

Wild Wing, the Anaheim Ducks mascot, showed up to greet the Ben's Asphalt, Inc. crew when they resurfaced the Ducks parking area at the Honda Center.



# A PAVING COMPANY IN THE PEOPLE BUSINESS

For *Ben's Asphalt, Inc.*, the road is paved with quality

by Ralph Fuller

**F**or the leaders of *Ben's Asphalt, Inc.*, the keys to customer satisfaction are its hard-working team of dedicated employees, close relationships with top suppliers and an in-house approach that ensures quality at every phase of the construction process.

These commitments have enabled Ben's Asphalt to grow from the back of founder Ben Skeffington's pickup in 1961 into the one of the largest asphalt paving companies in Southern California, led now by Ben's sons, Bill and John. Building on the company's West Coast success, the Skeffington brothers have embarked on

developing a national presence, with projects throughout the United States.

"We decided we needed to focus on only bidding work we could perform in-house so that we could be sure each job is done right," says Bill, who serves as CEO and owns the business jointly with John, who is Chief Financial Officer. "To do this, we've made a point of developing full capabilities within the company. We operate our own transportation unit, for example, so that we can be sure of having equipment where it's needed precisely when it's needed."

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John adds, “Our product is paving, but our mindset is that we’re in the people business. We strive to maintain a work environment where our employees can perform at their best. We rely on suppliers we know well to provide us with the highest-quality materials available. And we work to keep relationships with our customers close, so that they understand the process and we understand their needs.”

## STARTING ‘AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD’

In California, Ben’s Asphalt employs more than 200 workers based at locations in Santa Ana, Anaheim, Riverside and Calimesa. The company operates six full-time, new construction paving crews as well as four full-time repair paving crews, three seal-coating crews and three striping crews.

The reach of Ben’s Asphalt wasn’t always so. Ben started the business by taking his pickup door-to-door soliciting driveway jobs. He worked “at the top of the world,” as John puts it—in hilly Laguna Beach, where the grades were so steep other companies avoided them.

Gradually, Ben moved on to small commercial jobs and expanded from there. His older son, Bill, joined the company in the mid-1980s, John a few years later. Bill came with a bent for operations, John for administration.

“We have two totally different personalities,” John says. “It allows us to compensate for each other’s foibles. If we agree on something, the probability of success is high. If we don’t, it’s not likely to happen.” Ben

Skeffington remained involved with the company until his death in 2002.

John envisions that his three sons and Bill’s two might come into the business someday—but only after they’ve worked elsewhere for an understanding of the real world. “Then,” he says, “if they want to be part of Ben’s Asphalt, they’ll still have to work their way up the ranks.”

Today, the company’s range of offerings encompasses new construction and repair/maintenance services for projects including industrial parks,

schools, shopping centers, churches, business parking lots and more. When Ben’s Asphalt contracts with homeowners’ associations for subdivision/road paving, it often adds on driveways when area homeowners request the work.

Significant projects have included parking areas for Angel Stadium, the home of Major League Baseball’s Los Angeles Angels, and the Honda Center, home of the National Hockey League’s Anaheim Ducks. When the Ducks built Great Park Ice & FivePoint Arena, a state-of-the-art

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John Skeffington, Chief Financial Officer,  
Ben’s Asphalt, Inc.



Ben’s Asphalt, Inc. maintains four paving crews to repair and maintain existing asphalt surfaces.



Asphalt rollers are used to compact new asphalt on a resurfaced road in Chino, California.



Precision measurement and modification of the subsurface are essential to ensure that runoff will not pool on resurfaced roads like this one in Chino, California.



The LeeBoy Asphalt Paver is a mainstay of maintenance and repair projects by Ben's Asphalt, Inc.

practice rink and community skating complex, it was Ben's Asphalt that was hired to construct the parking surfaces.

## TWO SIDES: LABOR AND SUPPLY

The company is equipped to handle both sides of paving needs: new construction and repair/maintenance. Bill emphasizes that these are essentially two different fields of work.

"Maintenance is labor-intensive; new construction is supply-intensive," he says. "It's a matter of taking something already there and making it new again versus creating something from the ground up."

Repair and maintenance often require grinding down the existing pavement and working to ensure that the redefined elevations of a new overlay allow for water runoff, approach ramp connections and other elements.

Sealcoating is an important step. It fills surface cracks to prevent water from seeping in and damaging base layers, protects the asphalt from the slow, steady attack of dripped oil and gasoline, and minimizes oxidation from the sun's ultraviolet rays.

"With new construction projects, grading and paving a site from scratch is an immense undertaking that involves intensive engineering, technical expertise and precise timelines," Bill says.

## SETTING UP EMPLOYEES FOR SUCCESS

Maintaining a workforce committed to this field can be challenging in the 2020s, John says. "It's difficult to attract entry-level people. We rely on referrals from our workforce and friends. A few long-term employees have brought in their kids. We strive to create a great work environment that takes care of our people with attractive pay,



recognition and reasonable expectations and flexibility. We try to set them up for success.”

The firm offers annual bonuses for employees at every level, from car wash laborer to senior manager. Monthly luncheons celebrate birthdays. A year-end golf tournament recognizes field supervisors and project estimators.

### **A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY**

Ben's Asphalt is heavily involved in community charity outreach, supporting causes and activities as diverse as the Natalie's Wish golf tournament to raise money for the Cystinosis Research Foundation, Laura's House for domestic violence victims, the Feed SoCal food drive, the Wells of Life 5K walk/race event to provide funding for clean water wells in Uganda, and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Each year, the company supports several charities by purchasing and fixing up old vehicles to be auctioned

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Ben's Asphalt, Inc. crew leader Franco Hernandez "tacks" an edge, applying binder to ensure new asphalt will stick to the concrete curb.



for use in the OC Fair's Orange Crush Demolition Derby. The sales jointly benefit the Orangewood Foundation (a fund for youth services), Susan G. Komen breast cancer research and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Capistrano Valley.

Most visibly, Ben's Asphalt has joined with the Matt Leinart Foundation for the past five years to sponsor a golf tournament to raise funds for the foundation's mission of helping disadvantaged youth. Aside from its charitable purpose, the event is an opportunity for the company, its project managers and its customers to strengthen relationships. But the charitable process works the other way, as well. Support for the Wells of Life and Natalie's Wish events came about when customers involved in them reached out to the Skeffingtons.

## NATIONAL OUTREACH

Focusing on local projects that could be performed completely within the company has long been key to the company's quality control. But several years ago, the Skeffingtons found the approach came with a drawback. They might bid on local projects for large retailers such as Target or Walmart, but the trend has been for those chains

to contract such work for their stores nationally. Ben's Asphalt was losing out on contracts for projects in its own neck of the woods.

"Our customers asked if we could expand our services outside California," John says, "so about five years ago, we established a national program with a Midwest division office in Saint Joseph, Missouri. Since then, we've been awarded projects with big-box stores like Target and The Home Depot in 30 states."

He continues, "We do this by establishing relationships with reliable contractor partners wherever we have potential jobs. We ensure our level of quality is met by sending project managers to work with them and oversee the job. It lets us extend our reach nationally while making certain the project is up to our standards. And, it extends our brand." 🗨️

*Freelancer Ralph Fuller has more than 30 years' experience explaining complex topics as diverse as rare tropical diseases, alternative fuels, new highway safety technologies and the fishes and critters on coral reefs.*