

THE THRILL FOR A DRILL

Sonic drilling technology garners more attention for innovation

By Heather Hudson

Ray Roussy isn't in the sonic drilling business for awards or acclaim. But lately he's been on the receiving end of both.

The National Ground Water Association (NGWA) recently bestowed their 2012 Technology Award on Roussy. In December, he accepted the annual honour for "an individual's major contributions to the groundwater industry in the development of ideas, tools and/or equipment" at the NGWA Groundwater Expo in Las Vegas, Nev.

"It was kind of nice to be recognized for the work I've done all these years," said a humble Roussy.

The NGWA honour marks the third for his patented sonic drilling technology. In 2008, it was recognized by the Canadian GeoExchange Coalition, supported by Natural Resources Canada, with its award for "best new drilling technology" and a \$10,000 prize. In 2010, Roussy accepted a Manning Innovation Award and a \$10,000 prize for his development of modern sonic drilling technology.

Ever the businessman, Roussy is more interested in what awards can do for his companies than for him personally.

"Awards are good for marketing purposes. When buyers see you won an award they know you've been around for a while and you're not just a flash in the pan," he noted.

There's little danger of anyone in the business mistaking Roussy for a rookie. In fact, his two companies are known far and wide.

Sonic Drilling Ltd. is his Vancouver, B.C.-area contracting company featuring a number of rigs outfitted with the "Roussy sonic drill head" used in environmental investigations, mining exploration and geothermal drilling projects. The sonic drill head is known for drilling three to five times faster than any other on the market without the use of drilling mud and with up to 80 per cent less waste. Sonic drills can also provide continuous undisturbed core samples to a depth of 300 feet.

Sonic Drill Corporation is a manufacturing business that produces a product line of drilling rigs using the world's most advanced and tested sonic drill heads. He has also licensed the technology to a Japanese company, which develops machinery for construction use in that country.

Reflecting on the secret to his success, Roussy says that it was perseverance that got him to where he is today. "It is a lot of work and you've got to have a lot of that stick-to-it ability to be able to continue."

He needed that grit in the early days, when funding was scarce and technical challenges were "significant."

"It was kind of a long road to educate people (about the technology). You've got to tell people for a long time that the technology is useful and demonstrate it. A per machine investment is at least a million dollars, so people have got to know that they're going to make money with it. We've been able to prove that in the contracting division."

End of an era?

Roussy's recent accolades may be the cap to a long career. At 65, he's thinking more seriously about retiring in the coming years.

"I've got to start making plans for ways that I'm not the main driver."

Despite retirement being on his mind, it's still clearly on the back-burner. His innovative technology seems to be gaining even more momentum in a number of industries and he's got his eye on manufacturing machinery for the construction business.

"There are many other applications for this type of machinery, certainly in the construction industry, and it's never really been marketed in that area strongly just yet. We'll eventually manufacture machines for construction and other industries, too."

It remains to be seen whether Roussy will call it a day anytime soon. In the meantime, his empire continues to grow. 🍷

Ray Roussy, Owner, Sonic Drilling Ltd.