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ADSC
The International Association of Foundation Drilling



Hayes Drilling, Inc.

A Midwest Success Story

Since 1958

By Peggy Hagerty Duffy, P.E., ADSC Technical Advisor

The following is the fourth in a series of articles about continuity of family ownership and leadership in ADSC companies. During the next two years we will be reporting on ADSC companies with multiple generations of ownership and management. This article is about the Hayes family of the Kansas City area and the history of Jene, sons Mike and Doug with a number of other "players" thrown in. (Editor)

One could say Hayes Drilling has been built on Midwestern values and hard work. One could also say "no one leaves Hayes Drilling," and add that most of their work comes from repeat customers. These statements constitute no surprise for anyone who is familiar with the foundation drilling community. On the other hand, some might be surprised to find out that the birth of Hayes Drilling began when a boy saw a pretty girl on the sidewalk. But don't most great stories start that way?

Jene Hayes grew up in Kansas City, Missouri. In 1947, he was working at his dad's gas station when the lovely Betty Sadler walked by. Jene looked. A few days later, Betty walked by again, and Jene looked some more. Jene wasn't a shrinking violet, and his sharp business sense told him when to jump at a great opportunity...so to speak. So the next time the young lady walked by, Jene asked her out. They were married a year later.

Jene wasted no time pursuing career opportunities to support his new bride. He first worked for the Veterans' Administration, and later sold life insurance. Neither of these options fulfilled his ambitious business goals. Although Jene's Dad was in the homebuilding business, he never had the inclination to pursue his personal dreams in the construction industry. However, his father-in-law worked as a superintendent for Grant Renne & Sons, a Kansas City general contractor. Mr. Sadler knew the com-



Jene Hayes at Hayes & Taylor Drilling Company.

pany needed an office manager, and he certainly wanted to make sure his son-in-law was successful. So Jene began his construction career as Office Manager for the company, using his innate business skills while quickly learning the fundamentals of the trade. He was later promoted to Field Superintendent, where he gained valuable knowledge about construction operations.

Jene didn't let his business aspirations lapse during this time. He attended junior college at night, ultimately receiving his degree in business. His education provided him with the knowledge of understanding how to move a company forward, as well as helping him to capitalize on his natural business skills.

As time went on, Jene grew frustrated with working hard to make money for someone else. He had formulated a plan for his own construction venture along with an associate Everett Taylor, an engineer. Betty had been working at Farmers Insurance while Jene worked with her dad. Together they saved \$6,000 to open a new company. Taylor also invested \$6,000, as did Jene's older brother Don, who chose to be a silent partner in the new business. In 1958, Jene and Everett started Hayes & Taylor Drilling Company. They had one drill rig and a hun-



Mike Hayes, Jene Hayes and Doug Hayes.



Jene, Don, and Everett sending the crew out circa 1960's.

gry attitude. Hayes & Taylor took on any client “who needed a hole drilled.” They parked the rig at a local gas station, and tried to get back every night to catch any new jobs that might have come in. Jene was the business side of the operation, and Taylor was the drilling side.

In addition to working at the insurance company, Betty had been busy having the first of their three children. Mike was born in 1955, and Doug and Suzanne followed within a few short years. The family quickly became part of the business, and vice versa. Hayes and Taylor's office was located in a guest bedroom in Betty and Jene's house, and the business operations often became intertwined with family activities. Regardless of whether or not business was being discussed, the lessons about hard work and accountability never stopped.

As the business grew, Jene brought his brothers into the operation. Don, Jerry, and Harold all had been in the construction business in the past, mostly in the residential arena working

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with their Dad as carpenters. Mike tells us that Jene had tried to work with his brothers in the home building business, “But he only lasted about a week. That part of the construction industry just wasn't for him.” In the beginning Don abandoned his “silent” role in the business and joined Hayes & Taylor to help oversee operations. Jerry and Harold began work as field superintendents.

In the early years, there weren't that many drilling companies

in the United States, and few were operating in the Midwest. Although Hayes & Taylor typically had to bid for work, they were often the only bidders. A number of customers came to Hayes every time they needed foundations drilled. The company

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Jene providing “hands on” assistance.

A SUCCESS STORY Contd



Jene speaking at an ADSC meeting.

grew with steady, hard work, creative business management, and a common feeling of support among the employees.

In the 1970s Everett Taylor left to work elsewhere and the business became Hayes Drilling Company. By then, Jene had exercised his brand of creative business insight, and the company scope was growing by leaps and bounds.

