Henley & Company

Roger E. Henley Jr., President & CEO

When asked about recent special accomplishments, Roger Henley — president and CEO of Henley & Company — just said, "Survival!"

This latest accomplishment in the long history of Henley & Company might very well be its most important. But in the true spirit of a third-generation plastering contractor and entrepreneur, Roger looks more at how the recent economic crucible has only made him and his company stronger.

"I saw a significant number of contractors not make it during the recession," Roger said. "It was the most severe downturn I've ever experienced. But we had the wherewithal, and the tenacity, I suppose, to stay in business. I was able to keep a group of my key people working through it. So as a company, we survived. I personally feel like a better administrator because of it, and that we're doing better overall. At this point, I'm happy to be able to say the future once again looks bright."

Henley & Company's ultimate test was not their first one. Roger's initial challenge occurred even before he became the owner and key administrator.

Roger was in college when approached about taking over the company. As a science major, however, his background might not have seemed like the best match at first. "I was pretty good with numbers though, which is the language of both science and business," he reflected. Having worked in the industry since the age of 10, he wasn't exactly new to the business. "I was also groomed with leadership qualities, so it just kind of fit. I didn't have to think about it long, because I was interested from the beginning."

With his lifelong training in the industry and his own father, a second-generation plastering contractor and entrepreneur, as a mentor, one could see where, as Roger put it, "Valuable knowledge and expertise has been carried forward. To this day, I still bounce ideas off my father for his perspective. I was very fortunate to have him available as a consultant, especially in the early years."

That training and investment was needed to deal with the challenges ahead. Being a Northern California specialty contractor based in Sacramento, the company deals with lower pricing in the area due to non-union influences. In a countermeasure, Henley & Company aims for prevailing wage work. It has become more available lately in Sacramento. However, in the greater San Francisco region, the four-county zone tends to have more union-prevailing and private work available due to the large number of signatory general contractors. It's this union-based private and prevailing wage work that provides the pricing necessary to support union wages and fringes. By pursuing both, Henley & Company is able to take advantage of the opportunities in their local region along with those in the Bay Area and greater Northern California.

Their reach doesn't end there; Henley & Company's service area extends to the Central Valley as well as into the North Bay, Sonoma and greater Napa Valley areas. At one time, the company also furnished and installed specialized wall and ceiling systems for the military in Nevada.

With generations of leadership behind them, Henley & Company has extensive experience in exterior lath and plaster systems, EIFS and high-end artisan-related plaster. Once a largely residential contracting company, the business moved into commercial construction. Having been a union contractor for many years, they operate mostly with signatory general contractors. Roger noted, "It's an entirely different level of construction and administration." After this move, it was a conscious decision on the part of the company to continue as a specialty contractor due to the community need for their quality installations. As Roger put it, "There is so much demand for our proficiency and experience, we generally stay very busy."

And busy they are. A current notable endeavor is the 800-acre Hunter's Point Shipyard development in San Francisco. Roger described it as "exciting to be working on this project. There's challenges working in a deactivated naval shipyard. Projects in the city are always challenging, sophisticated and unique. That just makes it more interesting for us.

The Ashton at Candlestick Point, San Francisco

"We also just finished the New Dillard Elementary School in Elk Grove, south of Sacramento. It was a large contract we completed in less than four months," he said. It's an admirable timeframe for a company with a core group of about 35 field personnel at the time, though at other times of the year, Henley & Company may employ over 100 tradesmen. With their present number of approximately 75 employees, the company is currently tackling the major interior and exterior restoration work of the Amtrak Sacramento Valley Station. Because the station is well over a century old, it is considered a historical restoration in addition to being a fully operational and crucial public transit line for the capital region.

In discussing personal history in the industry, Roger noted his own connection to WACA. He explained, "I was honored to be a part of the committee that worked with Frank Nunes, now WACA's executive director, to establish WACA before I became a board of directors member. Being a member brings a different level of respect in the construction industry and in dealing with unions. Combining the drywall and plaster associations changed the working dynamics with all the unions we do business with. Of course, there's the ongoing training and industry awareness that WACA helps provide, not to mention important technical support. It's a great group to be a part of."

Regarding industry accomplishments, Henley & Company can accept a few accolades. "We try to be extremely responsive. We help our customers maintain their schedules and play an active role in pointing out any design problems along the way. We truly bring our extensive experience to the table, having seen how the different systems work … or not. That's what we bring to the equation. For all these reasons, we have many repeat customers!" Roger said.

A completed project in San Rafael, California

It may be no mean feat to survive in this industry. Yet Henley & Company is seeing its 20th anniversary this year with Roger E. Henley Jr. as third-generation president and CEO, and there's a possibility of a fourth-generation leader.

Sharing a keen interest in construction, Roger's oldest son Garrett is currently a senior and honor student at Davis High School. His hope is to be accepted next year to Cal Poly State University's Construction Management Program, in the College of Architecture and Environmental Design. For the past four summers, Garrett has been working at Henley & Company, helping with the logistics of materials and equipment and shadowing Roger as president and CEO. Garrett's interest in the industry, high scholastic achievements and professional training are steps to a promising career.

As said, the future is looking bright for Henley & Company.

WALL AND CEILING ALLIANCE

Holiday Party

Saturday, December 5, 2015 at 6:30 p.m.

The Fairmont Hotel (950 Mason Street, San Francisco, CA 94108)
Ticket Price $150 per person | Black Tie Optional

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Silver Sponsor $1,500
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Bronze Sponsor $1,000
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HOW TO REGISTER

Online registration for tickets and sponsorships are taken through our website's Calendar of Events Page. Find the Holiday Party event on December 5. Registration link will be on the event page.