

## Alan Luckhurst is retiring after 46 years in the auto parts business

By Tara Knutson

Forty six years ago, young Alan Luckhurst was putting in another normal day of work in the refrigerator at McCain's Foods, a potato processing facility that used to be located on the west edge of Clark. The only difference that day was that the building was burning around him. However, he was unaware of the dire situation until he came out of the refrigerator. That was the last day at McCain's for Luckhurst. "I think leaving the building between the flames and in the smoke might have had something to do with him looking for another job," reported Luckhurst's wife Beth.

Later that day, he found himself at the parts counter at Olson's Motors, now known as Sturdevant's Auto Parts, purchasing a part for one of his many mechanical projects. "He was always fixing something, either a vehicle or a piece of farm equipment," Beth said. "I just asked out of curiosity," Alan elaborated. "I was standing at the counter, and Jerry and Wayne Olson were both there. I said 'Do you have a job available here?' Jerry turned to his Dad and then turned back to me and said, 'Yeah! When do you want to start?' So on February 1, 1978, I started at the parts counter."

Now, at 72, Luckhurst has decided it's time to "slow down a bit." Last Friday, December 29 was the last day for the public to visit Alan behind the parts counter of Sturdevant's Auto Parts. "He's going to be hard to replace here," said supervisor Corey Hallstrom. "You just can't train someone to have the level of knowledge that Alan has. That comes with experience."

When Beth said that Alan does things long term, she was covering all aspects of Alan's personal and professional life. She and Alan said "I do" 35 years ago. They met at the Christian Singles Group in Watertown and were introduced to each other through mutual friends. Despite the relationship that was growing, Beth was issued a warning before their wedding ceremony in 1988.

"Alan said, 'Know that I come with a Studebaker that I will never sell,'" Beth recalled. "I told him that I'm a Studebaker girl." Her father worked at a Studebaker factory in Los Angeles, California until it closed. "There are a lot of ugly Studebakers out there, but he has the best looking one," she said. "I had no argument about the car staying around."

After they were married, Alan and Beth embarked on a week-long trip to Itasca State Park in Minnesota to visit the headwaters of the Mississippi River. When they returned, Alan went back to helping customers find the parts they needed. Beth worked for 20 years at Premiere Bank Card in Watertown before retiring due to health issues in 2019.

"Sometimes customers have no idea what they want or need. Other times, the part is hard to find," said Luckhurst. "You have to look in other places across the internet to try to find the right one. There's a shortage on some parts too. The prices have gone up terribly over the years, and there isn't anything you can do about it," he continued. "Since no one wants to walk anymore, people have made adjust-



Alan Luckhurst is pictured above at the Sturdevant's counter where he's worked aiding customers for 46 years.

Photo by Tara Knutson

ments and are more accepting of the prices now than they used to be," explained Luckhurst.

Luckhurst enjoys visiting with customers. "You become good friends with the community members," he said. "I'm going to miss that quite a bit during retirement." He also admitted that some days, he couldn't wait for the end of the day, like a lot of working people.

Luckhurst isn't a stranger to long days, working from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. every day and often taking his lunch break between customers. "It's his own choice to not take a lunch break," Beth explained. "He has always wanted to take care of the customer first." He has also been working one Saturday morning every three weeks. "Alan has never come home and admitted

to having a bad day," Beth shared. "He has loved it. Now, he just wants to have more spare time at home while he can."

Luckhurst has stayed with the building and business even as it transitioned between owners over the years. When he started, it was Olson's Motor Company. Olson's Motors dissolved in 2001, and Big A Auto Parts began. Other signs on the building over time have been Bumper to Bumper and O'Reilly Auto Parts. In 2013, Sturdevant's Auto Parts was brought to Clark.

Sturdevant's Auto Parts operates 49 retail stores and two warehouses across South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska. Their headquarters are in Sioux Falls, S.D. "It's been an ok transition; different than it used to be

when we were owned by Olson's. You're mainly a number now, and the owner doesn't know your name," Luckhurst said. "With Olson's, there were five or six employees, and we knew each others families."

