



No Agreement to Keep Century Aluminum S.C. Smelter Open

(AP) — There is still no agreement to keep Century Aluminum's smelter in Goose Creek, South Carolina operating with its 600 jobs, despite the pleas of workers.

The board of the state-owned utility Santee Cooper voted Nov. 30 to reject the company's latest proposal, local media outlets reported.

Century has been buying most of its power from an out-of-state provider with Santee Cooper providing the rest and transmitting the power to the plant.

Century wants to buy all its power from another provider and pay Santee Cooper for transmitting it.

About 30 employees listened in disbelief as Santee Cooper's board voted against the plan to allow the company to find an energy source from somewhere else.

Thirteen-year Century Aluminum employee Valerie Taylor pleaded with Santee Cooper president Lonnie Carter to find another option.

"I am very much worried about my job," Taylor said. "I have five children. I am the breadwinner of my family."

Santee Cooper has said it cannot agree to a rate that would increase costs for other industrial customers. The company has said without a new agreement, the smelter will close by the end of the year.

The plant extracts aluminum metal from aluminum oxide by using large amounts of electricity.

Royal Dutch Shell to Close Pittsburgh-Area Office

(AP) — Royal Dutch Shell is closing an office near Pittsburgh next summer, but that won't affect a pending decision on whether to build a major petrochemical plant in western Pennsylvania.

Shell Spokeswoman Kimberly Windon told the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review that most of the 180 workers at its Franklin Park office who are involved in gas and oil drilling will be moved to Houston, the company's U.S. headquarters.

Asked whether any of the workers will lose their jobs, Windon said, "Employee retention is key to our success and we remain committed to developing our people."

She also said the decision won't affect ongoing efforts to redevelop a former zinc plant for possible use as a petrochemical cracker plant in Potter Township.

Shell hasn't formally committed to the Beaver County project, but has spent millions on the site.

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When Opportunity Knocked, Kanawha Stone Answered

By LINDA HARRIS

lharris@statejournal.com

Kanawha Stone president Tom Kittredge figures Gerardo Rivera deserves at least some of the credit for changing his life.

Kittredge was working his way up the ladder at the family owned and operated company 35 years ago when Rivera, then an aspiring journalist, did a story for ABC's "20/20" news magazine on Mingo County's Tank Rock and the threat it posed to a mobile home community in a ravine far below.

People took notice, Kittredge recalls.

"After his story ran we got a call from the Office of Surface Mining; they said they'd (heard) we did specialty blasting," Kittredge said.

OSM needed to get rid of the rock without fragments showering down on residents and had asked DuPont, the chemical giant, to suggest contractors capable of getting the job done. Neighboring Kanawha Stone made the company's short list based on its handling of calcium sulfate extraction from holding ponds on its property.

As Kittredge tells it, Kanawha Stone, founded in 1973, excavated the calcium sulfate for use as road base, but it quickly became "increasingly evident that merely excavating rock from ponds and crushing it would not provide an adequate supply of stone to meet future demands."

Kanawha Stone, however, was surrounded by chemical plants and traditional blasting wasn't an option, so the company began using scientific blasting — also known as controlled blasting — to extract the calcium sulfate it needed without triggering a disaster.

In those days mine reclamation was a new field and few companies were in a position to take on the challenge. But in 1980, when OSM called, Kanawha Stone was ready.

"As with many new industries, reclamation at the time required small companies willing to take risks," he wrote in a 1997 history of the company. "Kanawha Stone fit the bill. The Tank Rock job proved to be a foot in the door, as many OSM jobs followed in the next few years."

Foot in the door or not, the job was risky. The terrain was so steep and rugged that drills for the blasting holes had to be air-lifted by helicopter to the top of Tank Rock. Every morning a Kanawha Stone employee would hike two hours to the top of the mountain, he said, and every evening the same employee would hike the two hours back to the bottom.

Kittredge's stepfather, Kanawha Stone co-founder Art King, used the firm's Tank Rock success to expand its capabilities as well as its manpower. When mine reclamation projects dwindled, he steered the company into road construction, landing as its first job in that arena the contract for the



Photo courtesy of Kanawha Stone

Kanawha Stone and its subsidiary Terradon Corp. are involved in many infrastructure projects throughout the region including the construction of the Interstate 64/Route 35 interchange in Putnam County.

