

2010 IASM President Wayne Overton Learned House Moving from a House Mover

Jack E. Brymer, Sr., Contributing Editor

In 1985, Wayne Overton founded C.G. Leary & Sons House Moving with his uncle, Eldon B. Heath, who lived in Chesapeake, VA and had been in the house moving business for more than 40 years.

"He taught me a lot of what I know about moving houses," Overton said recently. "For example, he said never be too careful., keep your load on three points, always keep your load cribbed up for safety, shim the house on your steel so you can pick up the house at as many points as possible at one time."

In fact, Overton remembers the first house they moved. It was a two-story log house with a stone fireplace and was moved first on a road, then through a field, across a canal and back on the road two miles to the new lot.

Although Heath was a knowledgeable man about house moving, he didn't know about crib jacks and heavy haul rollers; however, he knew what to do with Enerpac bottle jacks, how to set pipe rollers to roll a house around, and the ivory soap method.

Another piece of wisdom his Uncle Eldon shared was that if you see another house mover working somewhere, talk with the person if possible and look around his job site. You may learn something from that person's job that you don't know.

After Heath's death in 1990, Overton and his son, Gary Wayne, founded Abode Home Movers, Inc. in Shiloh, North Carolina and changed the name to Abode House Movers, LLC. in 2007. Following his late uncle's advice, they bought crib jacks, heavy haul rollers and used many time saving devices they had learned how to use from other movers .

A native of Elizabeth City, North Carolina, Overton's mother died when he was five years of age. He and his brother, Edward Gary, were raised by their mother's brother. Wayne was graduated from Camden High School and attended the Agriculture Institute at North Carolina State University in Raleigh for two years.

In 1967, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and served in Manheim, Germany where he obtained the rank of Specialist 5 Senior Tactical Mechanic. After active duty, he served four years in the Army Reserve.

Upon his return home, he married Geraldine Forbes January 21, 1968. She worked in the



Geraldine and Wayne Overton at the 2010 Recognition Dinner just prior to Wayne assuming the presidency of IASM.

nursery at Albermarle Hospital while Overton worked on his uncle's 1700-acre farm. In addition to farming—Iris potatoes was the cash crop—they also had a commercial grain elevator, a fertilizer operation, a stable of standard breed harness race horses and training track, and a construction company with bulldozers, dragline, cranes and dump trucks. "We worked year-round doing something in the business which had 25 to 30 employees in the real busy time of the year," he said.

The first year of Abode House Movers was difficult, according to Overton. "House moving was slow in 1991," he said. "We moved one house that year so I drove a truck for a while and completed an apprenticeship school at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard as a Marine machinist," he recalled.

Since then, however, Abode House Movers has established itself as a supporter of the industry and Overton as a leader in both the North Carolina Home Movers Association (NCHMA) and the International Association of Structural Movers (IASM). Overton has been a member of NCHMA since 1987 and has served on the board of director, as vice president and currently as president. He singled out one of NCHMA's members as most helpful to him. "Paul Pearsall has been a great leader and teacher to me," he said. "He has loaned or rented me equipment and given advice on problems I have had while doing jobs. "

Additionally, Overton said he has worked with the legal and utility committees of NCHMA to change the laws in North Carolina to make a better business climate for the licensed movers in N.C.



The first structure moved by Overton was this building in July 1985.



This building was moved out of the fly zone at the Elizabeth City, NC US Coast Guard Base in 1997.



Geraldine and Wayne in the early years of the company

“I love the house moving industry,” said IASM’s new president.

Likewise, IASM has provided Overton with a wealth of knowledge about the industry. “Talking with other movers--who go through the same challenges that you do--can give you some great tips on the do’s and don’ts of house moving,” he said. “Visiting their equipment yards gives you a lot of new ideas. It has enabled me to do more work and larger jobs.”

Overton said he had movers to rent and loan

him equipment and then explain how to do jobs that are difficult or that you haven’t done before. “For example, I met Peter Friesen in Florida and he gave me instruction on how to move a house over crib jacks,” he said. “I have used this method many times over the years and saved a lot of time.”

IASM vendors are also a great asset to the industry, according to Overton. “I saved over \$7,000 my first year as a member of IASM by meeting Matt Sundeen of Maguire Agency,” he said. “Also our staff executive, Gene Brymer,

has improved our business skill greatly by arranging educational programs at conferences we never had before. Our association is much more professional now and the overall fellowship at conferences has never been better. The conference just completed in Florida last month was truly outstanding. Charlie and Nicole Johnson and their team at Ducky Johnson House Movers pulled out all the stops

This new house was moved from the right of way of a high power electric line in March 2004.





This real estate office was moved February 1998 in Duck, NC to allow for additional parking space.

to put on the best yard visit we've had since I've been a member. Even the rainy weather we had the day of the visit did not dampen anyone's spirit.

Before taking over as president at the annual conference in Destin, FL, in February, Overton had served on IASM's board of directors, as secretary and vice president.

In addition to serving as president of Abode House Movers, LLC, Overton's wife, Geraldine, serves as secretary/treasurer and his son, Gary Wayne, is vice president. Due to the current economic situation of the country, Gary Wayne works nights with Norfolk and Southern Railroad and helps move houses when needed.

"In addition to keeping the books and records for the company, Geraldine helps me any time I need her," he said. Overton praised his family, including daughters Vivian and Suzanne, saying, they support and help him whenever they are needed.

In March 2008, Abode bought a towing company and established G&W Towing Inc., which is operated by Gary Wayne. While the primary goal of the company is heavy hauling; however, due to the current economic situation, transporting cars and trucks is a nice additional

source of income.

Abode's "bread and butter" jobs are moving beach box houses on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Most are one story, 24 to 28 feet wide and 40 to 55 feet long and one story and fairly simple to move. Under normal economic conditions, work on the beach is nine months of the year. In the summer months, Abode works inland in northeastern N.C. and southeast VA. The summer months are normally the slowest time of the year.

The largest job Abode has moved, according to Overton, was Doug Twiddy's Real Estate Office in Duck, NC. It weighed just over 250 tons. "We moved it back on the lot to provide for more parking," Overton explained, "and Doug wanted to save a dogwood tree so we had to roll it around the tree. The tree died two years later and Doug said that it was the most expensive tree in Dare County, NC."



Overton's uncle, Eldon B. Heath, a house mover



In July 2009 this World War II look-out tower was salvaged and removed from the historic Wash Wood Life Saving Station



In October 2008 this house was relocated in Southern Shores, NC.

featured in....

Abode's longest move was a children's play house from Virginia Beach, VA to Morehead City, NC.--about 180 miles. "I have moved a beach box house about 75 miles but most are only a few miles," he said. These include 11 houses from the beach to his farm in Shiloh and are being set up as rental property. "I have moved three houses for my children to live in on the farm," he said.

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"The most interesting job I did was moving the Chincoteague Island Virginia Church which was

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This house was constructed below the area's flood requirements and had to be elevated 16 inches. Abode HouseMovers LLC lifted the pilings with the house. The work was accomplished in December 2007.

