

GLAZIER'S GROWTH

Giroux Glass thrives on difficult terrain



First Glass: Giroux Chief Executive Nataline Lomedico took over helm in 2014.

By **HOWARD FINE** Staff Reporter

GIROUX Glass Inc., a glass pane installation company headquartered in L.A.'s University Park neighborhood, has etched a reputation in recent years for taking on the most difficult jobs that few other glaziers could or would do.

Take, for example, Giroux's most iconic project: installing the panes for the glass in the horseshoe-shaped bridge known as the Grand Canyon Skywalk, which extends 70

feet out from the rim of the Grand Canyon with nothing but Giroux's reinforced glass panes separating the viewer from the canyon floor 3,700 feet below.

Giroux was not the first choice for the general contractor hired by the Hualapai Indian tribe that owns the land around the skywalk site. But when the previous glazier and the general contractor had a falling out, Giroux was called in to save the project.

"They reached out to us because they knew Giroux had the reputation of being able to handle the big and complex jobs,"

said Chief Executive **Nataline Lomedico**.

"There were a lot of challenges, including the logistics of getting the glass and other materials to the site, which is a long drive from anywhere. Then there was the wind."

But Giroux persevered and completed the job, reinforcing the glass so it could withstand the weight equivalent of two 747 aircraft. The Skywalk opened in 2007 and has since attracted more than 300,000

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mutual fund managers are starting to see the impact with large capital outflows hitting their funds.

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Station Owners Face Biz Woes

MEDIA: iHeart, Entercom struggle; local stations OK

By **MATTHEW BLAKE** Staff Reporter

The fate of Los Angeles' radio airwaves is being hammered out thousands of miles away from here.

San Antonio-based **iHeartMedia Inc.** and Philadelphia's **Entercom Communications Corp.** together

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Catasys Thrives on Data Dives

HEALTH CARE: Firm helps providers lower costs

By **DANA BARTHOLOMEW** Staff Reporter



Peizer

Catasys Inc. is thriving by finding people who don't want what the company sells.

The Brentwood-based health tech company, which administers behavioral health

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Giroux: Growth Began with Real Estate Deal

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visitors a year.

Closer to home, Giroux’s glass window installations can be seen in several downtown skyscrapers – including windows that change tint for different lighting conditions at the 71 Above restaurant atop the U.S. Bank Tower, windows inside and outside for office space at the top of the Paul Hastings Tower at City National Plaza – as well as at the Staples Center arena.

Elsewhere, Giroux also has completed glass installations in a diverse array of buildings and structures, from eight-pane thick glass entry doors and a glass roof at the **Prada** flagship store on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills to glass panes at the Metro’s Aviation station near Los Angeles International Airport to a glass panels for a healing garden at **Kaiser Permanente Inc.**’s hospital on Sunset Boulevard in East Hollywood. The company also has a division that installs glass windows in high-end and celebrity homes.

Projects like these have completed Giroux’s transformation from a small service contractor that for decades focused on repairing broken windows in commercial buildings around Los Angeles to a major force in the glazier industry.

As of last year, Giroux ranked as the 24th largest glazing contractor in the United States, according to Glass Magazine, an industry publication in Vienna, Va. And its growth over the last few years has been quite rapid; Giroux placed No. 68 on the Business Journal’s 2018 Fastest Growing Private Companies list, with revenue increasing 71 percent from 2015 through 2017 to reach \$56 million last year. The company now has about 240 employees.

“Giroux’s ability to tackle more complex projects is what differentiates it from some of other glaziers in its revenue range,” said **Katy Devlin**, editor-in-chief at Glass Magazine.

Long history

Giroux Glass was founded in 1946 by **Louis Giroux** as a servicer of existing glass window installations, primarily downtown. If a window cracked or shattered, Giroux Glass would be called in to replace it. The company averaged about 10 employees and generated less than \$1 million annually, making it typical of the thousands of mom-and-pop glazing contractors nationwide. It operated out of a modest, company-owned building a couple miles south of the downtown core in the neighborhood now known as University Park.

In 1991, an unexpected turn of events changed the course of the company. **Anne-Merelie Murrell**, a USC graduate who entered the real estate business in the 1980s, was focused on buying properties near the USC campus. One of the properties she looked at was the Giroux building. But Louis Giroux stipulated that if she wanted to buy the building, she also had to buy the glazing company. Murrell agreed and became the



View Finder: Giroux did the glass work for the Grand Canyon Skywalk.



RINGO H.W. CHIU/LABJ

Sky High: Lomedico has led Giroux back after 2008 recession dip.

owner and chief executive of Giroux Glass. She set about growing the company, adding divisions and focusing more attention on construction and installation projects. By 2009, the Business Journal reported the company had \$76 million in revenue and 450 employees and

was growing big-time in Las Vegas.

But then, the recession hit, flattening the construction industry and cutting steeply into Giroux’s growth. Also, by this time, Murrell was in her early 80s and was focused on her succession plan. In 2014, Murrell turned over the reins to Lomedico, who had joined the company in 2000 and worked her way up the ranks. Murrell’s ownership stake last year was converted into an employee stock ownership plan, though at age 90, she remains on the company’s board.

Lomedico has refocused the company on growth; Giroux now works on more than 200 projects each year and has a backlog estimated at \$72 million. Now, though, with steel and aluminum prices rising thanks to tariffs and other cost pressures, Lomedico said Giroux is turning away some projects.

“We simply don’t have the resources to handle every job that comes our way,” she said.

Diverse customers

One longtime customer that has used Giroux on a wide variety of installation projects is general contractor **Hensel Phelps Construction Co. Inc.** of Greeley, Colo. **Randy Gonzales**, a local superintendent with Hensel Phelps, has worked with Giroux on

two projects over the years, most recently on the just-completed \$516 million renovation of the **Southwest Airlines Co.** terminal at Los Angeles International Airport.

Gonzales said this project posed a couple of unique challenges: The glass had to be impact resistant and be able to withstand blasts of hot air emitted from jet engines. Also, he said, there was the logistical challenge of working on the project while the terminal was being used by millions of passengers. “Giroux met the challenges,” he said.

Another contractor that has used Giroux primarily for glass pane replacement work is **JH Bryant JR Inc.**, of Gardena.

Joe Perez, a division manager with JH Bryant, said one of the more memorable projects he worked with Giroux on was the replacement of a storefront window in El Segundo about 10 years ago after a truck had crashed through the original window.

“They took care of that storefront and a whole other storefront next door,” he said.

More recently, Perez said, Giroux replaced two large glass panes in a Union Bank branch in Little Tokyo after holes were discovered in the original panes. “These panes were something like 9 feet high and 16 feet wide – so large they needed cranes to lift them into place.”

While projects like these pose significant challenges for Giroux, Lomedico said it is the high-end home market that is often the most difficult, particularly at hillside homes with panoramic views.

“The clients want to maximize their views, and that means big panes of glass that are not broken up with support beams,” Lomedico said. “Not only that, but sometimes the projects are never really done.”

She cited as an example one client in the Benedict Canyon area who has used Giroux Glass off and on for the last 20 years: real estate magnate and basketball enthusiast **James Goldstein**. His home, built more than 50 years ago by **Frank Lloyd Wright** protege **John Lautner** for local university professor **Paul Sheats** and now known as the Sheats-Goldstein House, has a glass-enclosed pool deck and terrace, retractable skylights and other glass features. The home has been used in films including “The Big Lebowski.”

“The design is so unusual, with frameless glass panes intersecting at unusual angles, which is among the most challenging work,” Lomedico said.

