

# Flavor Is Deciding Factor as Glory McLennan Wins Mackinac Bridge Cake Contest

By Karen Gould

Using her grandmother's lemon cake recipe topped with a special butter cream frosting recipe she created, Glory McLennan, owner of Tas TCreations in St. Ignace, won the cake contest held during Mackinac Bridge celebrations commemorating the 50th anniversary of the bridge Saturday, July 28.

"I couldn't believe it," she said of the win. She was awarded a certificate to mark the honor.

Four other cakes stationed under a covered picnic area at Bridge View Park competed in the contest judged by renowned cake makers Kevin Pavlina and James Aslanian from Pavlina Cakes in Fenton. Other entrants were Ronda McGreevey of Great Turtle Cake Company in Cedarville, Kim Sperl of Cheboygan for Bella e Dolce (Grand Hotel), Erin Sontag of the Detroit area, and Brenda Spencley of Bren's Cakes in St. Ignace.

The two chefs considered the entries based on how successful each baker was at capturing the



Glory McLennan, a St. Ignace cake maker, is pictured here with one of her wedding cakes. Her company, Tas TCreations, offers cakes for any occasion. (Photograph courtesy of Mrs. McLennan)

anniversary theme. They also took into consideration the neatness of the decorations, overall appearance of the cake, and the taste.

While all entries were well decorated, Mr. Pavlina said its flavor

was the deciding factor in choosing Mrs. McLennan's cake.

The sheet cake was decorated with two peninsulas made of fondant, using a sugar base, and dyed green. Creating the peninsulas,

Mrs. McLennan said, was the most challenging part of her design. Getting them into the right shape proved more difficult than she expected, although she finally was able to work the material into the shape she needed.

Overall, her goal was to show how the bridge brought both of Michigan's peninsulas together. Atop the two peninsulas were lighthouses, the state capitol building, freighters, sailboats, trees, a teepee, seagulls, and markers naming Michigan State University and the University of Michigan.

"I definitely wanted to make sure I got both the Upper and Lower Peninsulas together on the cake," said the New Jersey native. "I learned a lot about Michigan from doing this."

Mrs. McLennan began her cake-making business in 1999, when her husband, Ned, was hired to work at the Mackinac Bridge as a steeplejack. To replicate the bridge cables often climbed by her husband, Mrs. McLennan used floral wire on the cake. She also used

toothpicks and dowel rods to provide support for the decorations made of gum paste.

The project proved to be a learning experience. Her first lighthouse, supported by toothpicks, collapsed.

"There was a lot of trial and error," she said, before she came up with the idea to use tiny dowel rods.

As a young girl, Mrs.

McLennan started out helping her grandmother each summer in a New Jersey bakery.

"I decorated the cupcakes," she said. "They sold pretty well."

Now, she has her own cake company and has won the 50th anniversary cake contest.

"It's really, really exciting," she said. "I'm going down in the books."



Visitors to Bridge View Park in St. Ignace Saturday, July 28, appreciated the details in Glory McLennan's winning cake. The cake contest was held in conjunction with the 50th anniversary celebration of the Mackinac Bridge.

## Chris Smith, Grandson of Chris Craft Founder, To Be Guest of Honor

Recalls Early Years in Boat Building Plant for Show This Week

By Amy Polk

"I can honestly say I've never received a paycheck from anyone but Chris Craft," mused Chris Smith while in Cedarville July 5, celebrating his 80th birthday.

It seems fitting the grandson of Christopher Columbus Smith, founder of what was once the world's largest boat production company, would choose the site of Chris Craft's first franchise to celebrate a lifetime in and out of boats. His birthday was July 4, when he rode an antique Chris Craft through the Les Cheneaux Independence Day parade in Cedarville, passing American flags out to children. The rest of his week was spent on the water, where the engine music of the area's many Chris Crafts melded with the sounds of other boats plying the channels.

He is this year's guest of honor at the Les Cheneaux Boat Show, repeating a role he played in 1983, and honoring this 30th anniversary show with his family heritage. A captivating and pleasant speaker, Mr. Smith delivers stories of his legendary past with obvious passion for the boats his family produced.

