

A Concrete Canvas

Operator Brings Artistry to Decorative Flat Sawing Job



Above: Smooth radius cuts made with a flat saw highlight the entrance to Heritage Business Park.

In late March of 2003, Holes of San Antonio received a request from Koplowl Construction Company, a San Antonio general contractor they had worked for in the past. On the faxed request came a detail of a decorative pattern to be cut in a concrete slab. At first glance it appeared to be a standard decorative sawing job, but after taking a closer look at the drawing, Holes began to squirm a little as they realized 50 percent of the job involved radius sawing. Some of the radiuses were in the 5-foot range, which would require sharp curves to be made with a machine designed to cut straight lines. A note at the bottom of the fax read, “Can you guys handle this?”



Above: CSDA Certified Operator Miguel Rubio uses both concentration and skill to saw fluid curves in the concrete without deviating from the cut-line.

Holes dispatcher Fred Maberry, a company veteran of 25 years, called Kopplow's General Superintendent, Nile Wright, and told him that Holes could not answer his question until they set up a mock of the radiuses on their test slab and tried cutting them. Wright said the cuts had to be as close to perfect as possible because they would highlight the entrance to their project, the Heritage Business Park in New Braunfels, Texas. Holes promised to set up the mock right away and Wright decided to come over to witness the cutting process.

Holes then turned to Miguel Rubio, their Field Superintendent and one of five CSDA certified operators employed with the company. Rubio is also their decorative sawing expert. He took a look at the drawing and set up the layout, laying out – to scale – a couple of radius cuts. He proceeded to cut a smooth, precise 5-foot radius. It looked flawless. Wright immediately scheduled Rubio for the next day.

As scheduled, Holes arrived on time and began the task. All the actual layout at the job site was done by Kopplow. They anchored a string to a center point of reference, measured from the anchor point where they wanted the cuts, attached a pencil to the end of the string and drew the cut lines on the slab.

Rubio used a 35-hp flat saw with a 14-inch x 1/4-inch K2 Diamond blade and a Grabber cut-off saw. After two trips, the

cutting was complete. Rubio had cut about 400 lineal feet of concrete at an average depth of 1/4 inch.

"The most difficult part of this job was keeping the blade on the line and at the same time forcing the saw around the cut in a fluid motion," Rubio said. "You only get one shot at this and it has to be right."

Kopplow was very pleased with Rubio's work. "I am very impressed not only with the look of the finished prod-

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uct but with the professionalism of the operator," Wright commented. "I didn't think the job could be done free hand."

George Major, Jr., owner of Holes, praised his employee for a job well done. "Sawing a decorative pattern in a concrete slab with a flat saw takes great skill," he said. "Any good flat saw operator can follow a straight line, but few possess the ability to do decorative sawing – especially radius decorative sawing. Most companies only have one operator they trust to do this type of work."

Major said that over the years, he has realized that operators who are proficient at decorative sawing possess three traits. The first is patience. Patient operators know they cannot rush this type of job. They must work efficiently and diligently, but they cannot get impatient. Once patience is lost, so is the chance of a successful job. The second trait is concentration. Operators must possess the ability to concentrate deeply in order to keep their machine on the line. They know there can be no deviation from the cut line. The third and arguably the most important trait is pride. Truly good operators take great pride in the job they do. They strive to do their best work and they love what they do.

"An operator possessing all three traits is a rare find," Major said. "We are lucky enough to have two operators who possess such skills and they are both long-time employees as well as certified operators. Employees like these are one of the reasons Holes of San Antonio has become one of the premier concrete sawing and drilling contractor in south and central Texas."

Wright said Kopplow Construction selected Holes for the job based on their reputation for quality work in the concrete cutting industry. "They produced a sample before anything was cut. Looking at sample, I knew that Holes of San Antonio was the right choice."

Holes of San Antonio, a CSDA member since 1993, is a full-service sawing, drilling and demolition contractor. Holes has been serving south and central Texas since 1977 and currently runs 15 service trucks. Services include curb cutting, core drilling, flat sawing, wall sawing, grinding, hand sawing, decorative sawing, demolition, grooving and specialized concrete placement. ●

Resources:

General Contractor:
Kopplow Construction Company
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