

by Traci Read ■ Senior Editor

# Melfred Borzall Celebrates 60 Years Of Success

**M**elfred Borzall, a leading manufacturer and distributor of quality drilling tools for use in the horizontal directional drilling industry, is celebrating its 60th year in business.

Founded in 1946 when Fred Melsheimer introduced the first commercial horizontal drilling system to the public, the privately-held, family-owned company is still being managed by the second and third generations.

Sons Richard and Ted and daughters Shirley and Marie as well as son-in-law Larry and grandsons Eric and Peter are co-owners of Melfred Borzall. Richard serves as president; son-in-law Larry Coots is vice president and manages the Santa Fe Springs, CA, facility; and daughter, Shirley Foster, works part time in the accounting department in the same facility. Grandson's Peter and Eric also are following family tradition by joining the company roster. Eric is chief engineer and oversees manufacturing at the Santa Maria facility, and Peter is marketing director in charge of marketing and advertising.

Peter Melsheimer explains how his grandfather, Fred (now deceased), got his start in the horizontal drilling industry.

My grandfather worked as a welder and machinist for Baker Oil Tools, says Melsheimer. He saw how their tools were used for vertical drilling and decided they could be modified for installing utilities underground. In the past, workers had to install utilities with a trencher, a digger or even by hand, but he saw a better way to install them by adapting those same tools for horizontal drilling. Initially, his tools were powered by a pneumatic motor that would spin the bit.

Fred's first product was a set of tools for installing natural gas distribution lines by means of horizontal drilling, instead of trenching or open-cutting. This included a two-inch diameter Fish Tail bit; 20-foot lengths of 1 1/8-diameter drill rod; a back reamer; and a pulling swivel. This was a revolutionary idea at the time. Thousands of miles of gas distribution lines were installed with these tools. This technology, with the addition of locating electronics, formed the basis of horizontal directional drilling as we know it today.

Today, Melfred Borzall's product line has evolved to include directional drill heads, bits and blades, backreamers, quick-disconnects, drill rod, swivels, pipe and cable pullers, locators, rock drilling tools and sondes for use in the underground drilling industry, which are available both domestically and internationally through Melfred Borzall's dealers.



## Keys to success

Several factors have contributed to the long-time prosperity of the company.

There are several reasons for our success, says Melsheimer. First are our products. We strive to manufacture tools that will keep the utility contractor productive and profitable. New tools and improvements to existing designs come from listening to the customer, field testing and retesting. Second is customer service. All our sales people, both internally and with our distributors, try to make the process of tooling up the rig as simple as possible. With so many different types of rigs, threads and bolt patterns, it can be a nightmare for a purchasing agent to know what he has or what he needs. We simplify this process by knowing as much as possible about each rig. If a customer orders something that does not match up to the equipment he is using, we can spot it and ensure he gets the correct parts and does not incur unnecessary downtime. The third key to our success is our employees. We have very highly trained employees that have the same values as the owners who strive to produce and sell the best tools possible.

Experience and a commitment to producing a quality product line have helped set Melfred Borzall apart from other suppliers of horizontal drilling tools.

Melfred Borzall has always focused on tools and equipment for horizontal earth boring or what is sometimes referred to as slurry boring, explains Melsheimer. In the last decade, this has become more widely known as horizontal directional drilling. This includes bits that can be attached to hand-held pneumatic motors for drilling under sidewalks to 48-inch backreamers for maxi directional drill rigs.

Our experience is also what sets us apart from other suppliers. This experience helps in many different ways including tool design, custom tool designs and customer service. We have a wide selection of tools for both horizontal and directional drilling to help the utility contractor meet the different conditions encountered during each job.

## Expansion

As the HDD market has fluctuated over the years, Melfred Borzall has continued to face the many challenges to remain a contender in this highly competitive market. Their engineers keep pushing the envelope to expand the HDD tool box while at the same time remaining faithful to their roots.

Melsheimer says: Melfred was the first company to manufacture and sell a mid-size horizontal directional drill. The first model was called the SureShot. The first few years of demonstrating the SureShot to potential buyers ended up being more of an education to the utility companies and contractors to the concept of directional drilling. As larger equipment manufacturers entered the drill rig market, Melfred Borzall focused back on what it started with – downhole tools.

He also explains that the company began manufacturing aftermarket tools to improve the productivity and profitability of the other brands of directional drills.

With Fred's vision and pioneering spirit, which he passed on to his family members, the company has grown from those first years when Fred was the only full time employee with off-duty firemen as part time machine operators. It wasn't until the early '50s that his two sons, Ted and Richard, and daughter Shirley, would join him in the business working part time.

# Melfred Borzall

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Melfred's first building was built by Fred in Commerce, CA, says Melsheimer. It was approximately 1,800 square feet and electricity wasn't available for the first year. Power for his first lathe, drill press and trip-hammer was supplied by a Model A, 4-cylinder engine connect to an overhead line shaft. Leather belts were run from this line shaft to power each piece of equipment.

In the 1980's, we moved to a new 21,000 square-foot facility in Sante Fe Springs, CA, located near the Los Angeles area. As production increased, we outgrew the Sante Fe Springs facility and decided to open a new headquarters in Santa Maria, CA, in January 2000. Currently, there are 33 employees. This facility has 30,000 square feet. It has an 88 kW photovoltaic system and we are adding an additional 65 kW. Combined, this system will provide about 90 percent of the company's electrical requirements. That's quite an improvement over the Model A engine!

Melfred Borzall still operates the Sante Fe Springs plant facility. According to Melsheimer, the facility is better situated for its shipping capabilities and has an established walk-in business.

Sixtieth anniversary activities began earlier this year with a two-day event scheduled for distributors at the company's Santa Maria headquarters.

In May we had a special 60th anniversary event for all our distributors who attended from all over the world, explains Melsheimer. The meeting included two days of sales meetings, a golf tournament, wine tasting in the California Central Coast, a Casino dinner at the historic Madonna Inn and ended with an authentic Hawaiian style Luau.

In September, we are planning a special celebration for all our employees and their families at a nearby park for a day of fun, food and special activities.

Melfred Borzall has been in the business of making high quality products for 60 years. What does the future hold?

Melfred Borzall continues to focus on its core market – tools and accessories for small to mid size HDD drills, replies Melsheimer. This includes a new line of tools to maximize productivity in the mini rig market. But we are also beginning to offer tools for the maxi-rigs. This will be a gradual process to ensure we have tools that are proven and field tested in this market, just as they have been in the small bore market.

Melfred still manufactures the original two-inch Fish Tail bit, but we also make backreamers used on 200,000 pound directional drill rigs to cut a 48-inch hole. The machine shop has evolved from used World War II turret lathes to one of the most modern manufacturing plants on California's Central Coast, utilizing the latest in computer controlled machining centers and lathes for precise and maximum production equipment.

*FOR MORE INFORMATION:*

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