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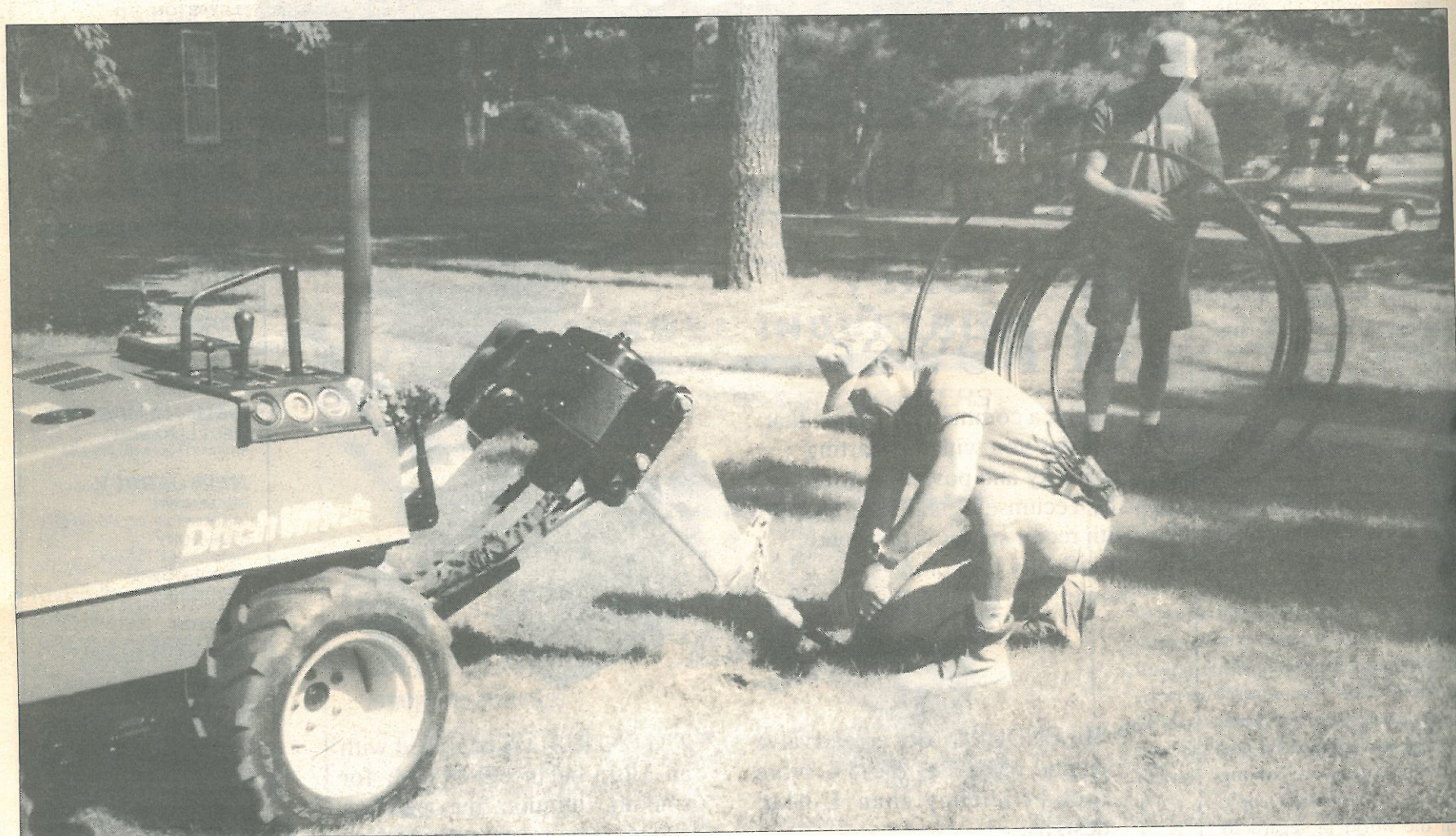
Expo '96 Round-up

NORTHERN REGION: **NY GIANTS NEW TRAINING FACILITY**

Pulling Pipe and Setting Goals

Philip J. Stylianos, Inc.

by Kathleen Hatt



Stylianos uses a Ditch Witch for most residential and commercial installations.

