

THE MOVER'S EDGE



Photo by Ed Waters Jr.

Fred Wolfe, left, driver, and Howard Levine, owner of Ramar Transportation and Logistics in Frederick, are shown with the tractor-trailer rig that carries the flight simulator for the new F/A-22 Raptor. The Air Force paid for the \$25,000 paint job, which is not completed (notice the front of the trailer, which will be painted as a nose of the aircraft.) The cab features a painting of part of the instrument panel. Mr. Wolfe has taken the simulator to Air Force bases where the Raptor is stationed, as well as to the plants where manufacturers such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Pratt & Whitney make the various parts.

Businessman's Secret Service duty tailor-made for post 9-11

By ED WATERS JR.

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FREDERICK — Howard Levine said he could probably write a movie script about the moving industry. Formerly with the U.S. Secret Service, Mr. Levine has been in the moving business 35 years and said he has seen a lot of things happen, both humorous and otherwise.

One of the main focuses today is security in any business, especially after Sept. 11, 2001, but Mr. Levine's background has always given him an edge in ensuring everything is done safely and properly.

"All of our drivers are in tune for watching for things," said Mr. Levine at his office at 28 Thomas Johnson Drive.

The site houses several of his businesses, including Ramar Moving Systems Inc., which is affiliated with United Van Lines, and Ramar Transportation and Logistics Group Inc., which is affiliated with Mayflower Van Lines.

"Our drivers and other employees report anything suspicious as we see them," Mr. Levine said.

While on the road or loading or unloading household or commercial articles, the drivers keep an eye out, he said.

Mr. Levine related an incident that happened prior to 9-11.

"We went to a house in Potomac to

pack up and move some clients who were going to Afghanistan. My guys said that after they had packed and sealed boxes, they kept finding them broken open before they could load them, and the people had put ammunition into the boxes," Mr. Levine said. The "clients" had hoped the crew would simply seal the boxes and load them on the truck.

"We can't haul ammunition, though we can — with the proper paperwork — haul guns that are unloaded and properly packed. We can't haul aerosol cans, liquids, bottles, liquor, wine or beer, even certain household chemicals, and all that was before 9-11," Mr. Levine said.

Two items that also were to be shipped for these clients were two old vehicles, one of them a Jeep, Mr. Levine said.

"We were really looking things over, especially after my guys told me about the attempt to put ammunition in the boxes. My warehouse manager at the time had a good intuition about things and said there was something about the vehicles he felt wasn't right," Mr. Levine said.

The manager had the vehicles unloaded from the trailers and crawled under them. Beneath the Jeep, he found a rifle had been stored on top of the muffler with duct tape and then painted black, the same color as the muffler, to hide it.

"We called the local police, but I told them they also needed to call the DEA and other agencies," Mr. Levine said.

Law enforcement officials came and interviewed the two clients, separately. "One said they were just going to Afghanistan for a visit, the other said they were moving permanently. It was great to watch what happened."

Eventually, after the weapon was removed, "We were told to pack it up and take it to the port in Baltimore. I'm not so sure that would happen today."

Today there are more regulations, Mr. Levine said, even involving food, though his company usually doesn't transport

food items.

"We won't take any food items that are open, such as an open cereal box," he said.

"The way food is controlled, I really don't see how something could happen," said Mr. Levine about the nation's food supply, but it could happen as an "inside job" (someone at a food processing plant tampering with the products).

"If someone wants to do something bad enough, they will find a way," Mr. Levine said.

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Driving with the raptor

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FREDERICK — When Fred Wolfe began a truck driving career, he probably never thought he would be driving a unique truck with a special cargo.

Mr. Wolfe, who drives for Ramar Transportation & Logistics Group on Thomas Johnson Drive, transports the training simulator for pilots learning to fly the new F/A-22 Raptor stealth fighter-bomber.

The tractor-trailer rig he drives is painted blue, with a Raptor on each side

and part of the instrument panel on the side of the cab. A small part of the front of the trailer has yet to be painted, but will feature the nose of the aircraft, Mr. Wolfe said. The Air Force paid for the paint job at \$25,000.

He has hauled the \$1.5 million simulator around the United States — to Air Force bases that have the new aircraft and to manufacturers who complete various parts of the Raptor.

Mr. Wolfe has pulled the simulator from the training center at Shepherd Air Force Base in Texas to Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, Tyndall Air Force

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SNAPSHOT

NAME: Howard L. Levine

COMPANIES: Ramar Moving Systems Inc.; Ramar Transportation & Logistics Group Inc.; Ramar Record Retention LLC and IBBYS LLC/DBA/GO MINI'S.

HOW LONG IN BUSINESS, WERE YOU IN A DIFFERENT FIELD BEFORE THAT:

Before joining North American Van lines as a salesman in 1970, I spent about seven years with the U.S. Secret Service. It was a most memorable time, but I didn't want to stay with the government; so, in 1970, I left for the sales position. I formed my own business in 1976, but sold out in 1986. My wife convinced me to open a moving company in Frederick so I could work and live here. So in 1987, Ramar was born, with the name standing for our daughter, Rachel, and son, Mark.

