

Member Profile

Wiley Johnson grew up on a farm near Abbeville, GA and, with the help of a supportive FFA advisor, he began working at the International Harvester Farm Equipment Training Center near Tifton, GA in the summer right out of high school.

Starting in 1961, International Harvester would send employees and representatives from all over the United States and often from other countries to the Training Center in Tifton and have them attend classes that familiarized them with the IH products they sold and maintained back home as well as products made and sold by IH competitors.

Wiley started out at Tifton in 1963 as an apprentice mechanic, which he says meant that he was a “go-fer” for the more experienced mechanics. His job was to repair anything that needed to be fixed on the demonstration equipment as well as setting up and breaking down the tractor implements and attachments used in the training classes.

After working for a little more than a year, Wiley enrolled at ABAC, a local two-year agriculture college and started work on a degree in Ag Technology. He continued to work almost full-time at the IH Center while in school.

In late '64 or early '65, IH changed Wiley's employee classification to “Journeyman Mechanic” and he continued in this work until the fall of 1969 when he was appointed “Service Manager” for the IH Training Center.

In 1976, IH closed the Training Center in Tifton and moved the operation to Ottawa, Illinois, where it became the Resource Development Center as part of IH's test farm, Industrial Training Center, and Photographic Center.

Wiley left Tifton and moved to Illinois. He continued in mechanical work as an Assistant Service Manager where his department was responsible for keeping equipment repaired and cleaned up.

He was there for two years until he moved back south to Huntsville, AL where he worked as a “Service Traveler”, calling on about 30

dealers in the Atlanta Region. It wasn't long before he was relocated to an office in Montgomery, AL where he covered just the state of Alabama.

This office remained open for only a few years, closing in 1983 just ahead of the Tenneco – CASE/IH merger in 1985. In the last couple of years of IH, Wiley continued as a Service Traveler and covered the areas of Alabama, South Mississippi, and parts of Georgia.

As a Service Traveler for IH, Wiley was responsible for keeping track of specific problems that had been seen on new pieces of equipment and made his dealers aware to keep an eye out for them in their service operations. He managed and distributed service bulletins to the dealers and also kept them up to date on recalls and other types of service related information. He also made sure that dealers' service technicians received periodic re-training.

In essence, Wiley was the IH point person for each of his dealerships. When a new product came out, he made weekly calls to find out if the dealers experienced any problems that the company needed to know about and to offer remedies that could be handled locally.

He would often go to the field to investigate an equipment failure and see for himself the problem at hand. If he couldn't identify the source or reason for a problem, Wiley had North American Service Managers devoted to specific types of equipment that he could call for help.

Following the 1985 merger, Wiley was retained in Service by the new CASE/IH organization and they kept him in Montgomery. Wiley worked out of his home until 1997 when his territory was divided up between two other employees and he was



Wiley Johnson (#295) (left) with his friend Gene Jones (#297) at the Elmore show in 2014. Wiley was elected at the meeting in November for a 3 year term as a Director for Chapter #23.

appointed as a “Product Specialist”.

Wiley became the planter and cotton picker specialist for the area from South Georgia to Columbus, Mississippi and would set up meetings for anyone who wanted a demonstration of how these machines operated. He had an electric powered mock-up planter unit as well as a cotton picker drum that he would send to the demonstration location that could show the equipment in action.

Wiley continued in this “Specialist” role until 2006 when a consolidation in the company offered him the opportunity to retire, which he accepted. But he wasn't completely done. For the next four years the company brought him back under contract each fall to work the cotton harvest on new cotton pickers. He cut the cord for good in the fall of 2010.

With retirement, Wiley and his wife Patricia moved from Montgomery to Wetumpka where they currently live so they can be close to their children and grandchildren.

For the last four or five years Wiley has stayed busy in the summer mowing 6½ acres of soccer fields on the north edge of Montgomery. He uses an IH Cub 154 Lo-Boy to do this mowing, which he says still does a good job.

Wiley has a total of 6 tractors, all IH with the exception of a CASE 400. He brings most of them to the show at Elmore each May.