

# Firm makes Corvette parts

By Ron Wilson

**Director**  
Huck Boyd National Institute  
for Rural Development  
at Kansas State University  
London, England. On display is  
a gorgeous, restored 1954 Corvette.  
Inside this Corvette are authorized  
replacement parts, manufactured  
halfway around the globe in rural  
Kansas. Rev up your engine, it's the  
subject of today's Kansas Profile.

Ron and Rhonda LaRue are owners  
of LaRue Machine in Chanute.  
Their remarkable business produces  
parts for Corvettes and performs  
many other types of metal machin-  
ing.

Ron and Rhonda have deep roots  
in rural southeast Kansas, where  
both grew up on farms. Rhonda  
went to Chanute High, Neosho  
County Community College and  
became a registered nurse.

Ron got a vocational degree at  
Pittsburg State. Even before gradu-  
ating, he bought his first lathe for his  
dad's shop on the farm.

Ron and Rhonda got married.  
Ron was employed at various jobs  
while working in his own shop on  
the weekends, when he was asked  
to produce some parts for restoring  
a Corvette.

That became his business' first  
machine shop project. He is still

producing parts for that company  
today.

When Ron and Rhonda had chil-  
dren, they wanted to be available  
for them, so they built a shop in  
which to operate their business next  
door to their house located between  
Chanute and Erie.

LaRue Machine was a metal  
fabrication shop, doing repairs and  
subcontracting parts, tool work,  
and machining with both CNC and  
manual equipment. The business  
grew with time, but then was hit by  
the recession.

Meanwhile, Ron had been in  
touch with Bernard Dick in Chan-  
ute. Bernard had been CEO of  
Churchill Machine before it was  
purchased and moved to Texas, at  
which point Bernard started and  
grew his own machine shop called  
Econo Machine. But Bernard was  
turning 65. He approached Ron  
LaRue about taking over the busi-  
ness.

"It was kind of a miracle," Ron  
said. "You don't buy a business in  
the middle of a recession." But they  
worked with Tom Byler and Kath-  
ryn Richard at the Small Business  
Development Center at Pittsburg  
State University.

"I can't say enough good things  
about Tom and those people," Ron  
said. "Tom facilitated all these enti-

ties coming together."

Eight months later, with help  
from the city of Chanute, Prosperity  
Foundation, Southeast Kansas RC  
& D, Start-Up Kansas, and local  
banks, the LaRues bought Econo  
Machine. Bernard Dick, the retiring  
CEO, is staying on as a salesman.

"Bernard has been a wonderful  
mentor," Ron said. "He has lots of  
experience and has been a great  
advisor."

While Econo did large scale  
machining, LaRue Machine had  
smaller specialized equipment, so  
the two businesses complement  
each other well in production capa-  
bilities and target markets.

Today the company performs a  
mix of metal machining, stamp-  
ing, custom and repair operations,  
including CNC lathe and mill work,  
tool and die making, and all types  
of welding. Ron is president of the  
company. Rhonda is vice president,  
secretary and office manager.

"Business has really opened  
up after the first of the year," Ron  
said. "We've already hired on more  
than was projected in our business  
plan."

"We're a large, diversified job  
shop," Ron said. "We're doing alu-  
minum castings which open up the  
refinery business and airlock valves  
for plastic manufacturing. We do

repairs for the cement industry  
and parts for Cobalt Boats, for ex-  
ample." Meanwhile, the company  
still stamps parts for Corvette body  
mount kits for cars which are going  
worldwide.

That's remarkable for a fam-  
ily business based in rural Kansas.  
Ron and Rhonda's son Garrett is  
studying management information  
systems at K-State and helping  
with the business's computers,  
while daughter MaKayla is in high  
school at Erie and helps run the  
family cattle operation. They went  
to grade school in the nearby rural  
community of Galesburg, Kansas,  
population 149 people. Now, that's  
rural.

From these rural roots, this Kan-  
sas family is building a remarkable  
Kansas business.

It's time to leave London, where  
we found a beautiful 1954 Corvette  
which includes parts made all the  
way over in rural Kansas.

We commend Ron and Rhonda  
LaRue, Bernard Dick, and all those  
involved with LaRue Machine for  
making a difference with entre-  
preneurship and hard work. Such  
entrepreneurship can help restore  
Corvettes, and it can help restore the  
economy of rural Kansas as well.

