

Replica of Mackinac Bridge Is Made From Toothpicks, Craft Sticks

By Paul Gingras

"It took a lot of patience and a lot of glue," said retired ironworker Terry Kuriger of Manistee, describing his wooden toothpick replica of the Mackinac Bridge, which he donated to the Mackinac Bridge Museum and Gift Shop in Mackinaw City Thursday, August 9, just in time for this year's International Ironworker Festival.

As an ironworker, Mr. Kuriger enjoys viewing the intricacy of the Mackinac Bridge. Owing to his trade, Mr. Kuriger has been asked many times if he worked on building the Mighty Mac.

"I was only 17 when they cut the ribbon" to open the bridge, he explained, but to pay tribute to the spirit of the bridge, he built his own, with toothpicks, craft sticks, and mini-sticks, producing a unique wooden sculpture that stands two-feet, 6.25 inches tall, and spans seven feet, six inches.

"I just had to use what I could get," he said.

Working intermittently, Mr. Kuriger spent 1.5 years completing the bridge replica. He enjoyed the aesthetic appeal of the wood so much that he could not bring him-

self to paint it. The rest of the scene, however, is as realistic as possible.

Working with an electrician, he adorned the masterpiece with 70 lights, which can only be turned on for brief periods, owing to the weakening effect heat has on the glue that holds the structure together.

Netting mimics the iron grating that forms portions of the Mighty Mac's roadway, and netting also forms the metal walkways to the side of the road. There are intricate handrails of wood, and towers composed of tooth picks sheathed with craft sticks complete the "Mini Mac."

Mr. Kuriger used blue, rippled, nylon material to mimic choppy water on the Straits of Mackinac, and a barge and sailboats complete the maritime scene.

On each end, the bridge connects to gray, painted cardboard that mimics concrete. To each side, he painted green grassy areas to represent St. Ignace and Mackinaw City.

"Everybody that has seen it cannot believe it," Mr. Kuriger told *The St. Ignace News*. "When you

see this, you won't believe it, either."

To build a sculpture on this scale, "you have to have patience and a steady hand," he explained.

Mr. Kuriger shaped the model's uncounted components with a nail clipper, and assembled them with tweezers "day in and day out," he said.

It is the first and only large model Mr. Kuriger has built, and it challenged him every step of the way.

When something went wrong, he simply walked away, took a break, and began again.

At times, the work was "mind boggling," he said, but "I really enjoyed building it."

The sculpture was begun about three years ago, and grew slowly and steadily in his small living room.

He built the model's center pieces first, which are two feet, six inches long. He then added one foot-long pieces on each side. It looked incomplete, so he added and extra 18 inches on either end. When the sculpture was finished, he supplied his brother, Wally Anderson, with materials to build a



Artist and retired ironworker Terry Kuriger of Manistee poses next to his masterpiece, a wooden replica of the Mackinac Bridge, Thursday, August 9, at the Mackinac Bridge Museum and Gift Shop in Mackinaw City. He spent 1.5 years building it with toothpicks, craft sticks, and tiny pieces of model-crafting wood, which he cut to create the sculpture.

clear plastic case.

Retired ironworker Pat Guzikowski of Manistee helped transport the Mini Mac to MaMa Mia's Pizzeria and Restaurant in Mackinaw City, the museum's location, where the delicate struc-

ture will stay.

"It is quite a piece of artwork," he said.

The museum is still under reconstruction following a 2005 fire, but owner J.C. Stilwell has told *The St. Ignace News* he hopes

to reopen it in August.

Mr. Kuriger looks forward to having visitors see his creation there.

"I will miss it," he said, "but I will enjoy having my living room back."



Dale Dumas of Manistee County shows his prowess at the rivet throw at the International Ironworker Festival Saturday, August 11, in Mackinaw City.

Ironworkers Show Skills

At right: Chad McNeal and his son, Johnny, from Alpena, pose in front of a featured motorcycle at the well attended International Ironworker Festival Saturday. The motorcycle displays items dedicated to the ironworker trade, including gas tanks built to resemble acetylene welding tanks, milled spokes that resemble torch heads, and wrenches.



At left: Charlie Shoot (left) of Dayton, Ohio, an ironworker for more than 40 years, tries his hand at the spud throw during the International Ironworker Festival in Mackinaw City.

Building Inspector Hiring Put on Hold at Newton Twp.

By Ryan Schlehuder

The building inspector position in Newton Township will not be filled until the township board resolves its issues with the state regarding alleged state code violations by its former building inspector, John "Hughey" McNeil, said Township Supervisor Bob Brotherton at a meeting Wednesday, August 8.