At the same time, Jene heard about a group of Texas drill-

ing contractors who had banded together to form an industry association, the Association of Drilled Shaft Contractors. Jene saw the value in uniting and addressing issues such as worker safety, as a group instead of individually. He quickly joined the

association and became active in the organization, offering a voice outside of Texas, and thus creating the start of the national

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presence for the ADSC. Jene eventually was elected ADSC President serving in 1974 and 1975.

While Jene was conquering the national stage and Hayes Drilling was expanding its reach in the Midwest, Mike and Doug were growing up. During their high school years both young men worked in the shop and in the field running parts and doing odd jobs. Mike went on to attend the University of Missouri, thus following in his dad's footsteps in pursuing a business degree. Doug decided to concentrate his focus on the field side of the operation. He began working with a Hayes crew as soon as he graduated from high school. Suzanne joined the company after college eventually becoming the Office Manager. After graduating from the University of Missouri, Mike went to work in the management side of Hayes Drilling. Doug worked his way up to be the Head of Operations. Mike remarks that many people comment on the differences between his personality and his brother's. "But that's what makes it work," he says. "He is good at one side of the business, and I am good at the

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Steve Holtz-Shop Manager (22 years); Jeremy Bennett-Project Manager (12 years); Aaron McConnell P.E.-Geo-Support Manager (5 years); M. Luke Schuler-Executive Vice President (29 years, 11 as Vice President); Mike Hayes-President (35 years, 18 as President); Alan Hintz-Controller (13 years) and Tara Gavoli-Senior Accountant (24 years).



Hayes installing foundations for the Sprint Arena in downtown Kansas City.

other. Together we are able to cover more bases than would be possible if we had the same personalities and skill sets.”

Growth of the company has not been punctuated with dramatic events or thrilling stories. The people of Hayes Drilling have worked hard, taken care of each other, and developed a reputation for quality. The bedroom office long ago became too small for Hayes’ many employees, (and the drill rigs wouldn’t fit at the gas station), so the company moved to an office complex in Kansas City, Missouri. Employees came, but very few went. One of the few who did leave was Don, who in the mid-80’s decided to move on to other ventures. Suzanne also moved on to explore life outside of the construction world. Jerry, Harold, and dozens of others became attached to the feeling of camaraderie and support at the company. “We have their backs. I think all of the employees know that,” stresses Mike. “When people have health issues or problems with a project, they know we’ll be there to stand by them until whatever it is gets resolved.”

In 1976, in Lexington, Kentucky, Hayes Drilling installed foundations for the brand new Rupp Arena, which was to become the home to the University of Kentucky’s vaunted basketball program. Jene thought this job was the perfect opportunity to de-

velop a presence in Kentucky. In 1989 Hayes Drilling opened an office in Georgetown, just east of Lexington. For many years the office was led successfully by Harlan Koehler, one of Hayes’ longtime employees. The consensus at Hayes Drilling is that Harlan brought professional respectability to the Kentucky of-

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Example of Hayes’s many anchored geo-support projects.

A SUCCESS STORY Contd



Jene and Betty Hayes

fice. In 2006 after Koehler's retirement, Craig Myers took over the Lexington office as Regional Manager. Myers continues to lead the eastern arm of the company into larger and more challenging work. Hayes Drilling will soon begin installing foundations for the expansion of Commonwealth Stadium in Lexington, thus making the

company the construction base for both the basketball and football programs at the University.

Harlan and Craig are just two parts of the large picture that has formed over the years as the Hayes "family" has grown to include non-family members that possess the same loyalty and commitment of blood relatives. These folks have been critical to the ongoing success of the company, and Hayes family members state that their contributions can't be quantified.

ADSC Past Secretary-Treasurer, M. Luke Schuler, P.E. is a civil engineer who came to Hayes in 1985 just a few months after college graduation. He had started his post-university career with general contractor J.E. Dunn, of Kansas City, Missouri. At that time J.E. Dunn, was working with Hayes Drilling on a project. Mike Hayes took the young engineer out for coffee and offered him a job. Schuler quickly learned how to estimate projects from Bill Overton, and since that time has worked his way up to project management. Mike can't find sufficient words to describe Schuler's contributions. "He's such a smart guy, and he helps with solutions to all sorts of problems on our projects. I can't even try to describe how much he contributes and how much he has done for us over the years." Schuler feels the same about the company and appreciates his position. His favorite part of the job is visiting job sites and working with the field

Mike and Luke both stress that no amount of business acumen could make the company succeed if the field crews weren't led by such sharp, hardworking personnel.

crews. "But as much as I like seeing our field guys," he laughs, "they always say they know something is wrong when I'm on the site." Schuler works with Project Manager Jeremy Bennett, a 12 year employee, and Aaron McConnell, another Project Manager. They are a tight team and representative of the Hayes work ethic.

