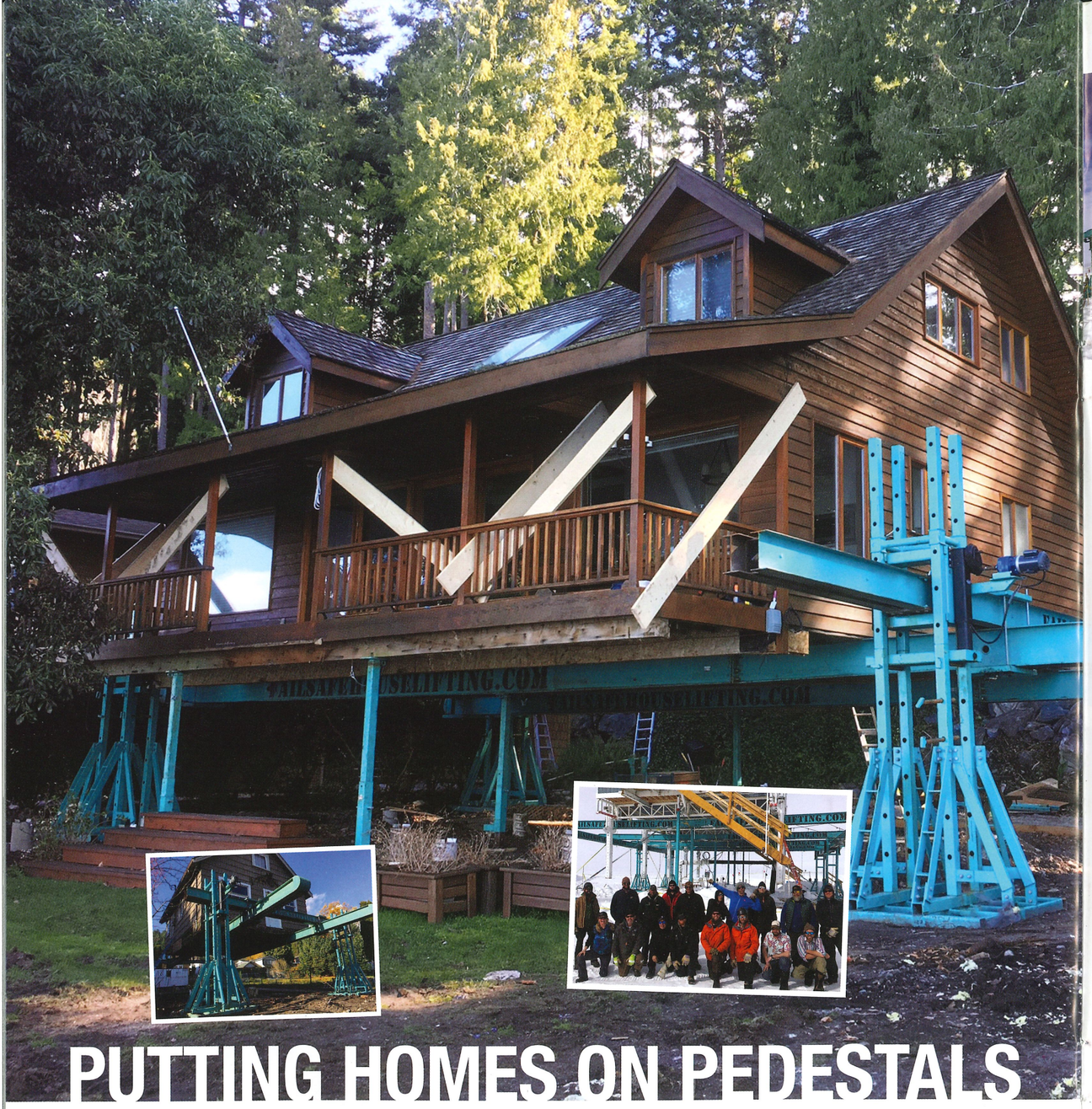

PUTTING HOMES ON PEDESTALS

FailSafe adds security during foundation repairs/replacements

BY: JONATHAN HAMELIN

WHEN YOU NEED A LIFT and don't have access to a vehicle, you call a taxi or ride-sharing service. But what about when your house needs a lift? For many customers, the answer has been to turn to Regina-based FailSafe House Lifting Systems Inc.

