

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2018

CUSTER COUNTY, ARNOLD, NEBRASKA 69120

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In 2017, Arnold experienced changes, progress, improvements, losses and devastation. Businesses were bought and sold, opened, closed and remodeled. The local organizations, committees and boards remained crucial to the vitalization of the community.

JANUARY

The Nebraska Rural Living website featured the Arnold Cemetery Wreath Project. The story was also picked up by NTV for Good Morning Nebraska. The story had more views in the ten days that it was live than any other Rural Success story posted in 2016.

The Arnold Sentinel moved to a temporary location in Hotel Custer to begin renovation on the 1930s building.

APS held its first semester incentive party, rewarding students for good grades and regular attendance, with a talent show and bubble soccer.

Legion Post 130 has raised over \$90,000.00 during the last ten years with their Scrap Metal Project. With the purchase of its own truck and 30' trailer to haul the scrap, the Legion is now solvent. With the money raised, many improvements have been made to the building.

GPS involves two elementary classes from APS in a geocaching event. A mock session was performed at the Arnold Recreation Area early in the school year and a later quick trip to Devil's Den included a send off of a travel bug while searching for a real cache.

Shirley Bassett, age 81, was featured in Darlene Rimpley's "They've a Story to Tell."

The APS school board saw changes in leadership. New president, Tony Eggleston was

voted into office, Joe Cool remained vice president, Diana Coleman remained secretary, and Duane Bowers was elected as treasurer.

Renovation began on the 1914 building purchased by Keith and Jodi Carlson. The future home of BrewBakers Coffee House and Gifts was underway. Although an opening date has yet to be determined, several events have been held at the location.

With over 80 percent of rural Nebraskans being homeowners, there is still a lack of affordable and quality housing in some communities. A 2016 Nebraska Rural Poll survey said that the construction of new homes in their community is adequate, most believe there are not enough homes or quality homes available for rent.

FEBRUARY

Girl Scout cookie sales celebrate 100 years. This was the first official year an Arnold Troop was organized to sell cookies. Ten girl members and three adult leaders organized the sales and hoped to attend summer camps and events. Badges were also purchased with the proceeds.

Arnold students participated in a Singing Youth of Nebraska Choral Festival in North Platte, Nebraska. The site was attended by 159 students from 14 schools.

Fallon Gibson joined the Sentinel staff as a part-time employee. She began employment just a few weeks before the confusion of temporary relocation to the Hotel Custer was planned.

Adrianna Adesina Forrester, age 13, was chosen as a state finalist in the National American Miss Nebraska Pageant.



Staff at The Arnold Sentinel moved back into the completely renovated 1930s building in May, after working out of a temporary office in Hotel Custer since January. Three building renovations started in 2017 on Main Street. (Pepper Werner photo)

Arnold Public School's hot lunch program was celebrating 60 years of existence. The program started at the old grade school next to the Baptist Church.

MARCH

Betty Lucas McKain, age 88, was featured in Darlene Rimpley's "They've a Story to Tell."

The delivery of a 750 pound beam by Bloedorn Lumber of North Platte to The Sentinel building drew a lot of attention on the street, and willing volunteers helped guide the beam into the building. The beam was installed to shore the sagging roof up as part of the major renovation process.

There was a lot of competition at the Chamber-sponsored Chili Cook-Off, with Ali Rosenstrater's team winning both Best Chili and Best Decorated Booth honors.

2011 A.H.S. graduate Dayna Larreau and two of her former University of Nebraska at Kear-

ney professors reached their goal of having Dayna's senior research paper titled, "Hedonic Price Analysis of Non-Barren Broodmares" published in the Review of Economic & Business Studies.

The Arnold Fire Department was called to three fires within one week. The first being a tree pile that got out of control due to wind, the second was a grass fire started by a 4-wheeler on a cattle drive that burned approximately 400 acres over two days requiring two fire checks.

Hunter Weinman earned a Gold Key, and Leighton Bubak was awarded a Silver Key in the Scholastic Art & Writing Contest as part of Youth Art Month.

