

70-year-young great grandmother has 60-year-old house moving company booming

In 1946, the year after WW II ended, Harold Egge returned to LaFarge, Wisconsin from the US Army and started H.J. Egge Movers. Along with his two brothers, who would build foundations, Harold moved and placed the houses.

His son, Larry, worked for his father while growing up and in 1976 bought the business from his dad who had retired.

For the next 10 years, the business grew substantially and supported two crews. A major source of the business during that period was practically moving the entire town of Soldiers Grove and the riverfront of Prairie du Chien after the flood of 1978.

During that time, Lillian Shanahan became involved in the business. At first, she developed bids and filled out permits but soon learned how to measure and move buildings. In 1985, due to physical problems, Larry returned to driving semi-tractors and his father stepped back in to operate the business. Unfortunately, Harold became terminally ill and died in March of 1999 following open-heart surgery and kidney cancer.

Shanahan then bought the business from Larry, who returned on a part-time basis until his untimely death in 2002.



Lillian Shanahan,
Owner, Egge Building
Movers, Ltd.



Circa 1950. Moving the Hammer Hardware Store in downtown Hillsboro, WI. John Egge, Harold Swenson, Charlie Hart, Larry Egge, Harold Egge, Emmit Egge and Darwin Letman.

The company has tripled its business during the last six years since Shanahan became president. "We still use the original way of shimming and loading the buildings," she said. "It has been successful for us to use this method and I feel that if it isn't broken, don't fix it." It is also important to know that this is a team effort and safe and reliable workers are extremely important.

Shanahan said she really got interested in the house moving business after elevating her own home. Later her daughter's house burned. Instead of rebuilding new Lillian located beautiful homes that were to be moved or destroyed due to new construction of a hospital. She replaced her daughter's home with one of the structures and remodeled it. A house from the same location was

then moved onto her farm. She restored it to its original state and it is a beautiful home with a view that looks out across a valley. Her interest in rescuing historical homes and buildings has made this job very interesting and satisfying.

In 2000, her son, Ken, who had worked in construction, came to work for the business full time. He is responsible for bidding all jobs and has become a key employee. He plans to take over the business when his mother decides to retire.

Also, several members of Larry's family have worked in the business including Jeremy Phinney, a second cousin, and Chuck Hart, a nephew, who originally worked with founder Harold Egge. Hart has been with the company for the past four years.



Brian Dillman house was moved in January 1986.

By JACK E. BRYMER, SR., Contributing Editor



Ms. Shanahan (left) and crew (below) with some of the company equipment.

(Left-to-right) Ken Shanahan, Charles Hart, Bill Johnson and Jim Coggins.

Currently, the company has one crew and employs an average of four to six people.

Shanahan said they had to rebuild the business from scratch after she bought it. The equipment was worn out or not working and only a couple of sets of beams were salvageable. "It was hard work building it up to what it is now, but we have made many improvements to our equipment to help in reducing the amount of heavy lifting that is part of the daily life of house moving," she said.

Obviously, the improvements have been well received. Currently, the company has six buildings



In July 1986 Larry Egge moved this old Winnechick tavern and dance hall by barge on the Mississippi River from Prairie du Chien to Lake View, WI where it was converted into a store.

to move before Christmas and is already booking work well -into the spring of 2007.

"It has been our goal to do the highest quality work and making each job as important as the last," she said. "We take pride in our work and this has been our best advertisement because..."

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This 60' x 60' structure in West Salem, WI was elevated for a new basement, that was dug by the excavating company.

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