

The LANNERS carbide manufacturers

One branch of the Luxembourg Lanners family entered successfully into the [powder metallurgy](#), more specifically into the manufacturing of [tungsten carbide](#) products. The best known products made with these metals are bits for [masonry drills](#) and balls for ball-point pens.

Nicolas Lanners was born Dec. 1st, 1893 in Diekirch. His father Jean Lanners came from Dorscheid in the Hosingen area and was a gardiner in Diekirch at 32, Rue Sainte Croix. His mother Anne Poos was born in Diekirch. Nicolas made university studies and got a Luxembourg doctorate in physics and mathematics on Nov. 11, 1915. He started a teacher's career, first in his home town Diekirch and in 1920 in Echternach.

But the interest of Nicolas went beyond teaching in a high school and on 11.11.1927 he was the co-founder, and no doubt the kingpin, of [ELECTRA S.A.](#), Diekirch, a company whose object was the manufacturing of tungsten filaments for lamps. In 1931, he created in Bereldange, close to Luxembourg City, the "Luuchtefabrik" (Lamp plant) which, as its name says, made filaments for bulbs. It was in this shop that [Willi](#)

[am Kroll](#) produced with his newly developed ["Kroll process"](#) the first charges of [titanium](#)

, a metal that was virtually unknown in those days. As WWII became imminent in Europe, Kroll emigrated to the United States and invented a process to produce zirconium, a strategic metal for nuclear power plants

(William J. Kroll A Luxembourg Scientist, Fondation Nicolas Lanners)

In 1949 Nicolas Lanners initiated the creation of Cerametal in Bereldange. The initial capital of 6.000.000 Francs was brought up in equal parts by:

- The Schwarzkopf family of Metallwerk Plansee in Austria: carbide tungsten know how;
- William Kroll: cash
- Nicolas Lanners: industrial land and building in Bereldange with equipment.

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Written by Claude Lanners

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It was this combination of resources of the three partners that made it possible for Nicolas Lanners to launch and to develop the company. Over the years, it became an active player in a sector dominated by big groups like Kennametal and in the early 1960s it was selected as the main supplier of balls by the well known French BIC group.

Nicolas Lanners had married in 1927 Laure Elter and they had a son Jean Paul. Nicolas died in Luxembourg on May 13, 1965.

Jean Paul Lanners was born 19.9.1931. He completed an engineer's degree at ETH Zurich, entered in 1953 in the family business and took over as general manager in 1964. In 1962, the Lanners family had taken over the shares of the other co-founders of the company, William Kroll and Metallwerk Plansee. Cerametal grew steadily and was soon short of space at its original site at 204, Luxembourg Road in Beggen. In 1970, the company transferred its activities on a new site in Mamer that would offer expansion potential for the next decades. Cerametal maintained a strong growth pace under the leadership of Jean Paul Lanners who was both a brilliant engineer and competent businessman. With the years Cerametal went international by opening production facilities in the United States and in China. A major step was made in 2002 with the merger of Cerametal with its founding partner Plansee Tizit to form

[CERATIZIT](#)

. This group is the number 5 producer in the world for tungsten carbide tools used in cutting and machining of wood, stone and metal, employing 4000 people worldwide.

Key figures for CERATIZIT Luxembourg are in 2011 a labour force of about 1000 and sales of more than 200 million EUR. They are the biggest manufacturing company in the country owned by Luxembourg nationals and a showcase of the Luxembourg industry.

Jean Paul Lanners married Anne de Rycker and the couple has four sons who work for the company. He passed away 13.3.2005.

Jacques Lanners was born in 1958 and like his father entered the family business after his engineering studies. In 2002 he was appointed general manager and he is now chief executive officer of the CERATIZIT group. Jacques Lanners is also a member of the board of directors of FEDIL- Business Federation Luxembourg.

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The Lanners family honoured the memory of its founders with the creation of the **Fondation Nicolas et Jean Paul LANNERS**

. The foundation bestows each year the

["Lanners Award"](#)

on an engineering student of the University of Luxembourg.

The author of this paper had the privilege to observe the outstanding development of Cerametal from the early 1960s onward in his quality as officer of the Industry Directorate of the Ministry of Economy in the Luxembourg Government. The family relation behind the common name was not known in those days.