



*California*  
**ADJUSTERS' ALMANAC**  
*2008*

**THE BIGGEST FRAME MACHINE  
WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI:  
WEST COAST FRAME & COLLISION**

***CLAIMS DIRECTORY • SERVICE PROVIDERS  
CITY, COUNTY, STATE & FEDERAL OFFICES***

# The Biggest Frame Machine West of the Mississippi



**Photo 1: West Coast Frame has the capability of lifting a three-axle tiller for inspection and repairs.**

By Paul Giambroni

We've been publishing this claims directory for 18 years now, and in that time I've been in and out of countless collision repair facilities. While most of that contact has been with auto body shops, I've still encountered my fair share of truck repair facilities throughout the state.

After a while, you get to the point where nothing surprises you anymore. State-of-the-art paint booths, extra-large frame machines, laser measuring and elaborate paint systems are the high tech beacons I've come to expect from most higher end shops. It's gotten to the point where I expect to see at least a few

of these items when I tour a facility. If I don't, my visit doesn't usually last very long.

Over the years I've learned to keep an eye out for that mythical shop that is perfectly equipped to handle any kind of repair.

Enter a recent phone call I received from a truck adjuster who told me he was forced into giving his last precious copy of the *Adjusters' Almanac* to "the guy from West Coast Frame" in West Sacramento. "The guy," as it turns out, was a fellow named Randy Erbes. According to this particular truck adjuster, Randy had the best-tooled shop and the biggest frame machine on the West Coast.

I decided to call him and find

out for myself. (Besides, I kind of liked the way he snagged this guy's last book!) As it turned out, Randy is the type of guy who gets right on the phone with you. His simple, easy manner belies the fact that he has been wizened by over 30 years experience in heavy-duty collision and truck repair. The brochure he sent me made some impressive claims about his expertise in "heavy duty fabrication, structural stress, design, mechanical failures, brake failures, defective or improper engineering and design, suspension, steering and frame straightening."

Not bad, I thought, but nothing I hadn't heard before.

afternoon that was attended by over 200 people from the industry.

The event started with a tour of his "fire shop." This portion of the facility services fire trucks and related heavy equipment from all over the state. There was one ongoing repair he pointed out to me specifically. It involved a fire truck that had broken in half.

The great variety of fire (and military) equipment that he had on display turned out to be nothing special—just another week's work in progress.

I was also impressed to see a giant Seefac screw lift raise a three-axle tiller high enough to literally walk underneath it. Ac-



**Photo 3: WCF's 60-foot downdraft paint booth for factory clean paint jobs from simple to complex.**



**Photo 2: Randy Erbes (right) and Michael Martinelli display the DuPont certified, state-of-the-art mixing and electronic color matching systems.**

When I asked him about the adjuster's claim that he had the West Coast's largest frame machine, he corrected me with, "It's the largest frame machine west of the Mississippi." Then he said something I'd never heard before: "Would you like to see a demonstration?"

In all my years, I had never seen a frame machine during its actual operation. Now was my big chance!

Randy wasn't kidding when he used the word "demonstration." In fact, it was much more than that. He set up an open house at his facility one Saturday

according to Randy each of this machine's six pillars can lift 16,000 lbs. (see photo 1).

As awesome as this was, I couldn't help being distracted by the full-bore barbecue they had going out in the parking lot. I decided to momentarily stop my tour and devour one of those fat burgers I saw sizzling on the grill. West Coast Frame's general manager, Curt Metcalf looked like he was having a great time as the grillmeister and made sure everyone was well fed.

As I began to feast, I noticed that Redwood Reliance Trailers from Cotati had a booth off to the

side. In between bites, I learned that West Coast Frame is also an authorized parts, service and warranty shop for all the different kinds of trailers they produce.

Once again, I thought, not bad.

The next thing I knew, Randy was pointing me in the direction of his paint room (see photo 2). They feature a DuPont system, complete with the latest in electronic digital color matching. He beamed with pride as he showed me his monster paint inventory. He even had his local DuPont representative Michael Martinelli there for good measure.

Before long, the topic turned towards application, which led us to the paint booth. I felt like I had just walked into a small airplane hangar. This thing was big! I'm told that at 60 feet long it's big



Photos 5 & 6: Frame rack setups showing the process of straightening a severe twist from the front and rear.

ran through the bowels of a container ship when I realized this was it—I was actually standing *inside of* the biggest frame machine west of the Mississippi (see front cover).



Photo 4: Their frame rack has the capability of having multiple setups and functions at the same time.

enough to paint two fire trucks simultaneously! (See photo 3.)

I was beginning to sense that Randy was one of those guys that doesn't fool around when it comes to buying equipment and was looking forward to the day's highlight event.

I eagerly proceeded over to the area designated as the "frame shop," and promptly asked where the frame machine was. One of Randy's assistants smiled and told me I was standing in it.

It began to dawn on me that the two rows of giant steel girders sticking out of the ground to my left and right were actually pillars. Then I noticed that there were four more rails beneath my feet that ran the length of this "cage" and were built right into the ground! I felt like I was standing on a piece of railroad track that

As it turns out, it took Randy 3 months, 52 tons of steel, and 118 yards of concrete to build this monstrosity right into his shop's floor. Each vertical post is actually a 10 inch, 58 pound, wide flange beam, 16 feet high and sits on top of another 10 inch, 58 pound, wide flange beam that runs underneath it and underground along the perimeter. The floor rails are composed of 12 inch, 50-pound seamless I-beams, 60 feet long, each. Those same rails sit on top of two layers of 7/8 inch rebar and are anchored by 28 inches of solid concrete.

As I sat there feeling a rare shift in paradigm wash over me, Randy's crew began to set up a couple of wrecks on the frame machine (simultaneously) for the highly anticipated demonstration. With the large crowd that

had now gathered around, he was careful not to set up any pull that might be considered risky. The object was to take these two trucks with two different hits and show how the setup works on both ends. The result was intended to demonstrate how easy it is to fix a variety of major hits using a machine of this size and strength (see photo 4).

Randy's claim that, "It is capable of making push and pulls in all directions up to 200 tons vertically and 100 tons horizontally" was validated about two seconds after he hit the switch.

With just a few clicks, the first truck (which had taken a brutal side hit) was forced back into its proper alignment. A few minutes later the second truck (which had suffered a severe twist) was set up and ready to go (see photos 5 & 6).

Watching this twisted Freightliner come back so easily gave me the impression that this machine

was capable of oh so much more. In fact, that's one of the main points Randy was trying to make. They truly are capable of making repairs no one else can.

Over the next couple of hours there were even more demonstrations to witness, including one for their all-axle laser alignment machine. This little baby has the capability to align multiple steer axle vehicles (see photo 7). While they were all fascinating, to be sure, they seemed a bit anti-climactic after seeing "the big pull."

At the end of my visit I was not only well-informed but well-fed. Randy and his crew had proven that the myth is true. There really is a shop that's not only equipped to handle any kind of repair, but also owns and operates the largest frame machine west of the Mississippi.

And it's located in West Sacramento.



Photo 7: State-of-the-art front and rear axle laser alignments include before and after readings of castor, camber, toe in, ackerman angles, KPI and turn angles.