

Mike Dillon Brings Progressive Reloading to the Masses

In [THE HIGHLY IRREGULAR AND SOMEWHAT IMPROBABLE HISTORY OF DILLON PRECISION PRODUCTS](#), Mike Dillon states that "Our first hobby-level progressive loader – The RL-300 – was a major learning experience. We built maybe 900 or 1000 of them, and lost about \$100 on each one." Some estimate that Mike may have only sold 600 of them. Making machines at a loss was far from Mike's goal but producing a machine that the reloading hobbyist could afford was a goal he took seriously.

The RL-300 was a solidly built machine, just as its predecessor the RL-1000 had been, but without any frills. Gone were the case feeder, auto indexing, automatic primer feed, and auto actuated powder drop that drove up the cost of the RL-1000. The RL-300 was all manual but the price was also a LOT lower. The RL-1000 was \$2475 while the RL-300 was under \$400. A big difference to the consumer, especially a consumer who might be reloading to SAVE money on ammunition.

Operation of the RL-300 would have been a big improvement over reloading on a single stage press but it seems like a lot of work compared to modern machines. A plunger had to be depressed to place the primer for seating, another plunger was pushed to drop the powder charge. The reloader would have pushed the case itself to advance the shell plate. The completed round would have been manually removed from the shell plate. A lot of work? Not compared to running a single stage, which was all that most reloaders had at that time.

So why was Mike Dillon losing money on the RL-300? Materials and production costs. The RL-300, just like the RL-1000 had machined stainless steel components that drove the cost up. So even without all the bells and whistles the RL-300 was still too expensive to produce at a price point that made sense at that time.

The solution was to go to cast parts and then, over time, start adding the automation back in. That change led us to the RL-450 which was the first in a line of machines that Dillon Precision is still producing, although the RL-450 itself has long gone out of production. But today is about the RL-300, Mike Dillon's machine that brought progressive reloading into the realm of the average reloader, so let's take a look at some pictures of the press and a pdf of the owner's manual. If you like you can access the pdf directly [here](#).