

REPAIR PARTS, INC.



A VAST SELECTION OF RECONDITIONED MACHINES, AND DECADES OF GEAR-MANUFACTURING EXPERIENCE, ALLOWS RPI TO PROVIDE TURNKEY PACKAGES FOR START-UP OPERATIONS.

By Russ Willcutt

After spending 30 years as service manager at Barber-Colman—then five with Barnes International and another year at American Pfauter—Terry McDonald thought he'd retired from the gear-manufacturing industry. He and his wife had moved to Wisconsin, where he worked at a campground they'd enjoyed over the years, and he did a little consulting on the side, but he was by no means actively seeking employment. That's when his phone rang, and the next chapter of his career began.

"Gene Kasten and Chuck Schultz had started a company called Repair Parts, Inc., in 1984, where they rebuilt Sundstrand machines and sold parts and accessories for Van Norman milling machines and Atlantic jig borers, and they were interested in getting into rebuilding Barber-Colman machines," McDonald recalls. "So we set up Re-New Machine & Maintenance in 1994 as the division of RPI that handled Barber-Colman work, they gave me a stake in it, and we've been partners ever since."

He adds that Kasten is the company's president, Schultz is vice president, and that he is manager and partner of RPI, with the corporate title of secretary and treasurer.

Although Re-New has since been folded into the company and no longer exists as a separate entity, RPI still offers a wide-ranging selection of Barber-Colman machines as well as others by Fellows and Pfauter, even the massive Sundstrand Omnimill. "We can only keep so many of those on the floor, though, since they're so huge," McDonald says with a laugh.


Still, with 83,000 square feet to fill, the company offers a vast array of equipment to choose from, with about 150 machines on the floor at any given time. "We're not the kind of company that says 'tell me what you need and I'll find it for you.' What we say is 'tell me what you're looking for and we'll fix up one of ours for you,'" he says. "And we also have a virtual showroom on our Web site with images of the machines

in our warehouse that have already been reconditioned and are ready for immediate shipment."

Of all the company's activities, McDonald says the part he enjoys most involves helping customers tackle a new manufacturing process. "While there are fewer of the big gear-cutting houses than there used to be, there are a tremendous number of smaller job shops who are interested in expanding their capabilities based on their own customer's needs," he says. "They'll come to us and say they want everything they need to produce a certain type of gear, and we'll provide them with a turnkey package that includes the equipment, the tooling, installation, and even the training—everything they need to get to work immediately."

When McDonald conducts these sessions, a significant portion is devoted to safety. "When I first got into the service end of the business, it was pretty much my job to make sure the machines were properly guarded and reasonably safe to operate, but these days most companies have a safety committee that reports directly to the top management," he says. "But that's not always the case with the smaller companies, and it's hard for them to stay on top of the 'latest and greatest' developments. That's why I do my best to provide them with as much safety-related information as I can during my training sessions, and also to share helpful tips in the column I write for this magazine." McDonald is author of the "Site Safety" column that appears in each issue of *Gear Solutions*.

Although much of what he knows about safety was learned over the course of his career, his real introduction came while he was with Barber-Colman and a member of the Service Management Committee for the National Machine Tool Builders Association, which is now the AMT. "This is when industry standards were first being formulated, and they needed people to write them, so they approached me and I ended up being chairman of that subcommittee. I'm no longer chairman, but I still contribute to the development of new standards."

Asked what he enjoys most about his work, and why he's remained in the industry for so long, McDonald doesn't hesitate to reply. "I'm doing this because I enjoy helping people get into this business," he says. "Because the fact of the matter is, it's a fun business." 

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For more information on RPI call (815) 968-4499, or send e-mail to rpi@repair-parts-inc.com. The company's Web site is [www.repair-parts-inc.com].