



Technicians for Macy's Services are on the job in scenic Jackson Hole, Wyo. The Grand Teton mountains are in the background.

GOING WHERE THE WORK IS

Macy's Services in scenic Jackson Hole has expanded by taking on new lines of business at the request of customers

By Marian Bond

Bobbie Reppa's father built his sewer, drain and septic business by discovering needs in the community, and sometimes by responding when the community came to him and said, "We need this service."

Jim and Lee Macy started Macy's Services in scenic Jackson Hole, Wyo., in the mid 1980s with two dump trucks and a water truck. From there, they gradually added equipment and services.

He would consider whether there was enough business to pay for the equipment and to realize a profit and then, if so, go for it.

Bobbie and Dwight Reppa bought the business in 1999, and they still follow the same growth philosophy. Waterjetting, video inspection work, and drain and sewer cleaning account for a significant share of their business, although they are also strong players in drainfield restoration, septic tank pump-

ing, dewatering and portable restrooms. They will soon add storm drain cleaning.

Tourist hotbed

For many of these services, Macy's is the only game in town, and this is quite a town. Jackson lies in Wyoming just south of the Grand Teton National Park — the valley is better known as Jackson Hole. The population year round is about 14,000 mostly wealthy people, but during summer or ski season that

PROFILE

MACY'S SERVICES, JACKSON, WYO.

- OWNERS: Dwight and Bobbie Reppa
- FOUNDED: 1980s
- EMPLOYEES: 10 year-round, 13 summer
- AREA SERVED: 60-mile radius from headquarters
- SERVICES: Video inspection, jetting, drainfield restoration, septic system pumping and inspection, grease pumping, dewatering, portable toilets, potable water, storm drain cleaning

number can reach half a million. When a customer needs service, Macy's is ready.

It was in 1984 that Jim Macy bought a sewer jetter unit. The community had come to him and suggested he take such a step. While the city had a jetter for its work, there was the need for jetting services among local businesses. For example, if a local hotel had a line problem, it took a long time to get a jetter from another community 70 miles away.

So Jim evaluated this need and agreed to add the service. Jetting soon became an integral part of the business, especially during winter when water pipes froze. Dwight Reppa estimates that jetting represents about 50 percent of the business during spring, summer and fall. In winter, it approaches 80 percent.

"We are the only company within 60 miles that has any jetting equipment," says Dwight. "Many of the local plumbers have cable machines and can clear smaller lines. Our target is the exterior lines — the longer runs the plumbers can't handle."

"Our cable machine is a General Speedroter 91. We have two 100-foot, 1/2-inch cables. It's a heavy machine. Because of our capability, we get the referrals for those longer runs. For any smaller jobs that come our way, we refer back to the plumbers. We have a good relationship with the plumbers in this town."

Winter problems

He describes a recent extremely cold

winter where the temperature stayed well below freezing even during the day. It was a light-snow year so there was no ground cover. Everything froze. "That particular year we could not keep the jetter in the shop," Dwight says. The Aquatech jetter delivers up to 2,000 psi, but Dwight estimates that for defrosting a line the necessary pressure is about 1,200 psi. The water is not heated — it's the pressure that cuts through the ice.

"If a house has been vacant, the ice can become very hard," says Dwight. "Once we have cleared a line, it is not likely to refreeze, unless it has been poorly installed, or is too shallow in the ground. It all depends on the circumstances."

Macy's is the only local company with camera equipment and offers video inspection in Jackson Hole and adjoining areas. This service is in demand, especially when local plumbers or contractors run into a problem they can't diagnose.

Macy's uses a Gen-Eye camera from General Pipe Cleaners. Jim Macy started out with a General camera, and Dwight recently acquired new equipment, sticking with a product he believed worked well. "The camera work has really taken off in the last two years," says Dwight. "This one we now have has the two reels and we can now go into the smaller lines."

Customers for cleaning and video services include several homeowner associations and the local country club and golf course.

While Macy's is geared to expansion and a variety of services, the company stays away from indoor plumbing. Reppas are looking to fill a niche not

Dwight Reppa deploys a Gen-Eye inspection camera.



Macy's owner Dwight Reppa gets ready to load the company's new grease pumping machine onto a truck.

already taken or a niche that can benefit the customers or community.

In the woods

An important customer for Macy's is the U.S. Forest Service and Grand Teton National Park, which actually was once a collection of ranches with old infrastructure — in other words, a maintenance challenge.

