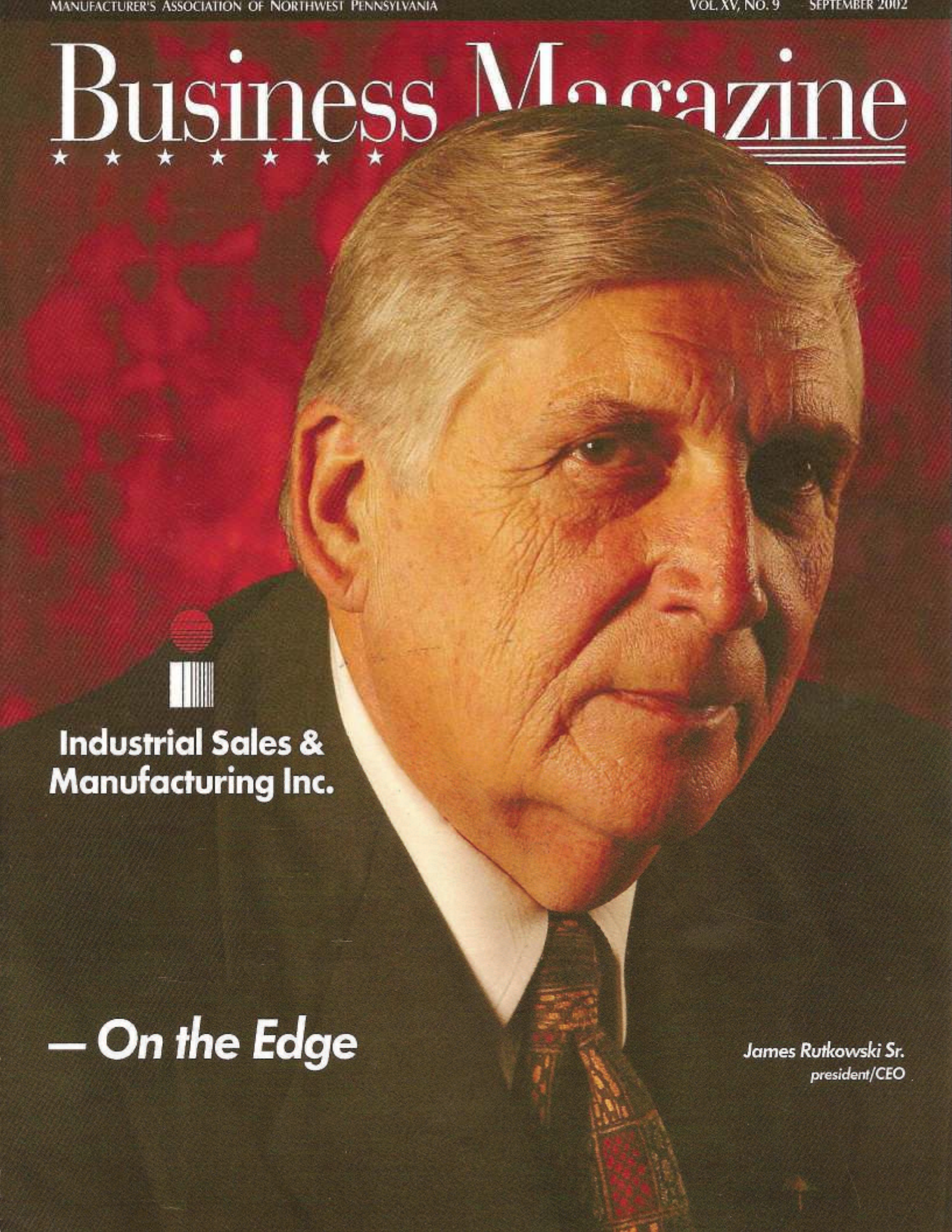


Business Magazine



**Industrial Sales &
Manufacturing Inc.**

— On the Edge

James Rutkowski Sr.
president/CEO

Industrial



Jim Sr. (seated) is proud to be working alongside all three of his children, (from left to right) Jim Jr., Robert ("Charlie") and Ann. The family stands amongst a portion of the firm's multiple products it fabricates for customers worldwide.



"Our clear-cut commitment to customer service and our ability to accomplish a variety of services under one roof has really set us apart."

— Jim Rutkowski Jr.

Perfecting each process before the millions of consistent components leave ISM's facility each day is vital. During a typical day, which consists of each machine running optimally through two shifts, any number of parts are deposited from the high-tech, computerized machines, such as clamps for locomotives, shafts for golf carts or safety latches for construction workers.

"We run approximately 2,000 of the golf cart spindles daily," Jim Sr. explained. "To put it in perspective, ISM will produce 2,500 different components in any given year. Our machines can be running one job and unloading another, so they save a substantial amount of time by satisfying multiple customers at once."

Some of the machines are even equipped with robotic mechanisms, including the futuristic robotic welder.

"This machinery is an amazing piece of equipment that has contributed immensely to us remaining productive," Jim Sr. said. "Rather than having someone weld 30 components per day by hand, this machine will have 20 perfectly crafted products welded by 9 a.m."

