## Milwaukee Plating Takes the Prize For World's Oldest Coil

Because of the corrosive environment in which it is used, most of the equipment in a plating shop is not known for its longevity. It is noteworthy that sometimes common items used on a plating line can remain in active service for many years.

In 1967, Milwaukee Plating Company, Milwaukee, WI, purchased two titanium gridcoil heat exchangers from Vulcanium Corporation, Northbrook, IL. Thirty-three years later, those same coils are still in active service in the same plating shop.

Little did Milwaukee Plating Company president Alfred (Al) H. Mattacotti know that the coils would last that long. And neither could plant manager Ernest (Ernie) Hooks predict that, 33 years later, the company would earn the distinction of owning "the world's oldest gridcoil."

## Finding the Oldest Coils

In 1999, Vulcanium Corp., a manufacturer of corrosion-resistant heat exchangers, set out to find the oldest of its coils still in service. The company wanted to know how the material is performing, and how the weld technology it uses is affected by time and chemistry in a corrosive service environment.

According to Richard Leopold, president of Vulcanium, "We're fortunate to have found many customers with coils in service for 20 years and more. Inspections have validated several of our principles on fabricating titanium—particularly standards for welding. For example, we now better understand how important it is to carefully prepare each weldment, and to weld in fully inert (oxygenfree) argon gas to minimize weld contamination."

The coils at Milwaukee Plating have seen continuous service over



It was worth \$2,500 to Milwaukee Plating to discover they were using the oldest coils in existance from Vulcanium Corporation. Vulcanium president Richard Leopold, left, presented the check to shop president Al Mattacotti, center, and plant manager Ernie Hooks.

the past 33 years in a nickel plating tank.

In the early 1980s, it was determined that the original coils were larger than needed, so the shop pulled the coils out and sent them to the manufacturer. Vulcanium was able to make four coils out of the two. Milwaukee Plating now keeps two of its vintage gridcoils in active service, while the other two are kept as spares. Hooks recalls only a few instances in 33 years when the coils needed repairs. "We've had the usual situations where inadvertent contact between a part and a coil resulted in arc holes," he said. "We just dropped in a spare and sent the damaged coil back for repair. But, in 33 years, we've never had a weld- or materialrelated failure."

## About Milwaukee Plating

Founded in 1943, Milwaukee Plating Company has grown from a small jobshop to one of the largest automated plating shops in a city known for its quality surface finishing facilities.

Two years after the company started, a young chemist by the name of Vincent Mattacotti, now deceased, became a partner, and the business grew fast. By 1968, he and his son Al had acquired all interest in the company.

Vincent Mattacotti's contributions to the plating industry were numerousr. He produced and improved several bright plating processes, and was heavily involved with AESF as a teacher, lecturer, author and officer. He received the Society's Frank E.