

Caron Precision Customer Spotlight



Caron Precision: A Legacy of Value with STUDER

Working out of its 18,000 square foot facility in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Caron Precision provides precision OD and ID production grinding and Swiss style turning to customers from all over the country. For close to 30 years, the company has maintained a reputation for delivering high quality components to the automotive, diesel, hydraulic, aerospace, defense, medical and other industries. They accomplish this with the help of the 14 STUDER cylindrical grinding machines from UNITED GRINDING currently on the shop floor.

Founder and Inspiration

Gary Caron was a world traveler with friends all over the world, and an avid pilot, motorcyclist and guitarist. He worked for STUDER from 1986-1992, then moved on to launch Caron Precision. His perfectionist qualities and family-focused attitude made the shop a great place to work and a great place to go for high-quality parts.

After Gary's passing in May of 2021, his stepson Rob Kuiper and stepdaughter Marci Flickinger picked up the reins and continued the tradition of quality and customer satisfaction. Rob is the current Owner and President, and Marci is the Office Manager. The two wear many hats, doing whatever it takes to get jobs done and keep customers happy—often doing so with skills Gary taught them.



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The STUDER difference

“Our product mix is mostly high mix, lower volume, although we also do long production runs for the automotive industry,” Rob said. “But we have the experience and know-how to run just about anything a customer might need.”

Caron Precision currently has 14 CNC Universal OD/ID STUDER grinders, some with automatic part loading. The universal design of the machines allows multiple features to be set up simultaneously. ID and OD can be run in the same hold for excellent concentricity and true position.

“Gary was a firm believer in STUDER grinding machines,” Marci said. “He would go to Europe for weeks at a time, learning the machines and getting the inside story.” Some of the company’s machines (like the eight S40-4s) have been around for ages and are still going strong. “We also have two S30 Lean Pros and four S21 Lean CNCs,” Rob said. “The S21s are the newest machines, but they’re still relatively old. The S40s have the old Siemens controls, but they’re actually our #1 running machine.”

“Once you grind with a STUDER, you wouldn’t want to work with any other cylindrical grinding machine,” Marci said. “We’re proof that they last. They’re just built really well.”

“And of course, we also have Tom (Regional Sales Manager at UNITED GRINDING North America),” Marci said. “He’s always available to provide any education and training we need.”

Rob also had kind words for UNITED GRINDING North America’s parts team. “They know everything about the STUDER S40s,” he said. “How to install and program, troubleshooting and everything else. Really helpful.”

An edge on the competition

Grinding accuracy and speed on the shop floor is enhanced with the ability to dress complete profiles in the wheel. The profiled wheel maintains part quality and reduces machining times by combining several part features to be ground at once. De-burring after machining can often be eliminated by including corner breaks, radii or chamfers in the wheel form.

“We maintain an extensive grinding wheel inventory, reducing the need to order wheels at the time of order,” Marci said. “It’s a virtual certainty we will have the necessary wheels on hand to run a customer’s parts without unnecessary delay.”

Attention to detail and strict quality control makes Caron Precision stand out from the crowd. They operate a documented Quality Management System certified to the ISO 9001:2015 standard. “The quality is first-rate and that’s our #1 thing,” Rob said. “We have people come to us with a part that another shop ran out of spec. They ask if we can save it, and we usually can. If not, we run the job to the tolerances they need.”

A lot of shops claim high quality to be their differentiator, but a couple stories make it obvious that Caron Precision goes above and beyond. “First of all, it took Gary an entire year to plan out a shed for his motorcycle before even thinking about building it. It had to be perfect,” Marci said. “And then you have Rob, who, as the saying goes, once a Marine, always a Marine. Everything has to be in order at all times. So you put Gary and Rob together and you start to understand why our quality is the best.”

Marci recalled a day when they found out a customer received a piece that hadn’t been ground. “Rob, Anna and I drove two hours to the customer and opened every single box, examining 2,000 parts to make sure no other parts were missed. We weren’t okay with a mistake, no matter how minor, and we had to make it right.”



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Moving forward, with a little help from friends

The family says it was hard to carry on without Gary, but along with his knowledge and experience, Gary left a legacy of workers and friends who were instrumental in helping the business not only survive but thrive.

“Our maintenance professional, Sevy Severance, has been with us 20 years or so,” Rob said. “He keeps the grinding machines in tip top condition with a routine of daily/weekly/ monthly/yearly PM. He does it all in-house. And Gary’s brother, Jeff, returned from retirement to work at the shop and help fill Gary’s shoes.”

“Anna Berry is another long-time employee,” said Marci. “She oversees the Shipping Department, but also runs machines. She’s been with us for 25 years and knows how to do anything that needs to get done.” Everyone in the shop has years of experience in metal working, grinding and processing. “The collective knowledge of all the people who work in the shop is the key to our ability to provide competitively priced services, on time and at the level of quality you expect,” Rob said.

Of course, their mother, Marianne, has been a huge part of the healthy transition. “I’m so proud of all my children,” she said. “Rob and Marci have worked hard to keep Gary’s legacy alive.”

“They’ve worked hard their whole lives. Newspaper job at age 11, hardware store job at age 16. Rob says he’s going to keep Caron going for another 30 years, and when he sets his mind to something, he does it.”

What the future holds for Caron Precision

Rob thinks it’s within the realm of possibility to expand the business and make Caron Precision the world’s largest grinding company, a goal that would no doubt make Gary proud. “The challenge is to find people with good heads on their shoulders who are excited about a career in grinding,” he said. “But when we find them, the finest grinding equipment on the market will be waiting for them, thanks to STUDER and UNITED GRINDING.”

We think Gary would agree.

For more on STUDER equipment—and all the UNITED GRINDING North America perks that come with it—visit grinding.com.

