

# NORTHWEST EXCAVATING

Southern California's Leader In Operated Equipment Rental And Underground Dry Utility Installation Since 1959

50

*Celebrating 50 Years*

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# NORTHWEST EXCAVATING

**Southern California's Leader in Operated Equipment  
Rental and Underground Dry Utility Installation Since 1959**

The name Northwest Excavating at first glance may seem like the name of just another contractor in the sea of construction companies in California today. In fact, Northwest Excavating is primarily an operated heavy equipment rental company, who also happens to have an underground utility construction division and a saw cutting division. Known throughout Southern California for 50 years as a company contractors can count on for only the best operators and equipment, Northwest has strived to

remain at the cutting edge year after year. To be in business 50 years, or more importantly to stay in business 50 years, is indeed quite a feat in today's chaotic business world. Northwest Excavating has not only accomplished this daunting task, but they have managed to grow and excel at a very impressive, yet controlled pace.

#### **Company History**

Bob Groff is the original founder of the Groff Family businesses and his efforts date back more than 50 years. Working in the dirt and being

around heavy machinery goes way back in the Groff Family history. Bob Groff was raised on a farm in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. As one of ten children, this is where he first enjoyed the thrill of running a tractor and working the ground. Later, Bob Groff and his own family moved to California and in 1952, Bob and Helen Groff started their very own small equipment rental company, appropriately named, Northridge Equipment Rentals. They would rent to contractors during the week and to homeowners



*(Above) Sue and Howard Groff, Owners. Sue is the President and Howard is the Secretary/Treasurer.*

**“ Strong customer loyalty combined with astute company management is what has enabled Northwest Excavating to survive and grow, decade after decade, in one of the most competitive equipment rental markets in the United States. ”**

on the weekend. Northridge Equipment Rentals remained a family run business until it was sold in 2005.

By 1959, Bob Groff began to see a need for rental equipment that was available with an operator. He decided to pursue this new business model and named the new enterprise, Northwest Compaction. Also situated in Northridge, California, the Groff's began modestly with just two backhoes, an Arrow hammer, a skidloader and a Gradall. During the first few years, the new venture focused primarily on operated rental to local grading and sewer contractors. As construction equipment needs skyrocketed in the 1960's, so did Northwest Compaction. It was during this time that Bob Groff found himself splitting time between Northwest Compaction and Northridge Equipment Rentals. Always conservative minded and not one to spread himself too thin, Bob decided to sell his interest in the operated equipment rental company to his son, Howard and his wife Sue. Bob would now devote himself full time to Northridge Equipment Rentals, while leaving his newest brainchild in the very capable hands of his son, Howard.

Howard and Sue began to slowly add more equipment to their fleet. During these initial years, Howard worked all ends of the business,



including equipment operator, mechanic, lowbed driver or anything else that would help his company to continue to prosper. While adopting his father's conservative approach, the company grew at a steady pace during the 1970's and 1980's. It was also during this time that Howard and Sue Groff decided to launch an underground utilities division designed to aid in the underground construction of power and telephone lines. Their years of previous experience working for underground sewer contractors made for a fairly seamless transition. They started out digging trenches and performing the backfill and compaction by the foot for

residential contractors. Howard, would again remain hands on by doing all of the estimating and running most all of the jobs himself.

In the mid 70's the decision was made to re-incorporate under the name Northwest Excavating to better reflect the focus of the company's business. Both the operated equipment rental and underground utility divisions continued to prosper during this period and Howard was now able to devote most of his time to the overall management of his company.

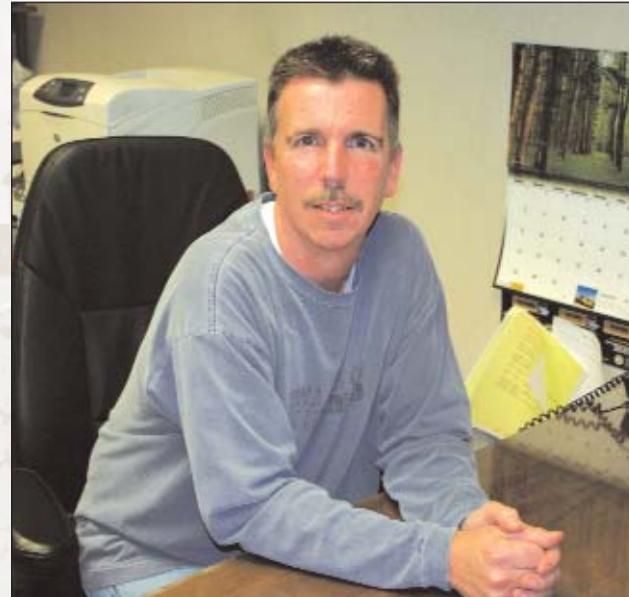
In 1980, Northwest Excavating had a fleet of 15 to 20 pieces of late model equipment in their rental fleet. By the end of the 80's construction was booming in

Southern California and the fleet now included D8N dozers, 623E scrapers and other larger machines, totaling 20 to 25 pieces in all for rent. The underground utilities division was also continuing to grow and specialized in complete installation of communication / electrical underground power, telephone and cable television conduit systems, as well as complete street lighting systems.

