



Longtime PMPA member Bob Brinkman retires from Brinkman International Group

Bob Brinkman, chairman of Brinkman International Group, has announced his retirement from the company that bears his name. The Rochester, N.Y.-based group is comprised of Davenport Machine, C.J. Winter Machine Technologies, Brinkman Precision, MSK Precision and Gates Albert. "I called it Brinkman International Group because I wanted to think big," states Mr. Brinkman.

He is the son of Earl Brinkman, the man who worked for Davenport Machine for 54 years and was president of that company from 1966 until 1979. The younger Mr. Brinkman began his career right out of high school by working part-time for C.J. Winter Machine Works. After earning a degree in business from the University of Denver and serving in the U.S. Army, he started working full-time at C.J. Winter in 1969. One year later, he purchased the business.

At that time, C.J. Winter was licensed to develop the radial infeed, thread-rolling attachment developed by Earl Brinkman. "It was only in the prototype stage," says Bob Brinkman. "So I took that on and developed the first model, a 140 SA for one-inch and inch-and-a-quarter Acme screw machines. That developed into a whole line of air-powered, radial infeed, thread-rolling attachments." Mr. Brinkman was also the first thread roll producer to hone the bores of thread rolls. The result was a smooth, durable bore on a very concentric, high-quality thread roll.

Over the years, Mr. Brinkman purchased several more businesses. In 1990, he bought Gates Albert, a screw machine company that had been owned by his father.

Ten years later, he bought MSK Precision for its single-spindle capabilities. But his biggest purchase was the company where his father had worked from 1925 until 1979—Davenport Machine.

"The Davenport family sold the company to Dover Corporation," Mr. Brinkman explains. "After my dad retired, the new owners never hired a manager that really understood the industry. Dover sold Davenport in 2000 and the company soon went bankrupt. We bought the assets in 2003.

"We fixed what was a totally broken company," he continues. "The machine tools were not running, the quality was terrible and the customers had migrated to knockoff suppliers. It was a real challenge, but it was something I had to do. We invested a few million dollars, fixed the equipment and developed some new innovations. We turned Davenport around and won back most of the customers."

A PMPA member since the 1970s, Mr. Brinkman helped establish the Precision Machining Technology Show (PMTS) and still serves on its committee. He is a regular at the PMPA Annual Meeting, Management Update and the Technical Conference, as well as a big user of the benchmark studies and the Listserves.

"PMPA gives you a good point of reference," Mr. Brinkman remarks. "There is a lot of camaraderie among friendly competitors. You get to bounce things off people without revealing trade secrets. You get to compare notes on what works and what doesn't.

"Today, PMTS is the only show where we exhibit as Davenport/



C.J. Winter," he continues. "That's the best venue. It's where you get to talk to most of your customers and the people that are interested in turning."

Mr. Brinkman recently turned 65 and decided to move from semi-retirement to three-quarters retirement. "I was actually semi-retired before the Davenport acquisition, but I came in to make sure it was done right," he explains. "Now that the company is in good shape, I thought I might as well announce my official retirement.

"I still own the place and I'll still have some involvement," he says. "I'm just going to goof off more than normal. I have full confidence in Andy Laniak's ability to steer the company in the right direction, along with the management team we built."

This month, Mr. Brinkman is traveling to Antarctica, where it is now summer. He plans to spend more time on hobbies such as skeet and clays shooting. Now that he's retired, he'll also add a new "hobby" to his list: keeping an eye on the companies he helped turn around.