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12th in a Series on Arnold's
"Young at Heart"
Residents

By Darlene Rimpley

Is the statement that is often made, "You can't go home again," really true?

It isn't in the case of Wendell Smith, who for 63 years has lived in six different states to follow his career, and twice as many towns. He has truly come home to Arnold.

Wendell was born in 1932 to Leonard and Winifred Smith in a sod house on Redfern Table near Callaway. The family lived in Callaway for a time, where Wendell attended first grade, and then became Arnold residents.

Wendell attended school and graduated from Arnold High in 1951. While in high school, he played the trumpet in the school band and sang in the glee club.

He attended the Baptist church, where he organized a band consisting of Pat Cole on the piano, and Charlene and Marlene Scott and Jeanette Bassett as the singers. Wendell, who was called "Wendy" all the way through high school, played the guitar and trumpet to accompany the group, and sang. They performed at several churches in the area, and even remained a group after Wendell graduated.

About a year after his graduation, the Broken Bow KCNI station manager's wife heard about Wendell from some source, and came to Arnold to talk to him about working at the station. Wendell was not sure, but the job became the love of his life.

He was a disc jockey, a newscaster, a weatherman and emptied waste baskets. It was a small station in those days, so everyone did a little bit of everything. Wendell could schedule some events, so he had the band perform on the radio several times.

After several years at KCNI, Wendell moved to Lexington, Nebraska, to work at KRVN, with his work being much the

They've a Story to Tell Wendell Smith Returns to Place Called Home



A 1951 graduate of AHS, Wendell Smith has made Riverview Apartments his new home, after being gone from the area most of his life.

same. He was on a 15-minute show called "Rise and Shine" with Dick Klasi, and had an early morning show where he played and sang. Then he, along with another KRVN worker, Moe Millikan, left for KHOL-TV in Holdrege, where Wendell was a newscaster, as well as doing other jobs.

While in Holdrege, he married. His wife, who was a Methodist, thought Wendell would make a good Methodist minister. The family moved to Lincoln, and Wendell began attending Wesleyan University to study for the ministry. After two years, he became pastor of a small church in Hallam, Nebraska.

A son had been added to the family by this time, and the couple decided they were not making ends meet. So after two years, Wendell went back to - yes - KRVN.

Several of the employees formed a country music band. They traveled to different locations to do a show, and finish the evening playing for a dance. One Saturday night, they went to Imperial, did the hour show, and played for the dance until around 1:00 a.m. The lead guitar player and his wife had rode with Wendell in his car. After the dance was over and the instruments were loaded, they asked the wife to drive so they could sleep in the back seat. All went well until Wendell woke up and saw that it was starting to get light, and they still weren't home. He sat up, looked around, and saw a sign that said, "Welcome to Holyoke, Colorado." They were going the wrong way!

Two more sons had been added to the family, and they lived in the country in an old farmhouse. It was a cold winter

- 10 degrees below zero - and all of the pipes in the house froze up. Wendell decided the cold weather was too much for him. He saw where there was an opening at a radio station at Winslow, Arizona, and flew down to interview. He got the job, and the family moved to a warmer climate. He was at Winslow for a time, then went up the road to Wickenburg, Arizona, to a station that went bankrupt.

He found another job opening in a broadcast manual at a TV station in Sedalia, Missouri. He was there for 10 years, during which time he was moved up to station manager.

He was offered a job as concessions manager at the Missouri State Fair in Sedalia, and after doing that for two years, he took the job as manager of the fair.

One year a Bluegrass Festival was held on the fairgrounds, and thousands of kids, along with the drugs, invaded the grounds. The people in town were afraid, and the state police came to intervene. Wendell said he even wore a gun.

His job as manager of the fair was over when a new governor was elected, and under the political appointments, they had charge of the fair.

So, he went back to his first love - radio - right there in Sedalia. Another son had arrived, and they were settled for a time.

Following were several more radio stations: in North Carolina, which went broke; then to Oklahoma and on to Texas. His last job was in San Angelo, Texas, at KIDY-TV. He decided it was time to retire, and in 1997 he "hung up his microphone" so to speak. He wanted warm weather, so the family moved on south to Alpine, and then to the small town of Marfa. He bought 10 acres on the Rio Grande River, which is the border between the U.S. and Mexico, moved into a trailer house,

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Community Clean-Up Day is April 18

Volunteers from Arnold Rotary, Chamber, the school, American Legion and village personnel will be making Arnold shine on Monday, April 18. They will be helping residents clean up their property, raking, removing weeds and debris and cleaning up trash.

Residents who have called and need help have been placed on a list. Volunteers will meet at the community center that morning to divide into groups and receive instructions. There is still time to get on the list by calling Patty Lamberty at 848-2228 (cell 308-520-4495) or Irv Jennings at (308) 530-1475 (please leave a message). Chamber will provide a meal for the volunteers.

American Legion members will be collecting metals of any kind. Call Mike at 308-530-1065 to be placed on the list for clean-up day or any day.

A roll off container has been placed at the village shop for use free of charge for village residents during the entire month of April. The village asks everyone to stack their items in the roll-off. Not accepted at the site are: construction rubble, refrigerators, freezers, batteries, computers and household hazardous waste.

The storm date for the clean-up will be Monday, April 25.

Early Voting Begins This Week

Starting April 11, in-person early voting begins at county election offices and will continue to May 9, the day prior to Election Day. The last day to request an early voting ballot be mailed is 4:00 p.m. on May 4.

Those applications need to be signed and faxed, emailed or mailed to the appropriate county election office for processing.

Mailed ballots need to be received back at county election offices by the close of polls on May 10.



Arnold Insurance Agency is open for business at their new location on the west edge of town. Renovation of the former Cardinal Inn building took place after Joe Bob and Randi Atkins purchased the building from Mary Carlson in September of 2015. (Janet Larreau photos)

Insurance Agency Holds Open House

For the last several months, residents have watched as the former Cardinal Inn building was transformed into a modern insurance agency by construction crews. Owners of the building, Joe Bob and Randi Atkins, and the rest of the staff of Arnold Insurance Agency, held an open house on Monday, April 11 to give everyone a chance to see the interior of the building and the investment that has been made.

For 2 1/2 hours, a steady stream of an estimated 200 people from not only Arnold, but the surrounding area as well, enjoyed the tour and meal provided by the agency. Many said they were happy to finally have their curiosity satisfied after months of waiting to see the inside.

"It was more than I ever thought would come for a Monday," said Joe Bob Atkins.

The interior lay-out includes an entry-way with two desk areas, seven office spaces, a waiting area, a conference room, break room, postage room and three restrooms. Atkins said the entire project was financed privately, using no federal, state or local grants or loans.

"We didn't want to tie up any local LB840 loan funds, because there are other (business) things going on behind the scenes in Arnold where that money will be needed," he said.

Arnold Insurance Agency has two additional locations in Ogallala and Grant, with 13 employees in all three locations. Atkins said all of the insurance agency's employees and contractors who worked on the project got together that evening for a private celebration, for a total of some 260 people served in one day. All of the food and steak for the sandwiches, grilled by general contractor Scott Steel, were purchased locally at Reed's Food Center.



A wall in the entryway of the new Arnold Insurance Agency features the same stone that is on the outside of the building.