



The

COASTLINE CONNECTION

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Meet John Deere's new "Seven-Yard Stallion"

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California dreamin'

with Northridge Rentals

The largest independently owned equipment rental company in California began with a dream. And a Deere. In 1951, Bob and Helen Groff had the imagination to foresee the push upward from Los Angeles and the tumble down the Hollywood Hills into the steamy lowlands of the San Fernando Valley. The Groffs launched a small rental operation with a few newfangled John Deere Model "M" Dozers. Such are the machines, after all, that dreams and \$14,000 bungalows were made of.



Builder Marshall Haraden with two of his passions: a John Deere 310G Backhoe and a big palm tree.

Flash-forward 54 years. Those little bungalows are fetching some \$700,000, and Northridge Equipment Rentals maintains its original headquarters, plus facilities in Palmdale, Lompoc, Bakersfield, and Fresno.

Of course, all the aforementioned info can be found at www.northridgerentals.com, but we were ready to meet the folks behind the Southern California success story. Pulling into the rental giant's offices, we navigate Napa Street past Northridge semis hauling John Deere 310G Backhoes, 210LE Landscape Loaders, 544J Loaders, and 450J Dozers.

Small talk in the big valley

We enter Northridge's California-cool offices to meet our gracious host, Mike Groff. Mike has the typical laid-back California manner that belies the frantic business of handing over expensive equipment to an escalating base of area contractors and landscapers.

"Sure, we're involved with the big jobs, but we specialize in the one-on-one service contractors just can't get from the mega rental chains," said Groff. "These guys need more than a machine dropped at their site — they need a field rep that solves problems for them."

Mike seems to have a customer-driven passion for staying ahead of the technological curve. "Topcon® laser-guidance systems bring productivity to our customers, so we have plenty available. It's my understanding that John Deere is starting to offer motor graders and other machines pre-wired for these systems — very good news for the equipment rental industry."

Mike is a John Deere Gold Key Customer

"Yes, Bill Groff and I flew out to Dubuque, Iowa, to drive our 310G Backhoe off the line — probably



"They're good to work on," says mechanic and sometime operator Greg Vincent. "And a dream to operate — not many excavators have a slick feature like Deere's extendable dipperstick."

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trees framing a huge under-construction villa. A quick sprint to the top floor of the über estate revealed a staggering view of hills — Agoura Hills, that is — swimming pools, movie stars. The most curious sight on the site, however, was the gargantuan Leibherr crane lowering a 12,500-pound palm tree into a hole freshly dug by a John Deere 310G Backhoe rented from Northridge.

When Northridge Field Rep Dave Bogacz told us that the 310G was being operated by Marshall Haraden, owner of The Marshall Group, a large construction company in the area, we hotfooted down the hill to ask him why he operates his own equipment.

"Oh, that's easy," said Haraden, "this is my property. Usually Marshall Group builds restaurants like B.B. King's or Olive Garden in Southern California and Vegas, but this is my new house, so I'm working a lot of equipment. Besides, I used to collect sports

memorabilia, and now I collect palms. Whenever I can dig a hole and put a tree in it, I do. I enjoy running these Deere, and I always request them from Northridge.

There's something about these four-wheel-drive models — lots of speed and power. Hey, Dave," he suddenly shouts up the hill to the Northridge rep, "this is the sweetest backhoe you've rented to me yet...I want to buy it!"

Figuring we'd never get a better testimonial than that, we said our goodbyes to Dave and that lucky new homeowner Marshall, and hit the 405 Freeway towards LAX and all points east.

Hollywood ending

On the trek to the airport, we called Mike Groff to thank him and his crew for their hospitality. "No problem, it was our pleasure. My grandfather started Northridge with a few Deere machines over 50 years ago, and today we have well over 100 pieces — we trust them over any other manufacturer for our rental machines. It's great to see the changing of the guard from Cat to Deere in Southern California. John Deere is always welcome at Northridge — maybe sometime we can talk about our movie studio division."

Northridge Studio Division? We're there, Mike. Hopefully on the set of *Die Hard with a Motor Grader*. ■

Coastline Equipment services Northridge Rentals.



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controls, especially the return-to-dig feature that keeps the cycles moving quickly. Our 544J is a marvelous machine...."

"...Most marvelous of all is the J Loader's Quad-Cool™ system," says Fuelling, finishing Drake's praise. "Let me show you how this works." Keith swings open the rear grille and fan assembly to reveal the revolutionary cooling design. "Right here, in one chamber, you have a system that cools all machine fluids — antifreeze; inter-cooler; and hydraulic, transmission, and engine oil."

But it's the reversing fan Keith likes best. "Every 30 minutes the fan automatically reverses and blows out chemicals that have gathered on the sensitive fins of each radiator or cooler. I used to crawl all over a loader daily to blow out its radiators with compressed air. Now about once a week I open this single cooling chamber and blow out what little residue the reversing fan didn't expel. Take it from a company that used to buy \$1,000 Cat radiators several times a year — in terms of uptime, the Quad-Cool system makes buying Deere wheel loaders an absolute no-brainer."

"You boys eatin' or drinkin' this afternoon?"

"Eating," we told the waitress reluctantly as we settled back into a Lucky Linda's booth for a quick bite. As we compared our notes from the Royster-Clark visit, we could hear the unmistakable drone of a hopper truck, no doubt filled with the wicked fertilizers we just saw tamed by Roger, Keith, and their fleet of smart Deere loaders. ■

K&W Equipment services Royster-Clark's Mount Vernon facility.