## Food given by group



Mel Pfau accepted around 200 pounds of food from the Grant  
Junior High Family, Career and Community Leaders of America  
group last Tuesday for the Genesis Food Bank of Goodland. The  
group put collection boxes in each TA room and had a contest  
between them. The winner got a pizza party. President Aaron  
Avelar hands a box of food to Pfau. Other members of the group  
pictured are Jordan Hopkins, Selena Acosta and Taylor Thomas.  
This is the second year for the group.

Photo by Pat Schiefen/The Goodland Star-News

# Hotline has victim information

Sandy Praeger, Kansas Commis-  
sioner of Insurance, said Monday,  
that insurance information for re-  
cent tornado and severe weather  
victims in Kansas is available from  
the Kansas Insurance Department's  
Consumer Assistance Hotline,  
(800) 432-2484.

"The department's consumer  
assistance division is prepared to  
answer consumer questions and  
concerns regarding insurance in  
the areas hit by tornadoes and severe  
thunderstorms," Commissioner  
Praeger said. "We are in touch with  
insurance companies who have in-  
sured customers in those areas and  
many companies' disaster teams  
have on-the-ground operations."

News reports said one person in  
Reading, the hardest hit commu-  
nity, was killed as a tornado rolled  
through northern Lyon County and  
damaged or destroyed approxi-  
mately 200 homes and businesses  
there.

Tornadoes were sighted in Shaw-  
nee and Jefferson Counties and re-  
ports showed hail and wind damage

throughout the northeastern corner  
of the state.

Sunday storms in southeast Kan-  
sas caused hail damage in several  
counties. The same storm system  
caused catastrophic tornado dam-  
age in Joplin, Mo.

"The department is ready to act  
as a liaison between consumers and  
their insurance carriers, if needed,"  
Commissioner Praeger said. "We  
have current carrier contact in-  
formation available through our  
hotline representatives. We can also  
help is a consumer doesn't remem-  
ber the insurance company name or  
policy number but does remember  
the agent or agency name."

Claims adjusters for insurance  
companies will be working in the af-  
fected areas. If a person can't locate  
an adjuster, contact the consumer  
assistance hotline and the request  
will be relayed to the insurance  
company, agent or adjuster, Com-  
missioner Praeger said.

The Commissioner also said con-  
sumers should deal directly with the  
claims adjuster from their insurance

company and not public adjusters.  
Public adjusters are not licensed to  
provide personal insurance services  
in Kansas.

More information about insur-  
ance claims and storm damage is on  
the Kansas Insurance Department

website, [www.ksinsurance.org](http://www.ksinsurance.org).

"Protecting Kansas consumers is  
our responsibility and part of  
our department's mission," Com-  
missioner Praeger said. "We are  
prepared to help when they need  
it most."

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**Wednesday, June 8, 2011**  
**10:00 AM, MST**  
Elk's Club—Goodland, KS

*Land Location: 16.7 Miles South of Kanorado on Road SH3.*

This land will be offered in 4 individual tracts & combinations of tracts.

**Legal Descriptions**      **Seller:**  
Tract 1: NW/4 of Sec. 20-11-42      Ann Marie Rafacz Trust  
Tract 2: SW/4 of Sec. 20-11-42  
Tract 3: E/2 of Sec. 20-11-42  
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# Auction

for Eric and Lenny Fleckenstein

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At the Jennings, KS, school building (South Pennsylvania Ave.)  
Jennings, KS

