

# IMA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## Rathburn Tool & Manufacturing: Raising the Bar in Precision Parts

Rathburn Tool & Manufacturing is a family-owned precision CNC machining company based in Auburn, Indiana. The company had a humble beginning in 1983 when founder Jerry Rathburn launched his concept with two manual mills and a focus on delivering the highest quality parts possible. "My vision for Rathburn was never to be the biggest or flashiest," claims founder Jerry Rathburn. "I wanted this company to be known for the quality of the people here and the quality of the work we turned out every day." Just over forty years later, Rathburn has maintained that commitment to quality while steadily increasing its milling and machining technology and capacity.

**Integrity, Customers, and Partnerships:** "Rathburn is about more than just producing quality parts," says Angie Holt, President of Rathburn since 2019. "We act with integrity and proactively solve problems for our customers." It isn't uncommon for customers to ask Rathburn to advise on a more cost-effective way of machining a part, or for Rathburn to suggest alternate production methods or materials to improve quality and durability. Holt adds, "There are plenty of companies just looking for low-cost suppliers. We want to go beyond that with our customers and become agile partners. When we do that, we live up to one of our most important core values: Win Together."

Fundamental to being an agile partner is having the people and equipment to take on the toughest challenges. "Our approach is relational, not transactional," continues Holt. "We're always asking: 'How can we do it



better?' We focus on having great people working with the best equipment to produce the highest quality parts possible on every job. Quality isn't something that just happens. It happens on purpose. And we're proud of what we produce!"

**Advanced CNC Precision Machining:** Rathburn has steadily added to its robust capabilities with advanced technology that allows the company to improve efficiencies, increase throughput, and reduce



human error. A few examples of recent additions include a Miyano twin spindle lathe, a UR20 cobot, a Zetalase XL 20W laser etching machine, a Sodick VN600Q high-performance rigid linear motor drive wire EDM, a pair of Mitutoyo automated CMMs, an automated HYDMECH saw,

and dozens of other high-end production tools such as the Takisawa TT 2600G Type A gantry lathe.



TOOL & MANUFACTURING

The new equipment also enables Rathburn to have its engineers and operators focus on new areas where they can add even more value. "We installed the first robot in 2014 to take over a repetitive job to improve quality, efficiency, and ergonomics," reports Holt. "Since then, we've only expanded our technology to utilize the strengths of the machines and have our people focus on delivering the best products possible."

The technology enables the company to hit tolerances and production values not possible in the past. For example, the Sodick VN600Q is specialized for machining challenging features at high precision not available with traditional CNC machining. It has a work envelope of 23.6" x 15.75" x 12.2" with an LN3W control with power settings capable of providing a very fine finish down to <20 Ra with up to four passes.

The addition of a Zetalase XL 20W laser etching machine expanded Rathburn's secondary service capabilities and ability to meet ongoing customer demands for parts traceability. "The Zetalase gives us enhanced options for lot traceability on a wide range of materials and can penetrate through most coatings," says Rathburn Process Engineer Derek Horner.

He adds, "Being able to serialize each part and engrave on the circumference of a part provides a great option for customers that need individual serialization, lot identification, or other unique images."

The company's efforts have been rewarded by clients, industry leaders, and employees alike.

Last year, the DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce crowned Rathburn Tool & Manufacturing Business of the Year. In 2022, the Indiana Manufacturers Association recognized Rathburn with a Manufacturing Excellence Award. The company was also named among the Best Places to Work by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce.

Rathburn is proud of its history, but it is clear its focus is on the future. The company has continued to expand its precision machining portfolio, with new equipment additions in 2024, and there are rumors that Rathburn may add a clean facility across the road from its current facility to add medical device manufacturing

to the mix. The future looks bright for this Indiana gem. We look forward to seeing what the company produces moving forward.