"People will be required to have their houses lifted when the foundation underneath needs to be replaced or redeveloped," said Cameron Wensel, sales manager of FailSafe. "House lifting can also be used to prepare a structure for transport or in construction projects such as main storey additions."

Cameron and his brother Monty (FailSafe president) initially founded the company in response to the damage that Regina's volatile clay "gumbo" soil has caused to the foundations of many homes over the years.

FAILSAFE
BASEMENT REPLACEMENT
&
HOUSE LIFTING SYSTEMS INC.

The traditional method of house lifting has occasionally proven to be an inadequate approach to raising structures. In May 2006, a house collapsed in Regina that had been lifted on wood cribbing in order to replace the basement. The misuse, and subsequent failure of the house-lifting equipment being used in the project, nearly injured the people working underneath, left the house beyond repair and left the homeowners in a detrimental financial situation.

Monty was inspired to develop a more secure method of lifting houses and temporarily suspending them for construction. He developed the first generation model of the ATLAS House Lifting System during summer 2006 and began lifting houses that winter. FailSafe was launched in 2008 in order to address the growing need for house lifting and basement replacement services in the Regina area.

"Our engineered system essentially consists of steel lifting towers and a steel beam framework that is driven by electrical mechanical jacks," Cameron said. "The system offers a clear span beneath the lifted structure, meaning the whole lifting apparatus sits outside of the area of construction beneath the home instead of having all your equipment right underneath. The system has been designed so it's systematic in its design. Once you have the house up in the air, you can make adjustments quite easily; you can take it up to 18 feet."

Since FailSafe began, the company has been involved with approximately 200 house lifts. The company handles projects where it supplies house lifting and basement replacement services and also provides its house lifting services to other contractors. The ATLAS House Lifting System has continually been refined and is now in its fifth generation.

Offering a range of services, FailSafe has the capability to deal with areas such as basement replacements, house straightening, main storey additions, detached garage slab replacements and attached porch straightening. The company has also developed a range of permanently installed adjustable house jacking and leveling foundation systems to meet the needs of homeowners who live in residential areas that experience a high degree of ground movement, such as the communities surrounding Last Mountain Lake.

FailSafe's unique house lifting technology quickly garnered interested outside the province. The company has completed lifts throughout Western Canada in the past couple of years.

The company's first foray into the US came when it operated a system in New Jersey following Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Cameron noted that FailSafe has actually received inquiries from all 50 states in the US for both house lifting equipment and house lifting services. Before a premature expansion into the US; however, FailSafe decided to step back and consider the best long-term business approach.

"Our strategy moving forward in the next year is to fabricate a series of ATLAS systems to start," Cameron said. "We have an interested group of prospective renter/operators from numerous locations in the US and a couple in Canada, who want to have the opportunity to utilize our system for lifting structures. The business model will not be for direct sales of the equipment, but basically long-term rental agreements. We're going to start with an initial run of about 10 systems, and we're going to find operators to take those systems and start utilizing them in other markets under this new business model."

As it looks to explore new markets, FailSafe continues to utilize the services of STEP.

"We take advantage of STEP's market research services and background analysis in respect to prospective business partners and associates," Cameron said. "When we started operating in BC, for example, I contacted STEP and said I want the name of every foundation contractor from Chilliwack to Tofino. They were able to provide a detailed list of companies in our industry that we could use to reach out on a company-by-company basis."

While FailSafe is taking it slow when it comes to expansion, it has taken part in a recent international project. The company was contacted by CH2M, a global engineering company that is sub-contracted to do work for the National Science Foundation, an American government agency. CH2M was experiencing difficulties with Summit Camp, its year-round research station on the apex of the Greenland Ice Sheet.

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> *- Cameron Wensel, FailSafe Sales Manager*

"They have numerous buildings that they need to raise every couple of years because of snow and ice accumulation," Cameron said. "They were doing this using an inadequate system, and that was frustrating to them. We supplied them with the custom ATLAS system, provided training, and even travelled to Greenland to consult on a structural lift. This has allowed them to more effectively complete their ongoing structural lifting and foundation work."