

A SALUTE TO AN RMS CUSTOMER

OVERLAND SYSTEMS INC.

Diverse range of services helps spur Blue Grass, Iowa, company's growth over two decades

Twenty years ago Rod Teel started what is now known as Overland Systems by installing field fence. He did it out of necessity after being laid off from his job at the time, working through the summer and fall of 1988. When winter came, he couldn't install fence so he bought a dump truck and began hauling materials.

That began the diversification that led Teel and his wife, Jolene, into success at Overland Systems. Not long after the trucking part of the company started, Teel was called back to his old job and began working nearly around the clock at his full-time job as well as keeping Overland Systems going.

"By the end of the week, I'd generally be wiped out," said Rod, who's Vice President of the Blue Grass, Iowa-based company. Jolene is President. "But the business kept coming

and we began to take on even more. I worked two jobs for a few years, but eventually I had to either give up the business or quit my job. I knew that if I could devote myself full time to the business that I could make it grow, so we took a leap of faith."

At the time, Overland Systems had begun unloading bulk materials off of railcars for a local company. Today, the Teels estimate that handling bulk materials makes up about 85 percent of Overland Systems' business. Most of the work is done for area companies working along the Mississippi River, with Overland loading and unloading barges that carry everything from sand and gravel to large wire coils. Included in that 85 percent is trucking materials within a 75-mile radius of the Quad Cities area.

Diverse work handled by a great staff

The other 15 percent of the company's business comes from a variety of sources, including clearing and site work for private individuals and residential subcontractors. Overland Systems also strips overburden at a nearby quarry during the winter months, does some contract material screening, has a tree farm and nursery and does minor landscaping projects.

"The diversity came as a result of my philosophy of providing good customer service and has helped us grow," said Rod, who noted that the company no longer does fence installation. "I've always been willing to try different things, and at the same time have a hard time saying no when it comes to a customer. But the majority of our work comes in handling bulk materials. We've developed

Jolene and Rod Teel are President and Vice President respectively of Overland Systems. The Blue Grass, Iowa, company's main focus is on bulk material handling.



a good niche over the years, so we've concentrated a lot of our efforts in that arena. It's worked out well for us."

It's worked so well that Overland Systems has garnered an extensive list of repeat customers throughout its 20-year history.

"Nearly everything we do is for a repeat customer or someone who's been referred to Overland Systems by a customer of ours," said Jolene. "We do hardly any advertising. Most of it is word-of-mouth. We're very proud of the fact that we've developed a good reputation and customers think highly enough of our work to send others to us. That's what we've always strived for."

Because of its reputation, Overland Systems has grown 1,000 percent since its inception. When Rod decided to devote himself full-time to Overland Systems there were three employees in addition to himself and Jolene, who handles accounting for the business.

Today, it has 35 employees, many longterm, including Rod's brother Randy "Fuzzy" Teel, who oversees material handling operations. Other key individuals include Hays Snow, who oversees trucking, and Operators Andy Jones and Mark Leslie. Rod oversees all operations, filling in as an equipment operator as needed.

"I like to be hands-on, but at the same time, as diverse as we are, I can't be everywhere at once, so I have to rely on those guys in the field and on the road to keep things moving," commented Rod. "Fuzzy and Hays do a tremendous job of overseeing those key aspects to our business. They are a great bunch and deserve a good deal of credit for the success of the company. We really wouldn't be where we are without them."

Excellent service, machinery

Around the time Rod devoted himself full time to the business, he began to see a need for equipment to keep up with the work Overland Systems was doing. He and Jolene made a trip to Georgia to buy the company's first excavator.

"We drove down and back without staying overnight because we weren't sure we could



"Fuzzy" Teel uses Overland Systems' new customized PC1250LC-8 excavator to load material onto a barge near the Mississippi River. "We added the PC1250 because it allows us to move the materials faster and gives us the lifting capacity to move the steel coils, which can be very heavy," said Overland Systems Vice President Rod Teel. "We had it specially equipped for those applications, but we will switch for stripping purposes, so it gives us some versatility."



Operator Mark Leslie pushes up a stockpile with a D155AX-6 dozer. "When we were looking for a new dozer we wanted something that would give us the same pushing power we had, but the added benefit to the D155 is the fuel savings," said Overland Systems Vice President Rod Teel.

afford it," said Rod. "We were running a fairly lean operation at the time, and the whole way home we were scared to death that we'd made a huge mistake. But in the end, it paid off and we've been able to continue to add equipment as needed and as the business grew."

A large portion of that additional equipment is Komatsu dozers and excavators purchased from Road Machinery & Supplies' Milan, Ill., branch. The Teels work closely with Territory

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Versatile, fuel efficient machines are key

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Manager Dustin Olander as well as Service Manager Ty Gainey and Service Coordinator Sandy Begyn.

"They take care of us like Overland Systems is their own business," noted Rod. "One of the reasons we buy Komatsu is the service we get from RMS. Anytime we call, they respond right away. There have been times where RMS will come to work on our machinery on a Sunday afternoon, knowing we have to be ready Monday morning. And, as we buy more new Komatsu equipment, they're doing more and more of our service work because they have the know how to work on the newer systems. They'll even work on our competitive equipment, including overhauling motors in our haul trucks."

Recent Komatsu purchases for Overland Systems include a PC1250LC-8 excavator that it had customized for loading and unloading barges. It's currently working in tandem with a PC750LC-6 that the company owns, and both will be used for stripping overburden in the winter months. The company also has a PC200 and PC400.

"What we like about Komatsu equipment is its longevity and that it doesn't cost us a lot in downtime," said Rod. "No one likes downtime, but it's particularly bad for us because we're handling bulk materials that

our customers can't wait for. The Komatsus give us the ability to get the materials on and off the barge quickly and efficiently. We added the PC1250 because it allows us to move the materials faster and give us the lifting capacity to move the steel coils, which can be very heavy. We had it specially equipped for those applications, but we will switch for stripping purposes, so it gives us some versatility. It also has the Tier 3 engine, so it's more fuel efficient."

The same can be said for Overland Systems' new D155AX-6 dozer that's used in stripping and stockpiling materials. It also has a Tier 3 engine.

"When we were looking for a new dozer, we wanted something that would give us the same pushing power we had, but the added benefit to the D155 is the fuel savings," added Rod. "We looked at the charts that RMS had and saw potentially significant fuel savings, which in today's market is a huge benefit. Our operators love it." Overland also has two dozers (a D41 and a D61) used for stockpiling, land clearing and site work.

Solid relationships

The Teels recently moved into a new office and shop location in Blue Grass after nearly 20 years of working from their home. The new shop has enough room for Overland Systems' mechanics to work on its trucks.

"It was a necessity in order for us to be able to service our trucks as we continue to grow," said Jolene. "It's proven to be a good move with ample space to expand, if necessary."

The Teels don't have expansion plans as the business has grown considerably in the past five years. Rod said they're comfortable with the business at its present size.

"We never really planned to grow to this point," he admits. "We've grown to meet our customers' needs, so I guess it's possible that we'll continue to grow. But what we won't do is grow just for growth sake. Our calling card has always been our ability to serve the customer. We've developed very solid relationships with them over the years, and we plan to keep it that way." ■



Operator Andy Jones unloads material from a barge at a jobsite along the Mississippi River near Blue Grass, using a Komatsu PC750LC-6.

