

Maine Drilling & Blasting celebrates 40 years

By Kathy Guerin

One of the nation's best-known drilling and blasting companies is busy proving the old adage, "the more things change the more they stay the same."

Even though Maine Drilling & Blasting (MD&B) has grown in size and scope of services since 1966 when Ted Purington, Sr. and his wife, Judy, started the business from their kitchen table, the company has never strayed from its founding principles or its focus on local service.

"And therein lies our success," says Bill Purington, company president. "This company was built on hard work, honesty and quality of services. As we celebrate our 40th anniversary, we're proud to say those principles guide all we do. And as we expand to serve new markets, we've made it a point to maintain a local presence in communities throughout the Northeast. That's how we started; that's how we

Company founder Ted Purington, Sr. on the job in early days during the late 1960s. Maine Drilling & Blasting photo

operate today."

Maine Drilling & Blasting offers drilling and blasting services to the construction and quarry markets, and a variety of specialty services including rock bolting, hoe ramming, engineering, public relations, preblast surveys, and packaged and bulk explosives distribution.

A dream comes true

The exact date was March 3, 1966. Ted, Sr. had decided to see if there was a better means of supporting his family. He and Judy borrowed \$2,000 with three co-signers to form Maine Drilling & Blasting. From the kitchen, the business grew into the barn, then into a secondary tin building at the family homestead in Gardiner, Maine.

"Sunday afternoons, we kids would have the job of

Continued on page 29

Association News: MDB turns 40

Continued from page 27

inventorying the magazine which sat 100 feet from the back of the house," Bill says.

It was a family affair through and through. In the earliest days Ted, Judy, and a few close friends shouldered most of the responsibilities. Judy gave up her career as a registered nurse to become office manager, while raising five children. Eventually, the four sons, Ted, Jr., Bill, Jim and Tom, became involved in different capacities.

The company began with a single jackhammer for a drill. However, what the Puringtons lacked in resources they made up for in ambition and integrity. The first job was a simple one: drilling the foundation for a cellar. In short order, Ted established a reputation for exceptional quality. As Ted's relationships with area contractors grew, so did Maine Drilling & Blasting. By 1982, he was doing more than two million dollars of business annually.

Staying true

In the late 70s and into the early 80s, while interstate highway and municipal sewer projects provided

Consistency, not just explosive growth, has been the company's secret of success



A family concern: (l-r) General Superintendent Jim Purington; Executive Vice President Ted Purington, Jr.; founders Judy and Ted Purington, Sr.; President & CEO Bill Purington; Regional Quarry Superintendent Tom Purington. Maine Drilling & Blasting photo

numerous out-of-state opportunities, the rapid expansion sorely tested the company's resources. And, for a while, MD&B's future appeared bleak.

"I thought I had taken my first 15 years of business and lost it all," said Ted, Sr.

In response to the challenge, in March 1982, 16 years after the company's inception, the last son to join the company, Bill Purington, came aboard as the company's general manager. With the support and cooperation of his brothers, Purington helped modify the business plan and led a successful reorganization. "We weren't allowed to fail. We didn't know any different. My father's drive and determination has been passed down to us, his four sons, and that's been a determining factor in us making it," says General Superintendent Jim Purington.

Through the mid-80s, Maine Drilling & Blasting expanded its territory to include all the northeastern states and extended its reach as far south as Maryland and Pennsylvania,

Continued on page 31



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Association News: Maine Drilling & Blasting turns 40

Continued from page 29

substantially increasing the company's volume. In 1986, MD&B founded a subsidiary – MD Drilling & Blasting – to serve the southern New England market. "Different name, same high standards," says Bill Purington.



Blasts on Rte. 189, New London, NH, in the mid-1980s and on Rte. 193 outside of Boston, Massachusetts during the late 1980s. Maine Drilling & Blasting photos

By the end of 1989, the company had established seven operating divisions and grown to fifteen million dollars in annual sales, with a peak workforce of more than 150 employees – up from 31 in 1982. The company had also moved strongly into the quarry business.

"Our goal was not to be the biggest drilling and blasting company in New England," says Bill Purington. "Rather, our actions were part of our long-term family business plan to be the premier and most respected

blasting contractor in the Northeast industry."

That plan and the Puringtons' resolve was tested



once more when a recession at the close of the 1980s hit the construction industry hard. Rather than managing an expansion, the challenge

now became one of downsizing and survival. By 1991, in fact, volumes had atrophied by 40 percent. Ted Sr. is remembered as saying, "This is the time for all of us to roll up our sleeves, get back into the ditches and work together."

