

Montana Based Manufacturer Continues Commitment to Providing Wood Fiber Processing Solutions

By Diane M. Calabrese



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GRINDING CEDAR: *The 460 Rawlings Electric Stationary System processes cedar waste from a plant that manufactures cedar siding, decking and fencing. The ground material is then used in cedar mulch at a cedar bark bagging plant at the same location. Cliff Rawlings designed the solid rotary grinder with a system of solid rotors that launched the company's signature line of wood waste hogs after hearing a lot of frustration from customers who had all but abandoned grinding cedar.*

MISSOULA, Montana – Client focus, hard work and a legacy rooted in the wood products industry define Rawlings Manufacturing Inc.

Since its inception in 1976 as a small sawmill construction and consulting company, family-owned Rawlings Manufacturing has grown and diversified by listening to customers and responding to their needs. By 1980, company founder Cliff Rawlings had developed the Rawlings solid rotary wood hog that would launch the signature line of wood waste hogs at the company.

Hearing the frustration of customers who had all but abandoned grinding cedar because of its stringy bark, Cliff designed

the Rawlings solid rotary grinder with a system of solid rotors. The result was a grinder that could tackle cedar and keep performing smoothly.

Today, the grinder product line includes vertical and horizontal machines in a range of sizes and with options for diesel or electric power. The hog that Cliff developed 39 years ago has served as the inspiration for a series of innovations in hog design leading to the Rawlings Super Hi-Inertia™ rotor.

“Since the early 1980s, the backbone of our company has been the Super Hi-Inertia Rotary wood hog. The machine is equipped with a massive steel rotor. With the increased weight of the rotor this equals

out to increased kinetic energy to power through large feeding surges and process hard to grind stringy materials such as green waste, cypress, redwood and cedar,” said Judi Tyacke-Rawlings, project manager at Rawlings Manufacturing.

Today, Cliff’s three sons carry on his legacy. John Rawlings, the owner and president of Rawlings Manufacturing Inc., also known as the “Hog Doctor,” has continued to manufacture the Rawlings wood hog, improving and improving on his father’s original rotary hog designs, while developing new and improved wood and bark recovery systems. He has earned the name “Hog Doctor” because he has taken on the mantle of making certain hog design inno-

vations to keep pace with industry changes.

Craig Rawlings is president and CEO of Forest Business Network. Through the network Craig serves an expert on and advocate for the use of underutilized timber and woody biomass. Mike Rawlings is president of Rawlings Industrial, which builds sawmills, chip mills and planer mills.

The reach of industries served by equipment originating at Rawlings Manufacturing extends well beyond the wood products industry. “[We manufacture] wood grinding equipment that reduces and recycles a wide variety of wood waste into marketable products,” explained Judi Tyacke-Rawlings, project manager at the company.

Among the applications where grinders are found are biomass cogeneration, pulp and paper, sawmills, mulch, compost, wood recycling, waste to energy plants and food processing, said Judi. Of course, at the core of every interaction between the customer and the Rawlings team is good two-way communication.

“When a client contacts us, we gather information of the entire project,” said Judi. “We start with an application form that goes over the entire process in as much detail as possible about how the customer is receiving the product, processing, screening – and storage of the end product.”

Understanding the customer’s entire production strategy is important, explained Judi. “This allows the client the ability to design the wood waste system from beginning to end,” she said.

Capable of stepping in at any juncture to help a client, Rawlings can provide a so-



TWIN HOGS: *The Twin Rawlings 36x60 Vertical hogs are designed to handle all kinds of hard-to-grind materials including stringy cedar bark, green spruce bark, all kinds of mill wood waste, demolition debris, butt ends and railroad ties. The vertical hogs are shown here processing white wood chip overs at a paper mill.*

lution to a vexing issue, as well as help with an entire re-design. “Rawlings can handle every aspect of configuring, building and supporting a complete materials processing system,” said Judi.

What might a complete system be? “Each system can be designed with work platform decks, choice of belt, chain or vibrating in-feed and out-feed conveyors,” explained Judi. “Metal or magnet protection, product screening and separation are all customizable.”

Customers can also focus on the purchase of a hog. And many do. Because the Rawlings Super Hi-Inertia hog brings a strong and consistent force to bear on the material it is fed – and because it does so at a relatively low speed, maintenance requirements and power consumption are reduced.

And there’s an added bonus. The Rawlings hog tolerates errant rock or metal without incurring serious damage.

Rawlings home office, affectionately called the “Hog Headquarters,” is based in Missoula, Montana in the far west-central part of the state near the border with Idaho. The town has approximately 74,000 residents. And it is part of Missoula County.

Nestled among the peaks and chains of the Northern Rockies, Missoula is surrounded by forests that include a rich mix of western white and yellow pine, Douglas fir, larch, Engelmann spruce, lodgepole pine and cedar. It’s a good environ for those in the wood products industry to learn firsthand from the mill owners and loggers in the region.

Industry connections, however, extend far beyond Big Sky Country. “We have worked very closely with logging companies all over the country,” said Judi. And well beyond, too. “We have international clients in Australia, Canada, South Africa, and all over North America.”



