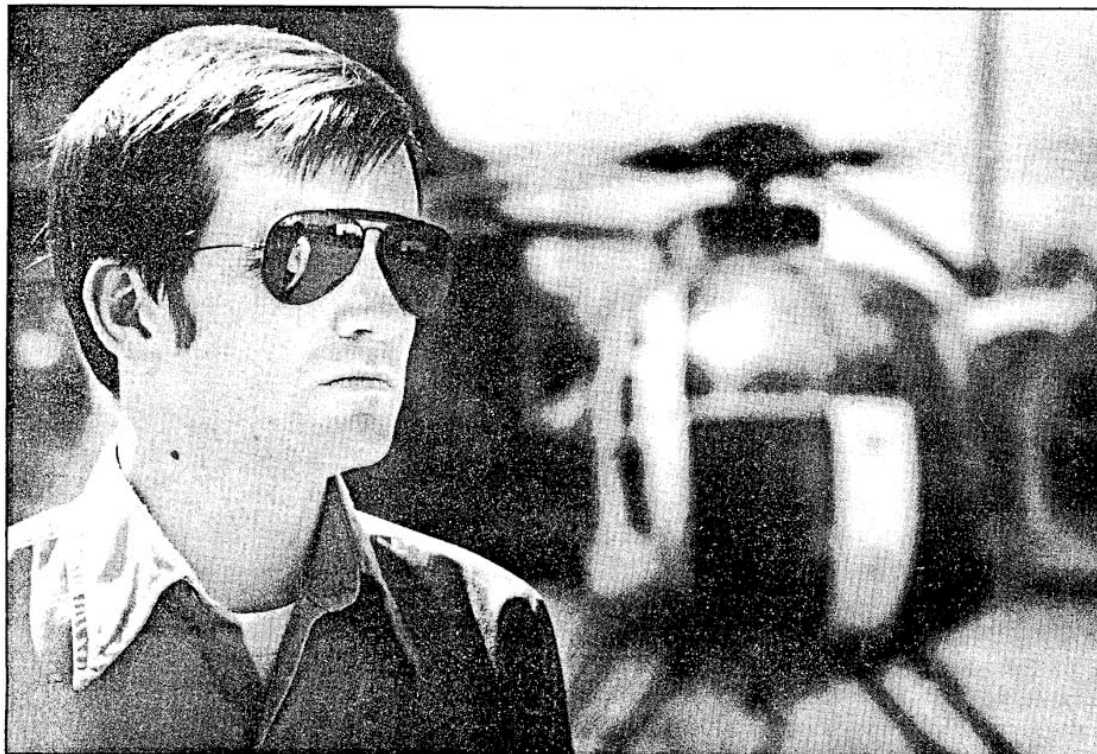


## Machine dreams



Mike Clement, shown above with a chopper, was only 17 when he started his first machine shop.

Staff photo/Curtis Corlew

## Michael Clement's an engineering whiz

By John Lovejoy  
Staff Writer

ANTIOCH — Michael Clement of Antioch has owned and operated machine shops for 12 of his 29 years.

He was only 17 and a high school junior when he started his first machine shop in his parents' garage when he was still living in Concord and going to Clayton Valley High School.

In those days he had a large milling machine, a drill press, a turret lathe and grinder, saws, torches, a compressor, an overhead crane, and arc and gas welding rigs.

He was able to acquire all those by doing odd jobs, he said.

"He's doing now what he's been doing all his life," said his father, Charles Clement of Concord. "We were probably the only house in the Bay Area that had three-phase electrical power, when he was operating his shop out of our garage."

Today, the younger Clement owns the Michael H. Clement Corp., an engineering lab and machine shop in Antioch.

The elder Clement said his son actually began working with machinery when he was around 10 or 11. He did odd jobs to earn money to buy more machines. Then, when he actually started manufacturing things, such as steel book shelves and hydraulic mechanisms for 50-ton presses, he used the money to buy more equipment.

Eventually, he moved his operations to Pittsburg. In December 1986, he relocated to Antioch.

On March 25, Michael Clement conducted a

**‘He’s doing now what he’s been doing all his life.’**

— Charles Clement,  
Michael's father

formal ground-breaking ceremony for a helipad he is building to accommodate busy executives visiting his 12,000-square-foot business on Wilbur Avenue near the Antioch Bridge.

He says the helipad, when finished, will be one of the few certified private heliports in Northern California.

"We're taking on a different class of customer who is not in the mood to sit in traffic," said Clement, a fairly proficient, though still unlicensed helicopter pilot himself. "We're expanding to a different level now with larger companies. That's why we require a helipad."

He added that, with the eventual demise of the Antioch Airport to make way for housing, his helipad will come in handy for use by air ambulances and the California Highway Patrol in case of disasters.

Near the helipad, he envisions a restaurant for his employees and customers.

Next door to his business, and in the same building, is Golden Gate Graphics, a print shop owned by Mike's mother, Virginia Clement. Sometimes he helps her out by modifying the printing machinery to do special jobs, he said.

In his own shop, among all the other machines, sits a brand new, big, gleaming, computer-operated milling machine.

Clement is especially proud of his Shin Nippon Koki vertical machining center, which he believes is the largest of its kind in Northern California. It's completely controlled by computer.

Luckily for him, his fiancée, Jeanette Yu, whom he met while taking engineering courses at the University of California at Berkeley, is a programming expert. She takes care of those chores for him.

"She earned the second-highest grades in her engineering class at UC," Clement said.

He said his business, which employs 10 people, is "very stable financially" and he plows most of the profit back into it to keep it growing. He has between 300 and 400 customers nationwide, he said.

"We do unique things," he said. "We make special machine tools."

His father fondly remembered one machine his son built. It was made to cut special, pie-shaped segments from sheet metal for use on the top of a tank owned by a Standard Oil refinery. "That was really something," he said.

"We also make military products — defensive products," the younger Clement said, "and miscellaneous things that require mechanical engineering expertise."

Asked how he acquired his mechanical engineering skills at such an early age, Clement looked puzzled for a second.

"Well, it just turns out to be the simplest thing in the world," he said.