

Riddiford Roofing celebrates 100 years

Author(s): Mike Comerford Daily Herald Business Writer

Date: November 28, 2001

Page: 1

Section: Business

Business profile

Name: George Riddiford

Business: Riddiford Roofing Co.

Location: Arlington Heights

Web site: www.riddifordroofing.com

Revenue: About \$15 million

Slogan: "A trusted name in roofing since 1901."

To celebrate their 100-year-old family business, the Riddifords threw a party at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Rosemont earlier this month.

About 300 people showed up to toast Riddiford Roofing Co. and the family that has guided it through four generations.

"It was awesome," said owner George Riddiford. "I felt I had to do it for my grandfather and for my father."

That respect for family and for the company's long history were factors in the company winning this year's Massachusetts Mutual Family Business of the Year Award at the University of Chicago Family Business Council. George Riddiford's two sons, Joseph and Christopher, work in the business along with nephew Jay Tulley.

"They said only about 11 percent of family-owned businesses survive to the fourth generation," said Patricia Riddiford, George's wife and co-owner. "So we defied those odds."

Riddiford Roofing is an Arlington Heights-based roofer that has had some of the highest profile projects in the area, including the John Hancock Center, Water Tower Place and the Chicago Hilton and Towers.

The firm specializes in commercial/industrial roofing, with the bulk of customers businesses, schools and hospitals.

With 91 employees, the company expects sales this year of about \$15 million.

Which is a long way from the company George's grandfather, Louis Riddiford, ran with the help of a horse-drawn pulley system to lift buckets of tar up to rooftops.

A crucial point in the company's history occurred in 1967 when George's father, George E. Riddiford Sr., died the day after Patricia and George were wed.

"I went from a guy doing repairs to the guy running the company," George Riddiford said. "It was a rough start."

But he learned on the job and eventually the business began to thrive. In the last 10 years, its sales have tripled and its profit margin has widened.

In a business sometimes known for disreputable practices, Riddiford Roofing has an enviable reputation, said Bill Hayes, supervisor of maintenance, Community Consolidated School District 54, in Schaumburg.

"They take pains to make sure everything is right," said Hayes, whose district has used Riddiford Roofing for three years. "They actually care and that is unusual in this business."

Despite the recessionary economy, George Riddiford said his business "is getting stronger and stronger."

The business, George Riddiford said, is changing and he's adjusting. Green roofing, with gardens on roof tops, is now more common. The City of Chicago wants its roofing to be white from now on for energy savings reasons.

However, the secret of the family's success, George Riddiford said, remains the same.

"Our people are very competitive," said Riddiford, noting that turnover is low at the company. "They give 110 percent."