

M I L W A U K E E JOURNAL SENTINEL

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GOOD MORNING TODAY'S TOP NEWS

NATION & WORLD

Sharon hospitalized



Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is hospitalized with what doctors describe as "a minor stroke." **3A**

Time's 'Persons of the Year'

Time magazine names Bill and Melinda Gates and rock star Bono its "Persons of the Year" for charitable work. **6A**

BUSINESS

Shipping out

Bentley World-Packaging sees sales and employment soar as it rides a wave of rising exports. **1D**

End to farm subsidies?

World Trade Organization negotiators approve a deal requiring nations to end farm export subsidies by 2013. **1D**

SPORTS

Colts aren't perfect

The San Diego Chargers knock off Indianapolis, 26-17, to end the Colts' bid for the first undefeated season since 1972. **1C**

METRO

Tracking bad behavior

Wisconsin's high school students are smoking less and wearing seat belts and bike helmets more but using alcohol at about the same rate, according to a new survey. **1B**

HOLIDAY HOURS

Customer service hours during the holidays will be:

Saturday, Christmas Eve, 6 a.m. to noon
 Sunday, Christmas Day, 7 to 11 a.m.
 Monday, Dec. 26, 6 a.m. to noon
 Saturday, New Year's Eve, 6 a.m. to noon
 Sunday, New Year's Day, 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.
 Monday, Jan. 2, 6 a.m. to noon

INDEX

8 SECTIONS

Comics 5E
 Crossword 3E
 Dear Abby 3E
 Deaths 4B
 Editorials 12A
 Entertainment 1E
 Movies 2E
 Pulse 1G
 Sports on TV 2C
 TV listings 4E

TODAY'S TMJ4 WEATHER

MAP, FORECASTS ON PAGE 2B

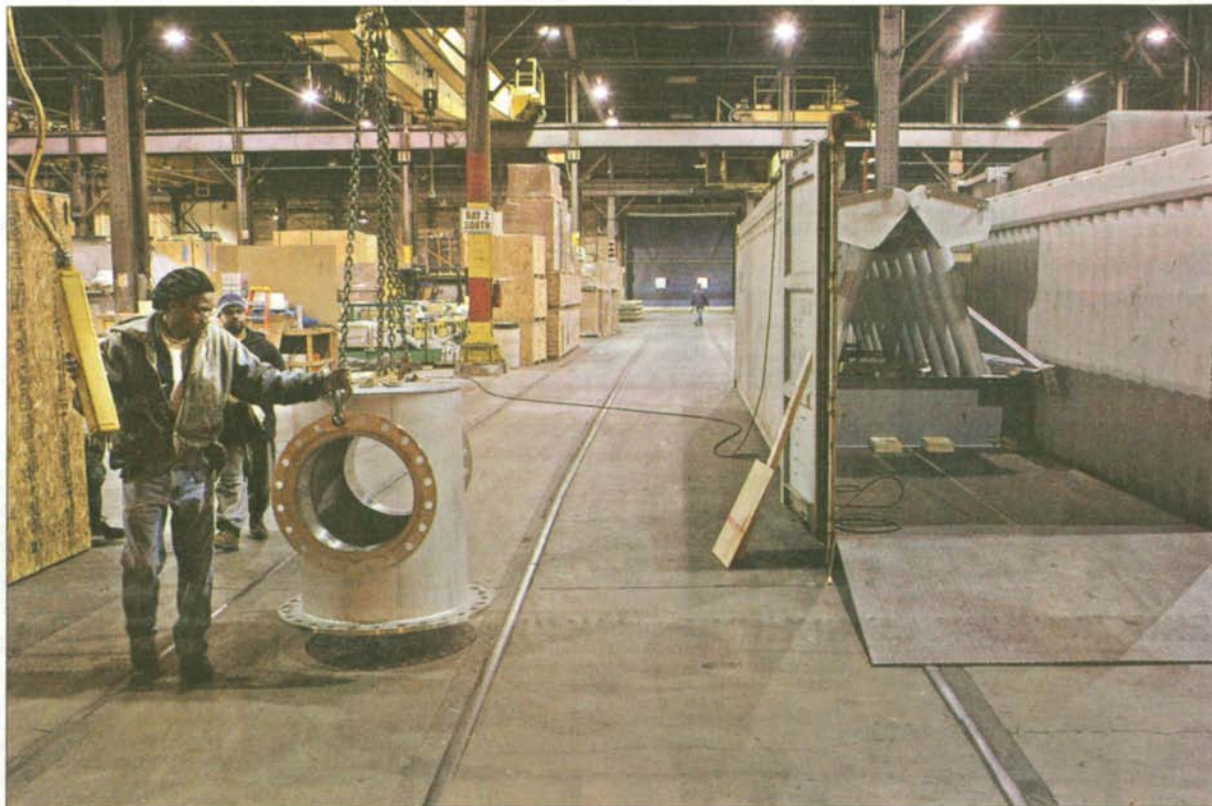
TODAY: 21 / 0
 Sunny, still cold

TOMORROW: 26 / 12
 A little warmer

A WORD —
 CULL
 (kul)

To pick out, select. v.
 Page 6B

THRIVING ON PACKING UP MACHINERY



TOM LYNN / TLYNN@JOURNALSENTINEL.COM

Bill Dudley loads equipment for a water purifying company in Chile onto a shipping container being filled at Bentley World-Packaging, which prepares machinery for shipping abroad.

