

Michigan Job Shop Goes Big

Hallmark Tool & Gage is a family-owned and operated business in Wixom, MI. "Hallmark has more Hurco 2-meter and 3-meter DCX double column machining centers under one roof than any other company in the country," said a company spokesperson. Hallmark invested in these machining centers to expand its capabilities in order to increase the services provided to its customers. "When we research the need for new equipment, we are always seeking to expand our capabilities in size, technology, quality and efficiency," said George Richards, President of Hallmark.

When Hallmark was founded in 1980, it had six employees. The company was primarily a gage and fixture manufacturer when George Richards purchased it in 1990. Scott Richards, George's son, started as a trainee at Hallmark in 1992 and worked his way through the company to his current position as Vice President. Today, the company has 37 employees and has expanded into fabricating, CNC machining, EDM services and complete full turn-key projects.

The majority of Hallmark's projects in the past revolved around the automotive industry. However, the father and



Hallmark Tool & Gage, Wixom, MI has grown from six employees in 1990, when George Richards purchased the company, to 37 employees today.

son team spent the last five years diversifying Hallmark's customer base to include defense, food packaging and a variety of commercial and industrial projects. "We do a lot of plate work and machine bases," said George Richards. "The machines we build are in operation all over the world."

A surface grinder by trade who has been in the industry since 1966, George Richards said he was first introduced to Hurco in 1996. "We had never looked at CNC equipment and we were looking for a company that could supply us with a machine we could train our employees to operate for a specific part we needed to machine," he explained. "We also wanted a machine that was versatile enough to handle other machining needs as required."

Ultimately, George and Scott Richards chose Hurco because of its integrated control that includes conversational programming, which was invented by Hurco co-founder Gerald Roch. "After looking at several different machines, Hurco was the answer," said George Richards. "The control's operating system is easy to use and it made it easy to train employees who had never programmed a CNC machine before. Hurco and Braun Machinery (the Hurco distributor in Michigan at that time) gave us the



Hurco VMX84 mill. The Hurco was chosen because of its integrated control that includes conversational programming. "The control's operating system is easy to use and it made it easy to train employees who had never programmed a CNC machine before," said George Richards.



At its 34,000 square-foot facility, Hallmark provides complete turn-key operations from raw material to final machining and assembly. Hallmark machines all types of material and provides à la carte services.

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support necessary to get us going and continued that support at every request. When we got our first Hurco, Scott was programming at the control and making parts within six hours. I was sold. We have been buying Hurcos ever since."

Hallmark currently owns multiple Hurcos:

- One 4-axis BMC40/50, Hallmark's first Hurco
- Two VMX84 mills
- One VMX50 mill
- One VMX42 mill
- One BMC40/20
- One VM20
- Two VM1 mills
- One TM10 slant-bed lathe
- Three large DCX double column mills
- Two 2-meter DCX22 mills
- One 3-meter DCX32 mill.

As for the company's investment in three Hurco DCX double column machining centers, Scott Richards said, "We went with the DCX obviously because of the size of the envelope (83" x 126"), but ultimately it is the control with its ease of programming. It is so user-friendly. There are so many ways to get from point A to point B when you are setting up and running the part and the Hurco control makes it easy."

George Richards added, "The extra Y-axis is just phenomenal on the DCX machines. Whenever we look at buying a new machine, we ask ourselves, 'Should we spend a little more to expand our capabilities in addition to expanding our capacity?'"

When asked for specifics, George and Scott Richards identified Hurco's patented UltiMotion feature and NC/Conversational Merge as two examples of technology that led to their purchase. "The new UltiMotion eliminates all the lost motion you used to see, and NC/Conversational Merge has the ability to go from one to another and use the



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best of both programming methods," said Scott Richards.

According to the company, while the larger envelope of the DCX machines supports the large plate work Hallmark does, it is also beneficial for smaller jobs because users can do an entire batch at one time with multiple fixtures on the table.

