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MasterCAM by day and VisualMILL by night!

Larry Fultz, the owner of LK Fultz Consulting LLC, has been working with CAD/CAM systems since 1998 and has tried all the major programs on the market. He ultimately settled with **VisualMILL** and has been using **VisualMILL** for nearly 6 years now and enjoys **VisualMILL**'s ease of use and streamlined menu structure.

Example of a typical plastic injection part and mold that Larry makes

MasterCAM by day and VisualMILL by night

In Larry' own words: "I started out using MasterCAM 7. Its what the company I worked for had. The interface for that program is weak at best. You have to navigate at least two or three menus before you get to the command you want and then it was still a 'DOS based' program that wasn't and isn't user friendly. So I began looking at all the other CAM packages out there. If it was available for download and had a trial period I downloaded it and used it. In 2003 I was getting ready to move to California and start my own manufacturing company after graduating college, a friend of mine suggested Alibre for CAD design and with it came **VisualMILL**. I was blown away by the functionality offered by both products and the price was perfect for my budget. I purchased professional versions of both well before their trial periods were up. Within hours I was designing and cutting parts on my mill. I can't

say enough how nice it is to have an intuitive interface that only requires a single click to get to the menu/command you need. I am a Solidworks and MasterCAM user at my day job but for my consulting company I am strictly Alibre and **VisualMILL** oriented. **VisualMILL** allows me to get right to the work and get my projects rolling which is a great benefit since most of my projects are time sensitive. Working in and around Purdue Universities Research Park you have to be on your toes and productive if your going to compete."

A picture of Larry with his Fadal Milling center

Rapid Prototyping using Milling

Larry describes his consulting business thus: "My consulting business is two fold. First I advise businesses on proper part design whether it's metal, plastic or composite and second I design and manufacture those products which are then taken to marketing companies and investors for future product development and production. Many companies have gone the Rapid Prototyping route and I can't blame them. When you need to test a product you want to do it fast. I'm using subtractive prototyping and mill my parts out in 3D on my mill. It takes a little longer due to making some fixtures but the quality of the part you get versus RP methods is far superior. Literally by more time I mean it only takes an hour or two for the first part to be cut. After the jigs or fixtures are cut and I have my knowledge base to draw from I can directly compete if not beat most RP machines out today for producing quantities of parts. This I have to give direct credit to how **VisualMILL** is so easy to use and again to the knowledge base that you can use in machining other parts that might be similar to one you have already done."

Need for Power

Since there is no general niche area for his company he has the need to have the capability to generate 4th axis and 5th axis programs. Many times he will generate the program and send it to an outside machine shop to get it machined. This allows him to control many of the machining aspects and keeps the workflow in his shop steady. Due to the versatility of his expertise Larry needs the ability to program and machine prototype material and plastic directly while at other times he needs to be able to machine metal molds for one of plastic injection prototypes.

Direct machining for plastic prototypes

Machining of Aluminum molds for plastic injection prototypes

Self Taught

Larry recalls the learning process that he had to go through with **VisualMILL**: "If I remember correctly I was able to download the manual directly off the website and since I already had a part drawn up that needed to be manufactured. I followed the exercises in the book step by step and within an hour of loading the program I was running parts. **MecSoft** made this possible by having so many post processors available for immediate use. But if you want to customize or need to adjust the parameters of the post, the post process generator has to be one of the easiest if not the easiest out there. Most post generators require you to literally speak another language in order to program them. **VisualMILL** is menu driven and oriented so you can find every command and edit the way you need. I personally make my posts so it's very easy to read. I added spacing and comment formatting so that when I send a program out, the machinist running the part on the floor can tell exactly what is going to happen in that program."

Strengths of VisualMILL

Describing the strengths of **VisualMILL** Larry explains: "There are so many, but I would have to say the biggest of them is it's the ease of use. The icons on the screen are self-explanatory. The environment is set up so you can get straight to work. The

post process generator has to be one of the best features. I can't thank **MecSoft** enough for making it so easy to adjust posts. I literally have a new post written every month due to outsourcing of some of the machining work. Everyone has a different machine but the post process generator allows me to get right in and format it so that my programs all have that same look and format so the machinist is well informed of what is happening with his machine. I would and have suggested to several friends who are starting their own companies to purchase **VisualMILL** I couldn't think of a better product to recommend for the price as well as ease of use."