

Pulse processor caps success with top ABEX award

By Bruce Johnstone
Saskatchewan News Network

REGINA — For Murad Al-Katib and Saskcan Pulse Trading of Regina, the journey to become one of the world's leading processors and exporters of pulse crops has been fast and full of achievements.

Al-Katib and Saskcan capped off that three-year rocket ship ride by being named Saskatchewan Business of the Year for 2004 at the Achievement in Business Excellence (ABEX) awards in Regina Saturday night.

"It's been an amazing three years for our company, starting with a blank sheet of paper in July 2001 and writing Saskcan Pulse Trading on the top of the page, and thinking we could put togeth-

er one of the leaders in the world in the processing and export of pulse crops from Saskatchewan," Al-Katib said.

The native of Davidson, who was also named Prairie region Emerging Entrepreneur by Ernst & Young earlier this month, thanked the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, which created the ABEX awards, Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership (STEP), the province of Saskatchewan and his business partners, Arbel Pulse Grain Industry & Trade of Turkey.

He also thanked his family and his staff of close to 100 for "making the leap of faith to come and join my circus."

Following the ceremony, which saw Saskcan also win the STEP-sponsored ABEX award for exports, Al-Katib reflected on the importance of being rec-

ognized in your home province.

"This is special, to be recognized by your business community right here in Saskatchewan . . . We have a lot of potential that is not realized and recognized by the rest of the world. This is what this (award) is all about."

It was also a special evening for Jim Yuel of PIC Investment Group of Saskatoon, which was inducted into the Business Hall of Fame. In fact, Yuel was one of founders of the ABEX awards and helped select the first three inductees into the Hall of Fame in 1990.

"I never, for a second, thought that I'd be up here receiving one," Yuel said.

Formed 28 years ago, Prairie Industrial Chemicals started out as small chemical distribution company, which diversified into chemical manufacturing, pack-

aging, transport, import and export, as well as property management.

In the 12 years since the company was reorganized under the name PIC Investment Group, sales have grown to in excess of \$100 million.

One of the PIC Group companies, Adventure Destinations International of Saskatoon, which operates fishing camps in northern Saskatchewan, received the 2004 ABEX award for investment.

Another company to receive multiple awards last week was Ground Effects Environmental Services Inc. of Regina, which won the award for new Saskatchewan product and \$10,000 from the Saskatchewan Research Council's Technology-in-Action fund.

Sean Frisky, founder and president of Ground Effects, was also named

Saskatchewan's Young Entrepreneur of the Year for 2004 by Business Development Bank of Canada last week.

Other multiple award-winners were Triple 4 Advertising Ltd. of Moose Jaw, which won the ABEX award for marketing, and its subsidiary, Independent's Choice Distribution Ltd., also of Moose Jaw, which won the ABEX in the service industry category.

Other ABEX award winners were: Keystone Energy Inc. of Regina for new venture; Pavement Scientific International of Saskatoon for physical environment; Nipawin Credit Union for community involvement (sponsored by Canadian Bankers Association); and Malenfant Enterprises Ltd. of Prince Albert for job creation.

(REGINA LEADER-POST)



—SP Photo by Richard Marjan

Patti Trapp and son Shawn with Minnie, their surviving miniature American Eskimo dog

Antifreeze used to poison dog

By Silas Polkinghorne
of The StarPhoenix

A dog is dead after being poisoned with meat laced with antifreeze, the dog's owner says.

It's the first intentional dog poisoning with antifreeze in the past 20 years in Saskatoon, according to Barry Blakley, a toxicologist at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WVCM) at the U of S.

"I think it's the first one that I've ever seen like that," he said in an interview.

Whitney, an 11-year-old purebred miniature American Eskimo ate the poisoned meat about two weeks ago, said owner Patti Trapp.

Trapp said she woke up one night to find Whitney vomiting. She was having trouble walking and when she drank water, she vomited again. The Trapps took Whitney to the veterinarian and she had to be put down. "Her kidneys and everything were shut down," said Trapp.

