

# Missouri LICA NEWS

Volume 67, Number 2

The Missouri Land Improvement Contractors Association

January/February, 2008



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**Sondra Brinton**

*Auxiliary Vice President*

**Mona Bledsoe**

*Auxiliary Secretary*

**Lisa Davis**

*Auxiliary Treasurer*

## BAD BART FOUND!

It's true ... the MLICA cowboy posse found Bad Bart at our 2008 Winter Convention! And, we never expected that it would be Jim Bledsoe, our very own Vice President!

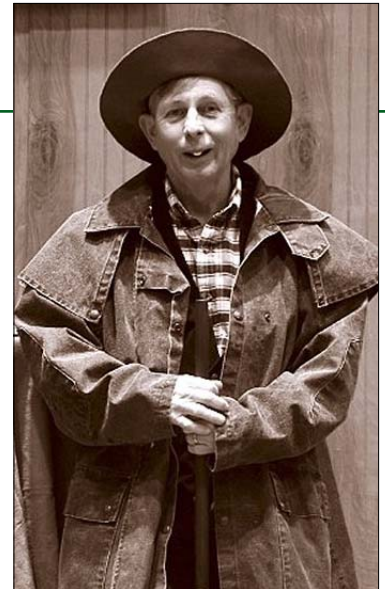
Thanks to the generous donation of their time and talent, the Ladies Auxiliary Convention Committee were able to transport all of us back to the old, wild west.

Throughout this newsletter, we will have some of the old-time photos taken during the Convention.

If you missed this Convention, you really lost out on some great information, fun and laughs! Even the Associates got into the act during our Exhibit Hall. We'd like to particularly thank the following Associate members who helped make the 2008 Winter Convention such a success:

Agri Drain Corp.  
ASP Enterprises  
Continental Western Group  
HeavyQuip  
MFA Oil Company  
Missouri One Call System, Inc.  
Port Industries, Inc.  
Precision Intakes Ltd

Prinsco, Inc.  
Prins Insurance, Inc.  
Scheib Drainage Products  
Springfield Plastics, Inc.  
SunSource  
Sydenstricker Implement Co.  
Winter-Dent & Company



↑ MLICA Associates get into the spirit during the 2008 Exhibit Hall

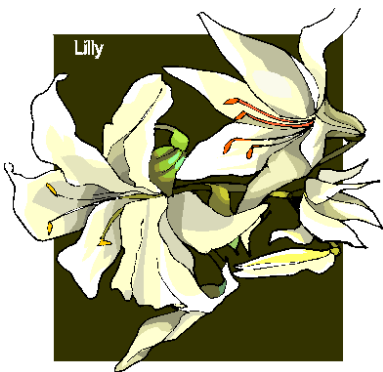
## Directory Updates

**Mike and Susie Dobson** have a new address. It is: 18931 Highway 24; Lexington, MO 64067; Home phone and fax: 660-259-6296. Mike's cell phone and email remain the same.

**Steve Taylor** is the new MLICA contact for the **Missouri Agribusiness Association**. The phone and fax numbers remain the same but Steve's email is: staylor@mo-ag.com.

**Prinsco, Inc.** has changed the territories for its sales force. That means that Ken Skinner will no longer be covering Missouri. Richard Wearmouth and Andrew Vogel will now be covering the Missouri territory. Their contact information is: Richard Wearmouth; Prinsco, Inc.; 850 Hawkeye Road; Jesup, IA 50648-0527; Ph: 800-728-6428; Fx: 319-827-3103; Cell: 319-361-2948; Email: richardw@prinsco.com and Andrew Vogel; Prinsco, Inc.; P.O. Box 72; Farmhamville, IA 50538; Ph: 800-728-6428; Cell: 319-331-2283

**Victor L. Phillips Co.** has a new Missouri LICA representative: Greg Knipp; The Victor L. Phillips Co.; 4100 Gardner Ave., P.O. Box 4915; Kansas City, MO 64120-1832; District: 3; County: Jackson; Phone: 816-241-9290; Fax: 816-241-1738.



*With Our  
Deepest  
Sympathy*

During this time of sorrow, we offer our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of the following individuals:

**Ted Pyle**, Montana LICA contractor member and Montana LICA Executive Director, died on December 18, 2007 as the result of a trucking accident.

**Arthur W. Lamme**, former Missouri LICA member, passed away at his home on December 9, 2007.

**Ralph Struchtemeyer**, brother of Missouri LICA contractor member Olin Struchtemeyer, died December 12, 2007 during an ice storm in central Missouri.

