

# Repair shop offers more services, space

By Kathryn Burke

*The Goodland Star-News*

The warm sun beat down on workers pouring the concrete for a new building at Alex's Radiator and Auto Repair last week.

Alex West, owner of the shop, watched over the work and talked about a promising future.

The new building will be 60 feet by 60 feet with room for three cars lifts.

West said it will be a steel building with 16-foot walls, tall enough to fit a semi tractor inside.

They will have a new office, waiting room and public restrooms.

"We never had a waiting room before," he said.

The shop has always been more than just radiators, he said, but the expansion means even more services.

West said they will add tires, oil changes, tune-ups and complete exhaust replacement.

The exhaust equipment includes a machine to bend pipe in house.

Although they have done exhausts before, West said, they have ordered most of the parts.

The shop will offer small-engine repair, from chain saws to lawn mowers, he said.

"I don't think there's too many people doing that," he said, adding he has done small engines for the past 20 years.

For the expansion, West is adding new equipment including a machine that helps remove tires from wheels.

He said they will remove, replace, patch and balance tires.

West said they will need a storage tank for used oil and an oil burner for the winter.

To store tires, he said, they will build special racks.

In the office, they will install their first computer system to do billing and payroll.

"It's gonna be a lot quicker service," he said.

West plans to keep one existing small building for radiator repair.

He will use the other existing building for tire and vehicle storage.

The new space will force West to double his staff, with four on the payroll instead of just two.

His wife Pam will continue to do the book work, he said.

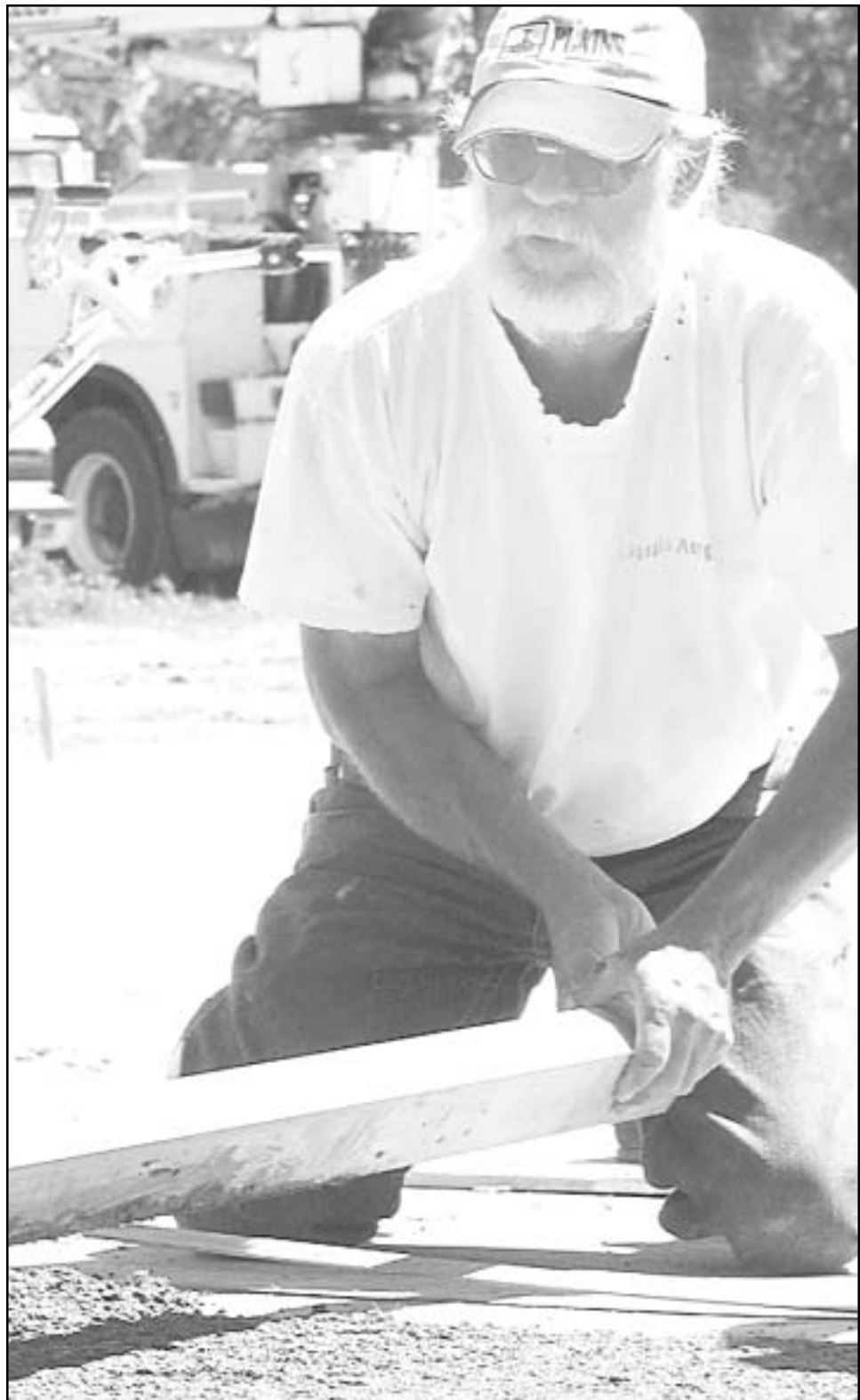
The biggest benefit to the new



## Workers pour, smooth concrete

Roger Snethen (right) with Goody's Construction pulled a board across a section of freshly poured concrete for the expansion at Alex's Radiator and Repair last week. Dee Miller helped pour while others used shovels, rakes and trowels to spread the concrete.