Antique Oak Wardrobe; End Tables; 1950's China Hutch; Boxes of Emergency Lights (recessed); Pine High Back Rocker; 16 ft. Walnut Conference Folding Table; 10 ft. Walnut Conference Table; 5 ft. Live Animal Cage; New Assorted Fed Ex Boxes; Compaq Computer & Others; Goldstar Color TV w/remote; RCA Magnavox TV w/remote; Sanyo TV (all TV working); 2 Timer Clocks (Acropoint); Pressure Cooker; C B Base & C B Equipment; Globe Heavy duty Meat Slicer; Kitchen Utensils & Pot/Pans; 3 Station Bunn Coffee Maker; Sharp AR-M237 Digital Imager (copier); 3 - 4 Drawer Fireproof File Cabinets; 3 - Conference Chairs; Assorted Office Equipment & Supplies; Dyna Star dual action 6 ft. Snow Skis; Round Glass Top Bar Table & stool; New Doors & Frames (interior); 2-Drawer File Cabinet; Laminate flooring (approx.) 20 Boxes; New Carpet & Padding; New Industrial Door Mats; 2-New Rolls Vinyl Flooring; 12 Tripp Internet Surge Protectors; HP Scanjet 8390 Scanner; New Molding; Telephone Equipment; Whirlpool Air conditioner; 2-Metal Shelving Cabinets; New Rolls Electrical Wiring; Boxes New Ceiling Lights; New Vanity Cabinet; Attic Ladder (New); New Window Shades; Assorted Floor Tile with grout; 2-Sets of Golf Clubs; Bus TV Monitors & Aircraft Equipment; Assorted PVC Pipe & plumbing equipment; Misc. Wood Shelving; 3-Washer & Dryer Sets; Mop Buckets & Mops; Scuba Equipment (suit, fins); 110 V. Air Conditioners; 9-New 315/80R22.5 Truck Tires; 1-315/12R22.5 Tire; 12 Ft. Gas powered cement skid; Industrial Strength Cement Saw; Power Cement Hand Saw; 2-Honeywell Electric Heaters; Scaffolding; Sears Electric Flattop range; Drop-leaf Table & Chairs; Oak file Cabinet; Oak Bookcase; Computer Desk; Sofa Recliner; TV Entertainment Center; 2 Metal File Cabinets; Kerosene Heater; Stereo/CD/Phonograph w/ Speakers; 1996 Oskosha Cement Mixer (L - 10 Cummins Motor, 9 Sp Transmission, 87,000 miles (no title)); Handy Power Washer (1000 Psi); 55 Gal. Shampoo (auto car wash); Power wise 3500 Generator; 2-Industrial Paint Guns (air powered); Sawdust Vacuum; 2-Excel 2500 Psi Power Washer; Windshield Stands; Yard Machine Mower 4.5; Metal Office Desks; Auto Matic Gate opener (new); Rubber Boots; Wood and Pipe Vises; Wood planes; Sanders (Air); 7 Piece Tool Kit; Tool Belts; Weber Gas Grill; Small Propane Bottles; 250 Gal. Propane Tank; Craftsman self-propel Mower; New Cabinet Doors; Diesel Powered Generator (on skids) (Model H R 5-CS, Model 400 FDC3043AA Cummins Engine, 240/416 V. . 346 Amps, 1540 Hours); Large Electrical Breaker Boxes; Robin 3300 Generator; 240/480 Transformer; Grizzly Combo Sander; J-Line Shop Band Saw; 20" Grizzly Shop Planes; Stow R-2000 Econo Roller Packer; Craftsman Jointer Model 11320621; 8" Grizzly Jointer Model G-1018; Rockwell Industrial Lathe w/tools; Cinder Blocks; Stanley Bench Grinder; 1990 Isuzu Trooper 4X4 (does not run); Whirlpool Side by Side Refrigerator w/water & ice dispenser; Comfort Glow Ventless Propane stove; Multi-Power Washer 6HP Motor (2750 Psi Propane Heated (Like New)); Poulan Chain Saw; Multi-Power Portable Air Compressor, Hose Reel/ Hose/ 61/2 HP; Haier 10,000 BTU Portable Air Conditioner 110V; New 8 ft. Counter Tops; Campbell Portable Air Compressor; North Star gas/diesel power washer, 16 hp Briggs, 3500 psi; Aux fuel tank JD tractor; Olson bandsaw; Marquis Gold 5500 Onan generator for motor home; Multi power washer - like new; I/C Quiet 14.5 ohv lawn mower engine; Floor Lamp; Office Chairs; Bookcase Desk; Assorted Art Work; Round Table; Power Flite Vacuum; Box Fan; Christmas Decorations; 16 ft. Christmas Tree; Fire Extinguisher.

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**Reservations:** Sale to highest and best bidder for cash in excess of \$1,800 per acre, with reservation to Seller of a non-participating royalty interest in 1/2 of the oil, gas and other minerals for a term of 10 years and so long thereafter as produced in commercial quantities

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