



Emergency Medical Technician, Diane Edgett, gave assistance to a fire fighter who became overheated. The fireman quickly recovered and went back to battle the blaze.

— Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts

## Building owners decide what's next

(Continued from Page 1)  
really enjoy shooting indoors. We don't know yet if we will rebuild, but we'll find a place somehow. We have a few options to look over. It's kind of up in the air until we have the fire marshal's report." Jim Rowh, owner of Pure Prairie Natural Foods, and the only building not destroyed by the blaze, said Thursday afternoon, "The fire marshal didn't say much, but the insurance adjuster said everything is 'go'. We can start cleaning up." He said the building is structurally sound.

Volunteers came in this morning to help him clean the store. They washed down walls, ceilings and every bottle and jar in the store. Everything not in sealed containers had to be discarded. All bottled and sealed items were fine, "That's just a huge blessing," Mr. Rowh said.

Mr. Rowh said there was four feet of water in the basement. The city pumped it out Tuesday. Compressors in the basement ran his refrigeration units. They shorted out, but he said "it was nothing major."

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment inspector will come after the cleaning for one last inspection. Mr. Rowh estimates the building will be open in 1-2 weeks.

Until that time he will keep selling produce on the east side of his store. He has a good supply of Colorado peaches, cantaloupes, corn on the cob and more. He will also sell vitamins and supplements as people need them.

He said the building and contents were insured.

He was told that during the fire the city, alone, pumped half a million gallons of water on the blaze. That's not counting the water hauled in by rural fire trucks.

Thursday afternoon, only a slight smoky smell could be detected at Pure Prairie. There was no visible smoke damage. ServiceMaster, a clean-up company, said there was only mild smoke damage and a "neutralizer bomb" would take care of everything.

Helping with clean-up and running the business are employees Ashley Martinez, Dennis and Roberta McAllister and Mr. Rowh's parents, Lyman and Georgia Rowh.

Perhaps the hardest hit of all were Lee and Siobhan Hanes, owners of U.S. 36 Collectables. Mr. and Mrs. Hanes bought the business about six months ago from previous owner Sharolyn

Bredemeier. Not only did they have their own collection of antiques in the store but they also had about 30 consignors with items in the building. Mrs. Hanes estimated there were at least a million separate items lost in the fire. She said that one consignor alone had about \$50,000 worth of items in the store, and no insurance. Many items were one-of-a-kind pieces. They can't possibly be replaced.

"All our sympathies go out to everyone who lost things in our store", she said.

"We not only lost the building, which was a landmark in Norton, but we lost our livelihood. It's not like either one of us has another job to go to."

She said Tuesday the realization of the magnitude of what had happened finally set in. She said the store and its contents had represented their retirement.

When they were interviewed Thursday night, they still had not slept. They escaped with only the clothes on their backs.

Because they were renovating their home in Alma, Mr. and Mrs. Hanes and their eight-year old son were living in an apartment in the back of the store. In fact, they had moved most of their furniture, appliances and family heirlooms from the house to the apartment for "safe keeping." They lost a captain's chair that had been in her family for generations and a quilt from Mr. Hanes' grandmother. It was the last thing she ever gave him.

Monday afternoon, Mrs. Hanes said, she smelled smoke. When her husband went to check, he discovered flames coming out of the Archery Club building. Someone was calling in the blaze and he reassured her that it was not their building and not to worry. She said she didn't even take her purse with her. That meant she lost her driver's license, her glasses, even her make-up.

"We really appreciate those guys (fire fighters). They worked all night to put out the fire. We appreciate everyone who worked so hard," said Mrs. Hanes.

When asked if they had any plans, Mrs. Hanes said, "We like Norton. People have always been nice and we've made a lot of friends. God has been good to us. We have our lives. I truly believe that everytime one window is closed, another will open. We're just waiting to see what God has in store for us."

With an optimistic attitude she said, "We're like rubber bands, we bounce back."



Norton and Lenora firemen were among the many who fought off heat and exhaustion to put out two flaming buildings.

— Telegram photo by Veronica Monier

## Fire leaves smoking rubble in its wake

(Continued from Page 1)  
said, they pulled off it on Wednesday.

When it was over and done with, he said they pumped over 500,000 gallons of water onto the flames. He said 180,000 came out of Hoxie's 60-foot aerial apparatus and at least that much came out of the Norton Correctional Facility's 85-foot platform snorkel. They had four 1,500 gallon portable drop tanks set up that pumper trucks could get water out of, and numerous tanker trucks, some of which came from Tracy's Tank Service of Phillipsburg, S&R Ready Mix of Norton, and Ronnie Fisher and Brad Harding.

Over 400,000 gallons came out of city lines, he said. Once outside help arrived, the city had no problem keeping up with the demand because none of the tanker trucks filled up from the city mains. Most filled up at the correctional facility or elsewhere.

There were seven fire trucks, seven large pumper trucks plus several smaller pumper trucks, and at least 75 firemen.

Help came from everywhere, he said. The Kansas Department of Transportation, Kansas Highway Patrol, Kansas Department of Corrections, Norton Police Department, Norton County Sheriff's Department, Norton County Road and Bridge, Norton City crews, and Norton County crews all helped out somewhere. Firemen's



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wives, the Norton County Emergency Medical Service and dozens of volunteers filled ice packs to put in the men's gear to cool them off. Red Cross had at least three stations set up where firemen could rest and get oxygen, drinks and food.

The Phillips County Emergency Medical Service arrived to cover Norton County's calls while they were at the fire. Thankfully, said Norton County Ambulance Director Ruth Schillig, there were no calls that they had to take.

Firemen from Long Island, Lenora, Alma, Logan, Oberlin, Norcatur, Jennings, Phillipsburg, Sheridan County, the Department of Corrections, and Kirwin answered the call for help from the Norton city and rural fire departments.

"It's totally impossible for me to thank everyone in the community for helping out," Chief Jones said. "Thanks to Ag Valley for donating gas to fill the fire trucks and to

everyone who donated ice, drinks and food."

"Thanks to all the firemen for putting forth their best efforts and taking an extreme beating. There's no question about it, they saved downtown. They're all volunteers and their employers have to be thanked as well for letting them leave work. The community should be extremely proud of the men and women they have in the volunteer fire service."

As for damage, he said he couldn't even begin to estimate how much was lost. Both Melvin Dale, a fire inspector with the State Fire Marshall's office, and Duane Potter, a special investigator with Unified Investigations and Sciences, Inc. out of St. Louis, went over the scene.

"When we lose structures like that, when we lose a business, we lose a tax base, a tax paying property owner, sales tax and jobs," he said. "We're losing a business that can draw people here. It's devastat-

ing to the owners, but it's also devastating to the community."

The Archery Club and U.S. 36 Collectables were both complete losses. Chief Jones said Pure Prairie Natural Foods has water damage in the basement, light smoke damage inside and a heat stressed west wall; the city pumped out the three feet of water that collected in the basement.

Several buildings had exposure damage. At Decor and More, radiant heat ignited the facade and cracked the windows. Radiant heat cracked the windows and scorched the paint at Whitefield's Coffee Shop. Both, as well as Ryan, Walter and McClymont Law Offices, have undetermined heat and smoke damage, he said. Several other downtown buildings have a few holes burned in their roofs.

But, said Chief Jones, with all the damage, one thing for which to be grateful was that no one was hurt, which could have easily happened.

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To be put on  
in Goodland**



Volunteer Norton fire fighter Shawn Mortensen helps fellow fire fighter, Andy Enfield, switch out oxygen tanks while they fought Monday's fire.

— Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts