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## LOGIBALL Marks 30 Years

in the Trenchless Rehab Industry

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# A Logical Approach

By Andrew Farr



## ***Logiball Celebrates 30 Years of Success in the Rehab Equipment Market***

***It's a common and inspiring tale in business***

when someone with little or no experience in a particular field is able to step into a role with a company and eventually work to lead that company to continued success for years.

When Marc Ancil first interviewed for a position with Logiball on a Tuesday

in 1994, he doesn't recall being able to say much during his meeting with Roger Bissonnette, company founder and president at the time. According to Ancil, Bissonnette did most of the talking and before he knew it, he had the job. By that Friday, Bissonnette wanted Ancil to go

to a jobsite in Pittsburgh to demonstrate some of the company's products to prospective customers. At that time, Anctil had very little experience in the trenchless industry. He did, however, have degrees in business and economics, and understood the importance of commitment to products and building customer relationships.

Today, Logiball has grown into a leading manufacturer of equipment for the trenchless rehabilitation of collection systems and gravity lines. Despite his initial lack of experience, Anctil, now president and general manager, has helped guide the Logiball team to success as the company celebrates 30 years in business in 2013.

## Getting the Ball Rolling

Logiball was founded by 1983 by Bissonnette, who already had extensive experience in the pipe business prior to that time. After obtaining a degree in civil engineering in 1960, Bissonnette worked for a pipe manufacturer for several years. In the mid-1970s, Bissonnette founded his own service company, Renovation Aqua.

"Our field of activities was primarily the inspection, testing and analysis of water and sewer systems," Bissonnette said. "At that time, the specialized tools and equipment that we needed were not always available or reliable. We decided to start making our own pipe plugs and other equipment. After a few years of field testing, we started selling them to contractors and municipal authorities."

In 1983, Bissonnette separated the contracting firm of Renovation Aqua from the manufacturing activities, and Logiball opened an office in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., to sell inflatable plugs, grouting packers and other equipment.

"In the late 1980s, I sold my contracting companies and concentrated my efforts to improve our existing products and create new ones," he said. "I figured out that the main asset of any company is its employees who have a sense of responsibility toward the products and its customers. I encouraged these dedicated people to become partners in the business."

One of those partners was Anctil, who, in 2004, became president of Logiball in addition to his functions as general manager.

Reflecting on what he's learned from his mentor over the years, Anctil joked, "I guess one of the things I am missing in this business is an engineering degree, but I learned a lot of it instead, from the man himself. Roger [Bissonnette] is one of the smartest people I've ever known. And it's hard to get education better than that, because this is the man who knows if something is going to work or not."

"I think one of the secrets to making a business successful like this is working as if it's yours. That's the [philosophy] that Roger established early on in our careers."

## A Commitment to Products and Customers

Today, Logiball prides itself on serving its customers and providing reliable products that best serve the industry. The company has a complete line of multi-size reinforced plugs that are used for different applications, such as blocking sewers,

bypass pumping, low pressure testing of sewers and testing dual containment piping systems. Logiball also offers a complete line of carriers for sectional liners along with auxiliary equipment.

"We are particularly proud of our line of test and seal packers — mainline and lateral," Anctil said. "We have done extensive research and added more features that make the process a lot more controllable and efficient. With them, testing and grouting all sewer pipe joints is possible in mainlines, laterals up to or from the cleanout, elliptical pipes, box culverts, etc. We are not in business to simply sell products, but to make sure we design and manufacture the best products possible."

Over the years, Logiball has also developed a great capacity to build custom products such as plugs, packers, borehole packers and other inflatable tools and equipment.

"When you are out on the jobsites and you hear technicians say 'Let's Logiball it' and they are using our lateral test and seal packers, it is mission accomplished,"

**Richard Thibault (left) and Marc Anctil of Logiball, prepare a test and seal packer for a 36-in. pipe rehab project.**



Anctil said. "I think that our ability to adapt to what is out there and our capacity to custom design and build equipment, working closely with the customers, has brought us to where we are today." At the end of the day, Logiball's con-

tinuing commitment to customers and the company's ability to reinvent and improve products is what sets it apart — and its customers agree. Visu-Sewer Inc., a pipe relining contractor based outside of Milwaukee, Wis., has used Logiball plugs and packers for more than 25 years. According to Visu-Sewer vice president

John Nelson, those products are the best on the market.

"From a construction and durability standpoint, you just can't beat them," Nelson said. "From a repair standpoint, they're always prompt, courteous and responsive."

From the contractor perspective, Nelson also agrees that Logiball is a compa-

*A crew from Great Lakes TV Seal Inc., a pipe inspection and repair contractor from Wisconsin, prepares a Logiball lateral test and seal packer.*



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ny that is very good at adapting as the market changes, which is what he says is one of the reasons the company is easy to work with.

