Rieco-Titan Factory Tour

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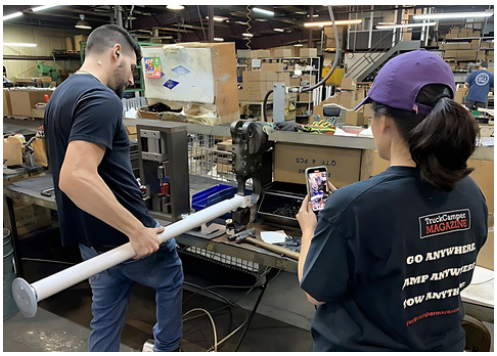
Truck Camper Magazine tours Rieco-Titan in Frankfort, Illinois, meets the third-generation leadership team, and observes Rieco-Titan Convertible Jacks in production. Don't miss their new Stamtec 200-ton press!

The ability to demount from a pickup truck is the essential feature that both defines and separates truck campers from every other RV type. The key component to making demountable campers possible is the corner jack. With four corner jacks, truck campers can be loaded and unloaded from a pickup truck and lowered toward the ground for off-truck use.

What this means is that corner jacks are the single most important system on any demountable truck camper set up. Yes, there are truck campers that are loaded with free-standing tripod jacks, but the great majority of truck campers require corner jacks to become a truck and camper rig in the first place. No corner jacks, no rig.



Above: Angela photographs Dillon Mason assembling Rieco-Titan jack gears

For decades, Rieco-Titan has been a leading brand in truck camper corner jacks. More truck camper companies trust Rieco-Titan than any other camper jack brand. Today, Rieco-Titan corner jacks can be found on Alaskan, Arctic Fox, Bundutec, Grumpy Bear, Kingstar, Capri, Cirrus, Cube Series, Four Wheel Campers, Host, Kimbo, Overland Explorer Vehicles, Palomino, Phoenix, Rugged Mountain, Skinny Guy, Travel Lite, Soaring Eagle, and Wolf Creek truck campers.

The stand-out reasons for this trust are two fold. First, Rieco-Titan corner jacks are proven to be robust and reliable. And second, Rieco-Titan has a reputation of working with new camper companies and helping them with their jack system integration. More often than not, new camper companies feature Rieco-Titan jacks, and stay with Rieco-Titan as they grow.

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Above: Brandon Daney punches Rieco-Titan Stable Stix

Above: Rieco-Titan Stable Stix and Swing Out Jack Brackets ready for shipping

Third Generation American Owned

Our introduction to Rieco-Titan the company occurred on the Arctic Fox production line at Northwood Manufacturing. Between final finishing and quality control, we met Bob McCarthy, then President of Rieco-Titan. It was 2007, and we were mere months into this fledgling enterprise called Truck Camper Magazine.

With his signature broad smile, Bob immediately welcomed us to the tribe. Then he schooled us on the fundamentals of jack design and functionality, taught us to say, "Rye-Coe" instead of "Ree-Coe", and made sure we understood that quality and consistency were his top priorities. As he explained in a 2008 TCM interview, "Consistency is the key to camper jack quality. The last jack on the assembly line must be identical to the first. Everyone at the plant has the same belief and understands why that's important."

Sadly, Bob passed away in 2014. His wife, Sharon, took over the company before her passing in 2022. Today, Rieco-Titan is headed by Bob and Sharon's daughter, Cinnamon Pavin. Cinnamon brought in her daughter, Rachel, as General Manager officially making Rieco-Titan a third-generation family-run company.

his past fall, we returned to Rieco-Titan and met Cinnamon and Rachel for the first time. They have maintained the core Rieco-Titan production team, process, consistency, and quality control established by their father and grandfather. Cinnamon and Rachel also have a keen eye on moving Rieco-Titan forward with new equipment, new production ideas, and new products. We can't report anything yet, but we can confirm that there are several irons in the fire at Rieco-Titan.

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Walking around Rieco-Titan's 35,000-square-foot factory, we found a lot of the same team members in the same places doing the same processes as we saw during our first visit in 2010. Often with a decade or more under their belts, these folks can produce the most vital of camper components with consistency and quality. Boring? Not when your camper is standing four feet in the air on jacks!