Chris Craft boat company got its start when a 13-year-old Christopher Columbus Smith and his older brother, Henry, built a wooden duck boat in 1874. The brothers were commercial duck hunters, and hunted the St. Clair River area, where they shot hundreds of ducks that they cleaned and packed in ice. About 40 miles from Detroit, the brothers were able to make a decent living supplying ducks to the growing hotel and restaurant industry in the metropolitan Detroit area. The boys also fished and trapped, and became locally renowned sportsmen and guides based in their hometown of Algonac. Chris Smith carved decoys, a skill that would later turn into carving boat models.

Algonac's location near the St. Clair flats gave the Smith boys easy access to the water, and the productive marshes, channels, and islands of the region. Boats were vital to the Smiths for getting game, and later for providing a guide service to bring urban sportsmen out to their hunting and fishing grounds.

"Algonac was a resort town with hotels, and people from Detroit came up by boat," Mr. Smith said of the brothers' transition into boat building. "They took people across to the islands by boat, and one day, one of their customers said, 'That's a nice boat! How about building me one?'"

It wasn't long before the Smith brothers began building boats for a living, eventually opening a boat livery in downtown Algonac to make good on a promise Chris Smith made to his wife to settle down and open a boat house and livery. The business developed a reputation for turning out good and fast boats, and Chris Smith



In Cedarville last month, Christopher John Smith of Holland, Michigan, reminisces about growing up in the Chris Craft boat building business and the years that led up to his 80th birthday. He is this year's Guest of Honor at the 30th Annual Les Cheneaux Antique Wooden Boat Show and Festival of Arts.

went on to develop the company to capitalize on the nation's growing obsession with speed and pleasure boating. Henry Smith opted to leave the boat building business and continue working as a hunter and sportsman. Chris Smith and Sons Boat Company was founded in 1922, and boat production started to take off, multiplying from 24 boats in 1922 to 447 boats in 1927.

It was in 1927 that Christopher John Smith, grandson and namesake of the company's founder, was born. His father, Bernard, was working in the company's factory alongside his father, Chris, and brothers, Jay and Owen. Speed boats were part of the company's initial line, and they were soon joined by a line of luxurious cabin cruisers.

The youngest of six children born to Bernard and Dora Smith, Chris Smith said he literally grew up in Chris Craft's wooden boat factory on the water in Algonac.

"Once I convinced my mother I could swim, I was allowed to go work at the factory," Mr. Smith said. "Everyone there knew me by name, and it was a great way to grow up."

He grew up with a love of boats and being on the water, developing a natural interest in the way they worked. The boats of his childhood included his own first boat — an eight-foot Penn Yan dinghy, his mother's 1936 Chris Craft cruiser called *Bernardora*, and his father's 22-foot Chris Craft utility for fishing.

"My dad loved fishing," Mr. Smith noted. "My dad was a great duck hunter, too, and he leased property on Walpole Island on the Ontario side from the Indians for hunting."

The family also took cruises, and Bernard Smith loved cruising up to Georgian Bay and Little

Current, also on the Ontario side of Lake Huron. Occasionally they cruised over the Les Cheneaux Islands, where they fished. Mr. Smith remembers seeing perch underwater around the docks.

Among his happy memories of the Algonac factory and spending

time on boats, Mr. Smith recalls hard times, like coming home from boarding school at the beginning of World War II, when his parents announced the government was taking his mother's 48-foot cruiser for service in the war.

"The last thing I saw of that boat

was them spray-painting the cruiser that olive green, Army color," he said. "We got to keep the 22-foot utility, however, and I was so happy about that because I was beginning to drive it."

Mr. Smith was graduated from high school in 1946, but was not drafted into World War II service because he could not pass the physical fitness test. He enrolled in a college summer program at Michigan State University, but college didn't hold his interest and he yearned for the boat factory. Around that time, he also met and married Melva Simons.

"Her parents were going to take her to Florida, and of course, that wasn't going to work at all," Mr. Smith said. "So we married in 1947, and that's another reason college didn't work out."

Mr. Smith decided against college, instead seeking enrollment in an apprentice program at the Algonac factory.

"Right from the start, I wanted to work with my hands in the factory," Mr. Smith said. "I think my dad was a bit disappointed, because he was having a dickens of a time finding managers within the family. I wasn't capable or interested enough to be a manager."