The Puringtons did just that, once again becoming

Continued on page 36

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Continued from page 29

stronger for the challenge. By the end of 1991, the reorganization was complete. The company had consolidated its operating divisions, from seven to four, reducing fixed costs by more than 40 percent. It was time, once again, to move forward, rededicating the company to local service.

"We've learned, time and time again, that growth should always be tempered by our ability to service the market locally," says Ted Purington, Jr., executive vice president for operations. "That means having experienced teams of local employees, a local fleet of equipment and resources for supply and distribution."

Several years ahead of its projections, Maine Drilling & Blasting returned to fiscal health and steady growth.

Expanding with local focus

In 1996, Maine Drilling & Blasting acquired its largest central New England competitor. "This acquisition, and others since, has been done with an eye to adding resources, particularly very capable local employees, thereby allowing us to better serve our area

customers," says Bill Purington. From 1998 through 2005, Maine Drilling & Blasting strengthened its commitment to the New England market with several key acquisitions of strategic competitors, their employees and local facilities.

"By strengthening our position in those markets, we have been able to provide more opportunities and enhance the job security for our employees."

Driven by safety-consciousness and the demands of being a good neighbor, Maine Drilling & Blasting has increased its investments in state-of-the-art safety technologies, public relations programs and community outreach. Key technical managers have been brought on board to train in-house personnel and educate front-line responders, local officials and the general public.

Maine Drilling & Blasting blasters and drillers have come to rely on the most advanced topographical information, computerized simulations, laser profiling of rock faces, and bore-tracking, which provides drillers a means of seeing what the bore hole looks like deep into the earth. A fully-staffed engineering

Continued on next page

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Continued from previous page

department, established in 2002, provides project and customer support throughout the Northeast in the form of defining scopes and site volume surveys.

Maine Drilling & Blasting has always believed that providing a secure local explosives network was fundamental to its operations. Additionally, in 2004, the company became the first contractor in the country to construct and operate its own bulk blending and loading plant. This decision was part of a comprehensive plan to increase self-reliance. By reducing dependence on others for explosives, an end-user like Maine Drilling & Blasting is less vulnerable to supply disruption and pricing pressures.

Says Al Perozzi, Maine Drilling's supply and distribution manager: "This centrally-located plant also allows us to maintain excellent quality control, while customizing the explosives blend for varying climates and jobs. It permits us to offer our customers the best product at the best prices."



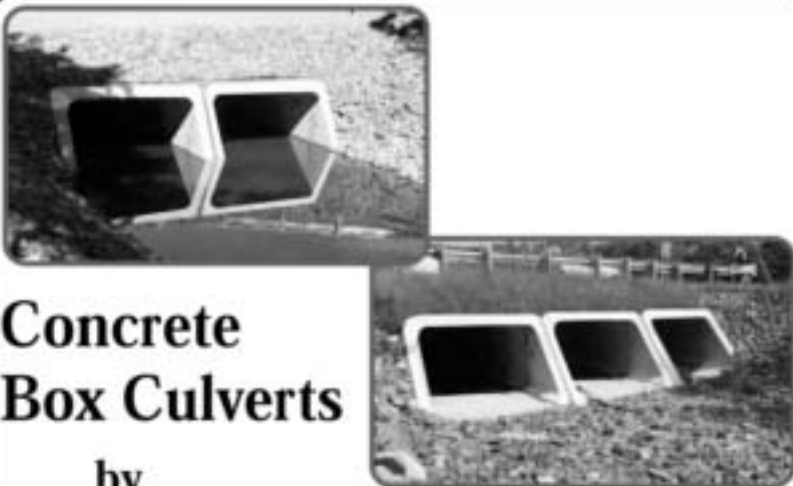
Atlas Copco hydraulic drill at Rockland. Maine Drilling & Blasting photo.

Today, the Gardiner, Maine-based company also maintains offices in New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts and Connecticut. The firm employs more than 350 people, including Ted Sr.'s four sons. Ted Purington, Jr., executive vice president, manages the operational side of the business from the Auburn, N.H. office. Jim Purington, general superintendent, supervises large technical projects. Tom Purington, regional quarry superintendent, supervises Maine quarry accounts.

Not content to rest on their laurels, the management and employees are pushing past the 40th year to continue in the tradition of Ted, Sr.

"Yes, we're celebrating," says Bill Purington. "Forty years is certainly a milestone, and yes, we're proud

of this company, but we also know that past success is never a guarantee of future results. We need to prove ourselves over and over again."



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