Armed with a strong customer base and a reputation for the most productive equipment and the best operators in the industry, Northwest Excavating was able to stay ahead of its competition throughout the 1990's. While many other equipment rental companies were



*(Above) Robert Groff, Vice President.*



*(Above) Mike Piccard, General Manager / Rental Division.*



*(Above) Stan Onley, Chief Estimator.*



*(Above) Dave McIntire, Superintendent.*



*(Above) Mark Vidinba, Dispatcher.*

scaling back during this time, Northwest continued to grow steadily, add more machines and even found time to add another division. From the beginning, the new Saw Cutting division came fully equipped with state-of-the-art instruments to provide contractors with the latest technology in the asphalt cutting, concrete cutting and core drilling industry.

Much was accomplished throughout these first 50 years and as Howard Groff himself attests, “Strong customer loyalty combined with astute company management is what has enabled Northwest Excavating to survive and grow, decade after decade, in one of the most competitive equipment rental

markets in the United States.” Northwest Excavating is and always will be a family owned business and second generation owner, Howard Groff was for many years an operator himself. Howard continues, “In some ways I would still prefer to be sitting in a cab rather than in a desk chair. I like to think my time and experience in the field has led to a closer and more understanding relationship with our much appreciated Local 12 employees. Sometimes I actually envy our employees.” Today, Howard jokes about the years when he was the youngest employee and operator in the company. He remembers doing everything from operating the equipment, to service

work and repairs, to making deliveries with the lowbed. Howard continues, “We have tremendous respect for our operators and all of our employees. They are the eyes and ears of the company and our company is fortunate to have some of the best people in the business working for us.”

**Equipment & Maintenance**

Today, Northwest Excavating maintains a fleet of more than 70 late model machines for rent, including D8T dozers, 143H blades, 623G scrapers, excavators, backhoes, rubber tired loaders, water trucks and much more. Ron Nuss is the Master Mechanic for Northwest Excavating and has also been with the company longer than



*(Above L-R) Ron Nuss, Head Mechanic; Charlie Tate, Welder; Angel Plascencia, Mechanic and Rob Lugo, Mechanic.*



*(Above L-R) Sylvia Herrera, Underground Office Accounting Clerk; Jane Sotto, Controller and Edna Deleon, Underground Office Accounting Clerk.*

**“ We have tremendous respect for our operators and all of our employees. They are the eyes and ears of the company and our company is fortunate to have some of the best people in the business working for us. ”**

**SEE YOU  
AT 60!**

We just celebrated our 50th anniversary, so from one 50 year old to another, we'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate Northwest Excavating on their 50 years in business. In today's challenging business environment, we know there's only one way thrive and grow – by providing the very best service to your customers day in and day out. Congratulations from the team at Ritchie Bros. Los Angeles for being such a great example to us all.

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**“ Our customers want to see the best and newest machines possible on their jobsites. They also want only the best and most experienced operators. At Northwest, we make sure that this is what they get each and every time they use our services. ”**

most other employees. Ron comments, “Our customers want to see the best and newest machines possible on their jobsites. They also want only the best and most experienced operators. At Northwest, we make sure that this is what they get each and every time they use our services.” For Northwest Excavating customers, this equates to more than just having nice shiny machines on the job, it means having equipment that will produce more in less time. Ron explains, “When a customer calls, we can provide them with the best machines on the market. The longer a job goes on, the more money we can save a customer. There are two

main reasons why we offer only the latest in equipment offerings and that is to satisfy our customers demands and to meet state regulations. Approximately 20% of our fleet is currently made up of Tier III machines while many of our other machines are equipped with devices like diesel particulate filters, which help keep us compliant and clean burning.”

Northwest Excavating purchases most of their equipment from their local Caterpillar dealer, Quinn Company. Howard Groff has this to say about the equipment they utilize, “We consider several brands to be solid and competent, but the thing about Caterpillar that

surpasses all others is their unprecedented service, product and parts support. There is nothing more important than keeping our machines up and running at all times for our customers.

Caterpillar’s response time with parts and service is almost immediate. We also have 15 John Deere backhoes and three John Deere 650J dozers that we purchased from Coastline Equipment. We are a John Deere Signature Series customer, which means we get special pricing and special service. We simply can’t afford downtime, Caterpillar and John Deere make sure we stay up and running.”



