

# Company Celebrates 100-year anniversary

Saturday, August 13, 2005



RF Buche, president of the Wagner-based G.F. Buche Co. grocery and convenience stores, is shown next to store ads from 1938 and an antique cash register that was used at the G. F. Buche Co. store on 405 N. Main St. in Mitchell that closed in 1987.

**By Seth Tupper, The Daily Republic**

**WAGNER -** For people in the G.F. Buche Co., anniversaries are a big deal.

Since the Wagner-based company was founded in 1905, company leaders have celebrated each passing year with bigger and better customer giveaways at their grocery and convenience stores. Prizes have included free groceries, pickup trucks and even a Shetland pony.

So, when current company President R.F. Buche began thinking about this year's 100th anniversary celebration, he knew it had to be big.

"That has been ingrained in me," he said. "We take a lot of pride in the G.F. Buche Company lasting as long as it has."

Here's what he settled on: Three red convertibles will be given away Nov. 5. Anyone can enter, but only 100 entries will be picked at random and placed in the final pot. The names of the 100 entrants will be posted, and they must be present at the final drawings in order to win. The drawings will be conducted at Wagner, Gregory and Mission, with one car to be given away at each location.

Each of the locations is the site of a Buche's grocery store. The company also has convenience stores, known as "Gus Stops," at Mission, White River and Lake Andes.

The Gus Stops are named for company founder Gus Francis "G.F." Buche, who moved from Wisconsin to Lake Andes to manage a general store during the early 1900s. A few months after he arrived, he bought the store and started the G.F. Buche Co.

The company expanded to 22 stores throughout the region, but many of the stores fell victim to bank closures during the Great Depression. The company operated a store in Mitchell from 1938 to 1987.

Leadership of the company passed from Gus to his son, Robert Sr., from Robert Sr. to his son, Robert Jr., and from Robert Jr. to his son, R.F.

R.F. will kick off the 100th anniversary celebration with "Centennial Memory" nights Aug. 18 at Wagner and Aug. 25 at Gregory. He has collected old photographs, advertisements and other memorabilia from the company's past to display at each location. The events will be open to the public, with special invitations for relatives and past or present G.F. Buche Co. employees.

During the next 100 years, R.F. said, the company plans to expand. With Wal-Mart dominating much of the grocery store market, he is leaning more toward convenience stores.

Whatever the company's future holds, R.F. hopes somebody named "Buche" will be at the helm.

"I certainly have dreams of that being the case," he said. "I can only hope that one of my grandchildren or great-grandchildren will be as proud of me as I am of the three generations before me. I feel very fortunate to be involved with this company."