

Saying goodbye to Wood River's oldest business

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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WOOD RIVER - After nearly a century in business, **Wood River Hardware** is shutting its doors.

Business owner **Keith Tite**, 59, said he has worked at the store, located at **26 E Ferguson Ave**, for 45 years. He said he began working there when he was 12. He attained it from the estate of his father, **Billy Joe Tite**, in 1995. Since then, he has worked more than 40 hours a week, sometimes six or seven days in a row. He said that

lifestyle was not one his children would enjoy, so he has decided to retire and leave the business behind.

"More or less, it's time for me to retire," Keith Tite said. "The business isn't what it used to be before the refineries left. We used to have four refineries here, now we have one."

He said the business is hosting a sale currently, marking items anywhere between 10-50 percent below regular cost. After those items sell out, Keith Tite said he will put the building for sale and pursue the dream of only the luckiest American retirees - he is going to move to Las Vegas with his girlfriend into her nice condo, so he can play golf whenever he wants.

"It's time for me to do something different," he said. "After 45 years, I think I'm due for a new chapter in my life. The last time I had a vacation outside of a day or two off or a holiday was probably about 15 years ago."

When asked why he would not continue passing the business through his family, Keith Tite said he sent his children through college and they all currently have good jobs, meaning they would not enjoy the long hours of the hardware business. He also said the future of the business would be less than guaranteed, given the lack of large commercial businesses, such as the refineries, in Wood River.

"This is probably the oldest business in Wood River," he said. "It's been here since the refineries came here."

Wood River Hardware has four employees besides Keith Tite. It also has a long list of regulars who came in all the time. Keith Tite said he would miss them and the **City of Wood River**, but added he would split his time between home and Las Vegas.

"All of my friends are here, but most of them are retired already," he said. "All my family is in this area too. I'm going to miss my customers."

Wood River Mayor Frank Akers described the departure of Wood River Hardware as a "difficult circumstance."

"It's always a difficult circumstance when a business closes, especially when it's been a family-owned business for so long," he said. "We're saddened by that, but we wish the Tite Family the best in any endeavors they may have, and we thank them for their years of service."

Akers said 2016 was pretty much "par for the course" in Wood River. He said as many as 20 businesses come to his city every year, and some of them do not last. He said 2016 was no exception.

Sales tax, however, is Wood River's largest source of revenue for the city. He said as much as \$4.8 million a year is generated through a combination of large businesses such as **Wal-Mart** and new car dealerships and small family-owned businesses such as Wood River Hardware.

"Wal-Mart and new car dealerships carry the bulk of that," Akers said. "When other businesses are here, though, there's some momentum from that. When people come here to shop, they're more likely to eat here, buy a car here, hang around here and maybe even buy a house. We always try to work with potential businesses."