

Engineered Tools Corp.

New Cass City firm two-family operation

Cass City's newest manufacturer makes a product that will never show up on retail store shelves.

Engineered Tools Corp., which has been in operation here since early August, specializes in making tungsten carbide tipped tools for the machine tool industry.

Engineered Tools isn't really new. The firm was originally located in Roseville, a Detroit suburb. Present owners Richard Bidding-

er and Dave Sturtevant bought it from the retiring owner and moved the equipment, primarily milling machines and grinders, to Cass City.

Biddinger was plant manager of Hydramet Corp. in Caro, but left last spring shortly before it was closed permanently by the parent company following a long strike. Hydramet also made carbide tools, but was primarily in grinding.

He could have assumed another position with the company, in Detroit, but he and his family liked this area and didn't want to leave. The Biddingers live in Caro. He knew the owner of Engineered Tools, as the firm had done some sub-contract work for Hydramet.

Biddinger and Sturtevant have been friends about 15 years and had discussed joint business ventures be-

fore. The latter was an industrial arts teacher in Caro from 1964-76 and since then has farmed and worked part-time at a machine shop in Whittemore. He and his family live on Cedar Run Road, Cass City.

The reason the partners located their business in Cass City was the building that was perfect for their needs was located here.

They purchased it from Nelson Gremel, who had used it for a machine shop. It was empty when they bought it. The building is on Doerr Road and is about the same size as the original Engineered Tools building in Roseville.

They handled the moving job themselves, with the aid of rented and borrowed fork lifts, necessary when one piece of equipment can weigh as much as 7,000 pounds.

ENGINEERED TOOLS IS very much a family operation. The entire staff consists of Biddinger, Sturtevant, their wives, Alice and Jacquie respectively, and the Biddingers' two sons when they are home from

college. Biddinger can foresee a time when the firm has 6-8 employees, but at this point, no additional help is needed.

The partners own enough property to expand their building, if that ever becomes necessary.

Their customers are basically firms that make machines that make products. Most are in the Detroit area, but they also have customers in Cleveland and Arkansas.

Some of their customers dealt with the original Engineered Tools. Biddinger knew some from his work at Hydramet. They do some subcontracting with the parent company of Hydramet near Detroit, Walmet Corp.

Most business is obtained by submitting bids to potential customers, in competition with other firms.

Biddinger, who handles the sales, hasn't been soliciting a lot of business because they are still getting organized. There is enough work to keep busy, but they have the potential to handle more.

ENGINEERED TOOLS works primarily with tung-

sten carbide, a very hard metal used for cutting tools and as a wear resistant part.

The firm's specialty is soldering it to steel. A cutting tool, for instance, might not have to be all carbide, so the machined carbide part that will do the cutting is soldered to the steel supporting part.

Tolerances are very close, within a few thousandths or less. "If it's not right, you know you're going to get 5,000 pieces back," Sturtevant explained.

Although fabricated parts -- carbide bonded to steel -- is the specialty, the firm also has the capacity to make parts entirely of steel or carbide and to do tool and die work.

BIDDINGER FINDS few disadvantages in being in Cass City. Although orders can be big in number, the parts they make are small, so usually can be shipped via United Parcel Service, so transportation is no problem.

The only disadvantages are in having to drive to Detroit sometimes to call on

customers or if the firm has to sub-contract some operation which can only be done in the Detroit area.

At Hydramet, he was in charge of as many as 70 employees, which kept him confined most of the time to the office, dealing with cus-

tomers and being on the phone.

At tiny Engineered Tools Biddinger is more likely to be wearing work clothes and running a complicated machine, which he prefers to being at a desk. "We're having fun."



MILLING -- Dave Sturtevant uses a milling machine to bevel an edge on the part.



ROTARY SURFACE grinder machines all parts to the same thickness. Placing them on the plate is Engineered Tools co-owner Richard Biddinger. An electromagnet holds them to the surface while being ground.

Eight injured in Friday accidents

Four persons, two of them from Kingston, were treated and released from Caro Community Hospital following a Friday accident in Wells township.

Injured were Ralph W. Koppelberger Sr., 75, of 3328 Washington Street, one of the drivers involved, and his passengers, his wife, Lena, 72, and Lorisa and Loren Fleenor, 14, and 7 respectively, of Caro.

