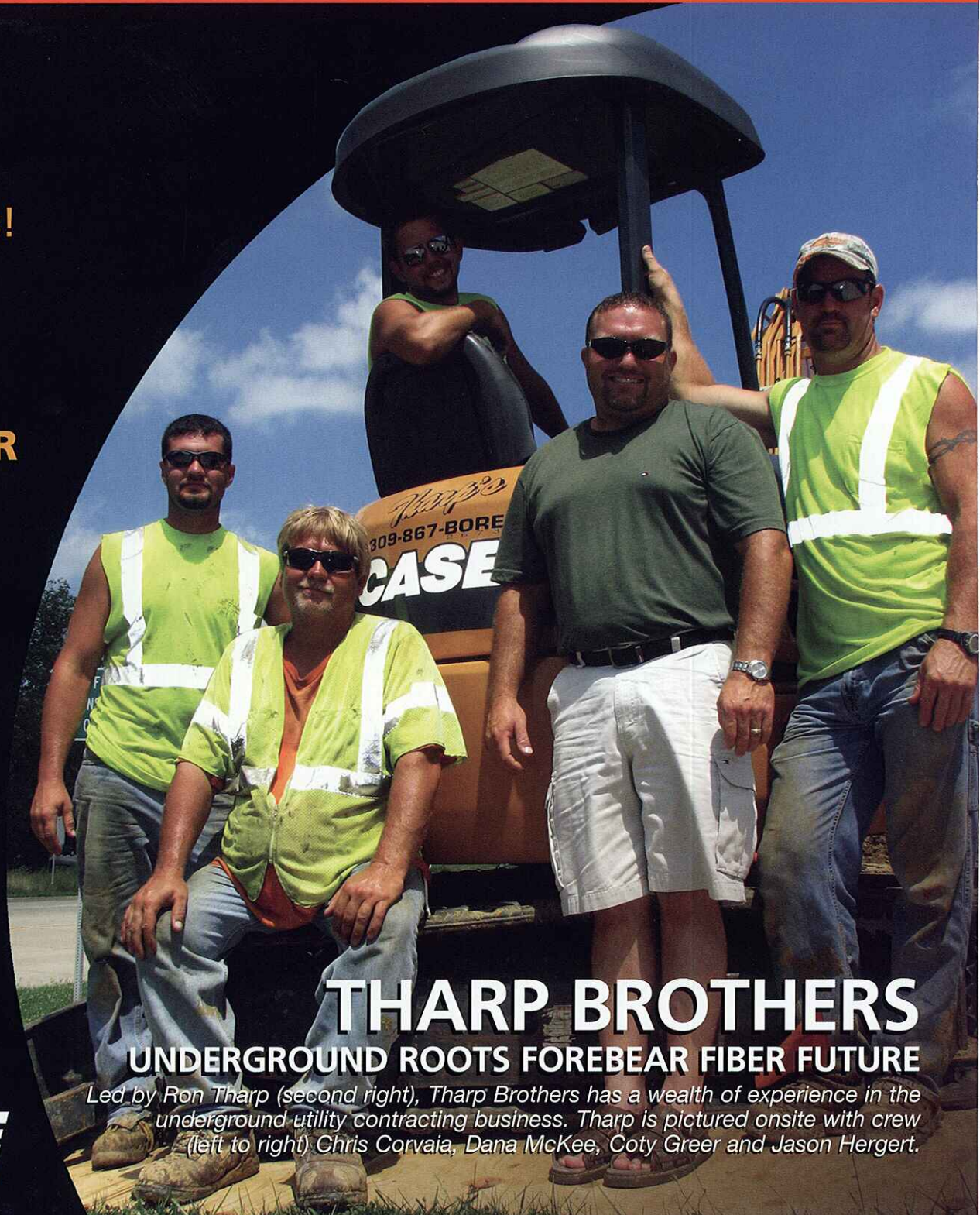


BIRKEY'S Bulletin

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THARP BROTHERS

UNDERGROUND ROOTS FOREBEAR FIBER FUTURE

Led by Ron Tharp (second right), Tharp Brothers has a wealth of experience in the underground utility contracting business. Tharp is pictured onsite with crew (left to right) Chris Corvaia, Dana McKee, Coty Greer and Jason Hergert.