**Jeremy Schottel**, son of Missouri LICA District #1 members Rod & Lori Schottel, died on January 21, 2008 as the result of a car accident.



## From the Dash of the Dozer ...

Wow, it's already February and I'm still talking about our Winter Convention. If you weren't there, you don't know of all the fun and friends you missed. We had a full agenda with speakers from DNR, NRCS, Missouri Highway Patrol, Mo Division of Labor, and Prins Insurance. If you didn't learn something here, you weren't paying attention!

Also, it was a great time at the Exhibit hall Friday night and we are always glad to see all the Associates. Remember to give back to the ones that are so generous to us.

At our membership meeting we voted that if a new contractor member attends the Convention, does not enjoy himself, and wants to quit, we will refund their dues. The group discussed contractor certification, dam safety and one call legislation, and the 2008 Summer Meeting and Field Day. We also elected officers, with Larry LaFollette being elected President. Larry is a good man for the job and has appointed several committees to steer MLICA in the right direction.

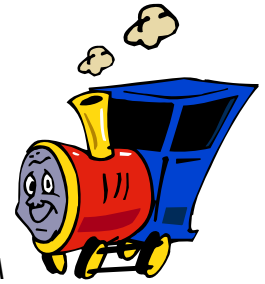
Saturday night, we all gussied up as cowboys and cowgirls, rustled up some good grub, and listened to a couple cowpokes sing and tell some tales. Then, we saddled up the horses for some barrel racin', six shootin', cow pie tossin', and a roping good time.

I would like to encourage all members to get involved and stay involved. You might be surprised at what you can learn, who you can meet, and the fun you can have.

Milburn Davis  
MLICA Chairman



# Welcome Aboard!



*We'd like to welcome the following members to Missouri LICA ... and thank the current LICA members who signed them up! Why don't you take a few minutes and welcome them personally?*

## Contractor Members

### **Rex Combs**

Drill Tech Inc.  
502 Missouri St.  
Tipton, MO 65081  
District: 5 County: Moniteau  
Phone: 660-433-6444  
Fax: 660-433-5324  
Cell: 573-864-3369  
Email: drill489@aol.com  
Work Categories: DB, RBD, SP  
Equipment: BH, LD

### **Mont Gilbert; Sue**

Gilbert & Sons Construction, Inc.  
P.O. Box 21  
Montgomery City, MO 63361  
District: 2 County: Montgomery  
Ph: 573-564-3964  
Fx: 573-564-3424  
Cell: 573-219-2532  
Email: msgilbert@ktis.net  
Work Categories: CU, PD, DB, RBD,  
SEP, EMC, EXG, TH, WM, ODW  
Equipment: BH, LD, DP, DZ, EX, TR  
Sponsor: Mel Kleinsorge

### **Matthew Haley; Beth**

C&M Contractors of Missouri LLC  
P.O. Box 445  
Lancaster, MO 63548  
District: 2 County: Schuyler  
Ph: 660-457-3006  
Fx: 660-457-3037  
Cell: 660-341-8906  
Email: cm.contractors@sbcglobal.net  
Work Categories: DB, SWU  
Equipment: BH, DZ, EX, TR

### **Rickey Martin; Beverley**

Midland Construction Co., Inc.  
111 South Perry  
Lancaster, MO 63548  
District: 2 County: Schuyler  
Ph: 660-457-2161  
Fx: 660-457-3192  
Cell: 660-341-3379

### **Seth Paul; Andrea**

Seth Paul Excavating  
7777 New Haven Road  
Columbia, MO 65201  
District: 2 County: Boone  
Ph: 573-999-5509  
Fx: 573-443-2223  
Sponsor: Winter-Dent & Company

### **Clinton Ray; Lisa**

Ray's Construction LLC  
20458 Pike 137  
Louisiana, MO 63353  
District: 2 County: Pike  
Ph: 573-754-3289  
Fx: 573-754-3289  
Cell: 573-754-2590  
Work Categories: DB, RBD, SWU  
Equipment: BH, DZ, EX, TR

### **Mike Schrage; Terry**

BRS Construction  
Rt. 1, Box 159  
Edina, MO 63537  
District: 2 County: Knox  
Ph: 660-397-3264  
Fx: 660-397-3668  
Cell: 660-341-4665  
Work Categories: PD, R, DI, EC, EMC,  
EXG, LL, WM, ODW  
Equipment, GR, DP, DZ, ME, EX

