

Aircraft company one of top stories

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5. In September 2003, Goodland began preparing for the Aircraft Seal and Gasket Corp. to move to town, planning eventually to have as many as 100 jobs.

The city got television coverage from a Hays station last December when equipment was unloaded at the new plant. More equipment arrived in January, and the building at 10th and Center was dedicated at a ribbon cutting ceremony in February in memory of Public Works Director Ed Wolak, who died Nov. 29, 2003, while supervision the remodeling.

As the year progressed, it became evident that things would not fall easily into place. Rumors about the firm multiplied through the summer, but President Herb Menold insisted in a letter to *The Goodland Star-News* that the company was committed to manufacturing in Goodland.

"Other good news," Menold said, "is that the orders continue to grow as the overall U.S. economy continues to improve. The aerospace industry will remain strong for some time to come due to the world situation. The heavy military spending and the aging fleet of commercial aircraft are causing the replacement market to grow. We believe this growth could continue eight to 10 years, and this fact makes the com-

mitment to manufacture in Goodland viable."

The city had spent \$500,000 renovating the old Mosbarger IGA building as the site for the plant, and provided the structure rent-free to the firm.

A year ago, the firm requested a \$200,000 state economic development loan through the city. Though Goodland sponsored the loan, the city would not be responsible for repayment.

The loan requires one job to be created for every \$35,000 borrowed, six jobs for the total loan, within the first two years. The city's lease also requires job creation.

In July, the city commission held up on approval of a draw on the state money until it could get some answers from the firm about why there had been no production.

In October, City Manager Ron Pickman said the company had failed to pay its utility bill on time in August, and the power was cut off. Menold paid a deposit to have the power reconnected, but the city manager said he might recommend that the city void the firm's lease.

Menold cited a lack of local investors as the reason for delayed production and said he would have to make other plans for financing.

"I will start production when I can afford to," he said. "I have borrowed and spent too much of my own money to walk away now. I



Katie Zelfer had one of the better "Mutton Bustin" rides at the Howdy Rowdy Rodeo on Aug. 3 at the Sherman County Fairgrounds.

Clowns Brock Whitmore (left) and his father Randy provided the riders with both encouragement and protection during the event.

Photo by Greg Stover/The Goodland Star-News.

cannot afford to lose the money I have personally invested."

Ultimately, the city gave the firm more time, and employee training began in October. Roy Dixon, operations manager for the plant, said in mid-December the plant was producing parts for an aircraft rear door seal. He said they shipped 87 pieces that week and had made about 400 in the past six weeks.

Doctor, store owners retire

6. Goodland lost two institutions last year, with a long-time doctor and the owners of a prominent department store announcing retirement.

In October, after living and practicing in Goodland for 37 years, Dr. Robert McCullough closed his offices for good. Then in November, the owners of Aten Department Store announced its closing after 22 years on Main Avenue.

McCullough, 79, said he was retiring to move to a rural area five miles from Lawrence to be closer to his four of his children and most of his grandchildren. Although he had planned to retire in the fall anyway, he said the death of his wife Mary, who was one of his nurses, brought the decision to a head.

A lifetime of practicing medicine started early for McCullough — his mother was a nurse, and his grandmother a midwife. His sister became a nurse, he said, and he always knew he wanted to be a doctor.

He joined the Navy at 18 and served as a combat medic in World War II from 1943 to 1946. He said he served in an amphibious corps in the South Pacific, and as a combat medic, went ashore with the troops.

After the war, he went to the University of Kansas and then taught general science and math in Oakley and then biology for two years in Denver.

He was called up for the Korean War, but the war ended before he was sent to the front. After that, he went to graduate school for a year at the University of Denver, then medical school at the University of Colorado.

McCullough said he plans to keep his license for a while and maybe practice medicine somewhere.



McCullough



Barb Aten



Wayne Aten

The Aten Department Store will leave a hole in Main, as Wayne and Barbara Aten decided to retire this November.

"It's sad," said Barbara, 75, "but it's necessary."

Wayne, 74, said the couple is calling it quits after putting off their retirement for five years.

"We're way past retirement," he said.

The Atens' story began in 1941 in Wayne's home town, Grant, Neb., where he started working as a junior clerk in a retail store. He bought the store in 1968 and grew the business, opening a store in Oberlin in

1972 and then one in Benkelman, Neb., in 1973.

In 1982, the Atens opened the store in Goodland and moved here. They bought stores in Hays and Yuma, Colo.

Aten said retailing has become more difficult for smaller businesses. He said through the years, he has found it harder to get suppliers and compete with big chains.

Aten said the couple plans to do a little bit of traveling, but they don't have any big plans for retirement.

"We'll just do what comes naturally," he said.

After 54 years in retail, he added, they want to spend some time at home.

"To own a retail business," he said, "that's six days a week, sometimes seven."



Tim Gittinger, a member of the Goodland Boy Scouts, smoothed out the dirt before finishing work for the day on his Eagle Scout project March 6 in Gulick Park. Gittinger, the son of Kendall and Marilyn Gittinger, anchored two benches onto concrete poured a few weeks ago near the playground.

Photo by Greg Stover/The Goodland Star-News

New sheriff takes over after winning primary, general election race

7. An election and a resignation propelled Kevin Butts, Sherman County undersheriff since 2001, into the position of sheriff this November.

Former Sheriff Doug Whitson decided in February not to run for reelection, sparking a race for the Republican nomination.

Butts took the primary against Goodland Police Officer Greg Kroskey and former deputies Dee Albers and Art Lovington. In the general election, Butts won with 1,936 votes to 644



Butts

for Democrat John McCool.

Butts assumed the position of sheriff early when in November, Whitson resigned.

"It was time to get out of there and go onto other things," Whitson said. "After 20 years... I need to do something different."

His departure came after Sherman County commissioners met in several closed-door sessions with County Attorney Bonnie Selby. Whitson received a lump sum of \$7,104 for his pay through Jan. 9 and \$1,745 paid by the county

for two months of health insurance.

Selby told commissioners that under state law, when the sheriff resigns, the undersheriff automatically becomes the sheriff, so there is no break in law enforcement coverage.

One of the first orders of business for Butts has been to re-open the investigation into the disappearance of a Goodland man.

Jimmy McCelland, 44, has been missing for more than a year after he was involved in an argument at the rural home of Mark Peden.

Around the time of the investigation, the sheriff's office searched

the scene and even did a walk-through of a section of Beaver Creek southwest of the home.

Even with the follow-ups, Butts said the leads have slowed. His new campaign, he said, will be an effort to keep the case fresh in people's minds in hopes of digging up new leads.

"Just not knowing is terrible for the family," he said. "I want to get Jimmy's picture out again, and maybe someone will remember something."

Many people, including members of his family, now believe McClelland is dead, but that his body

may never be found. Butts said the case is far from being solved, and he is hoping with the public's help there may be some new facts that give him a chance to find the answers.

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