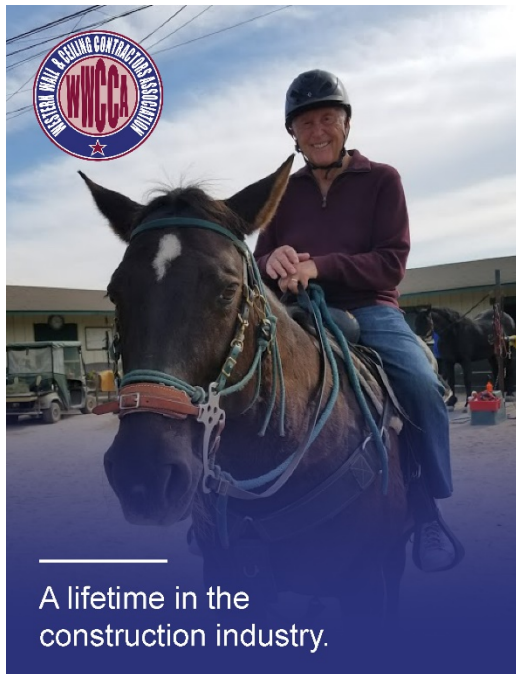


Bob Heimerl, Mowery Thomason, Inc.



A lifetime in the construction industry.

LEGENDS

Back in the day I had a close friend, Dick Ratcliff. His father Buz introduced me to the construction industry. He was one of the principles in the Bolster Company and asked me to give him a call when I got out of the National Guard. He had just hired a new estimator a few months before, so he put me in touch with Homer Thomason who was a part of Mowery Thomason, Inc. I went to work for him in February of 1961 and I have been there ever since. Today my son Todd and I run the business and have a great crew.

I did not have any experience in the contracting business, but Homer was a very good teacher and thought me

everything he knew. At that time, he did all the estimating and that is what he trained me in. Tom Mowery was the other half of the organization and he basically handled the field, took care of all the men, and ordered the materials.

I never did work in the field, just started in the office and learned by working. Back at that time there was no project management. There were no computers with estimating programs like today that tell you how many screws you need on the job. It is quite a change from what it used to be. I remember the calculators with the tape rolls, everything was done by hand. Went through a lot of tape, we ran everything twice to make sure you did not have an error in the key punching.

I had a very quick move up in the company because Homer Thomason passed away 4 years after I started. Tom Mowery offered me the opportunity to join him and carry on the company. That was a fast-learning experience on how to run a company, manage employees and manage money.

Back when I started our offices were by the LA river and could easily service downtown. Most of our work was remodeling older buildings.

We subbed out the lathing and were basically a plastering contractor. That was at the time where drywall was just starting to enter the market and become more acceptable by architects and contractors. We saw the handwriting on the wall that we should be involved in more than

just one facet of the industry. Tom was open to looking at taking on other scopes of work, so we took on the lath, plaster, and drywall.

I have seen a lot of changes. The big thing when I entered construction was “Knock on the Wall” it’s lath and plaster. That was a big slogan you heard all around the industry.

Drywall was brand new and there was not a lot of workers. Craftsman we hired that we did not know too well. We had a learning curve of figuring how many square feet they guys could get up in a day. There was a lot of gypsum lath that was applied at that time and was not that big of a switch from going gypsum lath to drywall. Walked softly and did it slowly and it worked out very well.

Clyde Hawk was doing lathing for us in those days. Jim Rutherford came in to be a competitor of his and we started doing work with Jim. Eventually Clyde moved up to Sun Valley, Idaho and opened a restaurant.

We started taking on our own work in drywall, framing and lathing in the early 70ies. It was more about how you were going to survive in this business and make things work. Plastering was becoming less and less. The price of plaster was much more that the application of drywall. If you were going to do drywall, you would start by doing your own framing and taping and take on the responsibility of the entire package to make it a sell-able to the contractor you were working for. It was also beneficial because you had total command of your industry and labor.

We were still using a lot of tie-on metal lath; black studs were being phased out quickly and the studs as we know them today were coming more and more on the market. This was mainly due to the drywall application where you needed a flange to screw your drywall to.

Drywall and advancements into its application come into the commercial end of construction for metal stud framing when they developed the self-driving tech screws and screw gun with a clutch so you can keep things moving fast. Plastering ended up dying out. It took a while for it to disappear on the interiors but once it started it went very quickly. The cleanup and drying time improved. You were now putting 3 coats of mud for taping and having to let that dry, however your taping application was very thin compared to the plastering application. Inside the buildings even with fans plaster took much longer to dry. The turnover of tenant space and interior development increased rapidly by drywall applications.

We have developed a good crew and try our best to keep our guys busy to keep the good workers. In the older days loaning out guys to another contractor would work out well, there was respect in the industry. Today it is much more difficult to be able to count on that.

Back in the 70's superintendents who worked on the job for a lot of years had flexibility to solve problems. It used to be just a tiny trailer with a few guys and few sets of plans. We could go to lunch to make a deal and "just get it done". Today there are a lot of people involved in making decisions on the management end of it. We sign contracts 2 inches thick and the submittal process is incredible. There is a lot of variance in materials and there is a protocol of general contractor going to the architect and back down the chain.

We at Mowery Thomason, Inc. tend to specialize in the more difficult jobs. We do a lot of health care and unique type buildings where we have a better niche and hit rate of getting work.

We did not find it successful to do out of state work but have done maybe half a dozen jobs out of town like Santa Barbara and Mojave. We do some smaller fireproofing jobs and are specialty applicators of acoustical plaster. It is a nice niche for us, sporadic and hard to get the guys that have the technique to do it. Plastering is hard today unless you are doing a school or a major exterior plaster job. It is really changing with continuous insulation which has been used in exterior commercial since 2014.

The most difficult job I remember doing was the Shenincawn Museum by the LA tar pits. The ceilings had a lot of radius work, spokes that came out from the center circle. It was mainly lath and plaster, not a lot of drywall. The men were looking forward to going to work daily because it was such a unique job that really challenged their capabilities.

Over the years we have done a lot of theme work at Disneyland. We are just completing some work there now on the Star Wars project. It was small in comparison to the overall job, but we had heavy finishes on the interior of 5 different buildings. There is a lot of great workmanship to be seen there, the Imagineering department of Disney is incredible. They are very schedule driven and they have art directors that are doing constant quality control. We have done a lot of general contracting work for Disney that involved night work. Proud to say we also did a lot of work on California Adventure and cannot believe it's' already been about 20 years.

I believe a lot of the future for our industry has to do with the demand. There are so many people here in California there will always be renovations on buildings. There has been a lot of innovation in plaster materials and coatings to avoid cracking and discoloration. Acrylic finish may cost a bit extra, but there are huge benefits over the many years of life of the building.

We had a lot of good times, great friendships, and fellowship throughout the years in this industry. We would take annual trips together and hardly ever talked business; it was quiet an era of all of us.