

SHOP NOTES King Midget Maintenance and Restoration

A-16 How Many Midgets—2017 *By Bob V.*

Every decade or so I make another attempt at estimating how many King Midgets were built. It's a futile exercise—hard work and no bottom line since no records exist. We have to work with serial numbers and apocryphal historical tidbits. In some cases, it's pure guesswork.

Production Estimates by Model Year

Year	Scooter	Junior	Special	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Total
1946	50			5				55
1947	80			25				105
1948	130		2	55				187
1949	70		2	130				202
1950	35		4	150				189
1951	30		500	135	23			688
1952	10				148			158
1953	10		1		343			354
1954	8	75	35		165			283
1955	6	85			168			259
1956	5	55	1		180			241
1957	5	40				271		316
1958	5	40				430		475
1959	5	35				368		408
1960	5	35				241		281
1961	5	35				254		294
1962	5	35				173		213
1963	5	35				234		274
1964	10	35				162		207
1965		40				146		186
1966		40	2			211		253
1967						479		479
1968						24		24
1969			6			236		242
1970							7	7
Total	479	585	553	500	1,027	3,229	7	6,380
	Domestic Cars			500	1,027	3,229	7	4,763

In the past decade more serial numbers have come in and a few more clues have arisen. As a result, the preceding chart, which is by model year, is just my best guess to date.

Our records account for about 1,300 known King Midgets. Unfortunately, a couple of hundred of them have no serial number reported and another hundred have serial numbers that are apparently incorrect for one reason or another. That leaves us with just over a thousand useful serial

SHOP NOTES King Midget Maintenance and Restoration

numbers, about 20 percent of all King Midgets built. And they're not sequential. Midget Motors used only even numbers on nearly all cars, no serial numbers on some vehicles and in many years, started a new sequence.

With more information the patterns clarify.

First of all, a big thanks to Michael and Tamyra Gourley, owners on one of the sweetest 1954 Model 2's around. It was restored by Marvin Ranich, who was sentimentally attached to the '51 M2 he'd once had—and lost, except for the title. He passed that to Mike and Tam and they sent a copy to me. It's a factory title, proving that car was titled in November, 1951. Its serial number was V6028. But how can that be? That would say about 523 Model 2s were built that year. The first year of production, coming out of a factory under construction, with assembled Model 1s also coming through! *What the ...?*

Here's my guess and I'd like to hear yours.

In November, 1951 Emerich Salzberger from Mexico City signed a contract for about 500 Model 2 kits to be shipped monthly to his factory for assembly. A common procedure by foreign companies in those days. How to account for them? Previously, I'd arbitrarily plunked them into the 1952 production estimate, assuming that's when the bulk of them would be built. Maybe so, but thinking about how Claud and Dale managed their business, I'm guessing they got a big chunk of cash on the front end before committing a full year's production capacity the shiny new plant to one customer. Those kits probably were bare bones, likely excluded engine, tires and who knows what else, along with a special volume discount. For their internal records, and because they'd not have had a U.S. title, it would seem reasonable for MM to simply assign them a series of serial numbers up front rather than record them as shipped. The 1951 serial numbers include a gap of around 500, late in the model year, which I'm guessing is those Mexican kits. On the chart, I've recorded them separately under "Specials." This change affects the model year production estimates but not the total. And I excluded those cars from the "Domestic Cars" estimate. No sure sign of them has ever been found. Perhaps they were never assembled.

Another significant change was in the "beginning and end" estimate. Because we have so few serial numbers, there must have been a few more cars in any given run than would be shown by simply subtracting the first serial number from the last. Things that helped tighten the estimates:

1. There are now enough serial numbers to ascertain that gaps I'd previously thought to be new sequences are apparently continuations. That means few "ends of a run" to be estimated.
2. Previously, I averaged the gaps in each run and added half to each end of the run. But averages are skewed by a few "large gaps" of 10 to 20 numbers. This time I extended each run by the *typical* gap of two or three rather than an average.
3. There are now enough numbers in the database to make it easier to eliminate "invalid" numbers that can't reasonably be "fit" into the sequence. For example, if one serial number at either end of a sequence adds 50 cars, it's probably wrong.
4. The assumption of the 500 Mexican cars numbered in 1951 but actually produced as kits through about 1953 makes more sense than my previous estimate.

This new estimate reduces the likely Midget Motors production by about four percent, but it's still just an estimate. When people ask, "How many of these cars were built?" the best answer remains "About 5,000 but nobody knows for sure, because the records were lost long ago."

A. Identification