

Matyikos:

Expert House Movers in Maryland, Missouri & Virginia

by N. Eugene Brymer

Among the “tired and poor” arriving in the “new world” at the turn of the twentieth century, were two families from Hungary. Joe & Hanna Jendrick in November 1900 and Gabriel “Gabo” & Mary Matyiko in February 1906. With nothing to lose and everything to gain their careers began in the coalmines of West Virginia.

At about the same time Joe and Hanna, with their six children, relocated near Virginia Beach, Virginia and began farming. Gabriel and Mary, along with their seven children, relocated to Richmond and also began farming.

John worked for his father on the farm where he first experienced moving structures. Moving small farm buildings from place to place on farmland was no big deal to farmers in the 1930’s. Wanting to “see the world” John



John & Isabel Matyiko in 1961.

joined the United States Navy and after his tour of duty was discharged prior to World War II. Back in Virginia he tried farm-

ing and cutting pulpwood before moving to Norfolk, Virginia to work for a shipyard. John’s father, back in Richmond, wanted to purchase some swine for his farm. A farmer in Virginia Beach named Jendrick had pigs for sale and requested John make contact with Mr. Jendrick. It was on this “mission” John met his future wife Isabel, the baby of the family. After a few months, in 1940, John convinced Isabel to marry him. The couple moved to a farm in Richmond, Virginia where John started a pulpwood and land clearing business. The union of John and Isabel produced four sons: John Jr., Joe, Jim and Jerry.

When Grandfather Jendrick died in a farm accident in 1949 the family relocated to Virginia Beach to help with the Jendrick farm. John, however, continued in the land clearing business in



Big John’s first truck in 1958.



John Jr. hard at work in 1965 in Norfolk, Virginia.

the Eastern half of Virginia. Meeting payments on heavy equipment for the business in winter months was no easy task due to wet weather and slow paying customers. But his luck was about to change.

In 1956 John won a clearing job bid on Langley Air Force Base, near Newport News, Virginia that called for the demolition of more than 20 houses. An economically disadvantaged woman from the area asked Big John if it would be possible to obtain a door from one of the



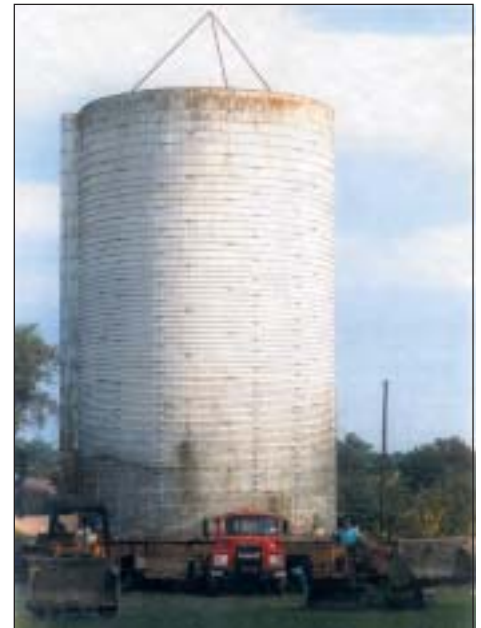
Matyiko siblings Joe, John Jr., Jim and Jerry in 2001.



The Waterman Museum was moved in Yorktown, Virginia in 1980.



Barn in Newport News, Virginia in 1998.



Silo in Newport News, Virginia.

houses? When Big John provided a door the woman replied, "The house doesn't do the door justice." Being a good hearted man Big John thought since the houses were to be destroyed what would be the harm in simply giving one of the houses to the woman. Not having been in the business of moving structures commercially Big John obtained a price from a local house mover named Fred Sherman to move the house for the woman. Later, when Sherman doubled his price, Big John instantly increased his business to include structural moving. He bought "249" railroad jacks, a single International Tractor and a lowboy trailer (which he subsequently extend to 30 feet) and became the largest House Mover in Virginia. Because of his weight, 280 lbs, the name of the new company became Big John House Movers.

Like all structural movers of that time Big John bought, scrounged and built much of the equipment used in the business. He built a single axle dolly, used



Alumni Center at the University of Richmond, Virginia in 1999.



Wooden structure in St Louis, Missouri in 2000.



A motley crew of experts. (L-R): John Matyiko Jr., Jay Travis Matyiko, John Phillip Matyiko, Joe Matyiko Jr., Jerry Matyiko, unknown, Cousin Sean McLaughlin, Joe Matyiko, Jerry Loviere, and Jim Matyiko at the conclusion of a successful move in Glen Carbon, IL.

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