

# THE DEVLIEG FOUNDATION

## What is the background of the Foundation?

The DeVlieg Foundation is a private foundation, tax-exempt charity, began by the founder of DeVlieg Machine Company of Royal Oak, Michigan, Charles B. DeVlieg. The company was formed in 1943 with the invention of the machine tool industry's first bed-type milling machine, and later the first jig-less boring and milling machine, the DeVlieg JIGMIL. These engineering accomplishments were achieved by an inventor who had not gone past the 8<sup>th</sup> grade! See his story below. DeVlieg became an international leader of precision machine tools with a reputation of manufacturing excellence. Many key employees contributed to its success, including his son, Charles R. "Bud" DeVlieg, who joined his father after high school and in later years directed the company. Both of these men with limited education believed strongly in encouraging and helping young people and established the DeVlieg Foundation in 1961.

## Our Mission

The mission of The DeVlieg Foundation is to aid and promote educational programs and experiences throughout the United States. Primary areas of focus are engineering, wildlife research and natural resource conservation, especially those that encourage respect and stewardship of the earth. Assistance is accomplished via grants to colleges, universities, schools and other non-profit entities that provide opportunities for all students.

## What are our grant interests?

In the early years from the successes in the machine tool business, the foundation's grants were closely aligned with engineering education with a significant amount of grants to Michigan universities. As engineering had been a focus, natural resource interests have evolved from board members' desire to expand into conservation of our natural resources. These foundation interests stem from Bud DeVlieg and his family's concern for preservation of natural areas. Grants include training of young scientists, engineers, and resource managers, in both fields of interest through the process of education.

## Who funds and operates the Foundation?

The DeVlieg Foundation was funded originally by Charlie DeVlieg, then by Bud DeVlieg, and later by Kathryn DeVlieg, Bud's wife, of whom all now are deceased. Besides their personal contributions, investments have allowed a substantial amount of growth for the Foundation's portfolio since 1961. The board of directors is presently run by Janet DeVlieg Pope and Julia DeVlieg, Bud's daughters. Curt DeRoo is the financial executive in Detroit, with six other board members. A subsidiary office for the Foundation is in Washington state where Janet and Julia presently reside.

## *Congratulations. Did you receive funding?*

If you are a recipient of a grant from The DeVlieg Foundation, we would like to hear from you and we are interested in your endeavors and successes from the funding you received. Please feel free to send correspondence to:

The DeVlieg Foundation, P.O. Box 515, Clarkston, WA 99403. Email: [janetdpope@clarkston.com](mailto:janetdpope@clarkston.com)

## The Story of an Entrepreneur – Persistence of Charlie DeVlieg

It would be hard to imagine a more discouraging piece of bad luck for a new machine-tool company: the first big development, climb cutting, hit the market almost on the very day of the Great Crash of 29'.

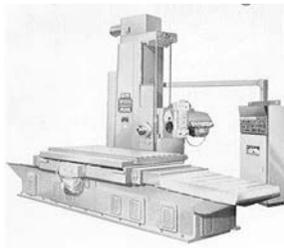
Charles B. DeVlieg had moved his 1-year-old DeVlieg Machine Tool Co. into a new plant, and it appeared the young company was through, but DeVlieg was determined to make a success of his own company, selling machines based on his own ideas. This was to become a pattern.



Charlie "CB" DeVlieg was the ninth child of parents from Groningen, Holland whose parents were both deaf mutes and immigrated to Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1880's. His father was a cabinet woodworker. Born in 1892 (d.1973), Charlie had abandoned school at 14 to begin a machinist's apprenticeship, but before he completed it he left to become a tool designer at Ford Motor Co. in Detroit at age 21. Soon afterwards, he joined Dodge Brothers as assistant master mechanic. In 1917 he accepted a position at Kearney & Trecker and quickly built a reputation as a works manager. Charlie DeVlieg's ambition was not satisfied by working for someone else. In mid 1920's realizing he would need a marketing organization to sell his new mill, he left K&T and worked at developing an idea he had for a bed-type milling machine, he approached Sundstrand Machine Tool Co., they liked the idea, hired Charlie, and put the first Rigidmil into production.

Three years later, he left Sundstrand and started his own company to design and sell milling machines, contracting with a Michigan manufacturer to build the machines. His builder soon went out of business, so DeVlieg bought a plant and began making the machines himself in 1929. The Depression ended the new venture. But DeVlieg held on: he formed another new company, and with his son Bud, ran it as a two-man shop through most of the Depression.

Finally in 1939, Charlie at age 47, started DeVlieg Machine Co. to develop a new machine, the Vanemil, that reduced worker-hours required to make aircraft supercharger blades by a factor of more than 15. In 1943 during WWII, faced with an 18-month wait for two badly needed boring machines, DeVlieg designed his own horizontal boring mill – forerunner of the famous JIGMIL. The machine did not require expensive jigs and fixtures, and could produce parts to the highest standard of accuracy never before achieved on a production basis. Demand for the machine was so great that he had to build three of them before he was able to hold onto one for his own use. Now 4,500 machines have been built. This highly accurate repositioning machine is known for precision, hand workmanship, excellence and attention to detail and is today used in virtually every manufacturing field from tool and die shops, aerospace, to heavy machinery manufacturing. The quality of workmanship is apparent as the older machines are now rebuilt and refurbished. The company also had a personal commitment to individuals, self expression and employee teamwork. "We do not build machines, we build people, and they build the machines", said Charlie DeVlieg.



Katie and Bud  
DeVlieg 1987 in  
Michigan

*First DeVlieg JIGMIL now at the Greenfield Village Museum in Detroit and a DeVlieg JIGMIL 4K-72 in 1989.*

DeVlieg Machine Co. became a leader in the industry, with a manufacturing facility in Michigan and England. As other products developed into an auxiliary line of precision cutting tools and accessory machines, factories in Japan, India, and Germany formed a network of worldwide distributors. As DeVlieg's CEO in the 1970's Bud DeVlieg traveled the world promoting trade serving as president of the National Machine Tool Builder's Association. The first DeVlieg JIGMIL can be seen now in the Greenfield Village at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan. The machine is up and running in the village museum's belt-driven machine shop, and is cutting metal. It represents an example of that next generation of machine tool development in America. "CB" DeVlieg hung onto an idea, always taking a little bigger chance. *He had dedication to purpose and persistence.*