CASE
CONSTRUCTION

THARP B

Underground Roots F

Ron Tharp got started in the underground utilities business as a teenager working for his uncle installing cable TV lines more than 20 years ago. He took the knowledge and skills he acquired and started his own contracting firm in 1989.

Today, Tharp Brothers offers a wide range of services, including directional drilling, plowing, trenching, backhoe work, and handhole and manhole installation. However, the company's primary work is plowing, blowing and pulling fiber optic cable for independent phone companies. Tharp has worked throughout the Midwest for a number of phone companies and is currently working for the Colchester, Ill.-based McDonough Telephone Cooperative on FTTP (fiber to the premises) upgrades and service area expansion projects.

"We've been on the project for six years, placing fiber to the homes in all the rural areas," Tharp explained. "It's an ongoing job. Once that's done, we'll move in and start doing the small villages and towns." The completion date is still a decade off.

The company's primary work is plowing, blowing and pulling fiber optic cable for independent phone companies.

As a contractor representing a utility to its customer, Tharp is conscientious about maintaining high professional standards in both employees and equipment. He requires employees to be experienced and courteous, and he wants his equipment to be dependable and well-maintained.

Case equipment has been the answer to having dependable equipment, he noted. "We never have any breakdowns."

Tharp Brothers has used Case CX36B mini excavators on its fiber projects for about five years. The company owns four of these excavators, and Tharp plans to buy a few more in the spring.

"We like the stability of the CX36B. We demoed a bunch of different brands, and we felt the Case was the best. It's operator friendly, and it's a good choice for laying fiber optic because it won't tear up a customer's yard as much as a backhoe," Tharp observed. "The Case is easy to maneuver;



The reliable and versatile Case CX36B mini-excavator has been a workhorse for the underground utility contractor.

you can get down in a ditch and get out without tearing the ditch up."

Tharp has been buying Case equipment since he started his business, and he still owns two backhoes he purchased before the mini excavators—a 580K and a 580L. "When I started out, they were the most affordable option, and we continue to have good success with them."

He is also a firm believer in taking care of his equipment. "I have a mechanic on staff who takes care of them. We keep them washed and waxed, and change the oil and filters. In doing that, we don't have to take a wrench to them." Tharp can't recall any of his Case machines ever needing serious work.

Tharp has been a customer of the Galesburg Birkey's

ROTHERS

Forebear Fiber Future

"We never have any breakdowns ... We like the stability of the CX36B. We demoed a bunch of different brands, and we felt the Case was the best.

Ron Tharp; Founder, Tharp Brothers



store for several years, and he has a good relationship with sales rep Gregg Kromphardt. "When you call to get a price from Gregg, he's right on top of it. He doesn't make you wait. If you want to demo a machine, he'll bring it right down. He gets the numbers to you so you can decide what you want to do, and nine times out of 10, Birkey's numbers are better than anyone else's."

"Nine times out of 10, Birkey's numbers are better than anyone else's."

Ron Tharp; Founder, Tharp Brothers

While the brother referred to in the company's name—Kenny—left the underground utility business and returned to masonry, Tharp Brothers remains a family-owned business. Ron's wife, Darci, serves as president and handles payroll. Two of Ron's brothers-in-law work for the company—one has been with the company for 14 years and the other for 15. A lead foreman has been there 11 years and the office manager for 15 years, making them just as much a part of the family. Also, many of the other 20-plus employees have been with the company for at least a decade. "We couldn't have gotten where we are without good employees," Tharp noted.



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