

# Rebuilding

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Atwood said. "Probably [we will] do some of the repairs and put the building up for sale once the new roof is on or maybe just lease it."

Atwood said the building still needs painting, and new carpet had to be torn out after being tracked with soot.

The roof caught fire on her building and broke through. She does not believe the roof will require removal to the underlying deck - plans are to install a membrane-type roof. City officials told her the outside wall remained in good condition.

"Once fixed, we will also take advantage of the grant money the bank has offered," Atwood said. "Once we notify all the bidders that we accept their bids, the building should come together rather quickly."

Brenda Dorr, Burlingame's mayor, was impressed with the fire departments involved with battling the blaze, as well as the citizens of Burlingame. It has helped ease the pain she was feeling from the destruction caused to her bakery and sandwich shop, Aunt B's.

In the early days after the fire, Dorr said, "No matter what the outcome of this fire is, I will rebuild and come back."

Dorr's goal was to save the old building. "You can't replace the ambiance of an old building," she said, "and I managed to do that. I am rather proud of that. It feels good to be back home again," Dorr said.

A year after the fire, on April 4, she held a grand reopening of Aunt B's, a standing room only event.

Two items saved from the fire that meant most to her were her recipes and her grandmother's rocking chair.

## A Helping Hand

The day after the fire, Burlingame City Administrator Flip Hutfles began searching for ways the city could help businesses affected by the fire.

"It was an unfortunate event to our downtown area, and I looked to see if there was any funding out there to help these businesses," he said. "We needed to let these business know the city was there for them."

Hutfles asked city council members to approve utility relief for the affected business, which they did.

Hutfles, together with First State Bank, applied for grants to help the businesses.

"This grant money was to help the businesses with a little income to offset some of the fire damage, to help pay for some of the insurance deductibles," Hutfles said.

John Fowler, First State Bank president, said, "The bank applied for a \$25,000 grant and then contributed an additional \$5,000



Wayne White/Herald-Chronicle

This quilt, made by Ruth Powers, of Carbondale, was inspired by a photograph taken by the fire department as they battled the blaze that destroyed a building along Santa Fe Ave. in Burlingame. It was machine pieced and machine quilted.

for a total of \$30,000. The city and bank went together to take applications from people who were affected by the fire and people who applied were awarded their full request."

Grants were awarded as reimbursement for expenses incurred during restoring buildings and reopening businesses.

LeRoy Romine, who owned the building destroyed in the fire, said he had no plans to rebuild at this time. The city demolished the building and the empty lot remains.

## Reflecting

Burlingame Fire Chief Jim Strohm spoke about the actions of his fire department the night of the ominous blaze. "Everything we had planned for in past years took place that night, and our planning paid off," he said. "We always hope that you never have a fire of that magnitude, but if it happens, you want to be prepared."

Strohm said due to a good working

relationship with business owners, the fire department had knowledge of the floor plans in many of the buildings downtown. This type of training helped firefighters prevent the fire from burning the city block that night.

"We knew where to go in the connecting buildings, and where weak spots were, so we could fight the fire from those vantage points and hopefully prevent any further damage to surrounding buildings," he said.

Excellent cooperation from neighboring fire departments was also key in preventing further destruction. These county fire departments train together, have formed an association and even do some planning together, Strohm explained.

"That night went like clockwork and helped to make it a simple fire because of all the help," Strohm said. "Osage City and their aerial truck ... surrounding cities not hesitating to send help immediately after the fire call was sent out."

The city's new water system, including a new water tower had just been installed, but the fire department put a call out for area fire departments to bring water.

"We were not sure about the new water system because we hadn't had a chance to test it yet, so to be safe, we called for water back-up," Strohm said. "But we had a miracle that night and the new water system did everything we expected it should do."

"We have a good, planned fire department," he said. "The only thing different that could help is always bigger and better equipment, and grants are always being written for that."

Fire was able to damage and destroy buildings, but not the spirit of the community.

"We are stronger," Dorr said. "Burlingame citizens proved that night and since, what they can do, and we will continue to show how strong of a town Burlingame is and will be."

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