

Job Story

A MARRIAGE MADE IN VEGAS: VOLVO & ROTOTILT

Texas contractor finds increased precision and versatility when adding Rototilt to EW180B

MAGNOLIA, Tex. – Every year, millions of people travel to Las Vegas with hopes of finding their fortune in cash. Utility contractor Connard Barker made that same trip to Vegas in early 2005, but instead of easy money, he was looking for a solution to a jobsite challenge he was facing in Texas.

To borrow an obvious Las Vegas cliché, Barker “hit the jackpot” at CONEXPO-CON/AGG when he discovered the Volvo EW180B rubber-tired excavator.

“I was looking for a versatile piece of equipment that we needed for a large storm sewer job in an upscale development,” said Barker, president of C.E. Barker Ltd., Magnolia, Tex. “It was critical that we do this job without damaging pavement and curbs or destroying grading and landscaping.”

It was at CONEXPO-CON/AGG that Barker decided that a rubber-tired excavator was the piece of equipment that would provide the performance he needed while not damaging the existing roadways and terrain. After considering units from Deere, Cat and Gradall, Barker said the EW180B became the clear and obvious choice, especially after a jobsite visit from Rodger McFarland and Tom Beard of ROMCO Equipment Company’s Houston location.

“Rodger listened carefully and took the time to put together precisely the right equipment for us,” Barker said. “I knew



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immediately it was exactly what we needed.”

McFarland and Beard brought with them an EW180B that was equipped with a Rototilt attachment. According to Barker, “that was just the ticket.”

“If you want large-scale production in an open field, give me a big-track excavator with an 84-inch bucket,” Barker said. “But if you want to do precise utility work, like digging out all around a 30-inch storm sewer without moving the machine or having any auxiliary equipment or manpower, I don’t think anything else can match the precision and versatility of a Volvo EW180B with a Rototilt attachment.”

Well-established in Europe,

Rototilt attachments are still relatively new to the North American equipment market. Rototilt connects the arm to the bucket or other tools, making single-axis tools virtually omnidirectional, while allowing flexibility and precision work.

Attached between the arm of the EW180B and its bucket, Rototilt can continuously spin the bucket 360 degrees horizontally and tilt up to 40 vertical degrees at the same time. Powered by a hydraulic system with telescoping tilt-cylinders, this attachment enables an excavator to easily handle difficult situations that would be difficult, if not impossible, for a standard machine, including digging around rocks, posts and underground pipes.

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After more than 30 years in construction, Barker knows underground utility work, and he knows equipment. He began his career in construction as a laborer while in high school. After college Barker worked his way up to vice president of another company before starting C.E. Barker Ltd. in 1996. The firm now employs 150 and runs a fleet of more than 100 pieces of equipment.

Barker’s Volvo EW180B was ordered with the optional 2-piece boom, which is ideal for urban applications as it can be folded in or out to avoid obstacles like trees and utility poles. The 2-piece boom can also provide a narrower swing radius, in addition to offering better visibility when traveling.

Even before the Hunters Creek Village project was ready for his crews, Barker put the new EW180B to work replacing an existing water line. “We had done the excavation, and we used the Volvo machine to place erosion control structures along a new street. We reached over and dug the trenches for them with the EW180B, and then we switched over to the forks, set them in the cut and positioned them.

“Normally we might have required both a rubber-tired loader and an excavator to do the job, but with the Volvo/Rototilt combo we were able to eliminate one of those pieces from the job. And, it did a nicer, cleaner job without damaging the street or the curb.”

As expected, Barker’s new EW180B proved “a perfect fit” for the Hunters Creek Village job. “It’s even more versatile than I expected,” he said. “It has really expedited the whole job. It makes small cuts across the road. It delivers trench boxes and pipes to the cut. It works from the street, while a track excavator works in the cut. The rubber tires don’t do damage like a bigger track machine, and because it’s fast and agile, it scoots all over the job site.

“We think of it like a cross between a wheel loader and an excavator in one machine.”

Sewer and water line projects often have lengthy runs, and the speed and agility of the EW180B allows Barker to move the machine to where it’s needed with a minimum of “muss and fuss.”

“We can move it a mile or two down the road without trailering it or providing an escort,” he said. “You just put a man in it and he drives over there. Unlike our tracked excavators, it’s made to be moved quickly.”

Barker reports that the performance matches the portability. In short, his Volvo EW180B has met – and then exceeded – his expectations in the months since its purchase.

“Our operators like to run this machine,” Barker said. “It has excellent visibility. It has plenty of power. The controls are positioned right and they’re



The Rototilt rotates 360° and tilts 40° and is very easy and smooth to operate with the unique Volvo factory installed Rototilt preparation kit.

smooth. No jerking. And, it’s a comfortable machine for the operator to work in, with excellent climate control.

“On a hot, dusty summer’s day in Texas, you really appreciate that.”

Barker said he has a simple formula that he applies when making an equipment buying decision: “When I buy a piece of equipment, it has to be the right piece of equipment for the job, from a dealer I trust and who gives us a fair price. It has to be high quality and provide long service life. If you start with a quality piece of equipment and keep it in tip-top condition, you’ll have quality for a long time.”

Barker said he anticipates at least 10 years and 12,000 hours from his Volvo EW180B “with just the standard preventive maintenance and oil sampling.” These are tasks he said are made simple by the machine’s excellent service access, with all maintenance and service points at ground level.

“Everything is where it ought to be to make it easy to work on,” he said. “That never hurts.”