

## BG Rental is place to turn for project aid

By JORDAN CRAVENS  
Sentinel Staff Writer

If ever there was a time when Wood County homeowners, contractors or even someone wanting to try their hand at a do-it-yourself project, Bee Gee Rental and Sales has been the place to turn to.

While an exact start date is unknown, current owner Rick Van Vorhis dates the business back to 1955, which began under the ownership of Isaac Loose, who in his travels as a salesman realized the market for the rental concept.

Currently located on West Newton Road, Bee Gee Rental and Sales has found home in several different locations around town, which began in a tiny building on West Poe Road.

"It was a little chicken coop is what it was," Van Vorhis said.

As the business began to grow, Loose purchased a large building, built onto several times before a major fire in 1970 destroyed the whole building and all its inventory.

Instead of walking away, Loose rebuilt. The business was purchased in 1977 by Van Vorhis, who had been working there for ten years starting out in high school.

In that same year, the rental business also became a full-servicing Stihl dealer after customers expressed a need for chain saw and lawn care products. They later began selling other name brand product lines.

Having already considered moving to a different location, another fire in 1996 which severely damaged the warehouse section of the business convinced Van Vorhis to move to its current location at 829 W. Newton Road, where inventory includes a variety of name brand lines and products such as tables, chairs, canopies for parties, small hand tools, laser levels, lawn equipment, scaffolding, ladders, skid-steer loaders and mini back-hoes, among others.

As a long-time employee/owner of the local business, Van Vorhis has seen trends come and go throughout his tenure.

"There used to be a time when everybody did a lot of their own work," he said. "Back then because of that they rented a lot of those tools to do those jobs."

"Over the years a lot of things have changed just as in any other business."

Fewer "do-it-yourselfers" and more contracting out for different projects became more popular with increasingly busy lifestyles of people, especially as more disposable income was available in years past.

The products have also changed. New technology has replaced the old. Lifts have become more popular than ladders, and laser levels have replaced their predecessor, for example.

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Ray Sutter works on an Auger-Mate at Buckeye Hydraulics in Grand Rapids

Photos by Aaron Carpenter/Sentinel-Tribune

## Buckeye Hydraulics thrives

Diversity of products, markets helps firm weather downturn

By JENISE FOUTS  
Sentinel-Tribune Staff Writer

GRAND RAPIDS — In spite of a hurting economy, Buckeye Hydraulics Inc. is continuing to build its success with a strong emphasis on quality products and excellent customer service.

Founded in 1971 by Lionel Long, the company offers a variety of services, including manufacturing hydraulic components for original equipment manufacturers such as hydraulic hoses; providing system designs and custom work, whether for individuals or companies; and distributing hydraulic components to customers whose orders may be for one piece or 1,000.

It stands by its motto, "No order is too large or too small."

Though its service area is primarily 17 counties in Northwest Ohio, plus parts of Indiana and Michigan, Buckeye Hydraulics does have customers across the nation and into Canada.

And even though certain areas of the U.S. economy are experiencing a major downturn, Buckeye Hydraulics is holding steady because of the many markets which it serves, from agriculture, power sweeping, sewer and drain cleaning, to the mobile equipment market, highway construction, well drilling, aircraft, forestry, and more. A small brochure on the company lists more than 25 markets which use Buckeye Hydraulic products.

"We expect to see some growth this year based on all indicators up



Hydraulic motors ready to be put to work

to this point," said Vice President Mike Fatzinger. "It is because of the diversity as much as anything. ... We're diversified enough not to be relying on one area."

He explained that Long started the company because he found a need in the agricultural market for a small power unit that could be used to free up farmers from having to use their tractors as much. "From that, the company just kept growing."

The company has actually grown into three separate entities. Buckeye Hydraulics shares its land with two other companies which Long founded, Ohio Fluid Products and Hydra-Mount Corporation. Ohio Fluid Products provides repair services.

Hydra-Mount is a machining company which makes pump and motor mounting brackets and couplings, allowing hydraulic pumps to be bolted to gasoline and electric motors.

"The three companies work back and forth, and because of what we all three do, it's a coordinated effort," said Fatzinger. "The synergy of the company makes it work together. It's a great mix."

About 38 years ago Long designed a hydraulic accessory for his father's auger used in a gravity feed wagon. That accessory turned into a staple of Buckeye Hydraulics' product line, popular even today, called the Auger-Mate. (See HYDRAULICS on 22)

## New ventures buck the tide of recession

By DEBBIE ROGERS  
Sentinel Staff Writer

The Dow took a dive. The wars overseas dragged into another year President George W. Bush's popularity was so low, he didn't campaign with Republicans. Two auto giants are on the verge of bankruptcy. Bailouts became a more popular way of funding business than bank loans.

Add up all this news from 2008 and it equaled one bad economy.

So how does someone decide to take a chance and open a new business? Some business owners who took the plunge last year weigh in on the topic.