Township Clerk Alice Zdebski read aloud a letter sent July 6 to the township by the state's Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG), which oversees the state's Building and Construction Codes. The letter stated that the township has yet to satisfy all of DLEG's demands.

It is best for the township to wait until it resolves its issues with the state, Mr. Brotherton said, before it fills the inspector position.

"I recommend waiting until we see what the state does to us, because they may put limits on us," he said.

The DLEG is asking for all inspection reports and certificates of occupancy issued between September 2002 and September 2006, which, claimed Mrs. Zdebski, Mr. McNeil possesses, but has yet to relinquish to the township. Mr. McNeil could not be reached for comment by press time.

"If you remember," said Mr. Brotherton to the board, "Hughey said he gave the occupancy permits to the residents and didn't make any copies, so he doesn't have anything, anyway."

The state bureau began an investigation after receiving an anonymous complaint that Mr. McNeil, while working as the township building inspector, was inspecting his own work he had done in the township with his self-owned building business, violating state and township codes. Because the state investigation is ongoing, state inspectors have not made information available about possible consequences of the alleged violations.

Newton Township, in its effort to appease state officials investigating the violations allegedly committed by the township building inspector and the lack of oversight by the township, adopted a conflict of interest policy earlier this year and responded to the DLEG's demands to hand over minutes and documentation of building and electrical documents from September 16, 2002, through September 2006, a total of 136 permits.

The township board also attempted to help Mr. McNeil improve his work performance, however, his state certificate for inspection had expired, and he was replaced on an interim basis by Dick Oliver, the township's assessor, who is also certified to inspect buildings.

The DLEG has also instructed the township to provide the department with any ongoing and future building and electrical permit documentation so that it can be assured the township is following

state codes.

The township's electrical inspector, Jim Zdebski, and Mr. Oliver are now required to use standard application and permit forms provided by the state.

The board agreed to implement the DLEG's requirements for the electrical inspector and interim building inspector.

Ballfield Easement Access Issue

Negotiations are ongoing to obtain an easement to the township ballfield from the main road. Dale Laidlaw, the owner of property adjacent to the field, promised the board that by its next meeting September 12, he will make an unencumbered offer to donate 15 feet of his property for public access to the field. Owing to a lien against the property, Mr. Laidlaw is not able to make the donation at this time.

The township is working on another 15-foot easement agreement with Kurt Doepke, who also owns property near the ballfield.

With the two easements, and two vacant lots of land donated by Dr. Thomas Latus of Florida, said Mr. Brotherton, the township ballfield will have enough space for parking and it will have a driveway access from the main road to the ballfield.

Agreement With Garfield EMT

Township Fire Chief Neil McArthur told the board that Aaron Oberle, a certified emergency technician who works on the Garfield Township ambulance

Bayside Live!

Gene Perry, Chasin' Steel To Perform



Chasin' Steel

Gene Perry will be featured in a Locals on the Bay concert Wednesday, August 15, at 7 p.m. at St. Ignace Marina. Mr. Perry's musical style can be described as classic rock with some country, modern rock, blues, oldies, jazz, and show tunes, delivered with an "on vacation" spirit.

Also at the marina, Chasin' Steel will perform for Bayside Live! Thursday, August 16, at 7 p.m. The group's name is taken from a reference to band members' favorite pastime of steelhead fishing, as they perform "bluegrass, on the fly." Jonah, Jacob, and Jason Kuhlman and Adam Carpenter make up the traditional bluegrass group and feature mandolin, guitar, hammered dulcimer, bass guitar, banjo, and vocals. They are based in Marquette.

Next week, Mackinaw will perform for Locals on the Bay and Emily Evashevski for Bayside Live!



Gene Perry

corp, will consult with Garfield Township this month to see if he will be able to work with Newton Township, as well, even if it may be on a part-time basis.

Mr. Oberle is hoping to work with Newton Township to gain more experience in his career field, Mr. McArthur said. Newton Township currently has no designated emergency medical technician.

Fire Department Tanker Sold

John Frisch of Gould City beat out four other bidders to purchase the township fire department's tanker truck, which has a 1,000-gallon tank. Mr. Frisch's bid was the highest at \$790.12.

Other bidders included George Ducsay, who offered \$777, Frank Ott, who offered \$511, Dennis Salper, who bid \$350, and Jack Howard, who offered \$268.

The firetruck is a 1979 Ford with an estimated 78,000 miles on it. Earlier this year, the township replaced it with a 1980 pumper from Portage Township that can hold 1,000 gallons of water.

Roof Repair Bid Awarded

George Tremblay of Newton Township was awarded the bid to replace the township hall roof and add reverse gables to the doors of the fire hall, which is attached to the township hall, for a total of \$14,900, which includes \$25 per hour for any overtime work needed.

The township received five bids for the project. Next lowest bidder

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