Arnold Public Schools implemented Beef Booster Initiative which brings healthy, locally raised beef into the school cafeteria.

The west grain elevator on the east edge of Arnold was burned to the ground in a controlled

burn due to lack of use. The elevator had a long history, beginning in 1912 when the trains came to town.

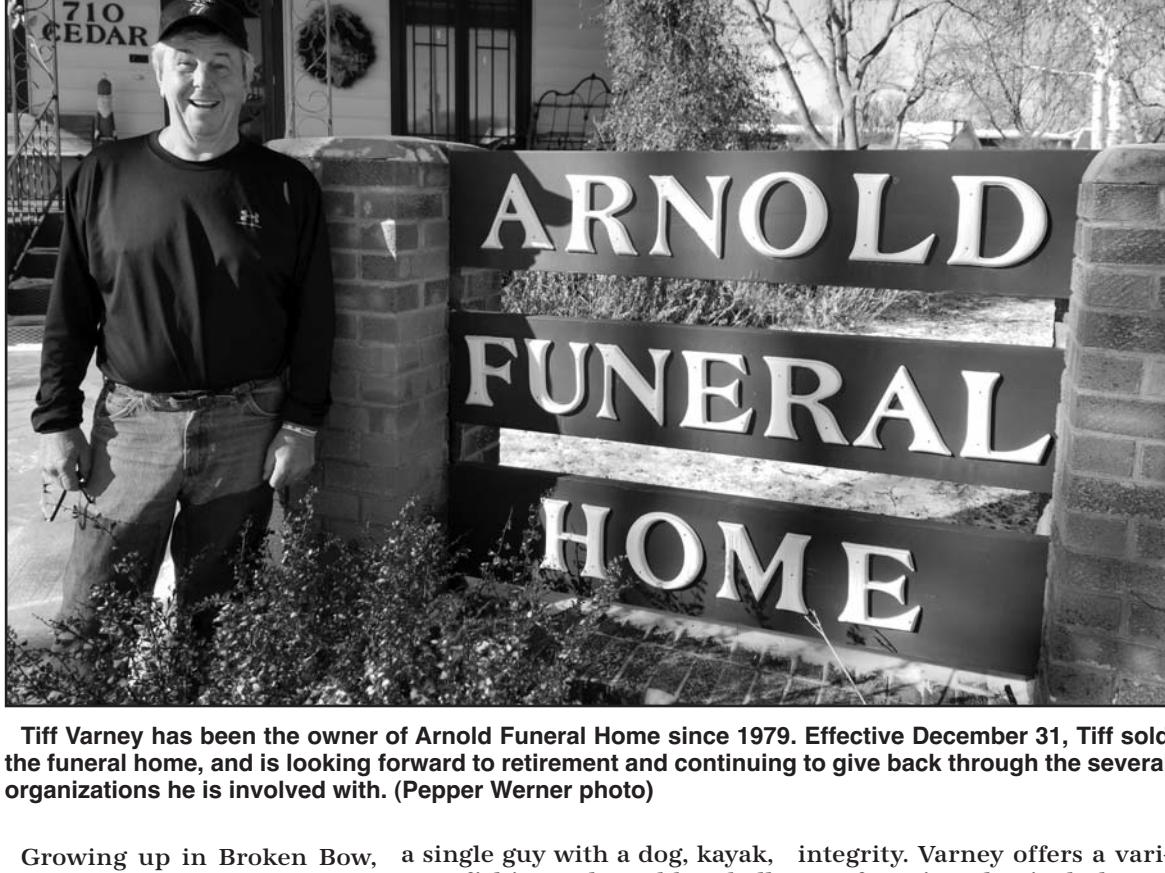
Several Arnold Volunteer Fire Department members were recognized for their outstanding service to the department at the Annual AVFD Banquet and Awards Night. Duane Gibson received the Fireman of the Year award, and Andrew Tickle was EMT Person of the Year. In 2016, the department made 37 ambulance calls and 17 fire and rescue calls. There are a total of 29 members serving the community.

