A Space Age Plant Comes To Suburbia

Fast-Growing Omni Spectra's Third Home Is In Farmington

By FRED DELANO
Staff Writer

The space age crept into Farmington without fanfare last June when the curiously named Omni Spectra Corp. opened a new manufacturing plant in which men talk seriously of how to communicate with "the man on the moon."

Just as important is how the astronauts who first land on earth's only God-given satellite will convey signals back to this planet.

It is the microwave components and instruments perfected and manufactured by Omni Spectra personnel which will help make this possible, just as they already have shared in the success of the Early Bird communication satellite, the Apollo and Surveyor spacecraft and other space probe devices.

Primarily, Omni Spectra serves the aerospace industry, and its customers run the full gamut of the microwave electronics field.

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WHILE DAY-TO-DAY functions of its 200 employees appear no more spectacular than many technical manufacturing processes, the end use of their coaxial connectors, adapters, cable assemblies and other microwave parts carry a glamor born of mankind's never-ending probe of the unknown—in this case outer space.

The 33,000-square-foot plant of Omni Spectra, Inc., on Hallwood Ct., not far from I-96 and Halstead Rd., is the third the fledgling company has occupied since its birth in March 1962. It outgrew its first Detroit facility in 1965, moving then to Southfield, but soon that, too, was inadequate.

Now occupying an 11-acre site with room for expansion, Omni Spectra considers the Farmington plant one of permanency. The company also recently opened a research and development laboratory at Scottsdale, Ariz., where the purpose is to develop new Omni Spectra products, augmenting work being done here.

Omni Spectra was conceived initially by three microwave engineers with experience in component design, development and systems applications: Dr. John H. Bryant, James Cheal and Vincent J. McHenry. At that time, all three were employed in the Research Laboratories Division of the Bendix Corp. in the Detroit area.

This trio added two co-founders who could bring to the company financial and manufacturing experience, Harold C. Ward and Rodney E. Christian, and because their roots all were in Michigan they saw no reason to set up shop elsewhere—nor do they now.

Bryant now is president of Omni Spectra and the others are vice presidents except for Christian, who no longer is with the organization. McHenry is in charge of sales, Cheal of engineering and Ward is secretary-treasurer. Walter E. Haines is vice president for manufacturing.

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TOGETHER THEY HAVE BUILT a diversified engineering and production staff that brought together not only microwave engineers and technicians, but mechanical engineers and designers with production experience as well.

This wide range of skills has achieved well-balanced product designs compatible with both quantity production and good electrical performance.

The present plant is 10 times the size of their first on Puritan Ave., and this year's gross sales to the company's more than 400 customers will exceed $4 million.

In addition to a sales network which blank-

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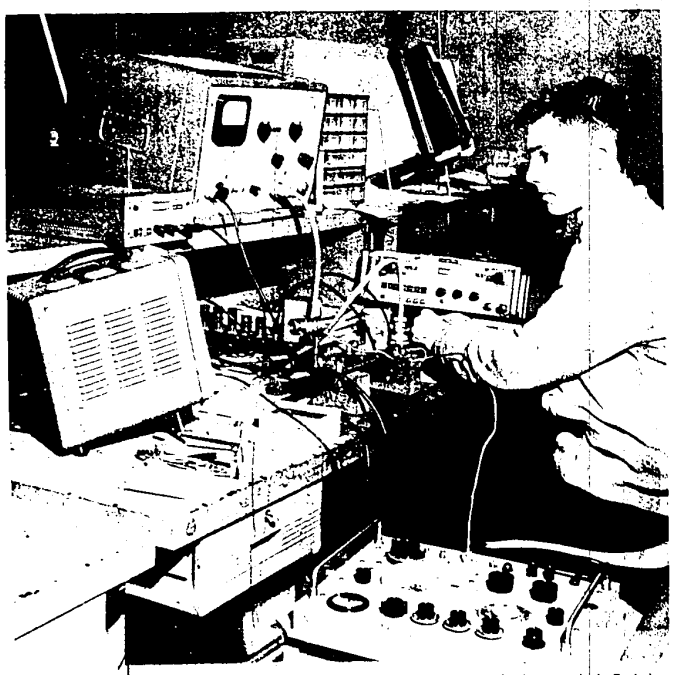
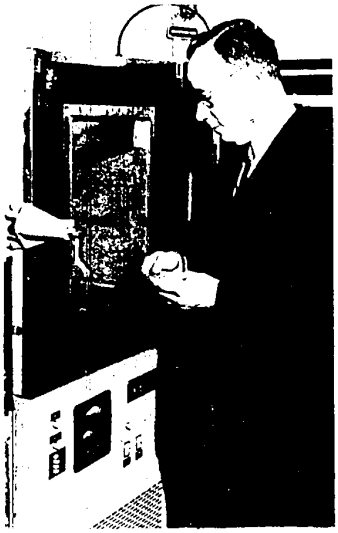


LABORATORY PROCEDURE -- This complex looking array of devices in Omni Spectra's Farmington plant is all for use in taking microwave mixer measurements. At the controls is Technician Ralph Daugherty.

TESTS FOR HARDNESS -- Inspection Foreman Brian Mitchell subjects a microwave part made at Omni Spectra to examination in a "microhardness tester," a process to determine hardness of metallic and nonmetallic elements.



IT'S NOT FOR BAKING PIES -- This may look similar to a built-in kitchen oven, but it's actually an altitude chamber in Omni Spectra's environmental laboratory. Here, Engineer Harry Liebziet prepares to test a microwave component in the chamber to see if it will withstand altitude and humidity conditions to be experienced by an actual spacecraft.

UM Opens Engineer's Facility

ANN ARBOR--Executives of Chrysler Corp. and The University of Michigan were on hand Nov. 29 when the U-M's Chrysler Center for Continuing Engineering Education was dedicated.

The center was built to help practicing engineers and scientists keep up with developing theories and new engineering tools, materials, and processes.

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MORE THAN 130 people were invited to the dedication ceremony in the 300-seat lecture hall of the center located on U.-M's North Campus. Presentation was made by Lynn A. Townsend, Chrysler board chairman.

The center was constructed with a $1.25 million gift from Chrysler plus individual donations from Chrysler executives and some proceeds of the U-M College of Engineering's continuing education program.

U-M President Harlan Hatcher, Harry E. Chesbrough, Chrysler vice president for product planning and development, and Dean Gordon Van Wylen of the U-M College of Engineering unveiled the dedication plaque.

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THE MAIN FLOOR of the bilevel building is primarily classrooms for engineers returning to campus.