



□ *Editor's note: This is one in a series of features that will spotlight businesses in Imperial. The community has a thriving business community, and all residents may not realize the extent of services and products local businesses provide. This feature will be a regular offering throughout the year and beyond, and will include those businesses with a commercial address located outside of the home.*

By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

The Imperial Republican newspaper that you subscribe to today may look different from an issue in, say, 1959, but the values are the same. Fair and in-depth news reporting are teamed with a commitment to the community both in news service and volunteer and financial support.

In 1952 Loral and Elna Johnson moved to Imperial, where he began working at the newspaper for Jim and Ruth Naylor.

On Jan. 1, 1968 the Johnsons purchased the paper from Ruth Naylor.

At that time, the paper was set using a typesetter, and the pages were printed one sheet at a time, Elna Johnson remembers. Her children sometimes helped fold the paper.

There were five on staff, including the Johnsons.

In 1972 offset printing was introduced, which was a “challenge” and a big transition in the paper industry, Elna Johnson stated. The pictures taken for an issue had to be sent to Lincoln to be made into a block print, then transported back to Imperial in time to be printed in the paper.

Eventually, the Johnsons purchased an engraver that allowed them to make their own block prints for pictures.

The Johnsons purchased several more newspapers, including The Holyoke (Colo.) Enterprise and The Grant Tribune Sentinel in 1977 and The Wauneta Breeze in 1982.

About 1987 the industry changed again with the advent of desktop publishing via computer. In the mid-90s the Johnsons built an addition to the building at 622 Broadway to house the printing press. New offices were created from the space originally filled by the press.

In 1997 the Johnson's daughter, Lori, and husband Russ Pankonin moved to Imperial to work at The Republican. They had been co-publishers of The Wauneta Breeze for 15 years.

The Pankonins, along with Brenda Brandt of Holyoke, Colo., daughter of the Johnsons, purchased Johnson Publications in 1999, and the Pankonins became publishers of The Imperial Republican.

Russ Pankonin reviewed a number of important changes the newspaper has made over the past 10 years.

Those include the integration and recent update of the website, www.imperialrepublican.com; the redesign of the paper when the Pankonins took over, and “the implementation of a new generation of desktop publishing.”

Although primarily thought of as a newspaper, The Imperial Republican also provides the following services, Pankonin noted: commercial printing, vinyl signage, and all kinds of specialty items. “If you can put a name on it, we can sell it,” he added.

The Imperial Republican is also known for its support of community projects and activities. Hours are 8 a.m. to 12 noon and 1-5 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, and 8 a.m. to 12 noon on Thursday.

Series has been educational, fun

Since the inception of Business Buzz on Jan. 11, 2007, I have run stories on 110 businesses in Imperial, missing just two issues. We began with Service Insurance and are ending with The Imperial Republican this week.

The owners or managers of just a handful of businesses declined to be interviewed—four, in fact. The Imperial businesses covered needed to have a business address, therefore, not be home-based.

Who knew we had so many businesses and opportunities in Imperial? Learning about the unique things a business might offer, and meeting the employees, has been a fun and educational experience for me, and, I hope, for our readers.

If I have inadvertently missed any business over the past two-plus years, I apologize. Thank you to all of the businesses which participated in the column.

Carolyn Lee, reporter