

By Jan Rahn

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A smooth transition has taken place at the Grant NAPA store, with new owners having taking over the end of November.

Already the owners of three other NAPA stores, the Mendenhall family of Imperial are excited to be a part of Grant's business community and are looking forward to serving the area.

Co-owners of NAPA stores in Imperial, Ogallala, Benkelman, and now Grant, are Bob Mendenhall, daughter Robin Francis and son Bob Mendenhall, Jr.

The Grant store at 326 Central was formerly owned by Larry and Susan Bieker who have moved back to their home state of Kansas.

No renovation is planned for Grant NAPA, but a new sign is on order changing the name slightly from the former which was Grant Auto Parts.

The Chase County natives all live in Imperial, which makes travel in either direction to their other stores very convenient.

Two employees, Bob Bounds and Mike Long, will remain at the Grant location.

The Mendenhall family's history of owning the automotive parts/repair business goes back nearly 42 years.

Bob Sr. first opened a repair shop in Champion in 1971, followed by opening an auto parts store there, and later moving his business to Wauneta in 1985. There, he ran a parts store and machine shop.

His daughter Robin, a 1984 Chase County High School graduate, returned to the Imperial area to work with her dad after receiving her bachelor's in business administration from Chadron State College in 1988.

Bob Jr. worked with his father throughout high school and upon graduation joined him in the business full time.

The Mendenhalls purchased the Imperial NAPA store in 1992. In 1995, they built a machine shop at the location in Imperial and consolidated it with the Wauneta operation.

They expanded even more in August 2007 with the purchase of the Ogallala NAPA store and a couple of years later purchased the NAPA business in Benkelman and constructed a new building to house it.

As in their other stores, the Mendenhalls are eager to serve the public and will order any part they do not stock, offering an overnight freight service to assure getting it the next day.

Robin said they are always adding and changing items in addition to keeping items in stock that people routinely need.