

# ATI celebrates 50 years of innovation



Evan Jones

J.C. Beattie, son of ATI founder Jim Beattie, gives a tour of the company's facility in suburban Baltimore. ATI is celebrating 50 years of doing business in the motor-sports industry.



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ATI's patents are proudly displayed at the building's reception area.

By Evan Jones  
MGR Communications

The first thing that's noticed when one walks into ATI Performance Product's headquarters near Baltimore is a wall covered with plaques.

There are nearly a dozen of them and they're all from the U.S. Patent Office.

It's a crowded building and every inch of space is utilized. Business has been so good that ATI has outgrown its facility and has bought another large building across the street that will house the corporate offices and other operations.

"We've been in this building a long time and we bought the building across the street to expand shipping, receiving of all parts, building materials, all of that," said J.C. Beattie, ATI's chief of operations and son of founder Jim Beattie. "Our goal is to move our offices and productions, converter and transmissions over there. Everything but engineering will go over there."

So with all the competition out there, why is ATI thriving while celebrating its 50th anniversary? Why is it that ATI equipped cars are winning drag races and other forms of motorsports?

The first hint are those patent plaques that symbolize the many innovations ATI has come up with over the years.

Another big reason is that the Beattie family races on the drag strip. J.C. drives a DragPak Challenger at events and he used to race in an ASA stock car. Jim went racing in the 1970s in Sportsman and owned the Black Magic Funny Car.

Pretty much, they're not only the manufacturer of the parts, but customers, too.

"Our customer service is that you can't please everybody, but you try," J.C. Beattie said. "You can call here and get a real person on the phone. We're racers ourselves and this is important to us."

"Building that car is eye opening in what a racer has to go through. We just have the racer in mind and going forth to make sure they're happy until we're done. We've aligned ourselves with good racers over the years like (Sal) Biondo and (Dan) Fletcher and those guys. They give us ideas if we



want to do something. They help us develop with those patents."

Instead of spending thousands for advertising, ATI grew thanks to winning racers and word of mouth from satisfied customers. Today, products are shipped from Baltimore to customers as far away as Australia.

"We never marketed to any specific part of the country," said Lynn Beattie, Jim's wife who helps run the company. "We let our products sell themselves."

The company began in 1961 after Jim Beattie left the Navy and opened a 3,000 square foot general transmission rebuilding shop.

ATI makes many high performance parts, including Competition Transmissions, Treemaster Converters, Torsional Super Dampers, Compu-Flow Valve Bodies, Flex-plates and Adapter Kits.

While ATI is especially famous for its torque converters, customers buy a variety of the products.

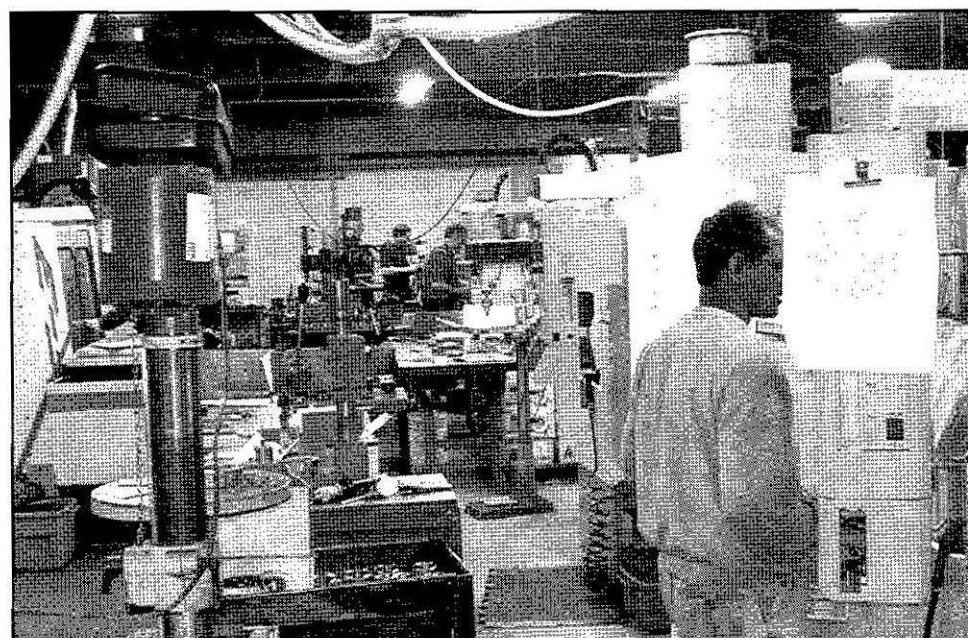
"It's interesting because you can break it up into quarters," J.C. Beattie said of the company's total sales. "Twenty-five percent of sales is dampers, 25 percent is converters, 25 transmissions, 25 machines. But you have to sell a lot more dampers to get to that 25 percent as opposed to converters. You have to sell two dampers to one converter. The dampers take up a lot of space and machinery and time in the shop, but the transmissions and converters take up more floor space."

