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Symphony in the Flint Hills Field Journal

Warren Harshman, Rock Crusher Extraordinaire

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WARREN HARSHMAN, ROCK CRUSHER EXTRAORDINAIRE

*Applying God's principles requires a commitment to
much more than making the business profitable.*

Warren Harshman

Since the 1950s, Warren Harshman's family has excelled in the dirt excavation business. In 1978 Harshman Construction delved deeper into the rock crushing field and today operates seventeen quarries in south-central and southeast Kansas. The family firm has earned multiple awards for land reclamation efforts that follow its quarrying work. Second-generation earth and stone expert Warren Harshman details his family's Flint Hills operation.

Describe your business, what you do, and location.

Harshman Construction, with its principal office located near Cedar Point, works in the rock crushing and earth moving business.

How long have you been in business, and how did you become involved in your business?

Frank Harshman Sr. purchased his first Caterpillar bulldozer in 1950 and began building ponds and terraces on his own ranch and did dirt work for neighbors as well. These neighborhood jobs helped supplement cattle and farming operations, which were his principal sources of income. In 1970 an employee encouraged Frank Sr. to purchase a rock crusher with the understanding the experienced employee would operate the crusher. The plan did not work out and the equipment sat idle in the shed for seven years.



Rockpiles I
Laura Berman

In the mid '70s, Frank Sr.'s three sons, Frank Jr., Jeff, and Warren, all worked on the ranch and did dirt excavation work, building ponds, terraces, and watershed structures. Competition was tough during those years, and there was hardly enough dirt business to support the family. In 1978 the brothers retrieved the rock crusher from the shed to try their luck in a new endeavor that would sustain the family business.

Describe some Flint Hills projects you've been involved in.

Over the last forty-one years, Harshman Construction projects have supplied a wide range of rock products to meet the needs of the Flint Hills. We provide millions of tons of agricultural limestone, or ag-lime, to area farmers; provide loose stone, called riprap, to form foundations for river bank stabilization jobs, county roads, highways, and railroads; and supply rock for private and commercial use.

How big is your staff, and what is a typical work day like?

Harshman Construction employs seventy-four people. The staff includes workers who operate five portable crushing plants in seventeen quarry locations in south-central and southeast Kansas, twelve of which are located in the Flint Hills; five people who build much of the rock-crushing equipment; five full-time mechanics and

service techs who work diligently to keep the equipment operating; and four office support staff who take care of bookwork and dispatching trucks. Eight family members from the next generation have joined Harshman family business teams, one of which is the rock-crushing group.

How significant are the Flint Hills to your work?

The Flint Hills offer much more than cattle grazing and beautiful scenic drives. More than sixty-five underlying limestone and shale members make up the Flint Hills, but only a small number of those are suitable for rock quarry operations. From these formations come large limestone building blocks that are architecturally sized and shipped for use in Kansas, the Midwest, and beyond. The crushed aggregate we produce has multiple uses, ranging from county and township roads, highways, airports, railroads, and parking lots to agricultural lime to limestone being used in cosmetics, cattle feed, and more.

Describe an important role of your business.

The concept of mining is taking something from below the surface of the earth that is of little value in its current natural state. It is brought to the surface and processed into something needed for many purposes, including building the local, state, and national infrastructure.



Farmland Flight
Justin Marable

How does your business impact the Flint Hills?

Crushed rock is a high-bulk, low-cost product. With the low cost of crushed rock and high transportation costs, rock cannot be transported many miles before the cost of transportation exceeds the cost of the rock product. For this reason it is important for the Flint Hills area to have multiple quarry locations not only to meet the needs of public and private construction projects but also to meet the needs of Flint Hills ranchers. Rock produced locally in the Flint Hills saves

counties, townships, and the state valuable taxpayer dollars while also providing jobs for area residents.

Discuss your efforts to restore land disturbed by quarries.

Harshman Construction takes Flint Hills preservation very seriously. Operating a rock quarry requires great care and effort to restore the affected area to its original use, whether the property was originally farm ground or pasture land. Creating large water storage structures where the terrain allows is often the end result of

the quarry reclamation process. Harshman Construction proudly claims multiple state and national awards for preservation efforts. These include the State of Kansas Governor's Mined Land Reclamation Award, presented annually to one mining operator from the state, and the National Association of State Land Reclamationists Outstanding Reclamation Award, presented annually to one mining operator in the nation. These awards recognize companies that have exceeded required efforts to reclaim and restore mined properties.

What are your biggest challenges?

Challenges to the industry are similar to agriculture in some respects. High input costs continue to add to the expense of producing rock, which creates small margins and stiff competition. Among the drivers of increased expenses are the high cost of equipment and repairs, insurance, explosives, and the ever-increasing list of government agencies producing more regulations. Another challenge includes increased difficulty in getting property zoned correctly to acquire a special use permit to open and operate a rock quarry. Mining operators must comply with regulations from no less than twelve agencies. At least seven of these agencies deal with environmental regulations.

What inspires you in your work?

My inspiration for work is knowing that all we have belongs to God, and He allows us to be faithful stewards of His possessions. God entrusts and charges us with the responsibility, as much as is possible, of operating every aspect of the business with excellence. It requires making decisions that incorporate God's principles to the best of our ability and investing time, treasure, and talent into important areas outside the business. Applying God's principles requires a commitment to much more than making the business profitable.

What would you like your legacy to be?

Harshman Construction strives to be a good employer, to provide dependable and quality service to our customers, and to uphold a reputation and legacy of integrity in the industry and marketplace.



Till no. 1
Levi Robb