



Frank Nitschke

## „The Thread Sewing Technique is Extremely Exciting“

**Frank Nitschke has been working as a service technician for Muller Martini in Germany for 20 years. To enable him to serve customers even more competently, the 48-year-old perfect binding specialist is currently undergoing further training in the demanding discipline of thread sewing.**

From my home in Berlin, I not only travel around Germany, I'm also always on call around the world when there's an emergency. If a machine at one of our customers is at a standstill or a spare part needs to be installed, my phone rings. These can be long-term planned assignments, for example for upgrades, or short-term assignments for emergencies. Over the last 20 years I have built up very good and stable relationships with our customers. The trust must be right and we achieve this with reliable and competent service.

### **Ensure know-how**

Now a new challenge has grabbed me. I recently started training on the [Ventura](#) thread sewing machine at our headquarters in Switzerland, so that I will also be able to carry out service work for this machine in the future. In total, I will be trained for several weeks on this machine, which was completely unknown to me until now. This will enable me to expand my know-how as a perfect binding specialist in a meaningful way. After all, thread sewing and perfect binding have many points of contact and many of our customers have both types of machine in the hall.

I am doing this training for two reasons. Firstly, many of our existing book sewing profes-

nals at Muller Martini are slowly reaching retirement age and we want to bring in sufficient junior staff. Secondly, since the thread sewing machine is now newly built at Muller Martini's Swiss headquarters in Zofingen, we also need to secure and expand the know-how so that we can offer this technology in the long term and also develop it further. My main personal motivation: I want to continue to provide our customers with very good, competent and even more comprehensive service.

### **Learning on the machine**

In perfect binding you also have to work very precisely in some cases, but after my first impressions I have to say: with thread sewing it's now getting down to the nitty-gritty. In addition to some theory, we of course work mainly on the machine during the training. The colleagues here in the assembly department are all very helpful and motivated to pass on the important information to me. I feel very comfortable in Zofingen, of course I've known a lot of people for a long time and we have a good human relationship. That's also important, since we spend a few weeks together.

After the second week of training, I was already able to celebrate the first „wedding“. This is what we call the process when the feeder is „married“ to the stitching center of the thread sewing machine. I was allowed to lend a hand myself and everything went well, which makes me very happy. We work in a highly technical environment here. The thread sewing technique is extremely exciting, but also difficult. You need a lot of experience and intuition to ensure that the books are bound perfectly at the end.

Both the assembly and the operation of a thread sewing machine are highly complex. Just a small misadjustment can cause a huge amount of damage. My instructor Heinz Wüthrich, who is in charge of the perfect binder and thread sewing assembly in Zofingen, warned me during the training, for example, with the following words: „If you turn this screw one millimeter too far, it will destroy the entire sewing saddle during operation.“ That's quite a responsibility.

### **Difficult commissioning**

It was particularly exciting for me to learn how to commission such a sophisticated machine. Because this is exactly where my customers will be asking me questions later. For them, too, it is particularly interesting to know how they can use the machine correctly and successfully. To give you an insight into how difficult the thread sewing technique is, I will describe an impressive experience from my commissioning training course.

In the stitching centre there are so-called needle guide blocks through which the needle is passed at one point and the thread at another. Each of these 14 blocks must be individually installed, adjusted and possibly reground. Whether the settings are really good can usually only be seen when the first book blocks are stitched with the machine.

On my training machine, the blocks were set up pretty well... except for one! On this block, the thread kept breaking at speeds above 150 cycles. So each time I had to remove it, regrind it, and reinstall it. The time required to install a block like this can range from five minutes to up to 30 minutes. Depending on whether you find the right position. Once you've finally found it and then tighten the bolt, everything can get misaligned again during this process. And you start all over again. I had to learn to have a lot of patience during this adjustment work. I was surprised how extremely precise you have to work here so that the entire machine works properly.

**Always something new**

So I have sweated quite a bit during the training. But I really like the fact that my job is always changing and I learn new things. So this training is also a new, great challenge. My whole job has changed a lot over the last 20 years, of course. I used to get an order, go to the customer, repair the machine and that was it. Today, in addition to the classic repair work, we offer many other services. For example, inspections and maintenance. Hardly anyone was talking about that 20 years ago. Today, this work is very important for us and our customers. In this way, they protect their investment and can produce on their proven machines for as long as possible.

Another difference to the past: I couldn't do my job today without a laptop. There we have many valuable tools at our disposal to carry out our work professionally. After an inspection, the customer wants to know how his machine is doing and what we can do to ensure that it continues to produce reliably. Hopefully it won't be long now before I can look after the first thread sewing machine like this. I'm really looking forward to that.

Yours,

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