

Antique Tractor Clubs Enjoy the Opportunity To Be First To Cross Mackinac Bridge

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antique tractor parade.
Mr. Socolovitch, a retired ironworker, had helped build the Mackinac Bridge. When the center span was completed on the bridge in 1957, he was working on the north tower and at the end of the day, Mr. Socolovitch was the second person to cross the bridge and walk home, he recalled.

"When they told me I was going to be Grand Marshal and second in the [tractor] parade," he said, "I said, 'Hey, that's two twos in a row.' So I was very happy."

He drove a 1951 Farmall MD prototype tractor with a Detroit diesel engine in the parade. Only four of the models were made. Another man, he said, has the other three, and now wants his.

Mr. Socolovitch is not selling. "I just hope they ask us back again next year," said Dave Hunt of Big Rapids. "I've never seen so many smiles in one day as I did today."

Mr. Hunt is a member of the Greasy Fingers Two Cylinder Club, and he drove a 1950 Model A John Deere.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime thing for us old boys to be the first to take a tractor across the Mackinac Bridge," he said.

Leonard Schreier of Pellston had four tractors in the parade. He drove a 1952 Model 40 John Deere.

Mr. Schreier was joined in the parade by his son, Lee, who traveled from Flint, and his daughter, Tammra Baker, who drove north from Detroit to participate in the parade. His neighbor, Norm Warner, drove the fourth tractor.

"I loved every minute of it," Mr. Schreier said. "I looked forward to it since February. I felt very honored to be a part of it. It's just something you'll remember for the rest of your life."

Mr. Schreier helped organizer Bob Baumgras with event preparations in Mackinaw City.

"I wish that it had been my idea," he said. "It's just a wonderful thing."

Mr. Schreier, like Mr. Socolovitch, said he would readily join the parade again.

"If they're going to run it tomorrow," he said, "I'll come back."

Mr. Baumgras got the idea for the event by looking at the Mackinac Bridge Web site.

"My intention was to see tractors cross the Mackinac Bridge," he said, following the parade. "That was my goal."

The parade turned into a family event, he said, even though only one person was allowed to ride on each tractor.

"What those families did was they came and watched and they took the pictures," he said. "They were on the Mackinaw [City] side,



Led by the Michigan State Police from the St. Ignace Post, the antique tractors reached the Mackinac Bridge toll plaza about 1 p.m. Friday, September 12. Gary Pollock (waving) of Howell, a retired crash test engineer with General Motors, drove the first tractor across the bridge, a red 1940 Farmall H. He was followed by former Mackinac Bridge ironworker Ed Socolovitch of Cheboygan, who served as Grand Marshal of the parade. He drove a rare 1951 Farmall MD prototype tractor. Only four of the machines were ever made.

and then they drove their vehicles over to the St. Ignace side and watched. They watched the parade again. So I think in a way it did kind of work out."

Operating on only 20 minutes of sleep, he was shaking hands and gathering comments from participants Friday evening.

By Sunday, September 14, he told *The St. Ignace News*, the City of St. Ignace and Kewadin Shores Casino already had invited the event to return, and he plans to talk with the Mackinac Bridge Authority and Mackinaw City about the idea in the next few days.

"It's looking good," he said of a potential return. He already has worked out solutions for a few problems he faced during the planning process.

He now realizes arranging the first tractor crossing was more work than he had anticipated. Improving communications between tractor clubs and participants would be his number one priority if the event moves forward.

A small business owner, he owns Owosso Tractor Parts. He credits Operations Manager Dean Steiner at the Mackinac Bridge for clearly communicating what would be required.

"Dean Steiner is a man who is

true to his word," said Mr. Baumgras. "If he tells you, it happens."

Betty Spangler of Ontario, Ohio, drove the last tractor in the parade. She and her husband, Jack, who also drove a tractor, traveled 500 miles to participate in the crossing. The couple had crossed the bridge years ago while on vacation.

Mrs. Spangler drove an Oliver 60 and Mr. Spangler drove a Case VAC.