By RICK ROMELL
 rromell@journal sentinel.com

Wrapping not just for holidays

Bentley sales soar as more state firms export

Let's say you've got a steel gear maybe a foot thick and 14 feet across that has to get to a mine on the Canadian Shield, or an 8,000-pound condenser ordered by a Malaysian power plant, or a big load of piping bound for Russia.

You're probably not going to ship parcel post.

More likely, you'll call in a specialist, and if you're working out of the Milwaukee area, there's a good chance it will be Bentley World-Packaging Ltd.

The company, which functions sort of as a gift-wrap department for Wisconsin manufacturers, has seen sales and employment soar as it rides a wave of rising exports, increased outsourcing and the benefits of a major contract with Oshkosh Truck Corp.

Based in a N. Port Washington Road building that straddles the Milwaukee-Glendale line, Bentley's sales have grown about 15% each year since 2001 and is expected to reach \$20 million in 2005, owner and CEO Thomas H. Bentley III said.

"We hit an all-time record recently," he said. "We've also opened plants in Georgia, and we just opened one in Pennsylvania."

Employment stands at 250, rough-

ly twice the level of three years ago, he said.

Bentley, 59, is the fifth-generation owner of a family business that began in 1848 with a still-operating construction company that built such local landmarks as All Saints' Cathedral, the Tripoli Shrine Temple on W. Wisconsin Ave. and the North Point Water Tower.

A big-game hunter whose trophy-studded office is decorated in an African motif — down to the diora-

ma of a leopard in a tree feasting on a small antelope — Bentley took a long-dormant export packaging business and resurrected it in the early '70s. Lately, it's been on a roll.

If the trend for the first nine months of 2005 holds, the value of Wisconsin exports should top \$14.5 billion this year — almost 40% above the 2001 number.

Helping boost the total, Bentley said, have been a growing world economy and, in many countries, a cheaper dollar, which makes U.S. goods less expensive.

Those circumstances may not last, "but for now the times are pretty



Bentley

Please see BENTLEY, 3D

Bentley thrives on packing equipment to ship abroad

BENTLEY, From 1D

good for a lot of these guys," Bentley said of his 300 regular customers.

And for one of Bentley's key customers, times are good indeed.

Military shipments

At Oshkosh Truck, Wisconsin's largest defense contractor, sales have doubled since 2001 and profits have more than tripled. Among other things, the company builds vehicles used in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Bentley has been busy packaging spare parts and armor for shipping.

"There's been just a huge — with a lot of immediacy — campaign to get those armor kits over there," Bentley said.

Another big push, he said, has been shipment of retrofitting kits that can air-condition older military trucks in Iraq, where temperatures often top 100 degrees.

Oshkosh Truck, which uses Bentley for its commercial products, too, began working with the Milwaukee firm in the late 1980s, and during the '90s subcontracted its central parts distribution to the packaging company.

"They've been a key part to our being able to respond to our growing business," said Tim Raupp, vice president of integrated logistics support for Oshkosh Truck.

Jackson-based Rytex Corp.,



TOM LYNN / TLYNN@JOURNALSENTINEL.COM

Joe Fernandez (left) and **Bill Dudley** load equipment for a water purifying company in Chile onto a shipping container at Bentley World-Packaging Ltd. Bentley, which is based on the Milwaukee-Glendale border and has eight plants, prepares machinery to be safely shipped around the world.

which sells its high-speed industrial doors domestically and in countries such as Canada, China and Venezuela, also speaks well of Bentley.

"They've done an awesome job," Rytex production manager Cathy Pomeroy said.

Companies shipping industrial goods increasingly have turned to packing specialists, said Ed Church, executive director of the International Safe Transit Association, a group that promotes improved ways to prevent product damage in shipping.

Labor costs may make it cheaper to hire a contractor, and many jobs may require spe-

cialized expertise, Church said. "It takes a little bit of skill, especially when not every product's exactly the same," he said.

Protective packaging

Bentley has prepared shipments as large as a two-car garage, packaged valuable art and worked with Australians who cruised Wisconsin buying used Harley-Davidson motorcycles to sell back home at a profit.

"They'd pay for everything in cash," Bentley said of the bike merchants. "They would always come over here with big wads of cash."

Intricate machinery such as Harleys may have to be packed

to withstand the vibration of rail travel, and certainly protected against corrosion in dank, salty ship holds.

A growing number of countries also require that lumber used to make packing crates be heat-treated or fumigated to kill pests.

Bentley said his firm's scale — he believes it is Wisconsin's biggest export packager — allowed it to buy lumber cheaper than exporting manufacturers could on their own. When Hurricane Katrina hit, he said, the company bought seven truckloads of plywood just before prices jumped 60%.

Bentley's largest packaging

plant by far, at 277,000 square feet, or almost the size of six football fields, is near its headquarters. But the company has eight plants in all, including two it opened earlier this year in Racine County to provide easier access to the Chicago transport hub — a key factor with reconstruction expected to gum up the Marquette Interchange well into 2008.

"Our center of gravity has to be south of Milwaukee," Bentley said. "We particularly can't get caught up in the Marquette."

Further plans, he said, include expansion to another state, and the possible purchase of one or two smaller packers.