

Like their uncles and father before them, the younger Ghilotti brothers pride themselves on maintaining a first-class fleet of yellow iron for their San Francisco Bay area construction company.

When they need to update their fleet, Dante and Mike Ghilotti turn to another family business: Ritchie Bros. Auctioneers.

In 1913, James Ghilotti left Italy to find “la fortuna” in America. A stonemason by trade, he settled in San Rafael, in the San Francisco Bay area, and established a small construction company. James’ son Mario and his four brothers joined the family business as soon as they came back from serving in World War II. When James retired in 1950, his sons took over and gave the company its current name: Ghilotti Bros.

Although they’d been taking on larger earthmoving and construction jobs, the Ghilotti brothers realized that hard work and high standards would only get them so far; they needed machines. In 1952 they took out a bank loan to buy seven pieces of heavy equipment from a Navy auction. The investment paid off – and the family has had “yellow fever” ever since.

Today, Ghilotti Bros. is run by Mario’s sons Mike and Dante. Mario and his wife Eva are still actively involved in a fulltime capacity. With the Bay area being so developed, the company has shifted its focus from earthmoving to demolition and infrastructure development: highways, airports, paving. It constructs over \$100 million a year and runs a fleet of over 200 pieces of yellow iron, 75 percent of it less than four years old. Like their dad and uncles, the younger Ghilotti brothers pride themselves on maintaining the most up-to-date fleet of late model equipment possible.

Ever since Ritchie Bros. came to California in the mid-1980s, the Ghilottis have relied on the auction company to help them manage their fleet efficiently and cost-effectively. For the past 15 years, Ghilotti Bros. has sold equipment almost exclusively through Ritchie Bros. auctions – up to two million dollars worth each year.

“The best way to update your fleet is to go through Ritchie Bros.,” explains Dante. “They are so far in front of any other auctioneer; they are so professional and consistent, and their reach is so wide and so deep. That gives you a certain level of comfort. I know that if someone, somewhere in the world is looking for a type of equipment that I’m selling, they will know about it and they will have the opportunity to buy it if I put it in a Ritchie Bros. auction. When I sell through Ritchie Bros., I know that the price I get is the true value of the machine.”

To keep their fleet current, the Ghilottis have also purchased millions of dollars of unused and late model equipment from Ritchie Bros. auctions across the U.S. – sometimes bidding online, but most often in person. “The auctions are great events,” says Dante. “I enjoy the excitement and you meet great people. But I also like to see the equipment for myself. Unless it has extremely low hours, I’ve got to touch it before I buy it. Every machine is slightly different, unique.”



Mario and Dante Ghilotti

“Relationships are a huge part of it.”

But the family’s loyalty to Ritchie Bros. has as much to do with people as it does with equipment.

“Relationships are a huge part of it,” says Dante. “The integrity of Ritchie Bros. is 100 percent, all the way up the ladder. They do everything possible for their customers, no matter how much they’re selling. I’ve seen the president of Ritchie Bros. catching bids on a \$100 bucket late on auction day. They make just as much effort for that \$100 bucket as they do for a \$100,000 excavator.”

Relationships are also a big part of Ghilotti Bros. itself – as they always have been.

“My dad has been doing this for 65 years; his experience and knowledge is a tremendous resource. He’ll say, ‘I’ve paved this street three times!’” laughs Dante. “It’s a great blessing to come to work every day and see your mom, dad and brother. We’re carrying on a great family tradition.”