Uncomfortable with shifting gears, at first Mrs. Spangler was unsure of making the passage over the bridge. Her concerns were quickly overcome, and she said everything went smoothly.

"I wish more people from our club could have come," said Mrs. Spangler. "I think they would have enjoyed it."

The event intrigued him, Mr. Spangler said, so he signed up for the parade.

"We're 77 years old," said Mr. Spangler. "We might not ever get to do this again. It's just fantastic when you go up that bridge. It just overwhelms you, the bridge, because we're not from here. We don't go over it daily."

Roger McCarthy of Blanchard drove a 1954 John Deere 70 said he was "smiling all the way across." He wished his grandson, Ryan, 8, could have joined him. Participants were required to be at least 18 years old. He hopes that in 10 years, if the event takes place again, when Ryan is old enough to participate in an antique tractor parade across the bridge, he will remember his grandfather was in the first one.

Richard Crane Memorial Big Rig Truck Show

Ed Reavie of Nostalgia Productions in St. Ignace said this year's truck show was among the best. Mr. Reavie is the organizer of the 13th annual truck show, which is part of the Truck-lite Trophy Series hosted by the National Association of Show Trucks. The trucks are judged and the top three are recognized in each category.

"This was one of our better shows," Mr. Reavie told *The St. Ignace News* Sunday. Ninety-seven trucks were registered in the show.

Bo Trout, president of the association, agreed. Trucks, drivers, and the visitors made for a successful show, he said.

"I think it was one of our best shows," he said. "The crowds were the best they've ever been."

Brian Hitchcock of Webberville has been a truck driver for 32 years, has driven more than two million miles, and now owns MBH Trucking, which has 20 employees. He has been coming to the St. Ignace show since 1997. His company has a fleet of 13 trucks, which primarily haul agriculture supplies to Ontario and Ohio.

Trucking, he said, is a hard profession, requiring days and weeks away from family and working around delivery schedules that are not your own.

His son, Rick, also drove a truck to the show and both father and son made deliveries on their way to St. Ignace. They plan to be back on the road working by Monday.

Mr. Hitchcock was showing a rebuilt 1996 Peterbilt. He put 750,000 miles on the truck, although he now spends most of his

time in the office. His three sons, Rick, Jordan, and Ryan, rebuilt the truck giving it a lower, slick look, which included eliminating door handles, unnecessary lights, and outside horns.

Inside is a leather cab that includes a flat screen television, refrigerator, and sink. From the driver's seat, gauges can be seen lining the length of the dashboard, with a row of unlabeled switches.

About two years ago, one of trucks rebuilt by his sons was filmed on the cable television show "Trick My Truck." During the opening credits, the crew is shown riding in on the Hitchcock truck. The scene said Rick Hitchcock, is on-air for about 20 seconds, yet it took the crew more than four hours to shoot it.

Rick Hitchcock, who drove the 2005 Peterbilt to St. Ignace, has been driving since 2001, when he turned 18. He likes being out on the road and seeing new things.


He and his brothers rebuilt the truck to include eight-inch straight pipes, fenders, and lowered the cab six inches. With the air ride, it lifts up during travel and he has had no problems driving in the winter.

The interior includes a wood floor and dyed leather interior to match the outside paint.

The trailer the Mitchell family has attached to their cab will head to Texas after the show to carry needed items for Hurricane Ike survivors. The trailer is part of an organization called Hope and Encouragement for Humanity, which helps people in need.

Trucking is a family occupation for the Mitchells, including Dennis

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The St. Ignace Community Foundation would like to thank the following businesses and individuals for financial contribution to the All Class Reunion held on July 25. The Alumni Fund of the St. Ignace Community Foundation received a \$9,000 endowment as a result of this activity. On behalf of the Reunion Committee and the Foundation Board, a special thanks to those listed below:

- St. Ignace Area Schools
- St. Ignace Chamber of Commerce - Ambassadors
- The Locker Room - Dorene Ingalls
- Dave Kunze
- The Old Fish House - Lisa Swope
- Arnold Line - Moie Brown
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- Village Inn
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- Mackinac Grille
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