

Kafkas lose garage in fire

Written by Chris Lee



The suburban that was parked inside Dan and Shonna Kafka's garage that burned down early Thursday morning, Dec. 16 was a total loss. A Ford Ranger pickup parked just outside the garage was also a complete loss. The barn pictured in the background was partially burned and the hay inside was lost. Holyoke Volunteer Fire Department, Amherst Volunteer Fire Department, Phillips County Sheriff's Office and Holyoke EMS all responded to the early-morning fire last Thursday five miles southwest of Holyoke.

Dan Kafka awoke to an orange glare inside his home early Thursday, Dec. 16. The glare was coming from his four-car garage that was fully engulfed by fire 150 feet from the house.

Holyoke Volunteer Fire Department, Amherst Volunteer Fire Department, Phillips County Sheriff's Office and Holyoke EMS all responded to the 2 a.m. fire that burned Dan and Shonna Kafka's garage to the ground and damaged a nearby barn five miles southwest of Holyoke.

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When emergency personnel arrived, the garage was fully engulfed with the nearby barn beginning to burn. The garage, which is believed to have been built in the mid-1960s, was a complete loss.

Kafka praised the response time of the emergency agencies saying they greatly prevented any further loss. "It makes the value of living in a small town a little more precious," Kafka said.

Lost in the fire along with the garage was a Chevrolet Suburban, Ford Ranger pickup, hay, tools and shop equipment. Kafka said a tractor parked nearby received some damage but will be repaired.

Some four-wheelers and trailers near the barn were moved out of the way and saved. Kafka noted no animals were lost and their home didn't receive any damage.

Kafka said he had been working in the northern part of the garage, which served as the shop, earlier in the evening and believes that is where the fire started. That part of the structure was burning the hottest when he woke up. He is unsure exactly how the fire started, however.

After arriving, the fire departments continued to pump water on the fire until around 6:30 a.m., according to Kafka.

As of Monday, Dec. 20, cleanup was mostly complete, and Kafka said there is nothing but a concrete foundation where the garage once stood. The barn will need to be torn down as well.