“They’re very attentive to what contractors need as far as changes in certain products and making modifications to a plug or a packer to make it more adaptable,” he said. “When we first started doing lateral sealing systems, we were only going up a few feet — maybe 2 or 3 ft. Then, when we started going up longer distances, [Logiball] quickly did some R&D and made a packer that could go up 30 ft in the line. So they were able to see that there was an opportunity to make some modifications and figure out how to make it work.

“Then as we started using their plugs for lining in more projects, they were able to change the rubber on the design of their [plugs] to be able to handle higher pressures, so they were able to make those changes,” Nelson said. “They’re just a good company to partner with.”

## Industry Challenges

Like any business, the design and manufacturing of industry-specific equipment such as pipe plugs and packers is not without its challenges. Logiball realized early on that sub-contracting areas of production resulted in a decline in quality. Over the years, the company has relied on a continued investment in machinery and its employees, as in-house capabilities in production allows for Logiball to better control product quality throughout the manufacturing process.

“We have had a period where outsourcing some of our components created a real turmoil,” Anctil said. “We decided that we would need to control the production of these components to keep our level of quality. We have performed quite a bit of R&D and built many pieces of equipment. I guess every project out of the ordinary becomes a challenge it itself, and in turn, an opportunity.”

But Anctil said every time the company gets a phone call with a request for something that is out of the ordinary, it’s a challenge. He recalled a customer who called into the office one night in the mid-1990s and needed to have a price to build a packer for a box culvert 10 ft in diameter.

“I said, ‘How are we going to build this thing?’” Anctil said. “We designed and built the packer and the job was

on schedule. I ended up learning a lot from pioneers in this industry who were willing to share their knowledge.”

## Company Philosophy and Moving Forward

Anctil also said the fact that Logiball is a small, tight-knit company also works to its advantage on the design and manufac-

turing end. The company has also made a commitment to hiring people who have worked in the field and who understand the products inside and out.

“We’re a small company and it’s kind of easier for us to turn around on a dime and accommodate the customer and accommodate ourselves,” he said. “We don’t need five signatures to get something done. We have the experience of the

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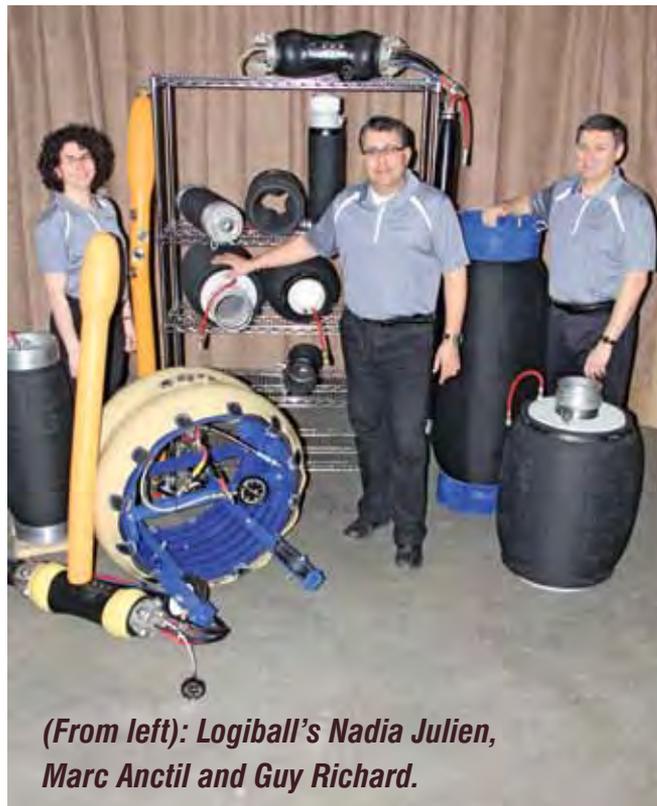
owner and engineer who did the work and some of the guys who were in the field doing the work back then. So now that you have some of these guys starting to make the equipment, it makes a lot of sense."

Logiball has been recognized by its peers as a leader in the industry by receiving awards from the Water Environment Federation (WEF) and the North American Society for Trenchless Technology (NASTT). The company earned an Innovative Product Award at NASTT's 1998 No-Dig Show and WEF's Innovative Technology Award in 1999 for Collection Systems. Logiball is also deeply involved in the National Association for Sewer Service Companies (NASSCO), where Anctil is chairperson for its Infiltration Control Grouting Association (ICGA). The company's continued participation in education at seminars through these organizations has contributed to the advancement and acceptance of technologies while educating the industry.

"The trenchless rehabilitation of sewers has grown rapidly through the last 15 years, but we have only touched the tip of the iceberg," Anctil said. "There's still 5 billion ft of sewer in the United States. How much of that do you think we've touched?"

"The future of trenchless technologies can only get better. There is no way we can afford to replace or renew what is already in the ground, therefore we must use and find innovative solutions to sustain and maintain these systems."

Andrew Farr is an assistant editor for *Trenchless Technology*.



(From left): Logiball's Nadia Julien, Marc Anctil and Guy Richard.

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