

Daily Herald

Stock listings 3

Obituaries 6,7

Weather 8

dly dailyherald.com

Business

Page 2

McDonald's
cool to investor
proposal



In the workplace

Bob Rosner on knowing
when to pull plug on a project
— Page 3

Bear Construction scores contracts with hard work

BY SARAH A. TOLKOFF

Medill News Service

Brothers George, Nick and Jim Wienold could have passed for starters on the 1985 Chicago

Success stories

Bears. Instead, these former construction workers run a Rolling Meadows general contracting

business that just marked its 20th year.

The three brothers — avid hunters, fishermen and football fans — named their company Bear Construction Co.

Their first job was a \$15,000 contract for interior build-out for Quantum Properties on Chicago's northwest side. They were "scared to death." They scrambled to cover costs and operated out of a trailer at George's Arlington Heights

Business profile

Name: Bear Construction Co.

Business: Commercial interior build-outs

Location: Rolling Meadows

Owners: Nick, George and Jim Wienold

Revenue: \$32 million in 2004; \$40 million projected in 2005

Employees: 100 to 125, depending on the project

home.

Today, Bear Construction is a multimillion-dollar company with a strong corporate customer base.

"Each one of the Wienolds backs each other up. If you need help from one, another is ready to step in and help," said Bruce Ebner, senior project manager

for SBC Communications Inc. of Northern Illinois and a Bear Construction customer.

Within the last decade, Bear Construction has quadrupled its sales and tripled the number of employees to 125.

Its client lineup includes Resurrection Health Care, UAL Corp.'s United Airlines and numerous businesses in the Merchandise Mart and elsewhere downtown.

Bear Construction has seen ups and downs as the construction industry has alternately boomed and faltered, but the key to the Wienolds' long-term success is all in the family.

Oldest brother, Nick, 58, is president; George, 48, is chief financial officer; and Jim, 43, is executive vice president. They are also executive project managers, overseeing, estimating, scheduling and budgeting for their clients,



MARK WELSH/DAILY HERALD

Brothers George, Nick and Jim Wienold of Rolling Meadows-based Bear Construction Co., have quadrupled sales in the last decade.

Their older sister, Sherry Kurinsky, came on board in 1987, and her son, Scott Kurinsky, is the vice president and a salesman.

George's son, Michael Wienold, 21, began working as a full-time laborer this year.

"We really like to think that because we are family-owned, we keep a close pulse on what happens," Scott said. "Our name is on each product, so we

want it to be perfect."

Bear Construction specializes in build-outs, or the construction of suites tailored to the specifications of the new tenants.

Bear also builds interiors of industrial buildings, banks, restaurants, and medical and communications facilities. George said that no job is too

See **SUCCESS** on PAGE 2

PAGE 2 SECTION 4 DAILY HERALD

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2005

Success: Family bond has kept construction company growing

Continued from Page 1

small, but his biggest contract to date was an \$11 million condominium conversion project of about 70 units.

Scott estimates that 80 to 90 percent of Bear's clients are repeat customers.

"Most of our work has been by word of mouth," George said. This system has worked well for them. In the fiscal year ending in June 2004, Bear Con-

struction had \$32 million in sales. George estimated that figure could increase to \$40 million in fiscal 2005.

Bear is a "self-performing" commercial construction company, an industry term that means the company employs its own trade laborers. The company can control quality, scheduling and costs by "self-performing" in all areas but those requiring specialists, like electrical, fire protection, heating, ventilation and air-

conditioning installation.

One of Bear's current projects is the interior renovation of Rolling Meadows' city hall.

Although its employees have tripled to between 100 and 125 people (depending on the job), Bear is looking to hire three or four more.

"Right now the work is tremendous," Scott said. "There is a lot of work out there."

Their father, George N. Wienold, worked for the city of Chicago for more than 30 years.

For 15 years, he was the coordinating architect of Chicago, where he headed the building and permit department.

Although their father died in 1993, they remember how he taught them the art of working with one's hands, how to be expert outdoorsmen, and how "doing it right" is valuable.

In 2003, a \$6 million project to add a second story on a 17,000-square-foot building in Bensenville proved particularly challenging. Sensitive telecom-

munications computers were to remain in operation, but could not be exposed to water, dust or vibration — elements that could disrupt phone service to the entire town.

The strong repeat customer base has kept Bear Construction afloat during the tougher years. The construction business hit a particularly low point after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Business finally began to pick up this year. But even when facing industry downturns and

slower sales, Bear has remained profitable, he said.

In October 2002, Bear relocated from Arlington Heights, where the company had outgrown its motley collection of trailers. In the entryway of Bear's new 36,000-square-foot office in Rolling Meadows, visitors are greeted by a stuffed bear outfitted in a tool belt, baseball hat and T-shirt sporting the company motif. Stuffed toy bears and bear collectibles peek out from shelves and corners.