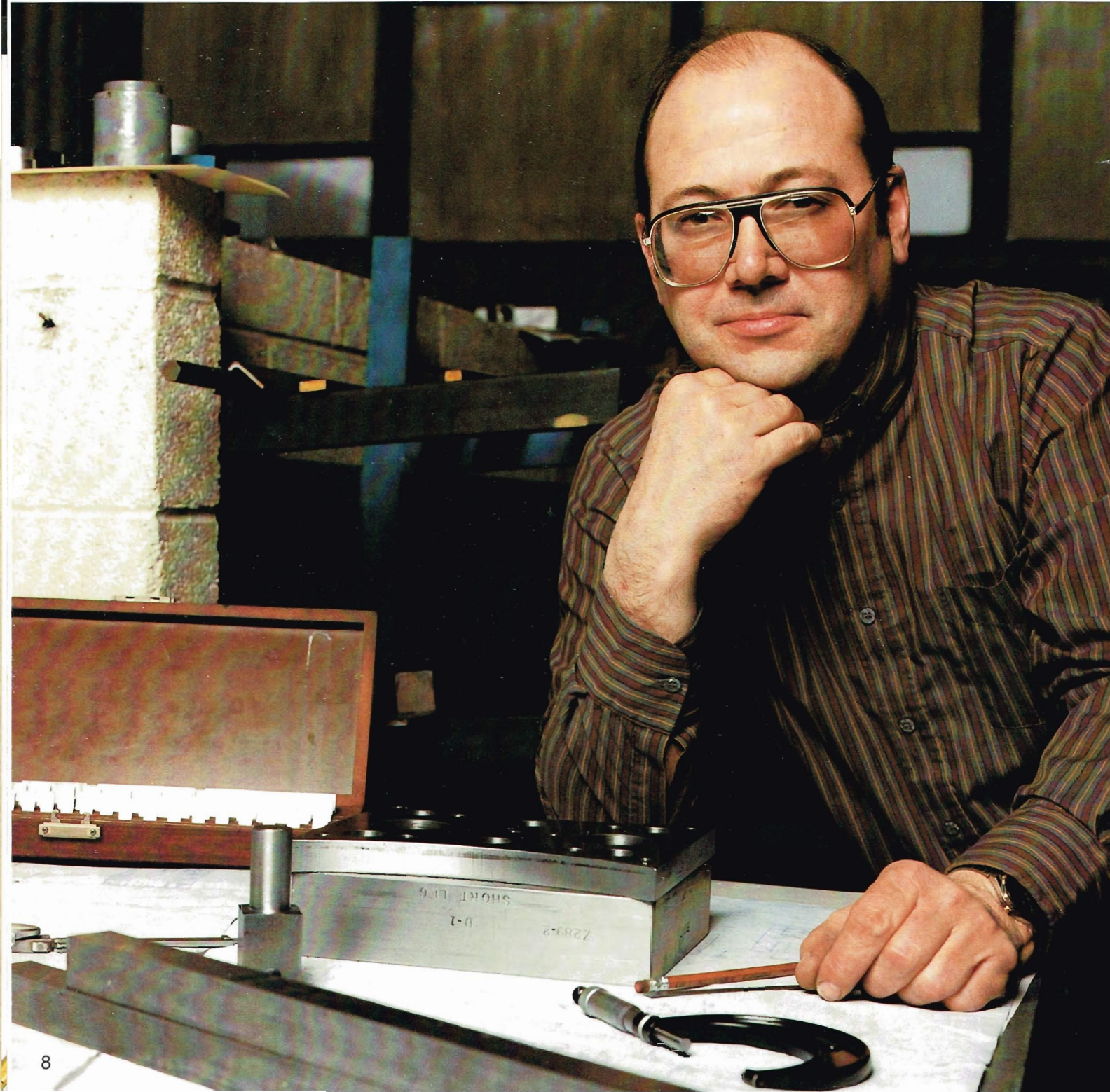




*Tired of being a passenger on the local economy's roller coaster, Eugene Jamison went into business for himself. His firm now employs five full-time machinists.*



Jamison, a journeyman pattern maker, had been the recipient of three pink slips in 1978-81 from major automakers and machine shops. Fed up with layoffs, Jamison borrowed a drill press from a friend in May 1981 and set up shop in the basement and garage of his Brownstown Township home.

"I felt I had to do something. I thought the best way to do it was to look after myself. I was tired of depending on someone else. I learned in the Marine Corps that when you've got something to do, you just dig in and get it done," said Jamison.

"Getting it done" meant knocking on doors looking for any type of machining work he could get, said Jamison. Although it was tough, he made the business go, and about two years ago, Jamison Industries secured financing from a local bank and moved into the Venture Center.

Although he has received no direct financial aid from the DCC, the Center has assisted Jamison by making a low-rent facility available and by supplying information and advice on bidding on government projects and other services crucial to a fledgling business.

Although some of its jobs are auto-related, Jamison Industries also manufactures military tank parts as a subcontractor for a firm supplying parts to General Dynamics Corporation. The firm now employs five full-time machinists, including Jamison and two apprentices.

Jamison now is poised to bring his company into the next phase of development—a long-term contract with an automaker or big manufacturing firm so he can better plan his future and provide more security for employees. His plan is to break into the competitive parts production field, and he is looking for a chance to prove his reliability to a major company. Another of his goals is to create jobs for handicapped workers.

"I knew all along that my products were the best," said Jamison. "The Venture Center really showed me how to go after contracts and how to market my business so that I could continue to expand Jamison Industries."

Other businesses presently in the Venture Center include a telecommunications equipment repair service, a firm researching the application of natural gas to automotive technology, a collection agency and a business machine repair service.

Among potential Venture Center tenants are a business that markets in-home doctor-to-patient communication devices and a firm that designs computer programs for vehicle fleet maintenance. Others conduct fashion retailing research and operate a service for restocking EMS vehicle supply kits.

The Venture Center provides a hospitable environment in which entrepreneurs and their youthful businesses can grow strong enough to stand on their own in the marketplace. It also is a convenient location for business educators to offer training programs.

Recently, for example, the University of Michigan-Dearborn began a program at the Venture Center—available to any downriver company—to teach small-business people practical management skills and how to apply computer technology to their businesses.

For Detroit's downriver neighbors, the Venture Center is the right idea at the right time. Coupled with the attributes of the area—proximity to Detroit Metropolitan Airport and easy access to expressways, rail lines and Great Lakes shipping—the economic revitalization of the area seems to be on the verge of a breakthrough thanks to a strong entrepreneurial spirit.