### Allison's Art Room

For Allison Badgley, a mix of timing, location and help in financing led her to decide to open Allison's Art Room in September. The Perrysburg business has classes geared toward children and birthday parties.

"This is a luxury. Art instruction for your child is not a necessity," Badgley admitted. "I do think my business will have some ups and downs based on the economy."

But, she said, parents usually continue to make sacrifices for their children, even in tough economic times.

A low-interest federal loan helped immensely in opening the art room.

Badgley, who is battling cancer, said her illness played a role in the decision, too.

"If I was going to do this, I needed to do it now," she said.

### Bliss Studio Salon

Christol Kratzer, who opened Bliss Studio Salon in downtown Bowling Green in November, said she didn't set out to own her own business but the opportunity kept presenting itself. When the former Anew salon on West Wooster Street went up for sale, Kratzer — who had worked for Anew — decided to buy it.

A strong base of clients, who number 650, weighed heavily in favor of going out on her own.

Kratzer said she took the old-fashioned route of buying Bliss. She saved.

She also enlisted her father and brother to renovate the space, putting in a wood floor and floor-to-ceiling windows.

"This was a huge risk for me," she said. But Kratzer added that she has high hopes for getting through bad economic times.

"I feel that this is somewhat recession-proof. When times are bad, it makes you feel better, getting your hair done ... so I kind of feel like I am safe."

### Perrysburg Tennis Center

The owners of the Perrysburg Tennis Center, on Progress Drive off Ohio 25, had their financing secured before the economy tanked, said co-owner Sue Fastnacht.

(See VENTURES on 22)



Aaron Carpenter/Sentinel-Tribune

John Rust Jr., of Rust & Rust Ltd.

## Rusts stay true to Rossford

By DAVID DUPONT  
Progress 2009 Editor

ROSSFORD — John Rust Jr. and his family believe in Rossford, and they put their money and sweat equity behind it.

Rust, his wife, Nancy, son John III and his wife, Bethany, operate Rust & Rust Ltd.

The company invests in a variety of ventures in the downtown including residential rentals, office rentals, a car wash and the company's newest venture, a self-storage business that also serves as the site for the company's office.

What holds those ventures together is a sense of pride. In a recent interview Rust talked about how important it is to keep up the look of the many older buildings he owns.

People want to live in a place that looks good, he said. That includes their own residences as well as the community. Rust credits the company's attention to appearances with the lack of vacancies in its properties.

"We've done our damndest to improve the looks of Rossford," Rust said. "It's a great town. It has great people. It's pretty much a close-knit town. Everybody helps everybody else."

Rust, a graduate of Ferris State College in Big Rapids, Mich., first started doing business in town in 1965 when he came to work at National TV and Appliance. Later he started a home manufacturing business in a 12,000-square-foot facility out on Luckey Road.

But the sky-high mortgage rates of the time, ranging up to 22.5 percent, led him to liquidate the company,

*'If you love what you're doing, it's not work. And I love what I'm doing.'*

—John Rust Jr.

of Rust & Rust Ltd.

much to the disappointment of his then-young son, who loved being in the shop with his father.

An electrical engineer by training, Rust worked in several area firms over the years. Since 1993 he's worked for what is now Pilkington, formerly Libbey-Owens-Ford, managing voice and data communications for North America.

He turns 66 this year and is eligible to retire, but hasn't decided what he'll do. "What's retirement if you love what you do? If you love what you're doing, it's not work. And I love what I'm doing."

That includes both his job at Pilkington and his Rust & Rust ventures.

Rust & Rust got started in 2000 after John Rust III graduated from college. He has degrees from Owens Community College and Bowling Green State University. Father and son share an interest in building construction and rehabilitation. "It's a passion we have," the father said.

Their first project was turning the former Sujkowski Funeral Home at 1001 Superior St. into office space. They rehabbed several other buildings.

In 2004 they converted an old bank building at 200 Dixie Highway into a car wash, keeping up its appearance

such that it still looks as much like a bank as it does a car wash.

Last year they opened the self-storage units business on 2.6 acres on former Libbey-Owens-Ford land at 212 Dixie Highway. The business includes 90 storage units and office space for Rust & Rust. Before, Rust said, the two families managed the business out of their homes. Now they have ample office space and room for maintenance equipment.

The site also would allow expansion with room for 45 more units.

As with the car wash, the decision to build the storage unit was a matter of seeing a need within the community.

Rossford didn't have a car wash in town and many residents had to go out of town to find remote storage units. They use them for cars, boats, furniture and other items. Businesses will also rent them for records and other storage needs.

While the enterprise's projects have all been in the downtown area to date, Rust said he would venture into the Crossroads of America area if the right project came along.

The family has been active in many aspects of the community.

Rust chaired the committee that managed the construction of the memorial downtown. He serves on the Planning Commission, is a past president of the Rossford Jaycees, has been involved in Boy Scouts and is a trustee of the First United Methodist Church. When he bought the property for the storage units, it enabled him to improve the parking for the church.

(See RUSTS on 22)