GRADUATED FROM: Kittanning High School, Kittanning, Pa. Attended Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

AS A HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR, I THOUGHT I WOULD BE: The next generation to own my grandfather's furniture business.

FAVORITE BOOK OR TYPE OF BOOKS: I enjoy autobiographies, books on

history and Jean Auel, who writes fiction, though following our origins and history.

IF A MOVIE WERE MADE ABOUT MY LIFE, WHAT KIND WOULD IT BE AND WHO WOULD PORTRAY ME:

I would like to think it would be a comedy. I have often said that if I were a writer I could write a 10-year, no-repeat sitcom on the moving industry. Perhaps Tommy Lee Jones could play my part.

PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENT: Working every day with my wife and two kids. I owe my success to their dedication and hard work.

FAVORITE QUOTE: I buy things I don't need with money I don't have to impress people I don't like.

FAVORITE MUSIC: Oldies such as "Unchained Melody."

WHAT I LIKE BEST AND LEAST ABOUT FREDERICK:

Best: The greatest county to live and work in.

Worst: Politics. Sometimes I think the words "By the People, For the People" are lost in the personal goals set by those in office.

BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY: Work hard, work honest, take

care of your family, employees and customers.

IN MY FREE TIME, I LIKE TO: Travel, see the country and world, and I hope to build a nice train layout.

FAVORITE CHARITY: Heartly House, though I enjoy helping all charities.

FAVORITE RESTAURANT OR FOODS: I have three — Dutch's Daughter for seafood, Gladchuck Brothers for seafood and steak, and Red Horse for steak.

BEST/WORST INVESTMENTS: Best — First Bank; Worst — first business partnership.

FAVORITE TIME OF YEAR: Winter, nothing beats sled riding.

IF I COULD CHANGE ANYTHING, WHAT WOULD IT BE:

Nothing. I can't think of a thing. Life is what life is. Each decision you make is final and you have to make the best of it, right or wrong.



Photo by Ed Waters Jr.

Howard Levine, owner of four moving-related businesses, was in the U.S. Secret Service for seven years. In 1970, Mr. Levine left for a sales position, and formed his own business in 1976. He sold the company in 1986. His wife convinced him to open a moving company in Frederick so he could work and live in the county. So, in 1987, Ramar was born.

Ramar

(Continued from 12)

Under the U.S. Transportation Security Administration, a new program has been launched called Highway Watch.

Professional drivers are trained by security personnel and other experts to spot problems such as homeland security concerns, stranded vehicles, impaired drivers or unsafe road conditions, and to report them immediately and accurately to the authorities.

It is not just for long-haul drivers, but transportation infrastructure workers and drivers, commercial and public truck drivers, bus drivers and anyone who spends a lot of time on the road.

The Highway Watch program also trains drivers to report safety hazards and auto accidents as well.

Participants are trained in what to observe, what to look for and how to report details of a suspicious vehicle or incident. The drivers also are immediately advised of Amber Alerts, national security concerns or general "be on the lookout" alerts from local, state or national law enforcement agencies.

Raptor

(Continued from 12)

Base in Florida to Langley Air Force Base in Virginia as well as to various manufacturers' plant around the nation, including Marietta, Ga., where the aircraft is assembled.

"It is really something to walk through that Lockheed plant and see everything come together," Mr. Wolfe said.

The major manufacturers are Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Pratt & Whitney, which make the engines. Their names are on the trailer, as well as Ramar's.

"It is a great marketing tool," Mr. Wolfe said. He has had the simulator on Capitol Hill, "to show them where the money is going."

"At the Air Force Academy and to other personnel, it is a great incentive to enter the pilot program or to do maintenance on the Raptor," Mr. Wolfe said. The aircraft, though complex, is designed to be relatively low-maintenance and can be "turned around" — refitted with fuel and weapons after a return from a mission — in a shorter time than many other aircraft.

"Pilots tell me it can turn

inside of an F-15. They said it can do more than what they thought it could do," he said of the Raptors, which go for \$134 million each.

Mr. Wolfe has extensive Department of Defense clearances to set up and explain the simulator, knowing what to show and what not to show, depending on who is looking.

The job has enabled him to not only meet "some great (Air Force) crews," but also Neil Armstrong. "It was really something to be there talking with the first man to step foot on the moon," he said.

Mr. Wolfe said one of the keys to the F/A-22's stealth is that "everything is inside." Except for the engine thrust out the back, the bombs, guns and everything else is inside and only comes out when ready to be used, rather than hanging underneath the wings or fuselage.

When Mr. Wolfe was in Frederick recently, Howard Levine of Ramar called some of his friends who are pilots to come see the rig and talk with Mr. Wolfe about the Raptor.

"It's not something you see on the road every day," Mr. Levine said.