

economic DEVELOPMENT



DAVE RUSHTON

SECOND GENERATION EXPANSION

Twenty-six years ago Fred Hiller and Barry Ross decided that self employment was better than constantly changing employment during the recession of the early 80's. So they started H&R Machine, with Fred doing the machining and Barry the tool and die. Within a year and a half the partnership split and both gentleman went on to build long term business in Fergus. About 24 years ago Fred took up residence in the back of the building at the corner of Gartshore and Glengarry, now home to Glomar Technologies. He grew the business within the 2,000 square feet that they had rented. They specialize in custom machining, welding and fabricating. They work in all kinds of metals and plastics while servicing the industrial, construction, agriculture, food processing, hydraulics and pneumatic sectors with both short and long term production runs. Fred always wanted to stay small so that the operations were easy to control. Their loyalty to customers and nimble response to customer problems has led to their long term success. The customer base comes from a wide area outside the community like Guelph, Kitchener & Orangeville. As industry grew in Fergus so did their local customer base. They

H&R MACHINE

have products from Miami to California and as far away as Kuwait.

In the early days a young lad named Jamie would come to his dad's shop to clean equipment and help out. The long hours and hard work did not frighten him and after high school he went on to apprentice at the shop, and do three years at Conestoga as a General Machinist. Susan, Fred's wife, has been active in the financial end of the business all along, doing a great job on keeping them on track. Their son Jeff also is a great help from time to time on front office matters like the computers and other problems. They have had many others participate along the way through apprenticeships, as well as regular and part time staff. Not too long ago Fred decided to pass the reins over to Jamie and retire. While the retirement is not a reality for Fred, Jamie likes to have the incredible wealth of knowledge that Fred has available, whenever he needs it.

In February, Fred came to me with a problem. They needed a lot to build on and they wanted to move out of where they were in July. We had just put in a road, sewer and water services to a new section of the Fergus Industrial Park, and we were told that we could let him locate there. A few weeks later, they had purchased a lot, arranged for an engineer and contractor and were on their way to having a building. Change at anytime can be stressful but during this process Fred took some time out for a heart attack and quadruple bypass! He thinks it was a combination of the details on the new building, and the Toronto Maple Leafs losing, that led to it.

The new 6000 square foot building on Gregson Court will be operational in mid-July, right on target. This triples their space and allows all of their materials to be stored in the building, and not in trailers as it is now.

Jamie sees continued growth as the community grows and he feels that with a diversified client base, they can survive the ups and downs of the economy. He also added motorcycle building to their repertoire, just like Orange County Choppers, except he has only a couple under his belt and no television show!

The Hillers have also given to the community with service as volunteer fire fighters; Fred for 36 years and Jamie for 16 years. They support community capital programs like Groves and the Sportsplex.

We wish Jamie all the best in his continuing business efforts and you just know that Fred will be there to keep offering his advice. As for Susan, her duties have expanded to maintenance of the new flower beds.



Jamie and Fred Hiller
of H&R Machine