Alan Hintz is another element in the Hayes foundation. As Controller, he handles all financial matters and has done so for over 12 years. Mike calls him "rock solid," and says he takes care of "anything and everything." Hintz is supported by Tara

Gavoli, the company Senior Accountant, who has been keeping the books in order for over 20 years.

Jerry and Harold Hayes remained in the field for over 20 years before they retired. Rick Windle and Robert Gade also are long time Field Superintendents and valuable assets. Mike and Luke both stress that no amount of business acumen could make the company succeed if the field crews weren't led by such sharp, hard working personnel. Andrew Waynick has kept watch over those crews as Safety Director for many years, and according to Mike, "his contribution is invaluable."

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Mike Hayes, President

serving as ADSC President in 2002 and 2003. Mike took on his dad's duties as a member of the ADSC's Site Selection Committee. And like Jene before him, Mike serves as a Trustee of the association's Industry Advancement Fund, which provides financial support for civil engineering graduate study scholarships, research, and innovative educational programs.

The family side of Hayes Drilling has flourished as the company has grown. New generations are coming up who could add to the strength of the company. In 1978 Mike married Linda Sanders whose Dad was a contractor. They have three daughters, Hayley, Kristin, and Jaime. Doug also found a fine complement to his operations-oriented personality in his wife Debbie King. They tied the knot in 2000. They have a daughter, Samantha. All of Jene's granddaughters respect the value of hard work, regardless of whether or not they decide to join the drilling business in the future.

Hayes Drilling was one of the first drilled shaft contractors in the Midwest, and they perfected their craft with industry advancements in equipment and with increased experience in their personnel. In the mid-1990s, Hayes Drilling added to their repertoire by expanding into the anchored earth retention business. To date, some of their most successful projects have been in this field. Hayes Drilling has grown and prospered in no small part by the addition of this division to their construction skill set. The addition of the new division required larger facilities and in 2004 Hayes Drilling moved into new headquarters on nine acres in Olathe, Kansas. The new facility consists of 10,000 square feet of office and an 8,000 square foot shop with space on the grounds for equipment.

Current Hayes Drilling projects are among the most challenging to date. The Olathe, Kansas group has been working on a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project in Omaha, Nebraska.

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Hayes Drilling's corporate headquarters in Olathe, Kansas.

This \$750 million venture involves construction of the new U.S. Strategic Command Headquarters and is being led by

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Keiwit/Phelps, a Joint Venture. The Kentucky office is involved in the construction of the East End Bridge in the Louisville and Southern Indiana Ohio River Bridges (LSIORB), one of the largest public infrastructure projects in the United States. Hayes Drilling has been retained to construct drilled shaft foun-

datations for the portion of the bridge that crosses Harrods Creek. This is a complex geologic environment with a

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high risk for flash flooding. (Note: This project will be the subject of an upcoming feature article in *Foundation Drilling* magazine).

Based on even brief conversations with company personnel the heart of the Hayes Drilling operation is obvious. Work always will be on the horizon,

and new equipment and methods will expand the possibilities for the company. But the people are the critical pieces of the puzzle. Discussions about the company always start and end with talk of the outstanding members of the staff. The company approaches each new project with an evaluation of how the personnel could tackle the job rather than just a general assessment of the scope of work. And where will this philosophy take the company in the future? Mike says "Jene was coming into the office well into his eighties. I don't know that we want to do that,

Luke puts it succinctly. "Jene told me early on that greed will be the fastest way out of this business. We don't cut corners, we work hard, and we care about the people we work with."

but as long as we continue to enjoy running a family business and the opportunity it gives us to continue working with our employees, our suppliers and our customers we will keep doing it."

That Midwestern work ethic that formed the cornerstone for Hayes Drilling is the glue that holds this close staff together. Every conversation, every e-mail, every passing interaction with Hayes personnel includes references to quality work and reliability. Luke puts it succinctly. "Jene told me early on that greed will be the fastest way out of this business. We don't cut corners, we work hard, and we care about the people we work with."

Every company would be fortunate to have employees who believe this. The people at Hayes Drilling Company *believe it, and live it.*

ADSC



A Hayes Family Wedding.