

Fiji Islands benefit from rural company

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Let's go halfway around the globe to the Fiji Islands, to a company that is receiving a key component for its manufacturing process from a U.S. supplier.

The component is a valve: An industrial valve to be used in the manufacturing plant's piping system. It is crucial that this valve works properly, for it enables workers to open and shut the passageway and effectively control the flow of products or inputs.

The success of this family-owned valve company is no open and shut case, but it is a remarkable example of global growth in rural Kansas.

Wayne McClelland is the president of ABZ Valves and Controls. Wayne grew up in the town of Madison, south of Emporia. After college at Emporia State and Wichita State, he became an accountant in Wichita.

But Wayne preferred small town life, so he came back to his hometown of Madison and bought a hardware store. He later bought a local company named ABZ Manufacturing.

ABZ was founded in Madison in 1977. The name ABZ came from the names of the original incorporators: Al, Bill, and a Mr. Zorn. The company worked in oilfield storage equipment and then diversified into industrial valve production, which is now the company's prime business.

Wayne bought ABZ and it remains a family business today. Wayne's father Bus is retired, but still involved with the company, and Wayne's son Jason is sales manager. The company is known as ABZ Valves and Controls, or ABZ Valve for short.

Its key product is a butterfly valve, which in its simplest form, is a fitting with a disk and stem mounted inside which can be turned to control the flow of product through a pipe. A quarter turn of the stem can turn the disk inside from zero to 90 degrees.

This is a crucial element to control the flow within any piping system. ABZ produces both a rubber seated valve and a high performance valve which can withstand high pressures and temperatures.

Wayne says, "Many types of things are transported through piping systems, such as water, chemicals, beverages, cement, steam, food, and paint.

"We can trim or coat our valves

with compatible materials for any of those applications."

ABZ offers valves for all types of industrial uses, in sizes ranging from 2 inches to 48 inches. Wow, that's a biggie. They also sell the related controls or actuators, ranging from gears to pneumatic to electrical controls.

But what is really exciting is how this company's business has grown.

In 1987, the company occupied about 5,000 square feet. Today, it occupies more than 45,000 square feet with a 17,000 square foot expansion in the works.

The company inventory is valued at more than \$4 million. Recent sales growth has been especially strong, due to new products and an expanded sales effort. During the past 2-1/2 years, sales have grown from \$8 million to nearly \$20 million.

This company literally sells valves and actuators from coast to coast and around the world.

ABZ has distribution in all 50 states as well as Canada, Mexico, Chile, Brazil, China, Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Australia, and many more.

Yet this global company remains based in its original rural town of Madison, Kansas, population 862 people.

Now, that's rural. How wonderful to find this international presence in small town Kansas.

Wayne says, "The Kansas Department of Commerce and the International Business Department at Emporia State have been instrumental in helping us with our international work. We like the simple life and the good work ethic in small town Kansas."

More information can be found at www.abzvalve.com. It's time to say farewell to the Fiji Islands, where we found a manufacturing company using a valve from a business far away in rural Kansas. We commend Wayne McClelland and all the people of ABZ Valves and Controls for making a difference with their hard work and international entrepreneurship. So I say, turn it on and open it up.

With their continued success, the benefits will flow to rural Kansas.

Editor's note: The mission of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development is to enhance rural development by helping rural people help themselves. The Kansas Profile columns are produced with assistance from the K-State Research and Extension Department of Communications News Unit.

Sterling man has made reputation as straight shooter

STERLING (AP) — Armed with his favored Browning over-and-under shotgun and chewing his ritual two sticks of gum, champion trapshooter Glenn Gable called for the "pull" to release a clay pigeon.

As the clay shot into the air, Gable lifted his gun and pulled the trigger.

In the 30 years since he shot the first practice round of clay pigeons, Gable's trapshooting hobby has earned him scores of trophies, enough silver trays, bowls, tea sets and casserole holders to overflow a dining room table, 60 belt buckles and hundreds of boxes of shells — plus dozens of turkeys and hams, and cash prizes.

More than the trophies, Gable, 80, prizes the pleasure of a hobby that consistently scores him in the upper 90s out of 100 pigeons. A pile of 300,000 shot-up target sheets proves his expertise and experience.

He likes telling the story of how he started.

In the years before he started trapshooting, Gable, then a schoolteacher, was an avid bird hunter.

"It was the day after hunting season in 1976," he begins. "That was the day my hunting dog Sadie died. I put my Model 12 Winchester in the closet."

He never touched the gun again.

At that time, his son Jim managed the Salt City trapshooting range on the east side of Hutchinson, near the site of the present Alcoa Aluminum company. Knowing about the loss of Sadie, his son invited him to make the trip to Hutchinson and try trapshooting.

"He loaned me an old trap gun, and I hit 12 out of 25 shots," Gable said.

He went to a trap shoot at Pratt the next week and hit 93 of 100.

"That got me started," he said.

Gable started making the rounds of area trap shoots and bringing home the prizes. As his scores improved, he traveled more miles to

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Glenn Gable,
trap shooter

compete. He broke the first 100 of 100 at a shoot in Missouri. Since then, he's broken a lot of 99s.

"Even if you don't have the knack, you can develop it," he says.

While many shooters prefer a calm, windless day for competition, Gable favors the opposite.

"I love shooting on the days especially when the wind's blowing and the weather's bad," he said. He added a grin to his explanation. "I pay attention better to what I'm doing and the others don't shoot as good."

Gable's trapshooter friend, Ron Watson, of Wichita, attests to Gable's national reputation for hitting the target.

"He's traveled extensively and known throughout the country," Watson said.

Watson labeled Gable as "a character," one who stays in the back-ground and sneaks up on the competition at a good-sized shoot where a lot of prize money is involved.

"When the shoot was over everyone would wonder where the money went," Watson said. "It walked away with Glenn."

Gable's brought home 11 trophies from Grand American shoots, an annual meet that attracts 3,000 to 4,000 entries. That competition calls for shooting 400 to 500 rounds a day. He's also shot successfully at the Pacific International in Canada.