## Company Member

### **Ray Bruton**

Bowersox Insurance Agency Company  
3537 S. Kingshighway  
St. Louis, MO 63139  
District: 6 County: St. Louis City  
Phone: 314-832-8010, ext. 132  
Fax: 314-832-6225  
Cell: 314-220-4223  
Email: rayb@biaco.com

### **Bruce Parsons**

Tague Steel & Iron LLC  
RR 1, Box 135V  
Memphis, MO 63555  
District: 2 County: Scotland  
Ph: 660-282-3420  
Fx: 660-282-3419  
Cell: 660-651-0752  
Em: bparsi@hotmail.com  
Sponsor: Hollis Boyer

## Supporting Member

### **Mandy Heinen**

Prinsco, Inc.  
1717 16th St. NE, 3rd Floor  
Willmar, MN 56201

### **Jerry Koechner**

17140 Lafayette Trails Ct.  
Wildwood, MO 63038  
Cell: 816-288-2644  
Email: jkoechner@yahoo.com

### **Bill Meyers**

SunSource  
10855 Metro Court, Suite C  
Maryland Heights, MO 63043  
Ph: 314-324-1941

### **Andrew Vogel**

Prinsco, Inc.  
P.O. Box 72  
Farmhamville, IA 50538  
Ph: 800- 728-6428  
Cell: 319-331-2283

***www.MLICA.org***

## Our Leaders

The following members have agreed to serve on the MLICA 2008 Committees. Please contact these leaders if you have questions, suggestions or want to get involved. Remember, we need EVERYONE to get involved ... that means you, too!

### Legislation: Gerald Bauer, Chair

**Members:** Buddy Hostetter, Milburn Davis & Ken Balkenbusch

**Goal:** Monitor One Call and Dam Safety Legislation

### Convention/Education: Ken Balkenbusch, Chair

**Members:** Jake Gingerich & Melvin Beckemeyer

**Goal:** Determine location and education courses for the 2009 Winter Convention

### Budget/By-Laws: Ozzie Wallace, Chair

**Members:** Nelson Wilson & Gayle Matthews

**Goal:** Develop a budget for the 2008-09 membership year for approval by the membership at the 2008 Summer Meeting

### Governmental Relations: Charlie Boyer, Chair

**Members:** Eddie Gilmore & John Houston

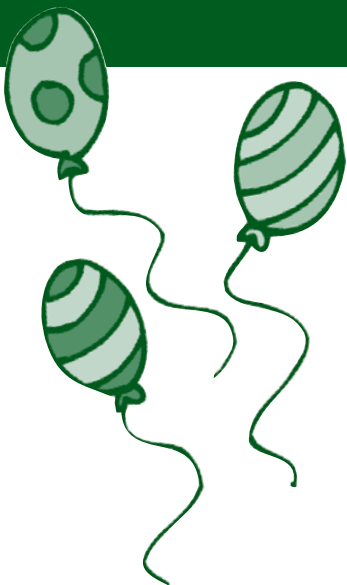
**Goal:** Attend the DNR Soil and Water Commission and NRCS State Technical Committee meetings throughout the year and send a report to the MLICA state office; In addition, the committee will work with DNR Soil and Water Program Director, Bill Foster, regarding either certification and/or insurance requirements those installing cost-share projects.



*Above: Stephanie Taylor and Larry LaFollette, MLICA President; Below: Shelley and Bruce Barnhart, LICA Region IV Vice President*



## Happy Birthday!



### March

3 J.D. Kelly  
 12 Ray Garrett  
 15 George Schulte  
 19 Hannah Slayden  
 MaryAnn Wilson  
 20 Bud Ward  
 25 Gene Haile  
 26 John Flora  
 28 Scott Thompson  
 31 Roger Wehmeyer

### April

1 Tim O'Neill  
 14 Don Scheib  
 15 Mel Kleinsorge  
 16 Jean Dittmer  
 17 Marlissa Dodge  
 18 Violet Corbett  
 Jeff Houston  
 19 Marty Dodge  
 25 Beverley Martin  
 26 Bob Parks  
 28 Billy Brewster

### May

2 Ronnie Corbett  
 6 Carol Woods  
 10 Fred Alexander  
 Jake Gingerich  
 15 Nancy Richardson  
 22 Brent Limback  
 24 Glennis Ward  
 28 Janet Parks  
 Bruce Parsons  
 Eddie Winters  
 29 Sally Bauer  
 30 Gerald Bauer  
 31 Ozzie Wallace



From left: Matthew, Dave and Patrick Dittmer.