By taking a short jaunt across the street, you'll find employees busily assembling large quantities of components into boxes. A large part of ISM's business is generated from companies that require kits to be manufactured and assembled. As an example, ISM might fabricate the parts for a lawnmower and then put these kits together.

"The kit business has really become quite a niche for us," Jim Sr. said. "We can manufacture most of the materials, assemble each kit and then ship them out, so it's essentially one-stop shopping for the client. Some of our largest kit quantities post figures of nearly 250 parts each!"

Another edge for the company is its ability to precisely complete quality short- and long-run work, as well as emergency jobs for the most demanding of projects.

"Our clear-cut commitment to customer service and our ability to accomplish a variety of services under one roof has really set us apart," Jim Jr. said. "If a customer were to call and order a part on Friday and say they needed it by Monday, we would be able to accurately satisfy the majority of these needs in-house."

Maintaining updated technology is essential for companies to remain viable in the ever-changing manufacturing industry. ISM realizes this importance and constantly re-evaluates its machinery and processes to ensure that it remains on the cutting edge. As proof of this technology-driven mindset, the company constantly updates its software so that Jim Jr. or Charlie can dial up and monitor the plant's production from any location.

"A lot of companies never stepped up to bat and purchased new equipment," Jim Sr. said. "We've reinvested a great deal of our revenue back into our machinery. We're constantly reinventing ourselves with every technology and machine to facilitate our customers' needs."

In fact, the entire facility is online, affording it the ability to create and send a design electronically to a machine for fabrication.

"Our ultimate goal is to delete the paper used throughout the process so that no matter where a person is, he or she can access any type of information," Charlie explained. "We hope to someday integrate laptops at the machines, where employees would be able to do anything from uploading and downloading programs and prints to viewing setup sheets or videos." ▶

The company's high-tech robotic welder can weld together five components to every one that was previously performed by hand.



The business has the capability for rod, pipe and tube bending up to 2 inches in diameter.

ISM's dual-turn lathe is capable of robotically loading and turning parts on each end simultaneously.



"We wouldn't be here if it weren't for the people out on the plant floor. If you have a strong employment force, it's imminent that you'll have a strong company."

— Charlie Rutkowski

This space-age technology has played another role in combating its most prevalent challenge yet — staying competitive globally.

"The biggest challenge for us is the 58,000 other machine shops and fabricating facilities that are in operation throughout the United States, and that barrier has just opened up with the edge of the Internet to any company in the world that you can instantaneously touch," Jim Jr. explained. "We have to constantly be better, or serve our customers better, to be competitive in the constant chase."

Modernized equipment also plays a part in enhancing employees' duties. Whether its CNC equipment or robotic-welding cells, ISM believes in purchasing anything that will make their jobs "better, faster and cheaper."

"We wouldn't be here if it weren't for the people out on the plant floor," Charlie said. "If you have a strong employment force, it's imminent that you'll have a strong company."

It looks like ISM's work force reciprocates this feeling, as the employees recently surprised the Rutkowskis for ISM's 35-year anniversary.

"We were meeting with customers at the time, but everyone insisted that all of us report to the Shipping Department," Jim Sr. said. "Everyone was standing around; I thought I'd hit the lottery! They presented us with a cake and thanked us for their jobs. It was a wonderful event, especially coming from the employees themselves."

ISM earns numerous accolades from the community, as well. With the Rutkowskis being involved in several organizations and the enterprise receiving countless awards, Jim Jr. comments that they're most proud of the fact that ISM was the only machine shop to be awarded GE's "Top Machine Parts Supplier" Award for three years. Jim Sr. is also honored to have been named Gannon's "Small Business Manufacturer of the Year" in 1993.

Additionally, ISM was pleased to be part of the Erie "Go Fish" project that made a splash at local business and community sites last summer. The company designed and manufactured two of the stainless-steel structures — one that can be found at Joe Roots Grill and another that stands inside ISM's facility.

With the action-packed atmosphere that surrounds this industrious plant, it's no wonder the Rutkowskis are now suffering from those same square-footage growing pains Jim Sr. experienced in the past.

"Since we have a couple of major projects going online very soon, it's inevitable that we'll have to plan for expansion," Jim Sr. said. "We do realize, however, that this is a good problem to have. We're extremely fortunate to experience this exponential growth."

To supplement this continual progression, ISM plans to keep sharpening its leading edge.

"We're committed to getting better and better and, obviously, keeping in line with updated technology," Charlie said. "We must also remain attuned to customer service; maintaining those close-knit relationships is key to impending success."

"And hopefully," Jim Jr. added, "20 years down the line when the next generation comes through, we can pass down these same values, just as our father did with us."

And for a little luck, perhaps their grandfather wouldn't mind passing down a few of his famous blue shirts. ☐

For more information, visit ISM's Web site at www.ismerie.com.



Pat Schwabenbauer qualifies a part during a firstarticle inspection.



The company designed and fabricated this unique structure for the Erie "Go Fish" project last summer.