Bernard Smith consented to his son's apprenticeship, and during the next two years, Chris Smith performed every job in the factory, from counting screws, to unloading lumber, to testing out new boats. Mr. Smith said when he tested boats, "my favorite place was the gas pump, because I'd just fill it up and go."

"We only knew one speed: 'wide open, and don't slow down for waves,'" he joked.

"The family encouraged us kids to use the boats because they figured it was better for us to find out what things were going to break on a boat before we sold it," Mr. Smith said. "Sometimes a prototype didn't perform the way we wanted, and we wouldn't be able to sell or produce that boat. That was a hard thing to see, because they would have to bust up and destroy those boats."

Mr. Smith eventually joined the engineering department, and noted that "no one person designed Chris Craft boats," because it was a team effort. Mr. Smith made prototype models out of scale drawings of boats that were built in all the Chris Craft factories. For approximately 60 years in the 20th century, Chris Craft reportedly built more boats than any other company. By 1960 when the Smith family sold Chris Craft, the company had 11 factories all over the world.

Mr. Smith spent most of his working life at the Holland factory, and 38 years in the prototype department. He retired from Chris Craft in 1986 at the age of 59, when the company moved the prototype department from Michigan to Florida. Chris and Melva Smith would not move to Florida because they loved Michigan, so Mr. Smith quit the company instead. He later worked with Steve Northius at Grand Craft in Holland for awhile.

The Smiths have six children, Larry, Chris Ann, Susan, Joy, Mark, and Debbie; five grandchildren, and one great-grandson. Three of his children are aircraft pilots like himself, and one flies for American Airlines.

It wasn't until after his retirement that he became interested in antique boats. The first one he restored was a 27-foot, 1961 Chris Craft Sea Skiff, he called *Odyssey*, a lap-strake sided model his uncle, Owen, developed to compete with Lyman's boats at the time.

"I had fun with it," he happily said of the restoration work. "All my life, my job was following someone else's drawings, and when I refinished this boat, I did what I wanted when I wanted to do it, without a fisherman standing above with a fishing pole, waiting for the boat."

He later restored a 16-foot Chris Craft Rocket he called *Odyssey II*.

A regular participant in the Les Cheneaux Antique Wooden Boat Show for about 15 years now, Mr. Smith often brings along his prized antique boats, *Odyssey* and *Odyssey II* to the show, where he can be seen cheerfully chatting with spectators or participating in the festivities.

## Ironworkers Will Show Skills in Mackinaw City This Week

The public is welcome at the International Ironworker Festival, where ironworkers will celebrate their skills and provide entertainment Friday, August 10, through Sunday, August 12, at the Mackinaw City Recreation Center behind the high school in Mackinaw City. Many of the ironworkers worked on building the Mackinac Bridge.

Registration and booth set-up will take place Friday, between noon and 5 p.m. At 6 p.m., there will be live music and dancing.

At 10 a.m. Saturday, there will be a parade through Mackinaw City. Children's games will follow at 11 a.m. From noon to 6 p.m., ironworkers will demonstrate their skills in a series of contests. At 6 p.m., there will be live music and dancing. A 50/50 raffle will take place at 10 p.m.

The World Championship Column Climb begins Sunday's activities, at 10 a.m. To add interest to the event this year, any registered climber who beats former champion Eric Costa's time will claim his title and a \$1,500 prize, reported Michael Coleman, festival president.

After the climb, there will be "old timers events" and an awards ceremony at approximately 2 p.m., he reported.

The festival was begun by J.C. Stilwell of Mackinaw City in 1981. Approximately 11,000 laborers, including ironworkers, joined forces to build the Mackinac Bridge.

### Bayside Live!

## Send Help, Boogie 2 Shooz Will Give Concerts at St. Ignace Marina

Send Help will be featured in a Locals on the Bay concert Wednesday, August 8, at 7 p.m. at the St. Ignace Marina. Local musicians Randy Binger, Mike Pierron, and Mike Welch formed the band about a year ago. They play a mixture of hard rock and classic rock.

Also at the marina, Boogie 2 Shooz will perform for Bayside Live! Thursday, August 9, at 7 p.m. The duo of Patti-Jean Cousens and Pamela Jenkins features soulful renditions of the blues, funk-flavored rhythm and blues, and lush jazz.

Next week, Gene Perry will perform for Locals on the Bay, and Chasin' Steel for Bayside Live! The concerts are free of charge.



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