# Standing Up for Standards

The owners of Dittmer Ditching believe in professional education and standards as assurance of quality work for customers and as a way to level the playing field

by Doug Day

## DITTMER DITCHING

Calhoun, Mo.

OWNERS: Dave, Matthew and Patrick Dittmer

FOUNDED: 1959

SPECIALTIES: Onsite system installation and maintenance (conventional and LPP), sewer and water installation, general excavation

AFFILIATIONS: NOWRA, Missouri Smallflows Organization, Missouri Land Improvement Contractors Association

WEB SITE: [www.dittmerditching.com](http://www.dittmerditching.com)

If you want to know what Dave Dittmer thinks about the onsite wastewater industry, just ask him. Hardheaded, straight talking, and a crusty old codger – that is one description of him, and it's from a nomination speech for a position on the board of the Missouri Smallflows Organization.

Dittmer has been on the board for more than six years, re-elected to a fourth term in January, and he is proud of what the group is accomplishing.

“Education is the key to this business from every standpoint, from legislation, to installation, to operation,” says Dittmer, owner of Dittmer Ditching in Calhoun, Mo., near the Lake of the Ozarks and the Truman Lake Dam.

In his own business, Dittmer prides himself on doing the job right, and on doing it a little differently (a little better, he would argue) than others.

## Times Changing

Dittmer Ditching has been in operation since 1959, when it was an excavating company that did some septic system work. “You’d dig about 25 feet of 12-inch wide ditch, put in a 55-gallon barrel for a septic tank, add 25 feet of lateral line, and another barrel at the end with holes punched in it and gravel around it. That was a septic system.”

Something like that may have been all right, by that day’s standards, for a weekend cabin. But people are living in those lake cabins full-time now, and the population is growing. Still, Dittmer says, “Some installers are still doing open end discharge: ‘Get our money and run.’”

Dittmer supports the registration and continuing education requirements of

“Dittmer” >p6

This article first appeared in the August 2007 issue of Onsite Installer magazine, published by COLE Publishing, Three Lakes, Wis., [www.onsiteinstaller.com](http://www.onsiteinstaller.com). It is reprinted by permission.



↑ *Patrick Dittmer operates an excavator.*

Missouri's onsite wastewater regulations – rules passed in 1996 with the help of MSO, which was formed in 1995. He says it's just a few installers who are "doing most of the bellyaching" about the requirements.

"They don't want to take time out, but they're the ones that are the low bidders every time," he says. "They buy their jobs on price, and get by with as little as they can get by with. Some of these rules are cramping their style, and they don't like it."

While such installers put their licenses in jeopardy, Dittmer says they don't seem to care. "That's one place where the MSO comes in," he says. "We're trying to educate people." One such endeavor was a soils seminar held at the start of the MSO annual conference this year.

## **Proud of Progress**

"I'm proud of all this stuff and helped develop some of it," Dittmer says. Installers need 20 hours of continuing education every three years, he says, and can get nine of that just by attending the annual MSO conference.

When Dittmer joined the fledgling MSO, there were about 200 members, mostly regulators and suppliers. Today, the association has more than 500 members. Most are installers, but they're still the minority of the 2,600 registered installers in the state.

Dittmer is a big believer in the professionalism, integrity, and constant updating of methods and technology encouraged by MSO. In the 1980s, he was buying 500-gallon septic tanks in bulk and installing 100 feet of lateral for a drainfield. His home county didn't have onsite regulations until 1989.

Dittmer thinks of himself as a leader. He was first in his area to use chambers from Infiltrator Systems Inc. He had one of first skid-steer loaders used for onsite installation. He was first to put tracks on a skid-steer and was first with mini-excavators.

"We have always been just a little bit different than everybody else," he says. "I don't mean to be bragging, but it seems to me that a lot of the things we do have been taken up by our competition. We are just about the first ones to try anything."

## **A Little Adaptation**

Dittmer Ditching, which includes just Dave and his two co-owner sons, Matthew and Patrick, still does some excavation work and sewer and water installation. Dave is a registered perc tester and does some septic system maintenance, but it's mainly a septic system installation company. Sign a maintenance agreement when the company installs a system, and you get a guarantee.

"We try to do a conventional system if at all possible," Dittmer says. He mainly uses drainfield chambers and buys mostly polyethylene tanks. He uses two-compartment tanks when needed to gain a little edge in marginal conditions. He'll also use concrete tanks if necessary in some of the rockier soils in Missouri.