Philip Stylianos has a goal. Within five years he wants to be one of the largest contractors in New England. To attain that revenue-based target, he figures Philip J. Stylianos, Inc., designers and installers of irrigation systems, has to gross

between \$500,000 and \$1 million a year. The company has reached the six figure range—not bad considering it came into existence only eight years ago. “That was back in the days when I thought I’d be my own boss and work 9 to 5,” laughs Stylianos. “That lasted

the first two or three days—and it’s probably why, at 33, I’m still single!”

Revenue or Control?

Although he’s sure of his financial goals, Stylianos is somewhat ambivalent about the loss of control that may necessitate. Adding more workers to his

Nashua, N.H., based company would mean getting more work done in less time. But more workers would also mean more training, more supervision and more paperwork. Some landowners want Stylianos himself to be on their property from the beginning of a

project to its completion, and here particularly Stylianos is finding the balance between company growth and revenue goals tricky.

Thus far Stylianos has three employees in the Summer, and one of them is usually retained on a part-time basis throughout the Winter. Although he dislikes having to train new workers every year or two, he has found that college students remain his best employee option.

Use Technology to Your Advantage

Efficient use of technology is Stylianos' current means of retaining control of his business. "In the begin-

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ning," he says, "I had the names of 25 clients in a briefcase. Now there's a laptop in my truck at all times. The laptop can be interfaced via cellular phone to my office so I can keep track of clientele, make scheduling changes, etc. But the work is catching up quick."

Stylianos has also used technology to establish a presence along the seacoast from southern Maine to northern Massachusetts. When clients ring a local number (listed in white and yellow pages) in the coastal village of Rye, N.H., their call is automatically switched to Stylianos' Nashua office. The phone service, called remote call forwarding, has the effect of making his office appear local rather than its actual 1 hour and 10 minute driving time away.

Yellow Page listings and word of mouth bring all of Stylianos' customers these days. The letter and company brochure he mailed two years ago to every architectural firm in the State of New Hampshire brought ongoing work with four firms. Some of those firms work

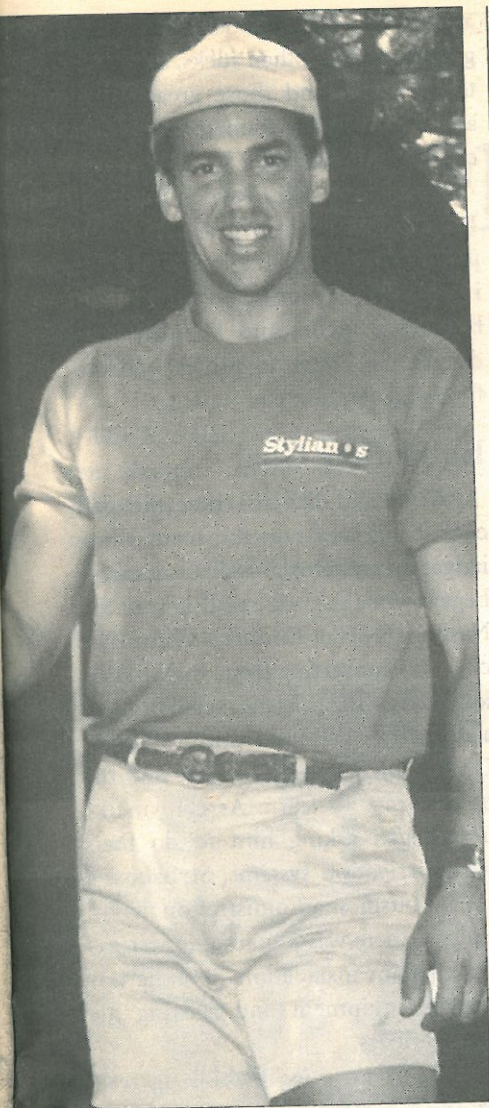


Since a sprinkler system can use thousands and thousands of gallons of water a day, the designer needs to know about the water system on the property, particularly if a well is in use.

on large projects and do in-house irrigation design. "But because we're dealing with irrigation systems every-day," says Stylianos, "we can be more efficient and thus do the work at lower cost. We will look at the blueprint and design an irrigation system faster than an architectural firm can."

