

Bridge 50th Celebration Tops All Expectations

By Karen Gould

With cheers, tears, and exclamations of awe, the Mackinac Bridge was celebrated by thousands over the weekend for connecting Michigan's peninsulas for 50 years. Symbolically recognizing that link, four Michigan Air National Guard fighter jets from Selfridge Air National Guard Base flew above the bridge from St. Ignace to Mackinaw City to begin the celebration, and a parade of 50 convertibles, one from each year since the bridge opened, drove across the Mighty Mac Saturday, July 28.

Air Stunt Is Investigated

Planes Fly Under Mackinac Bridge

Two red, single-engine pontoon planes were spotted flying under the Mackinac Bridge around 3 p.m. Monday, July 30. It is the third such incident this summer.

St. Ignace cottagers Judy and Ed Kaiser spotted the two planes approaching the bridge from the west and notified 9-1-1.

Mackinac Bridge Authority Executive Secretary Bob Sweeney said the dangerous stunt is under investigation by the Federal Aviation Administration. Citizens, he said, reported seeing the planes flying low over the water in the vicinity of St. Helena Island, several miles west of the bridge near Gros Cap.

"We have video of the incident, however, it didn't capture the (identification) numbers," he said. "The FAA does have other ways to track them," he noted.

Aircraft are required to keep a 500-foot clearance above and below the bridge, said Mr. Sweeney. There is a clearance of 150 feet between the bottom of the bridge, at the center span, and the water.

Mr. Sweeney said the United States Department of Homeland Security has been notified, owing to the repeat incidents.

"This is both a Homeland Security issue, because it is the fourth incident this summer, and it is a safety issue for our workers on the bridge," said Mr. Sweeney. "Planes or helicopters can get entangled in worker safety lines that may dangle underneath the bridge."

The incident was the second one reported in a week. At about the same time of the day, Monday, July 23, a yellow seaplane, similar to the two described in the latest incident, was reported to have flown underneath the bridge.

The first fly-under incident this summer, on June 3, involved a helicopter.

All three incidents remain under investigation.

Hospital To Be Smoke Free

By Ryan Schlehuder

Patients and staff will soon breathe a little easier at clinics in St. Ignace, Mackinac Island, and Naubinway as Mackinac Straits Hospital and Health Center plans to implement a tobacco-free policy Saturday, September 1. The plan coincides with a new state law to make all hospitals in Michigan tobacco-free by January 1.

Hospital employees have been participating in smoking cessation classes since June.

The hospital has provided a room where Long Term Care patients can smoke, however, only the handful of current resident patients at the hospital's existing long term care patients will be

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Residents of the two towns, along with thousands of visitors, lined streets, filled hotels, ate traditional birthday cake, pasties, and

fudge, and basked in the beautiful summer weather of the Straits of Mackinac to celebrate the first 50 years of the bridge and to honor

those who built and now maintain the structure.

Former ironworkers rode on floats in each parade. State and local

dignitaries and parade queens crossed the bridge in the convertibles, including Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm and former governors James Blanchard and William G. Milliken. Also riding in a convertible was Miss Michigan 2007, Kirsten Haglund, and in a horse-drawn carriage was Miss Michigan 1957, Valerie Strong Agresta.

Some of the participants appeared in both parades, while marching bands and local groups marched only in Mackinaw City or St. Ignace parades. Each parade

contained approximately 90 entrants, including members of Mackinac Bridge Authority, and all the politicians representing the communities on both sides of the Straits: U.S. Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow, U.S. Congressman Bart Stupak, State Senator Jason Allen, State Representatives Kevin Elsenheimer (105th District representing Cheboygan County) and Gary McDowell (107th District representing Mackinac and Emmet counties), St. Ignace Mayor Paul

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The Mackinac Bridge 50th fireworks display in St. Ignace was visible from the Lake Huron shore in Mackinaw City, where this photograph was taken Saturday, July 28. Large crowds lined the shorelines along the Straits to see the colorful display. Fireworks also were shot from Mackinaw City and Mackinac Island. (Photograph courtesy of Michigan Department of Transportation)



Crowds pack Mackinaw City streets to view the 50th Mackinac Bridge anniversary parade. Traveling north on Huron Street toward Central Avenue is Governor Jennifer Granholm in a red 1957 Thunderbird owned by Doc Watson.



At left: Descendants of Chief Mackinac of the Northern Nation of Indians, brothers Carl Andress (left) of St. Ignace and Don Andress of Mackinac Island ride their horses in the 50th bridge anniversary St. Ignace parade Saturday, July 28. Both men wear traditional American Indian garb. Carl carries an American flag inscribed with an American Indian and horse figures.

'Hay Days' Begins at Pickford

The old time string and folk music of Pickford's settlers will showcased at this year's Hay Days starting Wednesday, August 1, in Pickford. The five-day event celebrating Pickford's 130-year heritage will offer activities every day through Sunday, August 5. A complete schedule of events is on pages 6 and 7 of this week's issue.