Capon Bridge in the Eastern Panhandle. Then, when torrential rains led to widespread flooding that devastated Pendleton and surrounding counties in 1985, by luck he managed to land the biggest contract.

The widespread damage prompted state officials to abandon the bid process "and dole out jobs to all the contractors with equipment in the region," Kittredge said. When one of the survey crews sent out to assess damage in Pendleton County was slow to return, they'd construed it as a sign problems there weren't that bad and assigned the emergency repairs to the smallest of the contractors, Kanawha Stone. The damage, though, was so severe the survey crew had needed extra time to do its assessment and instead of being the least significant contract it was, in fact, the most extensive. After winning the contract the other companies had thought was insignificant, Kanawha Stone was able in just three weeks to triple in size and generate \$1.9 million in sales, more than they'd done in all of 1984.

"It propelled us to the big leagues," Kittredge said. "It got us building roads, and then about six years ago we got into the bridge market."

After that came the energy

sector: Kanawha Stone launched its energy services division in 2008 and was "one of the first to do Marcellus work."

"I think the first well was drilled around then," he said. "We saw (it) as an opportunity to use our existing construction skill sets — mass excavation and grading work."

Energy companies needed flat land to drill well pads, access roads, water impoundments.

"All of those were things we'd done before," Kittredge said. "We'd built dams, roads and pads for retail developments, and we saw they had the same needs as our other customers had so we made a conscientious decision to start the energy services division."

"Now, we've done more than 300 projects in the Marcellus and Utica in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia."

Energy, Kittredge points out, is essential to the West Virginia economy. He said his company has been "very fortunate" to earn the opportunity to work for energy and natural gas companies throughout the region, and is currently working with Antero Resources, which is building a \$275 million state-of-the-art water treatment facility in Doddridge County.

"We're particularly proud to be working on that project," Kit-

tredge said. "It's really a world class, state-of-the-art water treatment facility with huge environmental and economic benefits for that part of the state. There will be multiple contractors that work on that job, we're sort of the first in — we'll cut the road to the site, flatten the grade out and get it ready for folks to come in and build the facility on top of what we've done. Think of it as a pyramid — you have to have a solid foundation if you're building a pyramid. We're the first tier of the pyramid, so our work has to be flawless. Other contractors will come in after us (and add to it)."

The facility, as announced, will allow Antero to treat and reuse flowback and produce water rather than permanently dispose of the water in injection wells. When done it's expected to save the company about \$150,000 per well on future completion costs and eliminate 10 million miles annually of truck travel on local roads. Once operational, Antero figures more than 90 percent of the water it needs for its operations will have been treated at the facility.

"Instead of being injected into the ground it will be treated on site and then used again, so they're not pulling water out of streams or anything," Kittredge said.

Kittredge said the facility "will play an important role in achieving important environmental goals, further reducing truck travel as well as reliance on local water sources, and all but eliminating the need for underground injection wells for wastewater disposal." He credits Antero for its willingness to work with local contractors whenever possible, saying the "company and its demonstrated leadership is making a positive difference for our region."

"Our strategic plan outlines a continued presence in oil and gas, it's our country's path to oil independence," Kittredge said. "We're proud to be part of that."

Kittredge credits Kanawha Stone's growth over its first four decades to the family's willingness to adapt to changing markets and opportunities. His mother, Virginia, had joined her husband at Kanawha Stone in 1978, just five years after it opened. They started an engineering services division, Terradon Corp., more than 25 years ago.

Located in Poca, near Charleston, Kanawha Stone has operations in Elkins and Clarksburg as well as Luray, Virginia, and Charlotte, North Carolina. While the Kings remain at the forefront of the company's operations, Kittredge and his sisters, Ashley Lioi and Amelia King Randolph, have assumed daily leadership roles. Lioi and Randolph are project engineers.

"I'm incredibly proud of our organization and the people," Kittredge said. "I look around every day and I'm amazed at the quality of people and the organization's commitments to making sure projects are done right."