Once he has designed the system, Stylianos also installs and maintains it. These are the same services he provides to homeowners, landscapers, commercial property managers, and municipalities.

An irrigation system can compromise a homeowner's entire water supply. That's reason enough, Stylianos thinks, for irrigation system installers to be licensed. "The irrigation industry is starting to get a little out of hand," he says. "Anybody can design and



Philip Stylianos

install an irrigation system. Anyone can rent a trencher or a Ditch Witch and say he is in the sprinkler system installation business. There's not enough enforcement of regulations, particularly in New Hampshire."

Since a sprinkler system can use thousands and thousands of gallons of water a day, the designer needs to know about the water system on the property, particularly if a well is in use. How many gallons is the well producing? How deep is the well? What size horsepower pump is being used? Is the well capable of recovering in a reasonable time? If these factors are not taken into consideration, an irrigation system could severely reduce or even eliminate the water supply to the house.

"We've seen systems designed on a well that become a disaster. There is not enough pressure to operate the heads. Some customers do have a second well dug just for irrigation, but, according to Stylianos, this is not typical.

Stylianos urges anyone inclined to install an irrigation system to purchase a flow meter from a plumbing store or irrigation supply house. If the property is on town water, set up the flow meter at an outside faucet. Knowing how many gallons of water per minute are available will help ♦

avoid compromising the household water supply.

After he has used the flow meter to gather data about the water on the property, Stylianos uses a measuring wheel to determine the dimensions of the property and to draw a plot plan. He then enters data into a \$1,700 CAD program which does nothing but design irrigation systems.

An accurate plot plan is key to success, and the cost of an inaccurate plot plan can be high. Forgetting to enter a deck, porch, pool, or tennis court results in the CAD program's specifying extra sprinklers, a mistake which would drive up the bid and could potentially result in loss of a job. When correct information is entered, the CAD system can be 90 to 95 percent accurate, according to Stylianos. A copy of the CAD design showing

location of sprinklers is given to clients after they sign the contract for the job.

Pulling Pipe

In all but large athletic fields and

mates the machine cuts his labor costs 40 to 50 percent over traditional trenching methods which require hauling out heavy stones and bringing in fill. When the vibratory blade of the Ditch Witch comes to a stone, it pulls

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golf courses, Stylianos uses a Ditch Witch. The \$17,000 machine, manufactured by The Charles Machine Works in Perry, Okla., is perhaps best known as a pipe puller. Stylianos esti-

mates the machine cuts his labor costs 40 to 50 percent over traditional trenching methods which require hauling out heavy stones and bringing in fill. When the vibratory blade of the Ditch Witch comes to a stone, it pulls

around a rock. Tree roots are actually a greater problem than rocks, according to Stylianos, and those greater than about 2 inches in diameter have to be cut or tunneled under by hand.

Pipe used in most residential jobs is 1-inch Poly; larger jobs, such as shopping malls, use 1-1/4-inch to 1-1/2-inch pipe. The pipe is laid at a depth of between 8 inches and 14 inches, the deeper the better to protect it from frost and aeration equipment.

Immediate Goal

"We would like to enter the golf course market," says the man whose irrigation systems installation career began while he was working at the Nashua (N.H.) Country Club. The club was converting from an old-fashioned coupling irrigation system to an automatic system, and William Dutton, his former boss, gave him the opportunity to learn. As club members began asking him to do their home irrigation systems, Stylianos, a college business administration major, realized there was a market for irrigation systems installation. Soon he was renting equipment and starting his own business.

"But for now, we're thinking residential, commercial, municipality. We'll see where that leads us," says Stylianos.