"Pickin' n' Grinnin' in Pickford" is this year's theme, and participants in this year's Hay Days can expect to see and hear folk music performances all around town. A hamburger bash, Singspiration, and Blessing of the Banjos will start things off Wednesday afternoon and evening.

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Finding Underwater Treasure Will Be Goal of Aug. 12 Dive

The Straits of Mackinac Underwater Preserve and the Chamber of Commerce are hosting an underwater treasure hunt Sunday, August 12, at 9:30 a.m. at the American Legion Park in St. Ignace.

Early registration costs \$15; regular registration on site is \$20. Divers may purchase as many tickets as they wish. For each ticket, divers may bring up one token. For every token located, there is a prize. The grand prize is a two-night stay in St. Ignace. Divers may register at the

Chamber of Commerce.

The event will include a memorial for diver Jim Montcalm of St. Ignace, an expert scuba diver who developed local diving opportunities. Mr. Montcalm died September 4, 2006, at the age of 56, while diving on the *Newell Eddy* shipwreck near Bois Blanc Island.

A picnic will follow the treasure hunt.

Proceeds benefit the maintenance and preservation of the Straits of Mackinac Underwater Preserve.

'A League of Their Own' Player Returns to EUP Softball Games on the Farm Led to Fame for Stevenson

The little-known history of women's softball in the Eastern Upper Peninsula is featured in Rosemary Stevenson's book, "Don't Die on Third." The book is the story of Ms. Stevenson's 52 years of experience in softball and baseball, and autographed copies will be sold during Hay Days Saturday, August 4. Ms. Stevenson, a Stalwart native who now lives in Nunica, was known as "Stevie" in her baseball days. She will sign her book at the Pickford Historical Museum from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday. From 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. she will sign books at the Pickford Township Park.

She will donate \$5 from the \$15 cost of her books to the Historical Museum.

"I'm more interested in helping the museum than just selling the books," Ms. Stevenson said of her motivation to stage the book-signing event. "Let us all help the museum."

Like the cause she is trying to help, Ms. Stevenson's own experience is part of Pickford area history.

In 1943, American sports history was changed by the formation of the All American Girls Professional Baseball League, by Philip K. Wrigley of chewing gum fame and owner of the Chicago Cubs. Ms. Stevenson was part of that league, playing outfielder for the Grand Rapids Chicks when she was 17 in 1954.

Thirty-four years later, she found herself part of a group of women inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. Induction to the Upper Peninsula Sports Hall of Fame in Iron Mountain followed. She was



Rosemary Stevenson in 1954, in her Grand Rapids Chicks uniform as a member of the All American Girls Professional Baseball League. She will sign and sell books in Pickford this week to raise money for the Pickford Historical Museum.

inducted there April 7, 1990. She was inducted into the Grand Rapids Sports Hall of Fame, along with the entire Grand Rapids Chicks team, in 2001.

The oldest of seven children born to Mary and Samuel Stevenson, she grew up on a 160-acre farm in Stalwart. She started playing softball at age 11 with a team from DeTour. The team played against

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Mackinac County Relay for Life Raises \$33,000

Memories of those who have perished, and inspiring stories of those who have survived cancer, were shared at the 11th annual American Cancer Society Relay for Life fundraiser at the LaSalle High School track in St. Ignace Friday, July 27, through Saturday, July 28. The Mackinac County event raised \$33,000 for the American Cancer Society.

Billy Milford, of St. Ignace, a throat cancer survivor, spoke to the crowd about his bout with the disease just before 24 other cancer survivors began a lap around the track, led by two color guards from the U.S. Coast Guard's *Biscayne Bay* Saturday.

"Every night, I read scriptures of healing from the Bible," Mr. Milford said. "After 10 weeks of radiation, my face never burned and I never needed a feeding tube. I am now clean, and clean as a crystal. My thanks to God and for having a positive attitude."

He continued to encourage cancer patients, "Keep the faith, and believe that you will get through this."

More than 1,000 luminaries were sold and lined up on the side of the track, providing walkers light throughout the night.



Robin Belonga (left) of St. Ignace and Nancy Pfeiffelman of Mackinac Island, a cancer survivor, walk together during the annual Mackinac County Area Relay for Life 24-hour walk fundraiser, held at the LaSalle High School track in St. Ignace Friday, July 27, through Saturday, July 28. Ms. Belonga was walking in honor of her grandmother, Roma Horn.

The event was \$4,000 shy of last year's total, reported Mary Sue Peterson, the area director for the Upper Peninsula American Cancer Society, possibly owing to the fact the 24-hour event was held at the same time as the 50th anniversary

of the Mackinac Bridge and the inaugural St. Ignace Fish Feast.

"We did really well, though," said Melissa Matson, local chairperson for the event. "The rain

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