In a twist of irony, Rieco-Titan's consistency and quality start in a potentially dangerous area.

The signs above the Rieco-Titan welding team are legit. Welding (much less photographing welding) is a tricky and potentially hazardous business. The first rule is that you can't look at a welding arc with the naked eye. The second rule is to pay attention to where welding sparks are flying.

As 'Authorized Personnel' we always keep our distance and photograph welding without looking. This translates to taking lots of blind photos the moment we hear the familiar, "frying bacon" sound. You can believe that this (a) takes years of experience to master, or (b) results in most welding photos being tossed in favor of one or two lucky shots. You choose.

Along the left rear wall of the plant, we found Rieco-Titan's three-man welding team; Thomas Watts, Gary Hauger, and Buddy Jones. Thomas was welding mounting plates onto outer jack tubes, Gary was welding landing plates to inner jack legs, and Buddy Jones was welding a camper dolly.

One of my all-favorite memories of touring truck camper industry factories has to be the thunderous, "Cah-CHUNK! Cah-CHUNK! Cah-CHUNK!" of the enormous 92-ton press in the center of the Rieco-Titan facility; aka Big Bertha. Like a sandworm thumper in Dune, this machine could trigger an almost primal fight or flight response with its ground-shaking pulses. Naturally, the Rieco-Titan team was completely accustomed to this repeating earthquake, but it made quite an impression on yours truly.

I was eager to experience Big Bertha's power once more when we arrived at Rieco-Titan. Sadly, we learned she had finally retired after 80 years of shaping, bending, and cutting steel. In her place, Rieco-Titan now has a sleek and modern (for a press) Stamtec OCP-200.

As the name implies, the Stamtec OCP-200 is a 200-ton press with a one-piece welded steel frame, quick die change system, programmable press and automation controls, and other features Big Bertha's designers could not have imagined in the 1940s.

The Stamtec press was not scheduled for operation during the two days we were at Rieco-Titan. The Stamtec press operates several multiples faster than Big Bertha did, producing the quantity and quality of parts needed for Rieco-Titan's production in a fraction of the time. As a result, they don't need to run the Stamtec as often.

I must have looked quite disappointed by this news as Foreman, Mike Radzik, and Brandon Darney took the time to set up a die on the Stamtec and run a few parts; just for us. To be clear, one does not turn on a press of this magnitude and start running parts. Mike had to retrieve a die, forklift it to the press (shown above), and hoist it onto the steel bolster plate.

Setting up a die needs to be done exactly right to prevent damage to the die. As I peppered him with questions and took photos, Brandon walked around, checked, and eyeballed the die from the front and side making increasingly micro-adjustments. This may have been an unexpected exercise for some magazine, but he had to get it perfect to safely run a few parts.

The thick steel table Brandon is standing behind is called a bolster plate. The steel bolster plate features T-slots (note the T shapes above) that accept and locate the upper and lower die assemblies.

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I felt kind of bad that Brandon had to go through all these steps just for me (well, for all of us), but I really enjoyed learning how the Stamtec was set up and operated. He was also very generous in answering my barrage of questions; What's that part there? How does this work? What happens next?

Once the die was dialed in, Brandon loaded the steel plate and ran parts. The steel material is fed from the right side of the machine, is pressed, and then exits on the left side into a large metal basket.

The parts produced were Rieco-Titan jack brackets. Next time you see your Rieco-Titan jack brackets, think of Brandon and the Stamtec OCP-200. Of course, if your jack brackets are older, tip your hat to Big Bertha, and wish her a happy retirement.

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Daniel Espinoza was another familiar face in the same station. Daniel was machining the inner tubes of Rieco-Titan jacks and took us through the process of lubricating, punching, and assembling the product. Between each step, Daniel carefully inspected the jacks and made sure they operated within tolerance.

What captured my attention at Daniel's station was the Warner & Swasey No 3 turret lathe. Like Big Bertha, this is another tool that could easily date back to World War II. The rhythm of Daniel's work as he turned to different tools on this 3,500 pound lathe was hypnotic. It's safe to say that every Rieco-Titan mechanical or convertible jack in operation has been in Daniel's hands, and has run on this reliable machine.