*(Above) Richard Marshall, Rental Sales Consultant.*



*(Above) Al Holzer, Underground Sales Consultant.*



*(Above) Cecille Bandalaria, Rental Office Manager.*





Ron Nuss is also very quick to point out that the Groff's reinvest wholeheartedly back into the service of their equipment. Ron explains, "Howard Groff puts back into the company what he gets out, which allows us to keep all of our machines at optimum performance. We have the latest technology when it comes to computer diagnostics. The engine, transmission and hydraulic systems are all computer controlled in machines today. It's not just wrenches, welders and hammers these days, it's about laptop computers and the special software it takes to diagnose a machine and keep us aware of everything from fuel consumption to production history. Every one of

our service trucks is equipped with computers and the latest software and that doesn't come cheap, but it is necessary to remain on top in this competitive industry."

Northwest Excavating performs all of their own maintenance service and heavy repairs right from their state-of-the-art shop in Northridge, California. Everything from fixing a minor electrical problem to rebuilding pumps and hydraulics, as well as motors and transmissions, they do it all. In addition to maintaining all of the right tools and equipment, Northwest Excavating also offers engineering and fabricating services. For instance, Northwest engineers and fabricates all of their own

slopeboard hydraulic circuits. If a customer needs a special attachment to accomplish a certain job, they will engineer a solution to help them get the job done right. "Our sales staff is there on the job site to help our customers customize their equipment to meet their specific needs. With Northwest they have the best machine, the best operator and the maintenance and engineering needed to finish their job with maximum profitability", adds Ron Nuss.

**Northwest Excavating Management Team**

The current management team is made up of individuals who share the same commitment to quality, service and professionalism that the



Quinn Company congratulates Northwest Excavating on their 50th Anniversary and thanks them for their loyalty to Quinn and Caterpillar.



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founders of Northwest Excavating have exhibited for 50 years. Leading the way is Howard Groff's son, Robert Groff. Robert has been overseeing the business in the position of Vice President for 11 years and will one day represent the third generation to own and operate Northwest Excavating. He grew up around the business and remembers spending weekends working and playing in the office, while his father caught up on work. He also remembers the time he spent working on the underground utility crew, where he learned what a hard day's work is really all about. But his life has not always been about the equipment rental industry.

Robert spent several years as a professional race car driver. He started out in all the stepping stone series and racing circuits, which lead to racing in the Indy 500 in 1997 for McCormack Motor Sports. Robert comments, "I enjoyed my time in racing and was able to learn a lot about relating to people and the importance of dedication and hard work. One day the risk just seemed to outweigh the reward and I made the decision that it was time to go back to our family business. I'm really glad I did. My father has taught me so much about life and this business. I want to keep intact what has gotten us to this point so far, and I plan on working hard

every day to make sure we stay on top. I subscribe to a sort of "Field of Dreams" approach. That is "if you build it (and build it well), they will come (and continue to use your services)". What I mean is, if we put the best business infrastructure possible together, then our customers will recognize this and continue to trust us with their business. This means hiring and keeping only the best people and maintaining only the best equipment. This also requires the willingness to diversify in order to go the distance. I truly believe that if a company does not continue to evolve today, they will most likely not be here tomorrow. We plan on



**Jim Burke**



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To Northwest Excavating  
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being here tomorrow and for the next 50 years.”

In addition to Robert Groff, Northwest Excavating is lead by some of the best people in the industry. Rental Division General Manager, Mike Piccard for instance spent several years as the product support representative for the local Caterpillar dealer. He brought a world of knowledge about CAT products and their maintenance with him, which has proved to be invaluable to Northwest Excavating’s growth. Everyone single team member from the Chief

Estimator to the Field Sales Representatives work together to make sure of one thing and that is their customers satisfaction.

**Conclusion**

Throughout the past 50 years, Northwest Excavating has built lasting relationships with both large and small companies. These companies include some of California’s most respected home builders and developers, as well as amusement park icons. They have even supplied operated equipment to the entertainment industry where their services have helped to

produce an impressive list of Hollywood movies, like Water World and Jurassic Park: The Lost World. Bob Groff’s original philosophy continues to guide Northwest Excavating into the future, “To provide our customers with the latest, most productive equipment and the best operators in the industry.” It is certain that both Howard and Robert Groff will do everything in their power to make sure that their father and grandfather’s words of wisdom continue to guide their company for the next 50 years and beyond.



# Celebrating 50 Years!



Helping Contractors Shape Southern California  
With Quality and Dependability **Since 1959!**

**Our current fleet of over 65 pieces of late model rental equipment includes:**

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