APRIL

Nansel's Best Service celebrated 50 years of service to the Arnold community, and Ralph Nansel has been there through it all. It has been a family affair of three generations since 1983, with Ralph, Brad and newest member, Bryce. The other familiar face is Jan Eastwood,

Continued on page 2.

Looking Forward to Retirement



Tiff Varney has been the owner of Arnold Funeral Home since 1979. Effective December 31, Tiff sold the funeral home, and is looking forward to retirement and continuing to give back through the several organizations he is involved with. (Pepper Werner photo)

Growing up in Broken Bow, Tiff Varney didn't stray too far from home for long. After two years in Lincoln and then two years at the University of San Francisco, he served in the military as a civil services embalmer in Vietnam. After government service, Tiff traveled to New Zealand for a year to work as a mortician with a friend he met in school. In 1976, he returned to Nebraska and worked in various places as a substitute mortician. Things settled down in 1979, when as

a single guy with a dog, kayak, gun, fishing pole and baseball glove, he bought the Arnold and Mullen Funeral Homes from Gerry Tickle and Gene Ryan. Over the course of several years, Tiff married, had three children, two grandchildren and continued his position as funeral director.

The Arnold Funeral Home has been in the same location all of this time. There have been some upgrades and remodels, but the home is 110 years old and holds the same

integrity. Varney offers a variety of services that include cremation, dealing with the families, insurance companies, memorial services - pre-arrangement to cemetery. He also works with the anatomical board and cadaver research. He ensures that the final requests are granted and has been fortunate during his career to never have had to bury an unidentified person. He works doggedly to find family, even for a homeless person.

There is a 300 mile radius that

the funeral homes service - 16 miles from Alliance, to the North Loup River north of Mullen and Thedford. There are two part-time people that help at the Mullen location as well as two that assist Tiff in Arnold - Bob Allen and Bruce McConnell.

With the arrival of the new year, Tiff will no longer be the owner of Arnold Funeral Home. Grant Chapin and Doug Gaston, both of Broken Bow, will be taking ownership. Tiff will remain living in the residence and help when needed, but not in the primary role. He plans to travel to see cousins in New Jersey, Michigan, and California, reconnect with buddies from the service, and reminisce with old baseball friends from his minor league days.

When asked about a bucket list for retirement, Tiff simply responded that he has done everything he has wanted to do: been to Africa three times, had a custom gun built, been to a Yankees game in their stadium, visited the 9-11 museum, and was the first EMT in Hastings, Nebraska. Volunteering has always been of great importance to the Varney family, so retirement will allow more freedom for involvement with the Tom Osborne Legacy, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Angels of the Pacific and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He will also continue to support organ donor groups and promote awareness. Tiff stated that volunteering makes this country the greatest country in the world, and that's our job, and his mission.

When asked if he every became sad or distraught over a loss or burial, he was quick to

answer that he has learned over the years that life is fleeting and to be grateful for each day. The average person probably doesn't put much thought into death or loss until it happens close to home. However, Tiff deals with it often and has learned to cope and appreciate every moment.

"It depends on the circumstance," he said. "Sure, it's sad when a baby passes. That just can't be compared to a man that has lived over 100 years and had a full life. Maybe there is some truth to the old saying that a daily shot of whiskey promotes longevity."

Tiff quoted Elton John as saying "The candle is lit, we need to protect it from going out."

"That's not always possible. We need to appreciate living every day," he said.

There are two Varney boys, and Tiff's brother lives in Hot Springs, Arkansas. He jokingly said that his brother still tries to dial a push button phone. The senior Thomas Varney was in the military and was sent a lot of places. Tiff and his brother spent the majority of their time with their mother and grandparents. Mrs. Varney taught Red Cross swimming lessons for 47 years in Broken Bow. She was the one that taught Tiff about being an EMT. Originally, ambulances were based out of a funeral home and it was actually a home, just as his is today. People pulled together to help others and firemen might be driving the ambulance. Helping neighbors was part of it.

Tiff quoted John Wayne as saying, "He hasn't burned a lot of daylight." It's a fair statement for a man that has devoted his life to the preservation and celebration of others lives.