Someone threw the meat into the family's fenced backyard, said Trapp, who feeds her dogs only dry dog food and doggie bones.

Sask. Research Council tests confirmed that there was antifreeze in the meat, Trapp said.

The Trapps' other dog, Minnie, a nine-year-old miniature American Eskimo, didn't eat as much of the meat as Whitney, but still spent several days in veterinary care, Trapp said.

"She's home now. But she's very depressed because her partner is gone," said Trapp. "Now I have a moper." Minnie has to be hand-fed, piece by piece, Trapp added.

"It's been tough," she said.

Trapp said the vet bill for both dogs has been over \$1,000 so far.

Blakley said a dog will exhibit signs of a hangover — vomiting, gastric upset, and general malaise — when it has ingested antifreeze, which is made up of about 70 per cent ethylene glycol.

When the ethylene glycol is metabolized, it forms oxalates, which combine with cal-

cium in the bloodstream and lodge in the kidneys, causing them to fail, said Blakley.

Blakley said an animal must be taken to the vet in the first six to 10 hours after ingesting antifreeze.

"It just destroys more and more of the kidneys as more and more is metabolized," he said.

Antifreeze has a sweet taste that animals like, Blakley said. Around this time of year — when people are changing their antifreeze — there are often several animals accidentally poisoned by the substance, he added.

Blakley said the Trapp's dog must have eaten at least half a kilogram of meat laced with ethylene glycol.

Six dogs were poisoned in Sept. by meat laced with strychnine. But Saskatoon city police spokesperson Insp. Jeff Bent said the antifreeze incident is isolated.

Blakley said he hasn't seen any more strychnine poisonings since six dogs were killed in September.

Committee considers hotel levy

By Rod Nickel
of The StarPhoenix

Hotel guests would pay for beefed-up tourism marketing under a plan in the works to raise room rates and visitor numbers. Tourism Saskatoon and the Saskatoon Hotels Association are discussing a marketing levy, which would be a voluntary surcharge added to rates. The revenue would pay for conference bids, trade show booths and advertising that the tourism agency couldn't otherwise afford.

"The benefits would be getting back in a competitive position with most other cities in Canada," said Todd Brandt, CEO of Tourism Saskatoon.

Toronto, Vancouver, Kelowna and Halifax are a few of the cities with dedicated hotel levies or taxes. Alberta has a provincewide hotel tax.

Tourism Saskatoon officials and hoteliers quietly formed a committee a year and a half ago to study the idea. The committee hasn't settled on an amount for the proposed levy, although it would likely be a percentage of room rates, rather than a fixed charge, said Delta Bessborough general manager Andrew Turnbull.

There are so many marketing opportunities Saskatoon is passing up it's hard to know where to begin spending a levy, Turnbull said. There's also a downside, however.

"There's always a fear when you increase prices that you could have a negative effect on people's purchasing patterns," he said. "But to compete, there needs to be funding."

Saskatoon Hotels Association president John Bevis said it's too early to say much about the idea.

"It might not even be a done deal," he said.

Conventions attracted more than \$13 million in visitor spending to Saskatoon in 2002, according to Statistics Canada. Hotels and other forms of accommodation collected the largest share — more than one-third — of that spending.

Brandt said the committee isn't considering extending the levy to other businesses that benefit from tourism, like restaurants.

Tourism Saskatoon operates on a \$1-million budget. More than half of that revenue comes from membership fees and contributions, with City of Saskatoon offering \$300,000 annually and Tourism Saskatchewan chipping in \$150,000.

The idea of charging Saskatoon hotel guests extra has come up once before, in a different form. In 1998, city council considered taxing hotel rooms to fund the Centennial Auditorium.

At that time, there were estimates that a flat \$1-per-room levy could raise more than \$500,000 a year.

Council defeated that idea due to concerns that the tax would hurt the hotel industry.

