

# PLAINS TALK



## Casper WPE: Historic Downtown Building Reopens

### Did You Know?

- West Plains Engineering currently has **Career Opportunities** available. Check our website: [www.westplainsengineering.com](http://www.westplainsengineering.com) or contact each office for information about these positions.
- **Green building design** conversations occur with many of our customers! Call us with questions on LEED Certification!

Plains Talk is a quarterly publication of West Plains Engineering, Inc. in which we highlight a few of our most interesting projects. Your comments are welcome at any of our locations listed on the back cover of this newsletter.

- The historic Wyoming National Bank Building in downtown Casper is reopening its doors once again. This time it offers



46 affordable downtown apartments.

The six-story building was built during Casper's oil boom in 1920. It housed the bank, along with the headquarters of the Midwest Refinery Company, plus several retail stores. The building was purchased by an out-of-state investor and became vacant in the 1990s. The downtown landmark sat dormant for quite some time until the City Council purchased it and started figuring out options for the building and asking developers for proposals.

Steve Grimshaw, owner of Sheridan-based Grimshaw Investments LLC, came up with a plan. He eventually purchased it at market rate with a zero percent short-term loan, a combination of tax cred-

its, and his own funds. He proposed to turn the building into work force housing and save some of the building's 1920s grandeur.

By Spring of 2006, the renovation was

under way. The long process began of cleaning out the years of pigeon infestation and then the complete demolition right down to the superstructure. Every effort was made to preserve as much of the building's character as possible. The original marble that lined the walls in the hallway was removed and then reinstalled.

In June of 2006 there was a major setback. A fire, due to the construction work, destroyed the roof. The roof was the only thing that wasn't going to be replaced. The fire made the removal of the parapet cap a necessity and slowed construction down for about three weeks.

West Plains Engineering provided the mechanical and

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# Kevin Groves From West Plains Engineering: Report from Afghanistan

To everyone in the West Plains Engineering offices...hello from Afghanistan. I feel honored to be asked to write a brief description of what I am currently experiencing here during the ongoing war on terror. Let me begin by saying first and foremost, this experience has reminded me just how blessed we are to live in the United States of America. Please don't ever forget that. No matter how much we become frustrated with certain things, such as gas prices, or political controversies back home we do not fear for our safety on a daily basis like so many people around the world.

For those of you who may not know about my unit, Detachment 48 is a C-12 fixed wing airplane unit belonging to the South Dakota Army National Guard in Rapid City and consists of seven personnel. The airplane we fly is essentially a civilian Beechcraft, KingAir 200. Each of the 50 states has a similar unit tasked with a non-wartime mission of supporting National Guard and Active Duty personnel nationwide, or federal missions on an as needed basis. Back home we routinely fly all over the continental U.S. While in Afghanistan the wartime mission we have been given is to support the 101st Airborne Division throughout southwest Asia with aircraft based at Bagram airfield, which is located about 20 miles northeast of the capital of Kabul. From Bagram we routinely fly personnel and cargo into or out of about 10 different airfields throughout Afghanistan and Pakistan. Bagram Airfield is an old Soviet airbase used by the Red Army during its war with Afghanistan in the 1980s.

After nearly three months of our deployment I have flown missions to Turkey, Azerbaijan, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Pakistan and Kuwait. However, the majority of our missions are flown within the borders of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has a wide ranging geographical appearance. The northern and eastern portions of the country are almost exclusively rugged mountains. While the southern and western areas are mainly what we would consider high desert. It is some of the most desolate country I have ever seen. The mountains are nearly treeless, towering well above 20,000



feet in places, and the lowlands appear to have very little grass. Although some large rivers do flow through the middle of the country, from my elevated vantage point, only narrow strips along the rivers appear to be irrigated. Other rivers make up a large portion of the countries boundaries on the north and west sides. The eastern border with Pakistan can be very hard to determine accurately and is either very mountainous or very inhospitable desert. Afghanistan's climate can also be quite different from the north to the south. Just a few weeks ago I took off from Bagram in the rain and 50 degree temperatures only to land in the south, 300 miles away, with temperatures well into the 90s and sand blowing so hard at times we could see less than 1/4 mile. I understand the temperatures

will reach well above 100 degrees in the south during the summer months, and the blowing sand will be a daily occurrence. Oh boy, I can't wait.

The eastern border with Pakistan and the south central lowlands is where the majority of fighting occurs. We read and hear of daily encounters with the Taliban and Al Qaeda forces throughout these areas. It is also the nightly routine to hear multiple fighter aircraft launch out of Bagram enroute to destroy the enemy. I recently had the opportunity to meet a young man from Alabama who was preparing to return home after 15 months of duty here. Much of what I heard from him makes me so thankful to have soldiers willing to fight for our freedoms back home. He seemed too young to have experienced so much misery and hardship during the last 15 months. These are the men and women we need to give thanks for.

If I failed to address any questions you may have regarding my duties here please don't hesitate to email me through the company web-mail and I will attempt to answer what I can. Hopefully some of the photos I sent along will give you an indication of this country. I look forward to returning home sometime late this summer.

*About the Author:*

**Kevin Groves** is an Electrical Engineer for our Utility Division. Kevin has been with West Plains Engineering for over a year.

# Casper WPE: Historic Downtown Building Reopens, continued

electrical design for the building. Typically in an apartment project that is budget driven, the mechanical systems would be simple through the wall PTAC units that you find in most hotels. However, because of the historic building designation, federal mandates would not allow the integrity and the exterior of the building to be compromised.

Instead, the apartments are heated and cooled using four-pipe fan coils. Two gas-fired boilers in the basement provide hot water and an air-cooled chiller mounted on the roof provides the chilled water.