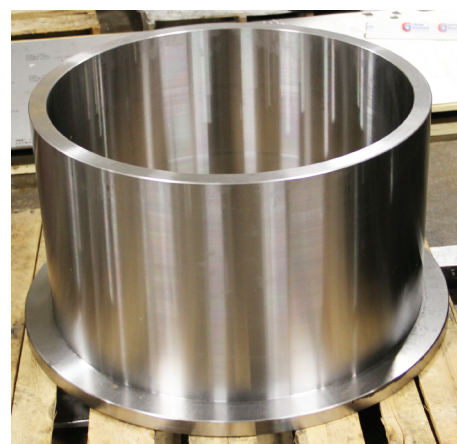
"The machine itself has the rigidity, accuracy and repeatability we need for the job at hand, whether we are machining aluminum, stainless, mild steel or pre-heated materials," said George Richards.

Paul Beverly, a CNC programmer/operator at Hallmark, said, "the Tool & Material Library, DXF Transfer, Concurrent Programming and AutoCalc are some specific control features that make my job more efficient." With the Tool & Material Library, he sets up the tool parameters by part material in the control, along with feeds and speeds, and then he selects them when he is setting up the part.

Beverly said, "With Hurco's DXF feature data entry mistakes are eliminated with DXF Transfer because the tool paths are created from the geometry of the CAD-generated



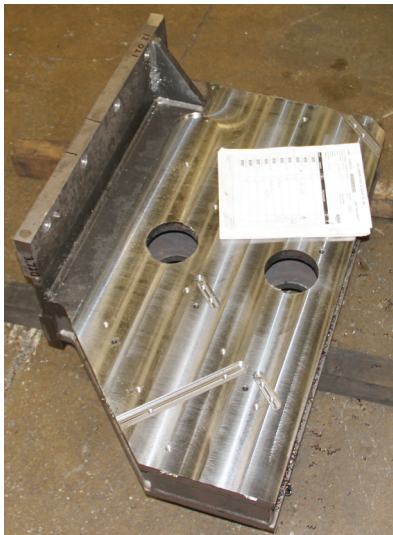
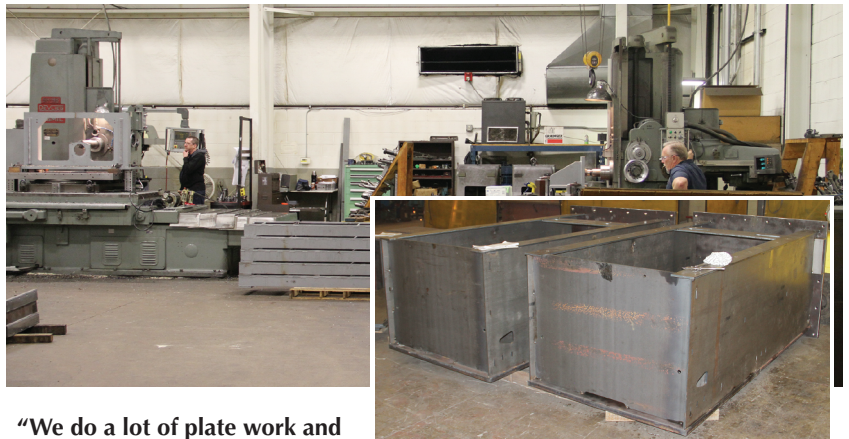
The larger work envelope of the DCX machines supports the large plate work Hallmark does. It is also beneficial for smaller jobs because users can do an entire batch at one time with multiple fixtures on the table.



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file. The Hurco DXF Transfer has some extra features that are time savers. Multiple part planes can be linked into a single program, contours can be chained automatically and a group of hole operations can be selected based on the hole diameter."

"AutoCalc is another time saver. You put in the dimensions that you know and the control automatically fills in what is missing," Beverly said. A feature Hurco calls Concurrent Programming is designed to maximize productivity. "Once this job is running, it is time to program another," said Beverly. "While running one job, you can program the next one right at the control without interrupting the cycle."



One of the many types of parts Hallmark manufactures for custom machinery is tagged for a final quality check.

At its 34,000 square-foot facility, Hallmark provides complete turn-key operations from raw material to final machining and assembly. Hallmark machines all types of material and provides à la carte services. George Richards said his business philosophy is straightforward: "At Hallmark, our goal is to provide our customers with a complete turn-key operation from raw material to final machining for any size project. We want to be a partner with our customers and

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consistently provide them with the quality and service they require at a competitive price. But we also offer smaller services. If you are looking for

only fabricating, just machining, or simply an EDM service, you will find it here at Hallmark. As for the future, Hallmark will continue to rely on great employees and top-notch equipment to provide its customers with world-class results."

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