



By Jim Reber

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Jim Reber (left) greets Gary Crum, Wyoming State Bank president and CEO.



3,000 and Counting!

Wyoming State Bank is ICBA Securities' 3,000th customer

It seems like just yesterday that ICBA Securities transacted business with its 2,000th customer. Actually it was 2001, and I was one of the 120-odd sales reps in the broker/dealer's stable. I remember the event well, as one of my own community bank customers was number 2,000.

Twelve years prior to that, about 300 ICBA members thought enough of their trade association to buy a bond from its newly hatched institutional broker/dealer in the first 60 days of our existence and were designated Charter Customers. This month ICBA Securities celebrates its newest milestone by profiling the community bank that is its 3,000th active account, Wyoming State Bank in Laramie.

Meet the Banker

Gary Crum is president and CEO of Wyoming State Bank, a \$140 million-asset bank that opened for business in September 2006. The community bank acquired Western Bank of Cheyenne in October 2007, which created a tailwind in expanding its footprint. In fact, Wyoming State Bank was profitable by its 11th month, reported net earnings for the entire year of 2008 and continues to be profitable in 2009.

Crum has been in the business for more than a few years. Many

community bank executives started at the teller window; he began his career as the night janitor at a community bank in Rawlins, Wyo. After college, he worked his way up through the ranks, spending a total of 26 years at a large regional bank and a large community-based organization. Four years ago he decided to be involved in a newly chartered bank.

His contacts in the Laramie business community led him to a group of investors who would become founding directors of Wyoming State Bank. Crum created many of the bank's organizational documents from the basement of his house. Only five months elapsed between those initial investor discussions and the granting of the bank's charter.

He also has a weekend job, at least in the fall. He referees college football at the very highest levels, and this season he will work games in several NCAA Division I conferences. He has also officiated a number of New Year's Day bowl games.

In recognition of his involvement in the community, Crum was named Laramie's 2009 Business Person of the Year, which he considers a tribute to the entire team at the bank. The Laramie Economic Development Corp., in bestowing the award, commented that "Gary epitomizes the very criteria which were used to select the winner," including "contributions to the community through investment, benevolent support and participation in economic development programs."

The Bank's Trajectory

Wyoming State Bank is community based in many ways. For one, it is owned by 173 shareholders, virtually all of whom are located in Laramie or Cheyenne. In the president's words, "we're a community-owned business bank." For another, its lending activity is almost entirely in those markets, which has proven to be a wise business move (more on that to follow). For still another, it gathers its deposits the old-

fashioned way—no brokered deposits.

Growth for growth's sake is not on the agenda for Wyoming State Bank's management team or shareholders. Originally, its seven-year plan was to be a \$400 million-asset community bank. As the economy has changed, so have the bank's goals.

"If we don't get there in 10 years, fine with me," he says. "We're very fortunate to be in Laramie and Cheyenne, which are both very stable communities." Earnings prospects "all revolve around us having really solid credit," says Crum. "We have only one loan more than 30 days past due."

Shareholders are being very patient as well, and they're being rewarded. The bank's stock price has appreciated nicely since its original offering in 2006. Crum says he has a waiting list of individuals who are very interested in becoming shareholders as soon as more stock becomes available.

Investment Portfolio Role

As is typical for new community banks, the investment portfolio took a back seat to lending at first. Eventually, however, it became necessary to incorporate bonds into the balance sheet. That's where ICBA Securities and Wyoming State Bank intersected.

"My impression was that ICBA Securities was a quality organization," Crum says. "I understood from talking to other bankers that they had a solid background and that their customers stuck with them." As for the ICBA Securities sales representatives, "I've never felt like they were just sales guys. If we need a report or an analysis, they get it in our hands quickly. And they're fully capable of explaining to us what the reports mean."

In keeping with the rest of its balance sheet, the bank's investment portfolio has remained pretty simple. The focus is on safety and liquidity first and on yield secondarily. Initially the majority of its investments were jumbo CDs, and now the bank has begun to build a government-agency ladder.

Well Staffed

Crum's associates include board chairman Randall Dancliff, senior lender Dan Hilgenkamp, cashier Kathy Hulle, compliance officer Christine Trumbull, operations officer Tim Michelena and investment officer Randy Welniak. Each person had previous experience working for financial institutions.

Says Crum, "Our mission statement says that we want to be the best community bank in the nation. Hospitality is a big part of that mission. We want our customers to feel like they're at a well-run hotel."

Congratulations to Wyoming State Bank. I look forward to profiling our 4,000th customer. 