The income qualifications for the housing are federally mandated and the property will be closely con-



Work underway in one of the 46 apartments in the building.

trolled. The tenants will range from single parents to senior citizens. All of the units are now rented and there are four retail spaces on the ground floor. One of the spots will have a small grocery store in it, while the others are still available.

The renovation and preservation improves the appearance of the historic landmark, making the downtown area more

appealing to shoppers, visitors, businesses.

About the Author:

**Julie Morton** is the Administrative Assistant in the Casper Office and has been with West Plains Engineering for nine years.



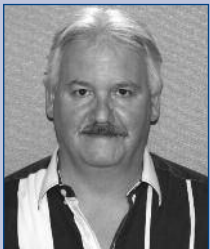
## WPE COMPANY NEWS ★ WPE COMPANY NEWS ★ WPE COMPANY NEWS



### NEW EMPLOYEES—

**Isaac Anderson** joined the Sioux Falls Office in November as a mechanical engineering designer. A graduate from SDSU in 2004 he worked at Tessier's Inc in Mitchell, SD until moving back to his hometown in Sioux Falls. In his free time he enjoys hunting, fishing, and running.

Also, as of March became engaged to his girlfriend Sue.



**Jerry Carlson** joined the Rapid City office in February as a full time Cad Technician. Jerry is married to Melanie who works in a real estate office in Spearfish. Outside the office, we enjoy horseback riding in the Black Hills, country living and our Golden Retrievers Oakee & Scooter.



**Andrew Maxwell** joined the Casper office as an Electrical Engineer in January after graduating from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in December 2007. Andrew is originally from Casper and will be getting married to his fiancé Becca in August. They welcome a new addition to their family;

Cyler Andrew Maxwell, born on January 7, 2008. Cyler weighed 6 lbs, 12 oz and was 19.5 in long. In addition Andrew and Becca have two daughters, Ava and Alexa, both 2 years of age. Andrew enjoys playing sports, camping, and outdoor activities.



**Shawn Gallagher** joined the Cedar Rapids Office in March as a Project Manager, Mechanical/Electrical Designer. Shawn grew up in Northeast Iowa and is a graduate of Kirkwood Community College. Following graduation Shawn went to work with Engineering Associates in Cedar Rapids. In the late

80's Shawn joined the Howard R. Green Company as a mechanical and electrical designer and later becoming a client services manager. Shawn left the consulting engineering market in the late 90's to join A'Hearn Plumbing and Heating in Hiawatha Iowa as a Commercial project manager. Shawn brings to WPE 20 plus years of design and construction experience. Shawn is excited to be with WPE and is looking forward to working with all of you. Shawn is married to Tina and they have 17 year old twin boys, Chase and Corbin. In his free time he enjoys playing golf and hockey, camping and spending time with his family. Shawn's hobbies also include custom painting, classic cars and Harley Davidson's, and yes, he's one of the many that makes the annual trek to the Rally in August.

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## Rapid City WPE: Homestake Mine To Become Lab for Scientists.

• A major milestone for the South Dakota State Technology Authority underground lab happened at the old Homestake mine this month. Water was pumped from the mine to the surface on March 14, 2008 for the first time in many years. After months of our design time to get power on-line in the Ross shaft, the first 700 HP pump at the 1250 level was put into service. There will be pumping stations also at the 2450, 3650, and 4850 levels with two 700HP, 5KV pumps at each level. The 2450 level has sump reservoirs overflowing with millions of gallons of water to be pumped to the surface. This level is currently in the process of getting the power on line with 12KV/5kV transformer substations as was installed at the 1250 level. The 2450 pump station should be pumping in April.

Many people ask me “What is it like below ground in the mine?” If you have ever been in a cave, it looks a lot like that and each level looks very similar. Some levels



though are much wetter than others. Certain areas of the mine go as deep as 8000 feet and currently the water has risen to approximately the 4850 level. Other levels above this have significant water on them as I have sloshed through 20” deep water on the 1700 foot level to inspect the Yates shaft. Besides water there is very limited space at most levels to install electrical gear, transformers,

etc. Also, the environment is very harsh in some aspects with the water and humidity levels as is evident by the extreme rust layer on almost all the steel left behind.

Almost all the equipment has to be replaced or rebuilt to be put into operation again including pumps and pump controllers. Each level is a new discovery as to the conditions we will face in order to install equipment. The goal is to have the mine dewatered by the end of the summer so that experiments may start to be implemented at the deeper levels. Experiments for the Sanford lab are ready to be started as soon as levels are determined safe and power is available for equipment. Scientists from all over the world will be exploring the site and mine in late April to determine which experiments will take place and how to implement them.

West Plains Engineering is currently providing design for the power distribution to the 5kV pumps and other lower voltage equipment in the Ross Shaft to the 4850 level. Other upcoming projects entail substations in the Yates shaft and various surface building additions and renovations. A future article in Plains Talk will update the progress of this project.

*About the Author:*

**Daren Beckloff** is an Electrical Engineer/Project Manager in the Rapid City Office. Daren has been with West Plains Engineering for two years.



### Fun for the Kids

For a little fun over the Easter holiday this year the Sioux Falls office held a coloring contest for the kids of those who work here. Our contest was for children 10 and under and we chose three kids to be the winners and to be featured in our Spring newsletter. The winners were chosen randomly by drawing their names from a basket. Our coloring winners were **Aeriel** (pictured) who is two years old, **Noah** (not pictured) who is eight, and **Landon** (not pictured) who is four.



Although only three are mentioned all kids received a gift.