

B-c-2 Interview with a Production Partner Company

Interview with an Award Winning Member of the HORIBA Group Meeting for Production Partner Companies

Mr. Shigeru Kirino, president and representative director of Crystal Optics Inc., is attempting to apply super-precision grinding to all kinds of materials based on a grinding technology for optical single crystals which he acquired while he was working for HORIBA. He has since expanded his company's business using this technology. We interviewed him about his enthusiasm for his work and asked him to share some interesting episodes.



Mr. Shigeru Kirino
President & Representative Director
Crystal Optics Inc.

What he acquired through trial and error at HORIBA helped him establish himself as an independent businessman

In the spring of 1964, I was 15. After graduating junior high school, I joined HORIBA, Ltd. Some 50 new employees had joined the growing company, increasing its work force to about 200. That year, the Tokyo Olympics were held, and I remember seeing the first run of the Shinkansen bullet train from the roof of the company together with my co-workers. I was assigned to the grinding section, where I specialized in grinding crystals such as alkali halides, fluorides, and ultraviolet and infrared aperture plates.

To ensure the temperature and humidity were continuously maintained at fixed levels, the grinding chamber was well sealed with 50-cm-thick walls and doors that were as thick as the doors of refrigerators. For this reason, employees that were working in the grinding chamber were given special 10-minute-long breaks at 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. daily. At that time, my superior was the late Mr. Masahiro Oura (former HORIBA president). He had a really warm heart and I was proud to work for him.

Around that time, HORIBA's MEXA (Motor Exhaust Gas Analyzer) became a big hit. This monitor used lithium fluoride for its window. I was solely responsible for all processes, including breaking, rounding, and grinding the crystals. Since production could not catch up with demand if

processes were performed in that manner, the company decided to outsource the work to an optical glass grinder. As a result, I sometimes visited the subcontractor in order to instruct its personnel about grinding technology, sessions which sometimes lasted into the middle of the night. Different grinding technologies are used for different materials. I taught myself through repeated trial and error since there was no one to teach me. I thought as hard as I could about what to do to apply such technology to mass production. The experience I gained at that time is still useful to me even today.

Going independent was reckless. I had no sales experience nor any customers and I was 36 years old. But as many graduates of national universities joined HORIBA, I got caught in the dilemma of often not being permitted to do what I was interested in doing. In addition, HORIBA trended toward shrinking its crystal grinding operations. So I decided to start a business on my own. Indeed, it was reckless.

After starting my business, though I was asked on a number of occasions whether my company was being managed properly, many people stepped in and kindly replied that "Your company should be all right if it is run by a former HORIBA employee." Also, being a former HORIBA employee is also advantageous when borrowing money from banks. This is, so to speak, my retirement allowance from HORIBA, and this is why I publicly emphasize that I am a former HORIBA employee. When I left the