

*He Is Touring City Operation; Eyes Budget and Search for New City Treasurer*

## New City Manager Gives 'Initial Observations' of City



Mark Roath

Mark Roath, McAlester's new city manager last week gave us his "initial observations," in his first talk in McAlester.

McAlester has "the good fortune of a strong historic past and is "known nationally," Roath said. "Second, McAlester has people that truly care about the community," and they are not just citizens, but (city) employees as well, he said.

"Third, McAlester is uniquely situated in the state, which allows it to offer" a "wonderful quality of life," with its lakes, its hills and the Wellness Center, he said, in adding information to his prepared speech. This last factor is a "big issue," he said.

Roath related that since his employment on Feb. 26th, he has "attended two council meetings" and has "met individually with a majority of the City Council." He added he has held a staff meeting with senior management, has "toured the city hall and has begun tours of "city operations, which I will complete by early next week."

The new city official said "in the short term," he will begin preparing the annual operating budget for the next fiscal year, and "will spearhead a new search for a city treasurer (or finance director.)"

An earlier search for a city treasurer "was too limited, which resulted in only seven candidates for the position," he stated. "I feel we can do better."

Roath said he also will "be involved with the city council in collective bargaining" with city Fire and Police Unions.

The new city manager said he was born in Dallas, but lived most of his youth in Montana, after his parents separated when he was in the fourth grade. His mother had been born in Canada, but they had moved to Montana, so they moved there.

His mother was city clerk in Shelby, Montana. During high school, he worked for the city's Public Works Department. After graduation, he enrolled at the University of Montana and majored in Political Science.

Upon graduation, he returned to his hometown and took a job as a police officer. He worked the 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift, which meant that he had to "clear the bars at closing," and run a check on out of state vehicles.

Before the end of his first year in law enforcement, he was accepted into the Peace Corps.

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*Mission: To Align the People, Knowledge, Skills and Opportunities (For) Economic Prosperity*

## Technology Center Trained 27,000 People in Past Year

Kent Towne told us two weeks ago, how much the Kiamichi Technology Centers, (the former vo-tech schools) had helped this area.

Kent, the Business and Industry Services Coordinator at Kiamichi Tech, said the school system has served 581 companies and has trained 27,000 people in the past year.

Kiamichi Tech has acquired \$600,000 in what is called TIP Funding for this area. It has acquired \$94,000 for existing industry, and its work has helped create from 600 to 650 new jobs, in Fiscal Year 2006, he said.

In addition, the school has helped 180 companies, by teaching 1,062 safety and health classes to 13,308 employees of their companies.

The system in 13 area counties helped companies in that area get more than \$2.6 million in government contracts in Fiscal Year 2006.

It was first in the state in safety and health training, Towne said, and fourth, behind Tulsa, Oklahoma City and the Moore-Norman

technology areas in career training.

The Technology Center official showed statements outlining the schools' specific help from Spirit AeroSystems, Simonton Windows, Franklin Electric, JE Systems, Inc. at Pocola, and McCurtain Manor Nursing Home at Idabel.

Towne said the Career Tech mission is to align people, knowledge, skills, and opportunities for business and industry. It's one purpose is economic prosperity, he said.

Fifty percent of Oklahoma's high school students are enrolled in Career Tech classes, he noted.



Kent Towne

# High School Is Trying To Preserve 'Historical Minutes'

Coy Richards, Television Production instructor at McAlester High School, told us Feb. 20 that his department is looking for persons who can tell about the history of this area.

Coy showed some of the first "Historical Minutes" that he is making, using the high school equipment and TV training.

The equipment is "better than you will find anywhere else in Oklahoma," the TV instructor said. His class uses Channel 16 on the Allegiance Communications' cable. It shows sports and school board meetings, as well as various interviews, and the new "Historical Minutes."

One of the "Minutes" is about the Jay G. Puterbaugh house, which now is the location for the McAlester Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture offices.

Richards said the home was built in 1902. It later became the Puterbaugh Gardens and location of various performing musical entertainment.

Another film short is about the first railroad tracks being layed in this area in 1870. The work was finished two years later.

Coy said he remembered the street car tracks in the downtown area

and out to Seneca Street, where it turned.

"We're looking for people who were born here," who know about the early days, he said.

The TV Program at the high school has grown, over seven years. But it still takes about an hour's work for each minute of filming, he said.

"We're going to try to restructure some things," Richards said about the course.

Some of the TV Department graduates have gone on to O.U. and Oklahoma State, to continue their studies. A few have gone "straight to the workforce," he noted.

Newsman Tom Brokaw was in this area filming. His production crew said that students using this equipment, can "go to work" with their experience.



Coy Richards Shows his athletic ability

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He turned down his first offer, of serving in a tuberculosis center in South Korea, for agricultural work in Costa Rica.

He said he was flown to New Orleans, to receive shots and complete paperwork. Then he and 24 single men and one married couple were taken to the airport in the evening. They boarded a plane for the Panama Canal, arriving about midnight.

Then they boarded a second plane for San Jose, Costa Rica, arriving about 7 a.m.

They were met by the U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica, who welcomed them. From there they went by bus on a five-hour trip to Liberia, Guanacaste, Costa Rica.

They were dropped off, one by one, with families they were to live with for the next three months. The Peace Corps paid the families 100 "colones," or just under \$10 a week.

The family had nine children including a married son, his wife and infant child, in a two room house.

The kitchen area was attached to the outside of the house and the house had an outside bathroom.

Roath lived in an enclosed porch.

His primary job was to train small farmers on planting cow peas, which the government wanted to introduce into the Costa Rican diet, to supplement their food supply.

Roath met his wife, Zeneida, there and they have been married for 32 years. They have two daughters who are married with

children of their own.

When he completed his time in the Peace Corps, Roath returned and enrolled in Ohio University. He was graduated with a Masters of Arts Degree in political science, with an emphasis on Public Administration.

His first job after graduation was as a Community Development specialist with the city of Marietta, Ohio. Later he took a position as Community Development Director in Ironton, Ohio.

While he was still in his probationary period, the city manager was fired and he was named the interim city manager. After that, he obtained his first fulltime position of City Manager, at New Carlisle, Ohio, near Dayton.

In 1985, while working as city manager at Copperas Cove, Texas, the city attorney's partner told him about a night program for a Law Degree at the University of Tulsa. He decided to apply and was admitted.

In 1988 he graduated from Tulsa University. He interviewed for two jobs. One was for Regional Solicitor for the Department of Interior. "The other was with the city of Coweta. The Coweta offer came a week before the other, however he maintained his license to practice law.

"Over my 23-year management career, I have managed very diverse communities," the speaker said, "such as predominantly agriculture, Hispanic, manufacturing, military, railroad, residential and university-oriented, which should be of some benefit" here, he said.

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## Attendance, Visitors, and Handshakers

Attendance at last week's meeting was 46. The previous week it was 45. Mark Roath was a visitor the first time and a speaker the second.

On Feb. 20, we had 42 and no visitors.

HANDSHAKERS-The bankers still control the laundered dollars.

Evans McBride passed the dollar to Phil Brenner on Feb. 20. Tim Whipps gave it to Doug Auld in a neighborhood deal on Feb. 27. And Noble Miller gave it to Greg McNall last week, so it can start all over again.