

Tuttle Community 'Pitches In'

[By Rosemarie Birrenkott]

On July 19th L & J Super Valu Grocery in Tuttle reopened. It was a community project and with that project, Tuttle showed what makes small town America special.

A fire, caused by faulty wiring, nearly gutted the grocery store in Tuttle on June 8. "Ten more minutes and the whole place would have been gone," Lloyd Seilinger said. He and his wife Jan own and operate the grocery.

At 4:00 a.m. June 8, two young fellows from Tuttle were driving through town and saw steam emanating from the roof of the store. It was raining very hard. They stopped their car and when they got out, smelled smoke. One turned in the alarm while the other went to alert the Seilingers.

"It was so depressing," Jan Seilinger remarked. "insurance would not cover the replacement." "Guess one just never realizes until it happens." Lloyd added, "you just never realize."

The fire caused extensive smoke and

heat damage. Even the telephone and clocks melted in the blaze. Salvage crews came from Minnesota to move things out. All that remained were two coolers and two freezers which could be fixed. Then the town of Tuttle came to console, and ask what could be done. They rolled up their shirt sleeves and pitched in to clean and scrub down. Teams of 15 - 20 people came at a time. New ceilings and walls went in. Shelves and counters were built. Women fixed lunches. Business places not able to offer manual labor bought crews dinner. Nothing was organized, people just came with hammers, saws, brushes, lots of muscle and cheerful comradery. "I think every person in Tuttle either called or was there to help," Seilinger said. "They were so generous, so supportive. One can't express how we feel towards these people, this community." People from surrounding communities called to express their thoughtfulness or to offer help as well.

The Seilingers moved to Tuttle four

years ago after buying the store from Armin Morlock. Jan had been working at Bismarck Super Valu Warehouse; Lloyd with the Bureau of Prisons. "It's Jan that really runs the place," Seilinger said, "she's been in groceries most of her life."

Jan was reared in Mercer where her parents own and operate a resort grocery-bar at Bush Lake. Lloyd grew up in Wing.

The grocery store was built in 1912 by Jake and Henry Kremenetsky. The building was added on to over the years and is now 24 x 120 ft. Besides groceries the Kremenetskys sold clothing, hardware and even had a Chevy dealership. The store was later sold and operated by Clifford Riskedahl.

With mobility to larger cities, small town businesses often hang by a shoe string and if disaster strikes die. In Tuttle, if these past six weeks are any indication, a generous community spirit should keep their town alive.