Caro state police reported Koppelberger was westbound on Bevans Road, east of Plain Road, crossed the centerline, and his vehicle struck the left side of an eastbound auto.

Driver of the other car was Susan Kay Cherniawski, 24, of Flint.

Koppelberger was ticketed on a charge of driving left of center following the 12:40 p.m. mishap.

Four persons sought their own treatment after a 5:20 p.m. accident Friday.

Sheriff's deputies reported Josephine A. Clothier, 35, of Clifford, was westbound on Mayville Road, failed to stop at White Creek Road, and ran into the left side of a southbound car.

Driver of the other car was Carl H. James Jr., 26, of 2906 Van Dyke Road, Decker.

Seeking their own treatment were the two drivers and James' passengers, Dennis Fante, 31, of 1713 Kingston Road, Deford, and Wesley McMann, 18, of Marlette.

Ms. Clothier was ticketed on a charge of disregarding a stop sign.

Carolyn Toth, 17, of Unionville, was treated and released from Hills and Dales General Hospital following a 7:45 p.m. mishap Saturday in Columbia township.

She was one of two passengers in a car driven by Max P. Morey, 19, of Sebewaing. He told Caro state police he was westbound on Ackerman Road, east of Graf Road, and had stopped his car to talk to the driver of an eastbound vehicle.

When the conversation was over, he started backing up, not realizing Ms. Toth was getting out of his car. She was knocked to the ground.

OTHER ACCIDENTS

At 10:15 a.m. Saturday, Caro state police reported, Wayne Dewey, 58, of 4455 Oak Street, Cass City, was westbound on Milligan Road, west of Buehly Road, when he lost control of his pickup on a patch of ice. The vehicle slid into a bridge abutment on the south side.

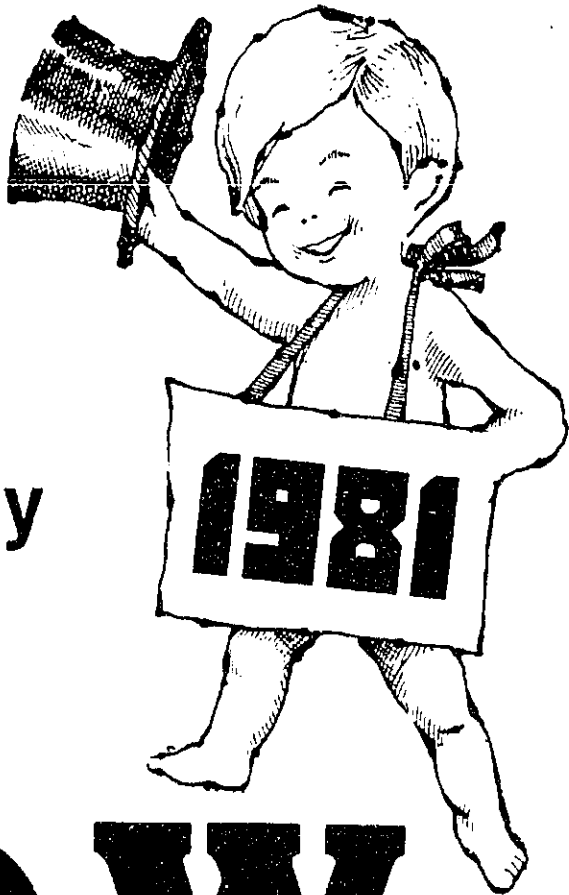
Kerri Sue LaBlanc, 16, of 3771 N. Cemetery Road, Cass City, reported to sheriff's deputies Nov. 25 a hit and run driver damaged the car she had been using the previous evening, while it was parked at one of three places in or near Caro.

CAR-DEER

At 6 p.m. Nov. 25, according to deputies, Evelyn E. Gilmore, 52, of Shay Lake Road, Kingston, was driving on Saginaw Road, near Oak Road in Vassar township, when a deer ran into the side of her car.

Cass City police reported that Harold J. Jump, 57, of Big Stone Gap, Va., was eastbound on M-81, west of M-53, at 8:30 p.m. last Wednesday when his car struck a deer.

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