Once Daniel has completed assembling the inner tubes, camper jacks go to Dillon Mason to assemble and grease the gears.

Two gears are laid into the jacks by hand and then fed into a series of custom jigs to ensure exact location and tolerances. The jigs are essentially small presses that are operated with a foot pedal. After each jig, Daniel visually inspects the jack and gears.

Next Daniel coats the gears in a thick dollop of lubricating grease. Once the grease is applied, Daniel makes sure the gears turn easily by hand. Following that test, the metal jack head covers are installed and the Rieco-Titan stickers are applied. From this point, the jacks are ready for final finishing and packaging.

Across from Dillon Mason, his brother, Dan Mason, was packaging EZ Swing Out Camper Jack Extension Brackets. Swing Out Extension Brackets swing Rieco-Titan jacks out to pass the wide rear fenders on a dual rear wheel truck. Swing out brackets are typically installed at the dealer level when a customer has a dual rear wheel truck.

Final finishing, quality control, and packaging is completed by a two man team headed by Scott Deckelman. Scott has been at Rieco-Titan for at least as long as our 17 year tenure as a magazine. In the photo above, Scott is putting the Rieco-Titan labels on electric upgrade kits for Rieco-Titan convertible Jacks.

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The team member across from Scott requested not to be photographed so we asked Scott to step in. Note the cleaning agents used to remove any manufacturing residue and the plastic sheaths to protect the finish during transport. We have seen countless shipments of Rieco-Titan jacks at truck camper factories across the United States and into Canada and regularly hear accolades about their quality and consistency.

Above: The Rieco-Titan office and production teams

For our first Rieco-Titan visit in 2010, we managed to talk the entire team into a group shot with nearly everyone hoisting up a Rieco-Titan electric, mechanical, or tripod jack behind the factory. Thirteen years later, we had grown considerably in our creative vision and talent and did something different. This time, we talked the entire Rieco-Titan team into a group shot with people hoisting up Rieco-Titan electric, mechanical, or tripod jacks IN FRONT of the factory.

Worth Repeating: Quality and Consistency

It may be more compelling to write about new products, product updates, and major changes than to report on quality and consistency. Then again, what are the two things you want the most when you're lifting your precious truck camper up and out of a truck bed? New and different? Nope. Compelling and fun? Not even a little. Quality and consistency? Yes, please!

We want to know, in no uncertain terms, that our camper jacks are going to safely support our beloved truck camper. And thanks to Bob and Sharon's instilled priorities, that's exactly what the entire team at Rieco-Titan follows to this day.

Like their products, Rieco-Titan continues to be a stable company producing reliable camper jacks and products for the truck camper industry and marketplace. Maybe that's not the most exciting sentence ever, but we are sure glad that's the course of this stalwart company.

On the other hand, we are excited about the Rieco-Titan leadership team's interest in researching and developing new products that serve and support the truck camper marketplace. We need our truck camper gear companies to stay stable and reliable while also looking for ways to make their products even better, and developing innovative solutions to improve truck campers and the truck camping lifestyle.


Above: Bins of jack gears and components ready for production

Side Note: Our Rieco-Titan Conversion Story

Our 2004 Alpenlite 1100 truck camper came with Atwood brand camper jacks. When our truck camper rig was T-boned in 2018, the front driver's side jack was torn off and destroyed, and the rear driver's side jack was damaged. Making the situation more challenging, Lippert had discontinued Atwood jacks months before our accident, making Atwood jacks unobtainable.

Thankfully, Rieco-Titan jacks shared the same bolt pattern as Atwood, and were readily available. And by readily available I mean Rieco-Titan had camper jacks delivered to us within a day (via Northwood Manufacturing). Given how vital camper jacks are, this is the kind of availability our community needs.

Since then, our Rieco-Titan jacks have performed flawlessly. They are at least as solid and stable as the Atwoods, and the Rieco-Titan remote control functionality is more reliable and works at greater distances. This is fantastic when you're keeping an eye on that pesky rear jack that likes to lift up first.

If you have an older Lance, Alpenlite, Fleetwood, Pastime, Northland, or S&S Camper with Atwood jacks, we can highly recommend the upgrade.

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