"It's pretty neat how it works out. It seems we're way busier with dampers, but if you cut it out there's still the other 75 percent."

It's not just drag racing.

"We service a hundred percent of the

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Here is some of the state-of-the-art equipment.





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J.C. Beattie gets a few minutes to relax with Max.

## ATI

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NASCAR teams, that's a good piece of the business, but it's not enough," Beattie said. "With the dampers, we're everywhere....24 hours of Daytona, Bonneville, Corvettes run all of our stuff. From drag racing to road racing, we're there."

It also goes beyond motorsports. ATI also makes dampers for airplanes, mining equipment and water pumps that run 24 hours a day and the oil is changed on the fly."

With the beginning of racing

season in North America, ATI is just getting out of its busiest season. With teams re-tooling in the offseason, orders traditionally increase when there's snow on the ground.

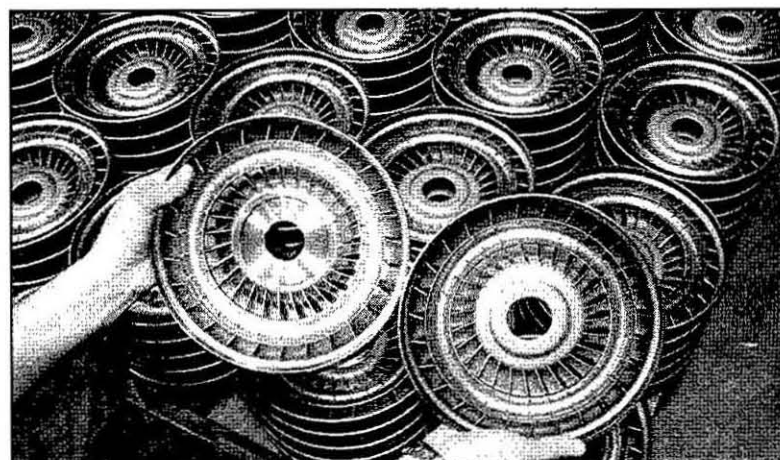
"The first quarter of the year is our busiest three months," Beattie said. "It's a toss-up between January and March being the biggest. Racing all over the country and we're down in parts of Florida and the West and we do a big business in Australia."

Looking toward another 50

years, Beattie said another reason for the company's growth has been low turnover. Employees stay for the long haul and some have been around long enough to retire.

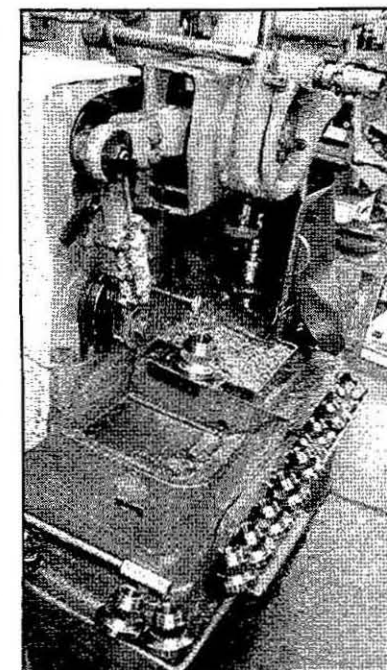
It's consistency like that which helps keep up the company's "word of mouth" strategy.

"I tell a lot of people, if they question our customer service or reliability, I tell them you can't stay in business for 50 years by being bad at anything," Beattie said.



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ATI makes sure all parts are properly processed.



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While there are plenty of state-of-the-art machines in the shop at ATI, some of the older equipment still churns out quality parts.



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The ATI car gets an overhaul before a season of competition.