

Kinney winner of \$2 million

■ Lottery ticket yields big prize

By Will Brumleve

Larry Kinney spent an hour alone last Saturday, pacing his house, keeping secret that he had just won \$2 million through the Illinois Instant Lottery.

But it didn't take long for word to spread throughout town that the 60-year-old Paxton man had beaten odds of 1 in 1.11 million in the game The \$2 Million Extravaganza.

Kinney's winning scratch-off ticket, which he purchased Saturday morning at Paxton Amoco, has been causing quite a buzz.

"We're getting a lot of people asking about it, what we think of it, if any of us had ever had a ticket like that before. The customers are all excited," said Jennifer LeRoy, manager of Paxton Amoco, 1190 W. Ottawa Road.

Kinney, a regular Lottery player, bought the ticket for \$20 a few minutes after winning \$50 on a different scratch-off game downtown at Paxton IGA. He was driving from IGA south on Taft Street when he decided to test his luck again.

After buying the ticket, as he was driving east on Illinois 9 back into town, he scratched off the first three bubbles on the ticket, unveiling three symbols, all bells.

"I go, 'Oh, that's a winner,'" Kinney recalled. "So I looked over (at the rules for the game), and I looked at

(the symbols) again. I go, 'bell, bell, bell. There's three bells. That's what it says."

Kinney drove directly to his home at 233 W. Orleans St., where he spent the next hour pacing uncontrollably.

About 10 a.m., Kinney called his wife of 40 years, Carol, who was attending the Apple N' Pork Festival in Clinton with their two daughters, Lori Buhs and Cheryl Wright.

"I said, 'You better sit down. I've got something major to tell you,'" Kinney recalled. "And I thought by saying 'major' she wouldn't all of a sudden think it was something bad."

"It scared me at first, because I thought it was some bad news," Carol Kinney said. "And then he said, 'No, it's good. It's good, major news.'"

Carol heard the news after she sat down in a chair that was in the festival's flea market. "We were just walking around at the craft show and the flea market, and that's where that little chair was, so I did sit down on the chair," she said. Carol said she later bought the chair for "sentimental reasons."

Upon hearing the news, "I was so excited; I didn't know what to do," Carol recalled. "I told the girls (the news), and I stood up, and I got shaky, and I couldn't even drive."

"When I told the girls ... we all got

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Kinney

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so nervous. We were so excited — between a cry and a happy feeling."

Plans for the future

As of Monday, Kinney had yet to redeem the winning ticket but said he is planning to consult his attorney on how to collect his winnings within the required one-year period.

The Kinneys have no plans for the extra money other than giving some of it to their children and grandchildren. They have no immediate plans to sell their house or to retire earlier than anticipated.

Both are planning to retire at age 62. Kinney, who works as a meter technician for AmerenCIPS, said, "This just makes it easier to do that."

The \$2 million ticket may be the

most valuable ticket ever sold at the Paxton Amoco near Interstate 57, but LeRoy said she was not certain.

"A lot of our tickets go on the road, so we don't have any clue (if they won)," she said.

LeRoy said a traveler won \$2,000 on a \$1 ticket last spring.

Kinney said it was "pure luck" that brought him the multi-million-dollar prize. His wife said, "I think we're blessed."

"I don't know why I drove out there (to the Amoco station), because I could have went anywhere else. There's a lot of other places in town that sell them," Kinney said. "But I was going that way and just kept on going."