PMPA Member Lovejoy Chaplet Corp. Finds Success in Providing Unique Product Offerings

In 1911, Lovejoy Chaplet Corp. opened for business in the small town of Hoosick Falls, New York. The company was originally a manufacturer of foundry works parts, mostly tin shelled chaplets and hinge tubes, and had a bank of Browne and Sharpe screw machines that ran off power shafts from the ceiling of the plant floor. In its early days, Lovejoy made aluminum and brass inserts that were shipped to another plant and eventually used in the compression molding of replacement distributor caps and rotors for some of history's most famous automobiles, including the Ford Model T and Model A. Despite not having a large customer base or being in proximity to manufacturing hotbeds such as New England, Lovejoy experienced early success making mainframe components for IBM. More than a century later, the company has grown to become a leading provider of specialty turned and milled parts with intricate geometries for the fiber optic testing, glass-to-metal seal, aerospace, medical, firearms and many other industries.

"Our location has always been a disadvantage, so we had to compete based on our prices and our quality," says Peter McGuire, president of Lovejoy Chaplet Corp. "Our customers knew if they got a product from Lovejoy, it was of the highest quality and could go directly to their production line without incoming inspection. We are 'dock-to-stock' with many of our customers."

After serving in World War II, Mr. McGuire's father worked as Lovejoy's bookkeeper, until in 1968, when he became the president of Lovejoy after one of the original owners sold his interest in the company to him. While his dad served as Lovejoy's president, Mr. McGuire and his two brothers spent their summers working in the shop. After he graduated from Bucknell University in 1976, Mr. McGuire decided to return to Lovejoy full-time as the company's vice president.

When Mr. McGuire eventually took over the presidency of the company in 1981, Lovejoy's original product lines were becoming less in demand, so he decided it was in the company's best interest to expand the company's single-spindle machining capabilities and embrace CNC technology. CNC machining was just becoming the norm in precision machining shops when Lovejoy bought its first CNC lathe in 1981. After receiving a local grant, Lovejoy was later able to purchase a CNC Swiss screw machine. This helped broaden the company's capabilities and allowed them to manufacture virtually any turned part configuration. Today, Lovejoy's list of machining capabilities includes CNC turning, CNC milling, CNC Swiss screw machining, single-spindle screw machining and close tolerance machining.

"While it's more common now, having both CNC lathes and CNC Swiss machines in a shop in the early 1980s was unique," Mr. McGuire says. "We were very inventive in the ways we manufactured some of the parts we had. Customers could send us a drawing of a part and we could supply a finished part in virtually any configuration. Being a one-stop-shop was a big competitive edge for Lovejoy."

As the company continues to grow and look toward the future, Mr. McGuire says Lovejoy actively works with the local high schools and community college to help recruit students to consider a career in machining. Lovejoy recently partnered with Hudson Valley Community College to create a scholarship that allows high school graduates to enroll in the machine technology program at HVCC. Lovejoy pays for the student's tuition and in return the student comes to work at the company upon graduation. Lovejoy currently has three employees on its shop floor who completed this program.

In his early years with the company, Mr. McGuire says Lovejoy's PMPA membership was very beneficial for learning about the precision machined parts industry and absorbing specific insights on topics, such as machining, marketing, legal issues and many more. Today, Lovejoy still relies on PMPA for its local and national meetings, as well as the copious amounts of online information made available through the organization's listserves and the association's databases.

"Whether it's finding information on machining or changes to federal labor laws, you can go to PMPA's website or its members and get answers," Mr. McGuire says. "PMPA members are friendly competitors who are willing to share their knowledge with each other on virtually any topic, from training to machining methods to material sources to legal issues. The association membership is an invaluable resource for a small company like Lovejoy."

Lovejoy Chaplet Corp. is located at 12 River St., Hoosick Falls, New York 12090. Phone: 518-686-5232. Website: **lovejoychaplet.com**