



Ditch Witch products take form in the Perry, Oklahoma plant. A workman (top, left) constructs one of the first R200 vibratory plow units to come off the production line. Trenchers receive the characteristic orange color (top, right) in the final stages of production. Edwin Malzahn (bottom, center) chats with members of the press at a banquet during the press fly-in.

Manufacturer Finds Success in Prairie

In 1955 a manufacturing company set in the middle of Oklahoma prairie country had nine employees and a goal. Today, that same company employs nearly 600 persons, is growing rapidly and sells many of its products before they leave the production line.

The company is Charles Machine Works, owners of Ditch Witch, and its product is trenching equipment. Not standard trenching equipment, but smaller, more mobile trenching equipment. In fact, Charles pioneered the service-line trencher.

A constant stream of innovations, a unique sales representative arrangement, and a family spirit

keeps Charles one of the forerunners in the trenching manufacturing business. Its latest innovation is a 195-h.p. vibratory plow unit designed to lay utility cable up to 3-inches in diameter at rates up to 7,000 feet per hour. The new product, the R200, has appeal for the telephone and large utility industries. Prototypes built to test the design have installed more than one million feet of cable in various types of terrain. The first production unit will shortly leave the production line.

Another recent innovation is the multiple-use modular trenching unit. A single unit can trench, lay cable with vibratory plow, replace dirt with backhoe,

dig with digging boom, carry a reel, bore holes under obstacles and sweep the pavement with a broom.

Once Charles Machine designed and built an industry adapted product, they proceeded to set up an efficient sales network. The country was divided into regions and sales managers, rather than living in their region, live near the plant in Perry, Oklahoma and fly to their regions to sell. Consequently, sales families remain in Perry as part of a larger, company family.

The Ditch Witch family consists of everyone working for Charles Machine Works. Unity of spirit is evident. A profit sharing program spreads the

economic rewards of success to each employee. Consequently, motivation is at its highest. A group effort production line further strengthens ties between employees.

The man behind it all is a third generation Perry native, who after obtaining a degree in engineering, took his father's metal shop where oil drilling equipment was made, and the pioneer spirit of his grandfather, a Perry blacksmith, and made it into success for the entire community. Edwin Malzahn's plant today employs a tenth of the population of Perry and has turned an agricultural town in the middle of the Oklahoma prairie into a booming industrial center.