FATHER & SON: *John Rawlings (right) and Cliff Rawlings (left) of Rawlings Manufacturing Inc.*

For its part, Rawlings Manufacturing has not operated a mill of its own since the early 1970s, said Judi. Cliff made the decision to serve the industry via the production of tools instead of the direct harvesting and merchandizing of fiber. And the company carried on in that direction.

The newest piece of equipment on the Rawlings product roster is the vertical rear maintenance (VRM) hog, “We have had several customers over the years that wanted a Rawlings solid rotary hog but did not have the overhead clearance in their existing footprint to allow for a clam shell opening type of machine,” said Judi.

The VRM solves the space problem. It opens hydraulically from the rear and still provides full access to the hog’s internal wear components allowing for “ease of maintenance,” explained Judi.

Is there a problem? Then there is a solution to be found. The VRM is just one example.

“We always continue to look at our machines’ design and improvement from the maintenance teams’ perspective,” said Judi. “These are the guys that are working on the machines in the worst-case conditions.”

Last year, Rawlings Manufacturing, Inc. took another interesting step, announcing that it formed a subsidiary company, RocWear Solutions, Inc. to allow the parts department to concentrate on designing and manufacturing their innovative wear parts. Read more in the sidebar article on page 6.

So how does input from the maintenance teams propel change? “In order to make the maintenance teams jobs easier, we have made the internal case liners



36x60 VERTICAL HOG: A 36x60 Rawlings Vertical Hog processes wood waste at a plywood mill. Rawlings hogs were developed from rock crusher technology and uses both shear and impact to reduce material.

smaller and easier to handle, bearings easier to remove and install by having lifting bolts designed into the bearing plate,” said Judi.

And more... “RocWear inserts are rotatable and easy to change out and the grate is also rotatable allowing for easy replacement and extended wear life,” explained Judi.

The emphasis on strong and durable equipment runs through Rawlings. “Our machines are heavy-duty and designed to operate 24/7 365 days a year,” said Judi.

As for the more than four-decade long track record of the company, it’s only the beginning, said Judi. “We’re just getting started.”

John’s son, Cliff Rawlings, has already

entered the business. With the addition of new family members, we can expect to see more interesting branches and endeavors to emerge from the original company.

There is also a constant that can be ex-

RocWear: Rawling’s New Subsidiary

In 2018, Rawlings Manufacturing, Inc. formed a new subsidiary called RocWear Solutions, Inc. The transition represented a significant move towards the company’s strategic focus on broadening the range of its high-performance wood grinder wear parts and services offered to customers, according to Judi Tyacke-Rawlings, project manager.

This transition was a positive, strategic fit for Rawlings Manufacturing, she said. That’s because the new division allows the company’s parts department to concentrate on designing and manufacturing the best wear parts for customers’ specific grinding purposes.

At the same time, Rawlings Manufacturing’s engineering and design team can focus more fully on its line-up of wood grinding systems while still offering customers the 24/7 customer service they’ve come to expect.



RAWLINGS BROTHERS: John Rawlings (left), owner and president of Rawlings Manufacturing; Mike Rawlings, president of Rawlings Industrial; and Craig Rawlings, president and CEO of Forest Business Network.

Customer Perspectives

“Compare this to other hogs we have had [that] were maintained at least weekly and you will see there is no comparison at all. This Rawlings machine is easier to work on, get into, and inspect than any other hog we ever had. I would have to say that overall, this is a very fine machine. I have only found one drawback with this machine. You sometimes forget to check it out regularly because you never have any problems with it.”

– West Fraser, Huttig, Arkansas.

“When the decision was made to upgrade our hog, we considered several options but had heard that the Rawlings hog had superior result when compared to other hogs once considered. The decision was easy as soon as we evaluated our options. Since the upgrade, we have realized many returns that we had hoped for, specifically, to keep the hog running a full shift without a problematic shut down. That factor alone has increased our uptime. Prior to the upgrade, the barker needed to run on lower pressures to reduce chances of plugging the hog. To summarize, the return on investment that we expected has been greatly increased and I would not hesitate to recommend to anyone to invest in a Rawlings Hog system.”

– Western Forest Products

pected. “At Rawlings we strive for 24/7 customer service,” said Judi. “As a family-owned company we want our customers to also feel like family.”

That family approach begins with establishing ties. “When our customers call our office, they are greeted on a first name basis,” explained Judi. “We know who they are. We understand their business and their processes.”

Family naturally encompasses employees. “We understand our employees are just as valuable as our customers and most have been here for over 10 years,” said Judi.

Doing what needs to be done is part of the hard work ethic. Ensuring that customers get off to the best start with equipment takes team members to customer sites to train customers on new installations. John – the “hog doctor” – has even consulted on sites where a Rawlings machine is not in use, said Judi.

Travelling to customer sites and being immersed in their processes is a good way to learn and keep on the leading edge of the wood products industry. It’s all part of the pride that the family-owned and operated Rawlings Manufacturing takes in making sure it can offer customers the best solutions.

There is a philosophy built into the motto of Rawlings Manufacturing. “Our motto is ‘always innovation, not imitation,’” said Judi.

It’s all about finding the best path forward – a unique way and a self-defined way, using the client focus, hard work and legacy in the industry as a guide. 



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