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BRUBACHER EXCAVATING INC.

Learn how forty years of experience enable this diversified company to deliver insight on the jobsite



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President

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Most people have an “ah-ha” moment when they figure out what they want to do for a career. The realization can provide clarity that causes them to drop everything in pursuit of their newfound calling. For Keith Brubacher, there was just one pesky thing standing in his way: school.

“After my third day of kindergarten, I came home and informed my parents that I was done because I had customers waiting on jobs which had to be finished, and they couldn’t wait,” laughed Keith, who is the President of Brubacher Excavating Inc. “They made me go back to school, but I started working full time once I graduated.”

Young Keith’s passion for the construction industry and command of its vernacular were inherited from his grandfather, Jesse, and father, Ben, who worked together in the family excavation businesses. Jesse started the obsession with dirt when he opened JB Excavating in the early 1960s with a focus on agricultural projects. Ben followed in his footsteps, founding Brubacher Excavating in 1971 and took on more residential and small commercial jobs. The two ran their companies alongside each other until the 1980s when Ben bought his father’s firm and merged it with Brubacher Excavating. Keith joined the family business in the 1990s and succeeded his father in 2004 when he was named President. He co-owns the company with his brother, Myron, and is currently the only family member active with the company’s management.

With more than four decades of experience to its name, Brubacher handles a wide variety of jobs throughout eastern Pennsylvania, eastern Maryland and northern Delaware. It focuses on site development, including surveying;

land clearing; demolition; drilling and blasting; earthmoving and utilities; asphalt paving and milling; horizontal directional drilling; vacuum excavating; and pipe fusion. The company has nearly 300 employees and is involved with as many as 25 projects at a given time.

“We work from the ground down, self-performing site utility and other complex excavation projects,” explained Keith. “Our specialty is solving site challenges and developing people. We’re in the trust-building business, that’s why our motto is ‘Insight. On Site.’ A lot of contractors can come up with a low bid only to bump it up with hidden costs throughout the job. That’s not how we operate. We deliver more than just a commodity. We partner with our customers, looking out for their resources and interests. We have a lot of equity built up in our name, and that’s why 70 percent of our business each year comes from repeat customers.”

Energy expertise

Another area that has developed into a core focus for Brubacher is its Energy Services division. With a crew of 25-30 employees in this group, Brubacher performs a myriad of jobs ranging from access-road creation and well-pad construction to dust control and land clearing on the Marcellus Shale natural-gas field.

“The Energy Services division was something we started in an effort to become more diversified,” noted Keith. “When residential and commercial work began to slow down in 2008, we had to adapt. Getting involved with the Marcellus Shale was a key part of that. We’ve developed some good relationships with customers in the energy industry that have helped us grow our reputation there.”



Kris Hay,
Director of Fleet



A crew from Brubacher Excavating uses the company's Komatsu PC490LCi excavator to load a Komatsu HM400 truck. "We've been very happy with how the PC490LCi has performed," said Director of Fleet Kris Hay.

Brubacher's penchant for completing complex jobs has come in handy for its energy customers. It recently completed a multimillion-dollar gas well pad – the largest of its kind for this particular customer – in Elk County. Brubacher crews worked around the clock to complete the seven-acre pad in an expedited time frame.

"It was a large pad with multiple wells on it," detailed Keith. "We built the access roads, handled the grubbing, earthmoving, stone grading and the construction of pads where the rigs sit when drilling the wells. We had people there non-stop, and we got it done in a matter of weeks."

Long-time relationship

Brubacher's relationship with Komatsu equipment and Midlantic Machinery has been a strong one for years. In fact, it predates both firms' current iterations.

"My grandfather and dad purchased International Harvester and Dresser equipment from both State Equipment and Furnival," said Keith. "When the dealer began offering Komatsu equipment, dad bought some dozers, and it's something we've continued to do. Today, we continue to have a solid relationship with Midlantic, and our Sales Rep Jason Wasielewski does a great job. We consider them a partner in our business."

Komatsu PC138USLC tight-tail-swing excavators with rubber tracks are popular machines at Brubacher for the power they deliver in confined areas.



Operator Chris Tobolski uses one of Brubacher Excavating's Komatsu PC138USLC tight-tail-swing excavators on a utility installation project in West Chester, Penn. "I like everything about the PC138," said Tobolski. "It has great power, and the rearview camera is a great addition when working on tight jobsites."

"The large, open jobsites are becoming less common today, and we are seeing a lot more redevelopment projects," detailed Keith. "The zero-turn PC138s are great for utility installations. We can get a lot of work done in a small space. They are flexible pieces of equipment and give us the ability to use them in a wide variety of areas."

Brubacher also utilizes a fleet of D39 dozers and excavators, ranging in size from PC138USLC to PC490LC.

While the performance of the machines in the field is important to Brubacher, the extra services that Komatsu and Midlantic provide set them apart from the competition.

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'Komatsu outperformed everyone'

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"We choose Komatsu and Midlantic because they check all of our boxes," said Director of Fleet Kris Hay. "We evaluate several things when we look to purchase a machine, and service is a big one. I'm highly impressed with Midlantic and Komatsu CARE. Having complimentary service for the first three years or 2,000 hours on our Tier 4 machines has been awesome, and Midlantic does the services when it's convenient for us. They come out on nights and weekends, so we are able to keep production moving."

Getting intelligent

Recently, Brubacher Excavating made the decision to upgrade its fleet when it added a Komatsu *intelligent* Machine Control PC490LCi



Brubacher Excavating President Keith Brubacher relies on Midlantic and Sales Rep Jason Wasielewski for his company's Komatsu equipment and service needs.

Operator Dan Willingham uses a Komatsu D39EX-21A KOMSTAT II dozer to spread stone at a Brubacher Excavating jobsite in Exeter, Penn. "When it comes to visibility, Komatsu dozers have all the others beat," said Willingham.



excavator with integrated GPS technology and semi-automation.

"We were in the market for an excavator with GPS controls, so we did some side-by-side demos," recalled Kris. "Komatsu outperformed everyone. We were a little nervous to make such a big step with the technology, but Midlantic was great in providing the training and service we needed to get the most out of our investment."

One important question Brubacher Excavating had was how the PC490i's Topcon technology would work with the firm's existing GPS system. Fortunately, Midlantic made sure that the integration was seamless.

"The compatibility between the systems was something we were concerned about, but it turned out to be insignificant," said Kris. "It's another example of Midlantic getting us the education and training necessary to be successful."

Once the 490LCi arrived at the jobsite, it was an immediate hit.

"We've been very happy with how the 490LCi has performed," shared Kris. "Other manufacturers have their smart controls, which are lights or monitors to give a visual guide, but it's still up to the operator to maintain grade. The PC490LCi controls the excavator and doesn't let it go off grade. It's so far ahead; it makes an average operator great."

Continued service

When Keith looks back on the business his family founded, he is amazed at how a successful company grew out of a simple passion.

"There is really no logic or reason that Brubacher is what it is today," reflected Keith. "My grandpa grew up on a farm, and my dad started working at age 15. We just love developing great people who are skilled at using equipment, and I think that enthusiasm comes through in our work."

"There will be challenges that we face in this industry, there always are," he added. "However, as long as we continue to be a company where the people who thrive within it are the ones who are eager to work together and serve customers, we'll continue to be successful." ■