

MacLean's Ready Mix celebrates golden anniversary

By Lynne Wells
Contributing Writer

MacLean's Ready Mix Concrete Ltd. is celebrating 50 years in business this year. The independently owned and family-operated business has met customer needs in Eastern Prince Edward Island for half a century.

Dick MacLean started his business as a part-time operation after purchasing a \$97 concrete block machine from the Eaton's catalogue.

"From 1955 to 1960 the block demand increased dramatically," he says. "We eventually purchased a Vessot automatic block machine, which produced about 40 blocks per hour and all different sizes."

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, MacLean's built three potato warehouses in Greenfield, P.E.I. for farmer Emmett Power. MacLean himself laid the foundation and the

floor for those buildings, showing up with a one-bag hand mixer, a wheelbarrow and other supplies.

"He got an awful lot of work from people seeing what kind of work he did for me," Power says.

The company produced 80,000 blocks for the Montague Regional High School in 1961. According to MacLean, back then every block was handled four times without the aid of pallets or forklifts.

With the building boom of the 1960s, MacLean's had a hand in everything from rinks to schools to potato warehouses to tobacco kilns across P.E.I., and the part-time business became a full-time operation with four employees.

In 1965, MacLean's purchased its first ready mixed concrete truck, and then had to buy two more trucks later that same year to keep up with



MacLean's Ready Mixed Concrete of Montague/Victoria Cross, P.E.I. is celebrating its 50th anniversary in business this year. Founded in 1953 by Dick MacLean, business enterprises have included ready mix, precast, construction, trucking and a bottle exchange. It's very much a family business, providing employment to many people from eastern P.E.I. MacLean's is a longtime supporter of APRMCA and currently Doug MacLean serves as a P.E.I. director on the association's board.

demand. In 1967, the company had its first bulk cement silo in place at the Victoria Cross plant.

"When we got started in Montague we could sell 600 bags of cement a season, but within five years of starting we were selling 600 bags a day," MacLean says.

The labour-intensive process of block-making came to an end in 1970, but the company did well with a booming construction industry. By

the mid-1970s MacLean's two sons, Doug and John, started full-time with the company. John now manages the trucking division and Doug has moved around the company serving in a variety of positions, including general manager.

By 1979, MacLean's had to open a concrete plant in Souris. The company also operates a portable plant. The 1980s brought lean times to MacLean's, as they did to everyone. The company ex-

panded its trucking division to diversify and John MacLean is very proud of how that expansion helped the company survive. MacLeans now hauls freight for other companies travelling across Canada with 14 tractor-trailers and 27 trailers.

"As far as I know, we never lost a contractor," Dick MacLean says. "You have to keep up with the times and change with what the contractors need. You have to

diversify."

To that end, over the past 10 years the company has purchased three stone slingers, two concrete belts and now a fleet of 13 mixer trucks. However, the MacLean family is quick to spread the glory.

"You can buy all the equipment you want but if you don't have the staff you don't have anything," John MacLean says. "We've been blessed with a tremendous workforce."

Dick MacLean often chalks up his business success to luck, timing and help from others. But his wife Mary, who helped with the company's bookkeeping for years, says it was his persistence that made the difference.

"He certainly worked for everything he got and a lot of time he put it all back into the company."

MacLean still works in the business, sometimes hauling two loads of gravel across the Northumberland Strait via the Wood Island ferry, but much of the company is in the hands of his sons, daughter-in-law Rhonda who handles the accounting and even his granddaughters, Jen and Heather have worked for the business.

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