A marketing levy, unlike a tax, wouldn't involve government and that's critical to its early appeal, Turnbull said.

A tax could always end up funding a government's general revenues, he said.

“The benefits would be getting back in a competitive position with most other cities in Canada.”

— Todd Brandt,
Tourism Saskatoon CEO

Ghostly woman in white a little out of the normal

COMMENTARY

You've seen the place. You pass by it often, going along Idylwyld Drive near 33rd Street. It's the distinguished old building in front of the Harry Bailey Aquatic Centre with the heavy oak doors and the tall bay windows and the exterior of brick and Bedford stone.

The sign out front says it's the E.A. Davies Centre and in recent years it's been part of the Kelsey campus. In a previous life, and the building dates back to 1922, it was a teachers' training college. Normal School, it was called.

Normal then, spooky now.

"It's an interesting building," Warren Wood says.

Wood works the evening security shift there. He took a job as a commissioner after almost 25 years as a driver with city transit. He knows the stories which are told of the Davies building; of the typewriter which could be heard clacking in an office down the hall when it was after hours and the building was empty; of the carpet layer who was working late in the building one night, well past midnight, when he heard voices. He put down his tools and listened closer. "It was women laughing," the carpet layer said. "It sounded like a party."

Wood has heard all that and more. None compare to his own experience.



BOB FLORENCE

"I had just started here," he says, and this goes back almost five years. "I was doing my rounds. The building was dark. I go down to the basement, turn on the light. Near the end of the hall I see in woman in white."

"She's wearing a long white dress, like organza I'd say, with a high neck collar. She's a younger woman, probably in her 20s or 30s."

"Excuse me, ma'am," I say. She stands there for a moment.

"Ma'am?" She starts walking away. She turns left, where's it's solid wall. She walks right through.

"If you don't want to believe it, don't believe it."

Just know this, Wood says. He's not alone. Other people have seen her, too.

Bob Peacock, for one.

He was a commissioner at Kelsey before Wood. Peacock remembers a fall night several years ago. He was going over to the Davies building on a routine security check.

"It was a cold night, I remember that," he says. "I could see my breath."

"I saw a light on in the basement. Nobody is supposed to be in the school at that time. I went down to the basement. There she is at the end of hallway — the woman in white. I followed her. Where she made a left turn, I tried to make a left turn. It was brick."

"Gave me goose bumps. Gave me goose bumps all over."

"People who know me, believe me. I'm not a quack. I haven't seen UFOs or anything like that."

A woman who worked there had a close encounter of the mysterious kind.

"She saw her on the main floor," says someone familiar with the Davies building, who does not want to be identified. "She described her in intimate detail: Brown, shoulder-length hair; green eyes; the way she held her hands. She said her dress was like something out of the '20s."

"She said: 'I spoke to her, but there was no response. When she looked at me it was as if she looked through me or beyond me. I heard a sound outside and turned around. I thought someone else was coming. When I turned back, she was gone.'"

Gone, but not forgotten.

Seen, but also felt.

"Here at night, when it's quiet, you walk down

the hall and sometimes you get the feeling someone is behind you," Wood says.

"People say 'Aren't you scared?' There's nothing to be afraid of. She's not aggressive."

Still, it was enough to give the willies to a student who was in the kitchen at the Davies centre one Friday evening, there doing dishes alone.

"I just knew there was someone in the room," the student later told someone on staff at the building.

The student high-tailed it out of there. "I can finish these (dishes) Monday morning."

Or so the story goes.

There is another story.

They say that back in the day when the Davies centre was the Normal School, the custodian had to be around at all hours to keep the building's furnace fed with coal. He had a residence in the basement. His whole family lived there.

They say that four years ago, when there was a big reunion of Normal School students and staff, there was a woman in her 90s who took in the weekend festivities. She told the story of having dinner with the Normal School custodian and his family on several occasions, and this goes back to the 1930s.

She said back then the custodian's family told her they often saw something mysterious in the basement. It was a woman, they said. She wore white.