

## (RE)DISCOVERING A CUSTOMER

# VUICHARD MICHEL SA

a 37 year old firm with 50 years' EDM experience!



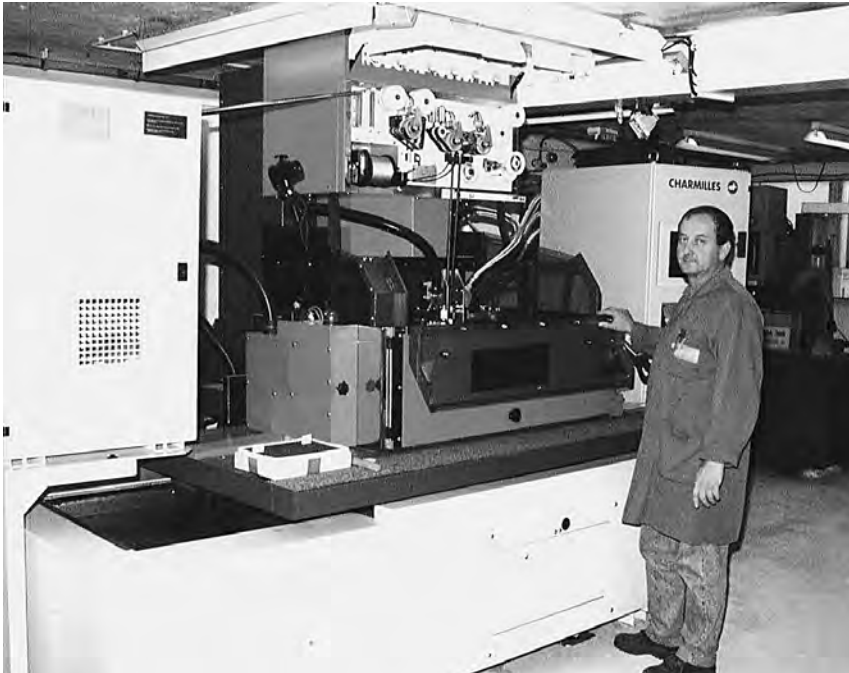
*Philippe Vuichard, present owner of the enterprise*

To reach the site you have to take a narrow road that winds through the mountain overlooking Valleiry, in neighboring France 20 km from Meyrin. Below the road, in a basically agricultural zone, you see a family house. If you do not pay attention, you can easily pass by without realizing that there is a factory there, on the slope below the dwelling. The Vuichard establishment is the image of its owners: modest and discrete, but efficient and more substantial than appears at first sight. You get an impression of solidity and flexibility that is further strengthened by the family spirit that permeates all the members of the company.

The adventure started in 1966 when Michel Vuichard left Charmilles, taking with him a prototype of a D1 with an "Isopulse" that he had just acquired. At the time he was expecting to go in for cutting tools but in the event he produced many molds and soon built up an excellent reputation in this sector. He obtained his first big contract in 1967 with Dupont cigarette ligh-



*Test workpieces  
for high  
precision cutting*



*Test workpiece for steam turbine wheel (4 axes machining)*

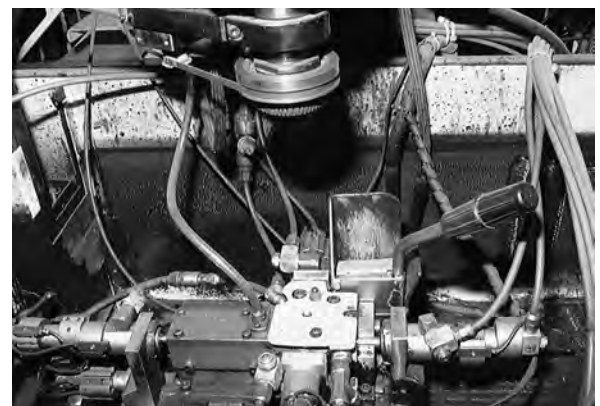
*The latest acquisition, an FI 4030 TW (the second) presented here by Pierre Geny, one of the two technicians for the FI 4030 TW*

ters; this cooperation lasted 27 years with the production of roughly 2 million lighters! The task was to make housings for the lacquer. To do this work Michel Vuichard developed and perfected an automat for the D1. At that time the word "palletization" did not exist in the French vocabulary, and Vuichard devised his own in-house method of automation, by installing small troughs under the electrode!  
Then his firm started the machining of blades for the first stages of gas and steam turbines. His mastery enabled him to machine in 3D (helix), still using a D1! For this application Vuichard utilized a system using cams.

