

Burr King



Old Burr King Is A Diamond In The Rough

Reacquired by Burr King in 2019 this 482 belt grinder is unlike anything they have seen before. "It's a non-standard machine. This might be one of the very first 482 grinders my father built" said Owner Don MacCarthy." MacCarthy continued by pointing out that the frame is actually a 562 frame.

"The 562 grinder was the "first" Burr King branded grinder. Grinders prior to this were manufactured by Pacific Abrasive with Donald MacCarthy Senior's watchful eye. MacCarthy designed the 760 for Pacific Abrasives in the early 1940's, and went out on his own in the mid 1940's. Shortly after that in the late 1940's MacCarthy began producing all the machines in his shop in Southern California.

"This particular grinder had a couple of clues waiting for us" said MacCarthy. He identified the main contact wheel with a date code from 1946. The serial number of the machine is 239. Prior to this the earliest machines had serial numbers in the low one thousands. It was rumored that the machines actually might have started with serial number 1001. "This machine debunked a long standing rumor, it might be more likely that the numbers started at 101 or even 001, but we know it wasn't 1001.

Rick Howard-Smith a knife aficionado from Palo Alto, California placed a call to Burr King in the early spring of 2019 for a couple of repair parts for his beloved Burr King grinder. "I think Rick ordered a bearing and a new wheel" Terry Marshall recalled. Marshall a 25+ year veteran at Burr King had no problem filling the order for Howard-Smith. "The bearing and the wheel are stock parts, but after I saw photos, I shared them with James Krier," Burr King's sales and marketing guru. "I knew he had to see this old machine."



Rick Howard-Smith poses next to his vintage Burr King.

Howard-Smith called again wishing to purchase some new abrasive belts. "He peaked my attention," Krier recalled. "He wanted 2" X 46" long belts, as far as I knew Burr King never manufactured a machine that used the non-standard belt size." After a long conversation on the phone Howard-Smith and Krier decided a little more investigative work should be done. "We've never bought a used machine from a customer," MacCarthy stated. "Typically we don't see the need, we still are building the same quality machines as my father did in the 1950's."

MacCarthy authorized Krier to purchase the machine from Howard-Smith noting this machine was something special. "I wouldn't have ever guessed this machine would have been full of so many surprises, we are happy to have it back home at Burr King," MacCarthy said.

The "482" grinder has undergone a transformation over the past month at Burr King. A restoration by Burr King's plant manager Keith Daleen brought the machine back to it's original showroom condition. This was the first time for Daleen to restore a grinder, however it's not the first time Daleen has made something look better than new. Daleen has been restoring old cars for over 40 years.

MacCarthy finished by adding "If it wasn't for the fact these machines run forever and we still have parts for them this piece of our company's history might have been lost forever. I want to thank Rick for being a loyal Burr King customer and for allowing us to purchase this machine."