Macy's cleans mainlines at one of the campgrounds where there are old 8-inch concrete lines with significant root intrusion. This called for Macy's to add yet another service. Macy's at first subcontracted the work but ultimately purchased the Speedroooter unit from General, which also handles other cleaning projects and can service up to 10-inch pipe.

What Makes Macy's Run

During winter, the crew at Macy's Services (when not out using the jetter getting rid of ice) is kept busy with maintenance chores.

All mechanical work is done in-house. There are two mechanics on staff, headed up by shop foreman Jerry Despain, with Chad Sparrow assisting. Former owner Jim Macy, an excellent mechanic, remains available for consultation. There are 10 crew members (13 during summer).

It's a challenge to handle major repair work in summer, when all equipment is on the go. Regular maintenance proceeds year-round. In addition to its jetter, the company has four pump trucks. The company just purchased a new truck from Jay's Inc. — a 2003 Peterbilt chassis with a Demag pump. The 2,500-gallon tank and body are aluminum. The split tank holds 2,300 gallons of septage and 200 gallons of fresh water. A new Conde compact portable pumping system is used for grease collection.

Dwight says that with the new truck the company will be outfitted to service car wash sumps, thus getting them into another line of business. In addition, the county increasingly requires storm drains in developments. Someone will have to clean them. With this new equipment, why not Macy's?

"We wanted the work, and it's not good to say to a customer, 'We now have to get in someone else for part of the job,'" says Bobbie. "We would rather finish it ourselves."

One job that came to Dwight's mind involved the use of the jetter and root cutter in doing a 300-foot run in a concrete pipe. "We were eating up blades like crazy," he says. "We would go through a blade on every run. Given the remoteness of the location, we had to take in our generator and pull in the campground generator so we could run the root-cutting equipment and the camera."

"It was not our most challenging job, but we needed those resources, and it was a good thing we had them. We have a big generator that works well. It is by Yamaha and has 12,000 watts capacity. We get into a lot of those situations where there is no power. Sewers, but no power."

High-end customers

Because the majority of the area is on

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Dwight Reppa



From the left, Jim Macy, Bobbie Reppa and Dwight Reppa. Jim is Bobbie's father and one of the co-owners of the company before Dwight and Bobbie bought it.

septic systems, Macy's fills that niche, as well. Grease collection and grease processing are also important to the community, and that's mainly why Macy's is in that business. "That's really our goal as a company. To be profitable, but meet those needs," says Dwight.

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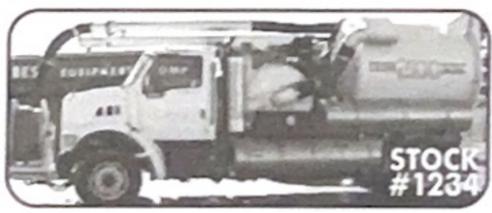
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1997 SECA Truck Jet on 1986 GMC Chassis: Gas/gas, stick, 10,238 mi. on chassis, low hours on SECA. **\$11,900**



1995 Vactor 2112 on Ford LNT8000: Allison auto., 64,038 mi., 2-stage fan, 8' boom, tele./rot. reel, rear door locks, body flushout, 60 gpm @ 2000 psi, pump rebuilt by auth. Vactor dealer, new RH side water tanks. **\$105,700**

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The Macy's equipment fleet includes this restroom trailer, built by Advanced Containment Systems Inc. (ACSI).

Currently a company from Utah collects grease from foodservice businesses throughout the community. However that company cannot be there on a same-day basis. "In the summer, there may be half a million people in town, and it's the same thing in winter when people are here to ski," says Dwight. "So if there's a need to collect grease we can do it."

"We used to be able to dump grease locally at the town wastewater treatment plant. In 1999, they decided that could not continue. For a while, we got out of the grease pumping business, and the Utah company was collecting all the grease. But in winter and on emergency calls, it was difficult for them to service the community. So we got back into it and we bought dewatering equipment, so we can deal with it." The dewatering system they purchased is by Flo Trend Systems, Inc.

"We will either landfill the grease, or we will be into another project — composting," Dwight says. "We think that will happen. So we will continue to collect grease as the town of Jackson is requiring more frequent cleaning of grease traps, and the Utah company cannot be here on a weekly basis."

Dwight says Macy's advertises primarily through telephone directories and by offering discounts and supporting local charity events. As a rule the company will be recognized in a printed program, as well as simply being on site with portable toilets.

Otherwise, advertising comes from word of mouth — and just from being there for the community. ■

"That's really our goal as a company: to be profitable, but meet those needs."

Dwight Reppa

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