

Tualatin Connection to Explosion that Rocked NW Portland

BY REID IFORD, TUALATIN LIFE

The contractor working at a construction site where a natural gas explosion occurred in a Northwest Portland neighborhood on Wednesday, October 19, is based in Tualatin.

Reports from NW Natural indicate that Loy Clark Pipeline had called in for locates, which is part of the required procedures.

Loy Clark Pipeline was established in 1957, and was the first natural gas pipeline construction company in Oregon, with 12 employees, according to Andrea Fonkert, senior public relations person with the company. The Tualatin company employs 156 people in three Northwestern states, including Oregon, Washington and Idaho, said Ms. Fonkert. The company has 97 employees in Oregon.

“When Loy S. Clark was just 15, he got his first opportunity to operate a dragline when the operator didn’t show up,” stated Ms. Fonkert. “He had been watching the dragline work for weeks and easily fell into the role. His construction career took off at age 21 when he was hired by



Courtesy of Portland Fire & Rescue

Bechtel Corporation and sent to California to install pipelines in the Bay Area. After several years of service, Clark and another employee were offered a bonus that included 10 pieces of equipment. They started their own business with that equipment, later named Miller Construction.

“In 1955, Miller Construction was awarded a pipeline job in Portland, Oregon, for Portland Gas and Coke, known today as NW Natural. The 16-inch feeder line took more than a year and a half to complete. Clark’s relationship with his business partner was severed when Miller decided to move on to other opportunities.

“Mr. Clark established Loy Clark Pipeline, stayed in the Portland area and began working on Portland Gas and Coke’s distribution system, which stretched from Portland to Eugene and west to Oregon’s coastal towns,” said Ms. Fonkert.

Regarding details about the event, Ms. Fonkert said the investigation is ongoing.

Statement from Loy Clark Pipeline:

“Recent events affected many people in the Portland community. Our thoughts are with the people who were injured or displaced. We are grateful for the work of the Portland Fire Department and Police Department for the actions they took to keep so many people safe.

“The incident occurred when one of Loy Clark’s electrical crews was working at a construction site for a new building. Loy Clark Pipeline Co. will be working with investigators. Additionally, we are partnering with NW Natural to provide hotel rooms for those in need of shelter and we are providing support to Red Cross Cascades Region.

“Our priority is assisting those who have been affected and we are working on setting up a location and a phone number for people who have losses associated with this accident.”