He calls his systems "conventional with a little adaptation." Dittmer uses chambers set in clean, inch-and-a-half rock instead of just burying the chambers in soil. When needed, he'll get more filtration by adding a filter fabric around the gravel. "Little things like that are what we do to try to make a better quality system," he says. "Of course, it adds a little cost. Sometimes we can sell it, sometimes we can't."

He sometimes installs dosing systems with chambers. That's not the norm, but he does it when necessary to build a

**"Dittmer" >p7**

# Dittmer *(from page 5)*

high-quality system. “We’ve had good luck with it,” he says. “We found that using a pump system and dosing is very effective.”

## Tackling Price-Pushers

He is not a big believer in drainfield size reduction. That has cost him some work, but he won’t quote anything below 200 feet of drainfield trench even when others will. “Of course, they beat you every time,” he says. “They charge the customer more than they would have for 150 feet, but less than I’d charge for 200 feet, and they beat me every time.” And some times, the customer ends up calling him later.

“They say ‘He won’t return my calls. I’m tired of messing with him,’” says Dittmer. In one case, he upset a potential customer who had selected another installer and had problems with the system. “I asked if it was worth the \$400 difference, and he hung up on me,” Dittmer recalls.

Some installers, he says, will give a low estimate, then charge to fix problems the customer runs into. “When it’s all said and done, the customer has a lower-quality system and has paid as much as I would have charged him up front,” Dittmer says.

Dittmer was able to solve a long-standing problem with a system that just wouldn’t work, even though the county had ordered a certain design for the undersized lot. “The builder just did what he had to do, and they tried to make it all gravity,” he says. “In order to make it fit the lot, they put in a drainage well. It never did work right. It failed and it failed and it failed.”

Eventually, a neighbor granted an easement for 100 feet of additional lateral so the system could be made to work, but the easement was good only for the current owner. Tragically, the owner was killed in a car accident last year, ending the easement. So the survivors couldn’t sell the house because it didn’t have a working septic system.



↑ **Matthew Dittmer checks the grade for placement of drainfield chamber.**

## Doing It Right

They called Dittmer to solve the problem, and it ended up being both costly and complicated. He added an aerobic treatment unit, with a pump tank, a 1,500 square-foot drainage bed that had to be installed partially over the old bed, and a 1,000-gallon septic tank. It was expensive, but it works.

Another customer was so happy when Dittmer solved a long-standing problem with another installer’s system that he sent a Christmas card. “Thanks so much for all your excellent work on our septic system,” the customer wrote. “No complaints from the neighbors, no flashing red lights, and no audible alarms!”

Dittmer says his reputation for professionalism and integrity – and for doing it right – has helped his company. “When I tell someone it’s so many dollars, it’s so many dollars, unless there’s just a terrible difference,” he says. “I try to make sure that doesn’t happen.”

Dittmer doesn’t think Missouri is as tough as other states when it comes to regulations, but he believes the state has done a great deal and is getting better.

“I don’t like regulations any more than anybody else,” he says. “But when installers won’t try to do what’s right, when all they’re interested in is getting the job, putting money in their pocket and running, you’re going to need some rules. And that’s what I’ve been fighting for for several years.”

## Level Playing Field

That fight has included testifying before legislative hearings in his trademark cap, and working with MSO and his local legislator to beat down efforts to kill the registration and education requirements. “Of course we fought that,” he says. “I do not have a problem with competition as long as it’s good competition.”

The rules, he says, help put everyone on the same page. But counties still have the right to set their own regulations, and that causes some problems. Dittmer Ditching works in five counties within a 50-mile radius, so he works with five different sets of rules. “That’s what makes our job so tough. You have all these different rules.”

Dittmer gets upset thinking about installers who “just throw it in and bury it.” In his view, “It’s got to be right. If it’s supposed to be level, it has to be level. If it’s supposed to have a certain degree of fall, it has to have that certain degree of fall. And if it takes a few more minutes to tweak it out, that’s what happens.”

As he states on his web site, “The bitterness of poor quality remains long after the sweetness of low prices is forgotten.”

**Your Key to Success**

**[www.MLICA.org](http://www.MLICA.org)**



*Left to right, top row: Ozzie & Patty Wallace, Gayle & Ginger Matthews, Melvin & Virginia Beckemeyer  
Left to right, middle row: John & Pat Houston, Gerald & Sally Bauer, Mel & Helen Kleinsorge  
Left to right, bottom row: Dennis & Sondra Brinton, Norm & Coretha Rozendaal, Milburn & Lisa Davis*