

# PA's Zippo Expects 500 Millionth Lighter In June

Joe Mandak, Associated Press Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Zippo Manufacturing Co., the northwestern Pennsylvania company that makes metal-cased cigarette lighters whose lids are known for their distinctive "click," is on schedule to produce its 500 millionth lighter later this year.

And by ramping up production, Zippo is projecting it can make that happen on June 5 — the birthday of the late George Blaisdell, the man who founded the company in Bradford in 1932.

"We are looking forward to making the sparks fly as we celebrate this accomplishment with our employees and Zippo enthusiasts around the world," president and chief executive officer Greg Booth said in a statement Monday.

The company counts millions of collectors, who are drawn to the lighters' retro-chic design, in addition to cigarette smokers who actually use the lighters to, well, light up.

To celebrate the milestone, Zippo will produce roughly 60,000 replica lighters that day, each with a commemorative stamp.

About 50,000 replicas of the 500 millionth lighter produced that day will come with the company's well-known brushed nickel chrome finish. Another 10,000 or so will be made with high-polished Armor cases with gold engraving to mark the occasion. The chrome replicas will sell for \$50 and the gold-engraved for \$100 through the company's catalog.

Founded in 1932, the company took 10 years to produce its 1 millionth lighter — becoming a staple of Americana when Zippos were issued to U.S. soldiers during World War II — and 37 years to hit the 100 million mark.

The 400 millionth was produced on Sept. 4, 2003, meaning the company based in Bradford, about 130 miles northeast of Pittsburgh, took about three months shy of nine years to produce its last 100 million lighters.

The company took just over seven years to produce its previous 100 million lighters, a slowdown the company attributes to anti-smoking pressure in some markets. That's one reason why the company last year launched a series of Zippo-branded products — ranging from watches, to leisure clothing to cologne — to bolster the brand.

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