

Adroit Construction By Dennis Powers

When going about one's life in the Valley on any given day, you will drive by, walk into, or work in a building that Adroit Construction has built. This started in 1979 when Bob Mayers relocated from the Bay Area to join up with Steve Lawrence. Having graduated from Bradley University with a construction engineering management degree, Bob had managed large commercial construction projects in Chicago and San Francisco.

Lawrence and Steven Shipiro, who had run an Illinois company also known as Adroit, started the company that Mayers joined, and two years later brought him in as a partner. Mayers and Lawrence bought out Shipiro's interest in 1983, and what was formerly a two-man shop in 1979 has grown well from there.

All was not "bed and roses," however, in that the primary focus then was small commercial projects and a few single-family residential buildings in this region. When the economy took large downturns--especially in Oregon with its basic lumber and timber industry stagnating--it was a very difficult go. The word "adroit" was picked and is defined as being "skillful and resourceful." They had to do this in order to survive.

As Southern Oregon and the country suffered through a recession brought on by high interest rates and inflation, Bob Mayers had an important asset: a California contractor's license that helped keep the company afloat. He took on general construction work on the Klamath River, including driving to Forest Service locations that no one else wanted to be at or do. Then Adroit started to use their own field employees for concrete, carpentry, and steel work in these remote locations, including at Hornbrook and Happy Camp. To them, this was like driving to Grants Pass and they had work.

Becoming one of the highly regarded general contractors in Southern Oregon and Northern California, the small firm grew substantially over the years--including with major projects through the "Great Recession of 2008" and on--to where its annual revenues today are \$50 million-plus with over 100 employees, 20-plus field superintendents, and the ability to work 20 commercial projects at a time. The company has managed developments from Crater Lake National Park and the high deserts of Eastern Oregon and California to confined city blocks.

From medical centers, libraries, and schools to banks, buildings, and even airplane hangers, Ashland-based Adroit has now completed over 1,600 projects, many with extreme conditions, emergency repairs, and tight deadlines. A few of the recognized projects are: Lithia Motors' four-story headquarters (the Commons), the Jackson County Sheriff's headquarters, SOU's 200,000 square-foot North Campus Village dormitory complex, Providence Medford Medical Center (remodel), Northgate Marketplace retail center, SOU/RVCC classroom building, the Fairchild Medical Center, and many other important structures.

Showing their forward-looking focus, Lawrence and Mayers brought in two of their younger, talented employees as co-owners in 2007. Although they still run the business, the

two wanted to bring along their successors and let them develop further at an executive level. Jason Stranberg and Tom Walker were not only Ashland High School graduates, but also graduates at different times from Oregon State University in construction engineering management. They had been project managers with large out-of-state construction firms. With the 10-year transition period starting in 2007, Stranberg and Walker will become 50 percent partners in Adroit just as Mayers and Lawrence have been.

Additionally, Bob Mayers has shared his time with the community. Rotary International honored him as its Outstanding Business Person of the Year. He has served on the boards for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ashland YMCA, and Ashland Chamber of Commerce. He currently serves on the boards of Peoples Bank of Commerce (Medford), the Mt. Ashland Association, and the SOU Foundation, among others. Jason Stranberg has also served as President of the Ashland YMCA board of directors, along with other nonprofit work, and Bob Mayers has lead the successful, annual “Y” kids scholarship drive for several years for the YMCA.

Adroit in 2013 was awarded the No. 4 spot in the medium-size division in the “Top 100 Best Companies to Work for in Oregon” rankings, along with past rankings. This region is so much the better for the moves by Steve Lawrence and Bob Mayers to this valley.

Sources: See generally “Adroit Construction” at [Adroit](#); “Adroit--Profile” at [Profile](#); Greg Stiles, “Commercial projects create Rogue Valley construction mini boom,” *Mail Tribune*, November 20, 2011, at [Some Projects](#); Greg Stiles, “Adroit at Adapting,” *Mail Tribune*, May 2, 2007, at [History and Succession](#).