

Hughes County Times

By: Aron Kelly

One Holdenville business had been growing and gaining statewide attention with its entrepreneurial outlook and use of the latest technology. Success and controversy have turned this small computer mapping company into a major player in the taxation battle between Oklahoma counties and pipeline companies and have given the three men who started it a diverse future to consider.

Brothers Gary and Rick Mask, along with their cousin Jerry Wisdom founded the Visual Lease Services Inc. in 1996. 'Mapping' would be the word most easily associated with what they do, however, in most of their contracts with counties in Oklahoma, their role is better defined as 'cataloging, inventory, and appraisal.' They are hired to assist County Assessors in finding appropriate property values, specifically for pipeline related property and this is the area in which the Holdenville based company has ruffled a few feathers.

In several counties there have been numerous pipeline companies discovered by VLS that have never turned in any pipeline or equipment before. Since these companies are allowed, under Oklahoma law, to appraise their own property for taxation, this means they get out of paying property taxes. Certain other companies have been only assessing a portion of their equipment.