Computer systems have also become a vital component of day to day business. "With Olson's, there were no computers used for parts. Now, the computer systems seem to change frequently, and it's hard to keep up with the technology," he explained.

The crew at the Clark store are always up for laughs and good times, making it a fun place to stop for customers and employees alike. Over the years, Luckhurst acquired the nickname of 'Lucky'. "With Al Byer working here, we had to find a way to keep the two AIs straight; we had an AI in the back and an AI up front," explained Hallstrom. "With a last name like Luckhurst, that's all it took to come up with 'Lucky.' It held like glue."

Retirement for Luckhurst will include lots of time spent on his beloved 1962 black Studebaker GT Hawk. "I've always wanted a Studebaker, one like my cousin had," he explained. "I saw an ad for one in the Watertown newspaper in the 1980s. I went to take a look at it the next day and traded up for it. My dad thought I lost my marbles," he continued. "It had 40,000 miles on it when I bought it, and I've only put 4,000 on it since. It hides under the cover in the garage, but I think it's time it comes out of hiding."

Luckhurst also has other models of Studebakers at home, but they "are in need of some tender loving care." He also has his father's

tractor, a John Deere 60 that was purchased when Alan was in grade school.

"I look forward to spending some time doing yard work instead of having to hurry through it after work or on the weekends," he admitted. The Luckhursts also plan on having longer camping trips in the future. "Hit the road and stop when we feel like it," he said. "We don't have to stay close to home anymore to get back to work on Monday."

"I'm not going to know what to do with myself for a few days," Luckhurst stated. He plans to continue his part time job of water, sewer and maintenance for the City of Garden City. He has worked this position since 1994.

His advice for people still in the workforce is to, "Hang in there. I thought this day would never come, but it does. Now, the guys are giving me a hard time about coming back to the store to help out," he said. "Maybe I will come, but I want a little time off first. Corey says he's going to retire with me, but he's got a ways to go yet," he joked. "I don't know what the future holds, but I'm excited to see what it brings for me."

"We're going to miss him," said Hallstrom. "With his years of experience, he has so much information that's not in the books or computers. He helped train me and kept us all up to snuff," he continued. "It's going to be different in the store without Lucky."

The kind, gentle greeting and wealth of automotive knowledge will be missed by coworkers and community members alike. Congratulations on your retirement, Alan.

## 2023 Year in Review Part II, July-December

July

A fallen hero bridge dedication ceremony was held in memory of CW2 Scott A. Saboe, originally from Willow Lake. The bridge is located on S.D Highway 37 over the James River.

eran's Memorial at Flat Iron Park to protect the new Bill of Rights pieces, including new plaques and weather-proof glass.

Clark County 4-H Horse Show was held.

Clark Rotary hosted a 12-

Twelve Clark County 4-H members participated in local 4-H fashion review with all entries earning purple ribbon placings.

Rural Clark native Kallan Christman is highlighted on her upbringing with parents Rod and

resident and business owner Heather Johannsen was held at her business, Heather's Bistro in Clark. Heather was in attendance to say farewell to friends and family as she chose to forgo further chemotherapy and radiation treatments for cancer.

Clark Area Community Foundation made two substantial donations to local project groups, including Choose Clark County to help with kitchen improvements at the Clark American Legion Hall and Rosehill Cemetery to assist with removing ash trees.

The 107th Henry Alumni Banquet was held with multiple classes recognized.

Kevin and Sandy Ortberg of Clark launch a food truck business, Cluck N' Moo. The couple's specialties are braasted chicken and homemade ice cream.

Prisoner of War Bench dedication by Rolling Thunder, Inc. Chapter 2 of South Dakota took place at Flat Iron Park.

The Clark FCCLA Chapter attended the FCCLA National Convention in Denver, Colo.

Brothers Beau and Grady Hemmingson of Bradley represented South Dakota at the 4-H Shooting Sports National Championships in Grand Island, Neb.

Alayna Caulfield of Bradley placed second at the 2023 National Junior Shorthorn Show and Youth Conference in Des Moines, Iowa.

Clark County 4-H Rodeo was held at the Clark County Fairgrounds with over 265 contestants competing.