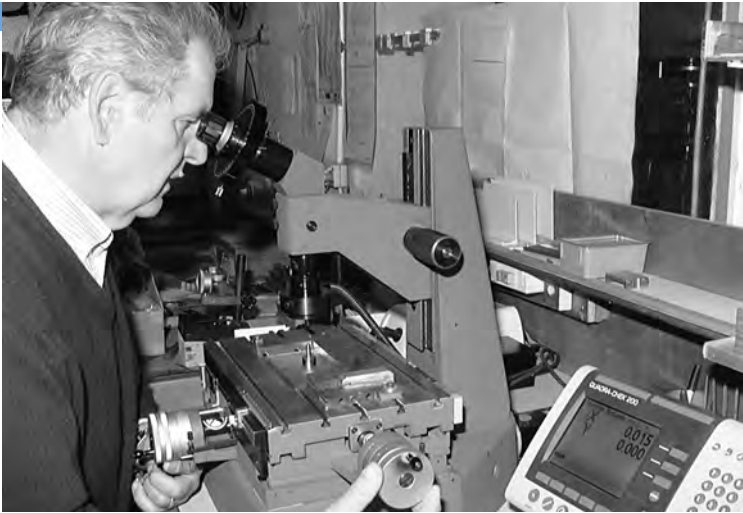
Micro-machining is an important activity for the company, which has considerable expertise in mass production machining. The orders come from the jewelry and watch making sectors, and also the microelectronic and medical sectors. As examples we can quote the drilling of needles or gas mixers or the production of connectors for optical fibers.  
In the field of tooling, Vuichard produces molds for compacting of metallic powders and thermoforming (plastics) together with punches and cutting dies. His main market segments are the microelectronics, household appliances and automotive sectors.

One of the notable aspects of the firm is that right from the start it was willing to honor any order that came its way and never hesitated to machine complex and difficult parts. This attitude enabled them to build up a highly diversified portfolio of customers, which helped to provide some protection against the inevitable ups and downs in market conditions. Its reputation, developed by word of mouth, has enabled it to prosper without any need for vigorous marketing. Since Michel

*Pneumatic automation system for the machining of optical fiber connectors developed entirely by Michel Vuichard on a Form 20 prototype!*



Vuichard handed over the reins of the company to his son Philippe in 1998, this strategy has changed somewhat, since Philippe favors a more active promotion of the brand name. The man behind the introduction of micro-machining, he recently acquired highly efficient top of the range twin wire machines such as the ROBOFIL 4030 TW, which boosts the firm's capacities even further. These new capacities enable Vuichard to broaden its capabilities thus opening up new prospects.



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*Company's founder, Michel Vuichard, measuring down to the last micron!  
(Aubert – CH microscope)*



*Programming office*

*As from 2000, Vuichard acquired high precision drilling and cutting machines. In order to be able to check the machining quality obtained, the firm has equipped its shops with adequate instruments. Here we see a Zeiss three-dimension measuring machine using scanning. This machine is capable of instantly identifying geometric defects (cutting of cylinders, etc.)*

### Vuichard

With its present workforce of 14, Vuichard is probably the largest French EDM subcontracting company. Its workshops house over 20 EDM machines, all from Charmilles apart from 2 micro-drilling machines. Some of these machines are true prototypes, judiciously modified by the ingenious owner and his colleagues having perfect mastery of their craft, each managing to outdo the other. One of the interesting features of the firm is the fact that it owns a stock of machines ranging from the earliest to the latest types of Charmilles models. These include the prototype of the D1 and D 20, some D4, D222 and D420 units, (from Charmilles Gloucester – UK, now defunct), some ROBOFORM and ROBOFIL of the 100 and 1000 series together with three models of the last few years, one ROBOFORM 30 and two ROBOFIL 4030TW

