



JEFFREY SMITH/Leader photos



## ICM marks 50 years

Improved Construction Methods was recognized on Wednesday for its 50th anniversary and being a 50-year member of the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce. From left are Mayor Bob Johnson, ICM owners Anita McFadden and her husband, Bruce; chamber president Steve Pawloski and membership coordinator Anna Hightower. Improved Construction Methods is located at 1040 N. Redmond Road in Jacksonville.

JACKSONVILLE COMPANY

# Improved Construction Methods marks 50 years

■ Makes plastic forms for manholes and now has \$10 million in annual sales.

By JEFFREY SMITH  
Leader staff writer

Jacksonville Mayor Bob Johnson and the Chamber of Commerce recognized Improved Construction Methods on Wednesday for 50 years in business and as a 50-year member of the chamber.

ICM owners Bruce McFadden and his wife, Anita, of Sherwood were presented with a mayor's proclamation, declaring this week ICM Week in the city. The chamber gave them a plaque for their long-time membership since 1970.

Bruce was 32 years old when he started the company. The McFaddens have four sons, Greg, Mark, Chris and Clay. Mark and Chris work at ICM. Bruce was president of the Jacksonville chamber in 1991 and a past president of the Rotary Club.

ICM, 1040 N. Redmond Road, manufactures and sells plastic forms used for cast-in-place concrete manholes. The company sells and rents construction tools and equipment used by contractors and municipalities.

ICM started out with a truck pulling a trailer and \$100,000 in sales and has grown to \$10 million in sales annually and 50 employees. They have eleven offices in Arkansas, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas.

ICM survived the great recession of 2008 and became smaller. COVID has had a minimal effect on ICM's sales. Contractors want to build and the work is outdoors.



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Construction tools and safety equipment are for sale at the ICM showroom in Jacksonville. The company was opened 50 years ago by Bruce and Anita McFadden. It is located at 1040 N. Redmond Road.

## 62 YEARS OF MARRIAGE

Bruce and Anita McFadden are from Hickory Ridge (Cross County). Bruce was in 11th grade and Anita was in ninth grade when they started dating.

Bruce said, "All the guys in her class were mad at me, because I stole the new, pretty girl who came to town. Hickory Ridge held a chicken roast. She was there and I eased over, where she was and reached out got a hold of her hand—and she didn't slap me, so it went on."

Bruce graduated in 1956 as valedictorian of the class of 13 students. He went to Arkansas State University in Jonesboro for two years to complete his pre-engineering courses.

"I came home every weekend from Jonesboro, about 30

miles away, waiting for her to graduate. We went to the same church," he said.

Anita graduated from high school in 1958 and earned her beautician's license that summer.

The McFaddens got married and moved to Fayetteville, where Bruce went to the University of Arkansas and earned his bachelor's degree with honors in civil engineering in 1960.

He went to work for the Army Corps of Engineers as an inspector during construction of Beaver Dam (Carroll County) on the White River in northwest Arkansas.

Federal work was not for McFadden and he chose to go into the private sector.

McFadden wanted to get his graduate degree in construction engineering. He spoke with the head of the engi-

neering department at U of A. The professor urged Bruce to attend Stanford University in northern California, where he applied and was awarded the Albert Sloan Fellowship, an all-expenses paid scholarship.

The McFaddens moved in the fall of 1964 to Stanford. Bruce earned his master's degree in civil engineering in 1965, completing the nine month program.

After college he worked on smoothing and repairing the runway at Little Rock Air Force Base and widening the road in Newport.

The McFaddens chose Jacksonville as the location of ICM, because of the people they knew and later met while Bruce worked on LRAFB's runway project.

Bruce, J.C. George and Tommy Bond were in the same civil engineering class in Fayetteville. George was Jacksonville's city engineer. George's wife, Doris, and Anita McFadden had worked together in the same beauty shop.

Whit Davis helped Bruce design tools to improve a paver that was being used for the base runway project. Odes Goodsell did welding for Bruce. He also met banker Kenneth "Pat" Wilson. Bond



ICM makes and sells plastic molds for pour-in-place concrete manholes. Concrete is poured between the two rings to form a manhole. The rings can be stacked for deeper manholes.

did surveying for McFadden.

Jacksonville had lots of property and buildings for sale from the former ordinance plant built in the 1940s during the Second World War.

## IMPROVED CONSTRUCTION METHODS

Bruce said ICM got its name because he liked how IBM (International Business Machines) was shortened and his classes taught improved ways of construction.

ICM was first located on West Main Street where Lomanco is now. ICM sold the property and moved in 2000 to the old Club Aluminum cookware building on Redmond Road.

ICM started out making and selling plastic manhole forms. They are made by warming large sheets of plastic in an industrial oven. The plastic is softened and laid into wood molds, where it cools and forms the curved shapes to build a circle.

"It was hard getting a brick layer to get into a nasty hole and build a brick manhole, so concrete manholes were poured on the spot. It is easier to get someone to do the work and the manholes had less chance of leaking," McFadden said.

McFadden said there was a man in El Dorado, who was using wood forms with molded plastic parts and gate hinges

used to pour a concrete manhole. ICM improved on the idea in 1970 by making manhole forms out of plastic.

Jacksonville city code requires poured concrete manholes. Pre-cast is not allowed.

J.C. George and Glen Blount founded AGL (Automatic Grade Light) lasers and accessories in 1964. AGL on 2202 N. Redmond Road is now part of Hexagon of Sweden.

Since Bruce and George were friends, he invited George to be become partners with ICM. ICM had a salesman in a truck and trailer traveling around selling plastic manhole forms, sewer line plugs and AGL pipe lasers.

ICM expanded to sell and rent safety equipment for working in tight confined spaces, such as harnesses, lifelines, rescue tripods and ventilators.

They sell trench safety equipment to shore up the work areas, so dirt does not cave in on workers. ICM sells pipeline testing equipment, boring tools, construction lasers, sewer cleaning equipment, plumbing pipe cameras, water pumps, cutting saws and concrete equipment.

The company also offers rehabilitation service on manholes, wet wells, sewer and water treatment plant structures along with concrete and earthen dams. They are able to stop leaks by coating the walls with cement-like or epoxy coatings.