

A profile in determination

The Quick Draw Optical story

We live at a time when overseas manufacturing has become the norm, not the exception. We witness the highest-volume corporation in the world having relationship issues with their customers, employees and suppliers, yet they continue to grow and expand unimpeded, uninterrupted and unslowed.

In Cheyenne, even our subregional shopping mall has only nationally and regionally owned and operated tenants. Store managers have little say in the operation - they are only responsible for opening and closing their stores, see that it's staffed to some extent, and deposit daily receipts into temporary accounts until wire transfers can move the funds to corporate bank accounts in distant cities. If they keep the store clean, that's a plus. And the light bulbs changed.

Up and down Dell Range, the landscape is now almost exclusively national chain operations. There remains a handful of locally-owned businesses but they are more outnumbered yearly.

About the only thing local businesses make now is food. And they actually only "prepare" that - they don't make it.

Yet, in our midst is a local business that does more than offer products made in overseas sweatshops or beyond our borders where wages are thirty cents an hour and working conditions are deplorable - using child labor and violating all rules of human decency.

Quick Draw Optical has operated on Logan Avenue for more than two decades and many in Cheyenne may only know that they sell eyeglasses - based on the advertising they see from Quick Draw or from seeing their place of business from the outside driving down Logan Ave.

But, Quick Draw is one of a dying breed. They make something. They actually make something. They fabricate eyeglasses. Certified opticians on premises "make" something - not just offer products made in China for sale in the U.S.

Because they have their own lab, they can provide a novelty offered by American businesses in the past - customer service. Instead of waiting a week or two while your eyeglasses are made in another town and another state, Quick Draw can deliver prescription eyeglasses and sunglasses in a couple hours. You can have your finished eyeglasses from them before the envelope from Wal-Mart to their supplier gets to the local post office.

Jim Sutter has been an employee, manager or owner of Quick Draw Optical for 26 years. While at one time Quick Draw had outlets in other cities in the region, it has always been an independent operation - never a franchise.

Jim has seen the elimination of independent optical retail stores - his is the only one remaining in Cheyenne. Optometrists now sell eyeglasses as an adjunct to the exams they perform but specialty optical-only shops are gone. Others also, of course, sell and fit contact lenses.

Pearle Vision in the Mall did have a lab but it has been removed. As a specialist, it is difficult to find and retain employees - as it's become for a number of businesses in Cheyenne. People can learn on the job in this profession but you have to have the interest both for the technical part of the work and customer interaction. Because of his lab, Quick Draw is able to make repairs which are unlikely in chain outlets. Helping those who cannot buy new eyeglasses but need theirs repaired or adjusted provides that measure of satisfaction other jobs cannot - or do not.

The American Board of Opticians certifies those like Jim and others who work in his lab on premises. Continuing education is required to stay informed and knowledgeable with the new materials used for eyeglasses and frames.

Quick Draw Optical's "niche" might be considered to be speed. Turnaround. Eyeglasses are produced in a couple hours, unlike competitors who need days or weeks. While other retailers can fill orders for customers, one as experienced in the field as Jim Sutter can determine what best fills the needs of a patient by listening. In 26 years, he has probably faced every challenge, every concern and every demand a customer could have.

Quick Draw Optical also sells sunglasses and offers name-brand frames. Evolution in eyeglasses has gone from prescriptions of plastic eyeglasses of "Coke bottle" thickness to ultrathin no-line bifocals in plastic and composites. Glass is still preferred by some wearers because it does not scratch as easily as other materials.

American consumers often choose to do business with companies they have no use for because their products are cheaper. Vision isn't something that should be treated at the lowest price. Quick Draw Optical is an independent optical shop and lab succeeding against the multi-billion dollar chain operators.

There's a reason for that. Check 'em out.

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Judge Grant does know how to impose prison sentences for violent crimes - even those that did not occur

Watching justice being meted out belongs with watching sausage and law being made. Unless you have a very strong stomach, you may want to avoid all three.

I've written on these pages of the case in which one brother killed another by repeatedly striking him with an "axle" - a 3' long, 1" diameter bar with a gear attached to one end. He struck his much larger brother, whom he supposedly feared yet with whom he spent the night drinking and "getting loaded," hard enough and often enough to damage the deceased larynx and lacerate his liver and spleen.

In that case, initial Second Degree Murder charges were reduced to Manslaughter and while the victim will spend eternity in restful slumber in a local cemetery, the axle swinger was given a probation-only sentence. No prison time.

It is the opinion of the Cheyenne Herald that leniency was granted more on church ties than extenuating circumstances. Judge Ed Grant does not have a reputation for letting violent criminals walk. He was once quoted as saying that "justice requires some length of incarceration" for a crime not as brutal as this one for which he granted a probation-only sentence. What changed?

Interestingly, at about the same time this judge was showing such leniency, the Wyoming Supreme Court handed down an affirmation of sentencing from another case.

In a May 11, 2007 ruling on an appeal by one Ricky Ewing, Chief Justice Barton Voigt wrote the unanimous opinion of the Court that Judge Ed Grant had not committed "reversible error" by not giving a jury instruction that included a definition of the meaning of the word "drawn" as it applied in this case and the jury's verdict was affirmed, making Judge Grant's sentencing affirmed as well.

Recall that in the axle case, this same Judge Grant accepted a plea agreement that Jon Forwood had said was not going to happen and as a result of the plea arrangement, struck after the 2006 election, a murderer -

a cold and callous murderer - who slept and talked on his cell phone while his injured younger brother lay in the driveway dying - did no prison time.

Same judge. Different case ...

In the Ewing case, the perp committed no violent act against anyone. He holed up in a shed behind the house in which he had been living and may have verbally threatened to kill any law enforcement officer who came into the shed to apprehend him. In the shed with him was a rifle - a rifle which no one knew for sure that he handled while making his threat. He asked that the definition of "drawn" be provided to the jury because there was no evidence he had drawn that rifle - by the common definition of having the gun in his hands - while in the windowless shed.

A sheriff's deputy testified Ewing said he'd shoot them if they entered - Ewing claimed he had said he'd shoot himself in the head if they entered. He was found guilty of interference with a peace officer (for not coming out) and aggravated assault (for his threat(s)). He was sentenced to 4 1/2 - 6 years. He shot no one. He hit no one with an axle. He just shouted.



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