After a 36-year drought, the Clark-Willow Lake Cagley-Smith Post #60 Legion baseball team punched their ticket to the South Dakota State B Legion baseball tournament. Team members in-

clude Jack Bratland, Mitchell Larson, Jack Helkenn, Lucas Kannegieter, Josh Kannegieter, Dawson Lantgen, Emmerson Larson, Jakob Steen, Conner Mudgett, Cooper Pommer, Collin Gaikowski, Owen Spieker, Trey Huber and Waylan Olson. The team is coached by Chris Bokinskie and assisted by Brock Greenfield and Hudson Fuller.

Captain Aimee Fiedler lead United States Air Force F-16 Viper demonstration team.

Cyclone golf was well represented at the Torchy Ries Memorial Golf Tournament in Watertown at Cattail Crossing Gold Course. Approximately 35 kids, including 10 youth from Clark participated, including Brynn Roehrich, Cade Gaikowski, Kooper Wookey, Kaden Wookey, Faith Roehrich, Miles Olson, Logan Borns, Maverick Clausen, Thomas Dandurand and Teddy Dandurand.

Clark Area 14U baseball team took home fifth place, winning the consolation championship game in the 2023 Department of VFW 14U Class Baseball Tournament.

August

Clark County Achievement Days were held July 31-August 2.

Clark Traders advanced to the State Class B tournament by defeating the Elkton Snappers in District 1B action.

The Lookout Bar & Grill in Clark gets a makeover to its exterior, with white steel wall panels and a red roof.

Dawn and Louis Brush enjoy cruising around the Clark community in a 1951 Chevrolet pickup that Dawn's grandfather, John Shirk purchased new in 1951.

Potato Day, once again held at Swimming Pool Park was fun, despite the rainy weather that set in

about noon on Saturday.

The Clark School readies for opening on August 16 with nine new faces greeting students.

Six new staff members greeted Henry students on August 15, the first day of school.

Clark Area 10U and 12U baseball teams brought home league first place trophies from their championship games in Elkton. Selected to the all-star team were 12U players Cade Gaikowski and Miles Olson and 10U players Teddy Dandurand and Archer Lenzen.

Ribbon cutting was held at Soapy J's Car Wash, located on U.S. Highway 212 on the east side of Clark, next to the Big C. The car wash is co-owned by Joe Herr, Jason Steen and Jerome Nesheim.

The Clark Traders baseball season came to an end with a loss to Canova Gang in the State B Amateur Baseball Tournament in Mitchell.

CWL cheerleaders hold cheer clinic for 57 Clark and Willow Lake kindergarten through sixth graders.

Year in Review  
(continued on page 3)

### WEATHER

Robert Cole - Official  
Weather Observer

|                                   | HI | LO | PR   |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|------|
| Dec. 26.....                      | 35 | 21 | 1.03 |
| Dec. 27.....                      | 34 | 25 | 0.08 |
| Dec. 28.....                      | 31 | 27 | 0.03 |
| Dec. 29.....                      | 32 | 19 | 0    |
| Dec. 30.....                      | 33 | 21 | 0    |
| Dec. 31.....                      | 24 | 15 | 0    |
| Jan. 1.....                       | 23 | 10 | 0    |
| 2023 precipitation to date 21.11" |    |    |      |
| 2022 precipitation to date 20.29" |    |    |      |



Pictured above with the new CW2 Scott Saboe fallen hero bridge dedication sign, from left to right are Saboe's family Ann (Saboe) Remington, Mike Remington, Tyler Remington, Breanna Remington and Annika Remington. The family was joined by Greg Whit-

lock, Secretary for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, South Dakota's 39th Lieutenant Governor Larry Roden and Brad Letcher with the South Dakota Department of Transportation.

Willow Lake Fourth of July parade is well attended, with nearly 40 entries in the parade.

Work was completed on the Vet-

team baseball tournament for Legion teams at Dakota Style Field. Clark-Willow Lake Senators took home sixth place.

Wendy Christman and how she came to be a commercial pilot.

A goodbye celebration of Clark

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