Photos by Kathryn Burke/The Goodland Star-News



building, he said, is indoor space.

"We've always had to do work outside," he said, sweating in the summer and freezing in the winter. "It was kind of cold working on semis outside."

The new building will have heat-

ing and air conditioning in the office and portable air conditioners for the shop.

West took over the shop in 1998 from Lonny Potterff and bought radiator equipment from MCB's.

He said the new building was on

his list for the past few years, but they hadn't been able to do it until just recently.

"I've needed the room," West said. "I've been looking forward to it, that's for sure." He is grateful to First National Bank and the Small

Business Association for help getting the construction going.

Goody's Construction is doing the work, Marty Johnson the electricity and McClure Plumbing the pipes.

Work on the shop expansion be-

gan in April and they finished pouring the concrete Wednesday.

West said he plans to hold an open house later this summer.

He invites people to swing by and take a look at the construction in the meantime.

# County commissioners consider appraiser's job

By Kathryn Burke

*The Goodland Star-News*

Terry Ballard, the part-time county appraiser, met with Sherman County commissioners last Tuesday on his agreement, offering to work another four-year term for the same pay.

Commissioners said they'd wait until today make up their minds, and the appraiser said he hoped they'd let him know soon if he needs to start looking for a job.

For his position, which by law requires special training, Ballard is paid \$40,000 per year plus full benefits. He also works part-time for Rawlins County and lives in Atwood. His contract with Rawlins County is for \$30,000.

"I would love to continue as county appraiser for another four years under the same contract," he told commissioners.

Ballard also asked for feedback on his job performance. Appraisers

in some counties have been under fire as all face contract renewal.

"I think you're doing a good job," said Commissioner Mitch Tiede. "Things seem to be going relatively smooth."

Ballard brought commissioners a survey of appraisers from around the area to compare pay, listing the salaries and job duties of area appraisers.

Most of the part-time appraisers, he said, are in northwest and southwest Kansas. He said the figures include some counties have an appraiser who contracts some work with outside companies.

"Everything is done in-house here," he said.

Ballard is required to reinspect 17 percent of the property in the county each year. That means he has to physically inspect the each one.

All property, he said, must be reassessed in a desk review each year. He said they adjust for inflation, neighborhood and other factors.

Ballard said his salary seems pretty competitive when all of the variables are taken into account.

From the survey, he cited a few examples, including an assessor in Cheyenne County who is paid \$12,000 a year for working one day a month.

In Decatur County, he said, the appraiser is paid \$29,500 for working one day a week. In Johnson County, the full-time administrator makes \$90,000 per year, he said, adding he is probably responsible for 80 to 100 people.

"It looks to me like we're kind of

in the middle," said Tiede.

Commissioner Kevin Rasure has heard concerns that some counties pay roughly the same and get a full-time appraiser who lives in the county.

Ballard said the Thomas County appraiser has lived there for 20 years. "They're very fortunate," he said, adding that most appraisers in the area work part-time in several counties. "Thomas is the only one here in the northwest that has a full-time appraiser."

Tiede asked Ballard why the county pays his full benefits for a part-time job.

Ballard answered that in 1997, he was approached by commissioners and offered a contract. The contract, he said, has remained the same since then.

"I'm not asking for any raise," he said, adding that department heads in the county have had increases over the past eight years that he hasn't seen. "I'm very comfortable with this."

Tiede asked how many days per week Ballard works in Rawlins County.

He said he spent roughly 700 hours there and 1,195 hours here last year, a little less than two-thirds time here and a third in Atwood.

After a 10-minute closed-door session, commissioners decided to wait to make a decision, placing Ballard on the agenda for today.

Ballard asked commissioners to make a decision soon so he can explore his options.

"I don't want to end up on July 1 without an income," he said.

Ballard gave commissioners an update on county assessments, too. He said the county lost \$655,000 of assessed value on agriculture land this year, but gained \$270,000 on oil and gas.

Overall, he said, the county has lost \$250,000 in assessed value.

The difference should be made up, Ballard said, when state assessment on utilities, railroads and pipelines is figured. He said 20 percent of the total county valuation is state assessed and the new Cheyenne Plains pipeline could make a difference.

## corrections

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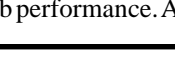
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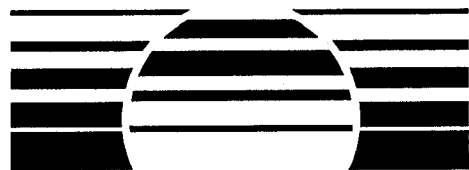


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