



Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center

PO Box 240 • 180 Marina Road
Knife River, MN 55609
info@krhcc.org

May 2022

By Paul von Goertz - KRHCC Board Member

WOODWORKER HONORS GRANDPARENTS WITH LOVING HANDS.

By Audrey Hanson

In 2002 my grandfather, Jim Hanson (mostly known as “Squeaky” or just “Squeak”) finished *The Patricia*, a 16’ boat named after my grandmother. He built it for her as a way for them to get out on the Lake together, not as his commercial fishing boat.

Photo credit: Submitted by Audrey Hanson.



The boat was very dear to him as it was one of the last boats he built. In 2020, my father, Eric, and I were talking about what I should do for my final 4-H project, as I wanted to do something big. My father suggested restoring the boat as it had been sitting outside for the last 13 years and was looking very rough. I thought he was crazy for suggesting it, but what could go wrong (?) and so I said “yes.”

This would not be the first big project I have attempted. I knew there would be challenges. In 2019, I rebuilt an old Scamper camper to enter in the Lake County Fair, but I knew I could top it with restoring *The Patricia*. I decided to restore *The Patricia* because I had seen a picture of what it looked like before it sat outside, and how much joy it had brought my grandfather.

“The biggest thing that drove me to restore it was to have it as a big memory of what he loved.”

While choosing to do projects like this, it surprised many people that at my age of 19 and 20, I would choose to take on a project this challenging.



I started to restore *The Patricia* at the beginning of March, 2020, and had to have it done by the first week of August. I knew there was a lot of work that had to be done but had no idea of how bad all the wood actually was.

Image: *The Patricia* “before” with “hogged” keel
Photo credit: Submitted by Audrey Hanson

After I got started, I found out that over three-quarters of the planks had to be replaced. With no time to waste, I went straight to work. We had to special-order wood, glue, and epoxy. While we waited for all the supplies to arrive, we got to work cutting six inches off the stern as it was all rotten and needed to be replaced. We had to do this without the boat falling apart. Come to find out there was a nail every two inches, which made it hard not to break the good boards.

Image: Audrey uses an oscillating multi-tool to remove rotted hull planking. Photo credit: Submitted by Audrey Hanson



When I started to put the new boards in place, we ran into complications, like realizing that the boat was bent out of shape and none of the boards were the same size. The boat was very heavy as we had to flip it over multiple times to work on it. It was very deep from keel to deck making it hard to flip it in our garage.

When all the outside pieces were replaced, we started to work on the interior by putting in new frames (“ribs”) and floor supports. With that done, we had to flip it back over.

It was then time to sand all the glue and epoxy off the hull. We found it difficult to get the epoxy on just right to look the best. After the epoxy was cured, I sanded it all one more time. It was now time to prep for painting. When mixing the boat paint, we found out how fast it dried as we attempted to spread it around, otherwise it left weird marks in the paint. After the outside was done, we painted the inside, seats, and the bow to finish it off.

“I wanted to put something on the boat in memory of my grandfather, which gave me the idea to put ‘In loving memory of Squeaky’ on the stern.”

To create the new letters for the boat, I decided to use our cricut lettering machine as I could seal the letters to hold them in place. My biggest wish was to put something on the boat in memory of my grandfather, which gave me the idea to put “In loving memory of Squeaky” on the stern of the boat. There were many emotional moments between my father and myself as we did the lettering. My dad had helped his father (my grandfather) build *The Patricia*, and now my dad was helping me. Image: The restored *Patricia* with Audrey and her dad, Eric. Photo credit: Submitted by Audrey Hanson



I went on to win Grand Champion at the Lake County Fair and then participated in the Minnesota State Fair, winning Grand Champion against so many other talented people.

I just wish my grandfather could see what I had accomplished with a lot of the skills he taught me.



This summer I am hoping to get the boat into Lake Superior from the Knife River Marina from where my grandfather first took it out. But first, there are just a couple more final touches that need to be made to make me feel like it’s one hundred percent complete and ready for the water.

Image: Audrey with her 1st prize won (I like “earned”) at the Minnesota State Fair. The boat was entered under the category of “Self-Determined” as it was eligible to be placed under several entry categories.

Editor’s note: This newsletter has had several stories about local boat restorations. This story was written by the boat’s restorer, Audrey Hanson, by request of the KRHCC.

By way of history, Jim Hanson and brother, Ken, were bigger than life KR commercial fishermen and their personalities contributed greatly to the character of KR. Jim died in 2019 and Ken in 2003. The KRHCC is pleased to print this story written by Audrey about how she chose to remember and honor her grandfather, Jim.

*After completing the restoration of **The Patricia**, Audrey started her second year at Lake Superior College in Duluth where she is in the Physical Therapy Assistant program. The KRHCC will make every effort to cover the launch **The Patricia!***

The KRHCC welcomes story submissions that relate to the history of the KR area. To suggest a story, email: info@krhcc.org

KENDALL FIRE OF 2014 SHOWED FAMILY RESOLVE, KR COMPASSION

Mother's Day 2022 was the 8th anniversary of the fire that nearly robbed Knife River (KR) of one of its icons.

On Mother's Day, May 11, 2014, Mary and I were headed up Marina Road to church. We stopped at Scenic 61 and there was a sheriff's deputy blocking all west bound traffic. Then the reason: clouds of black smoke billowing into the air in the vicinity of Kendall's.

Both shocked and saddened by what could be taking place, we drove on to KR Lutheran Church where others were watching what appeared to be Kendall's on fire. Was this the end of one of KR's icons?

Legend has long had it that Russ Kendall's Smokehouse began in the 1920s when William T. Kendall was delivering fish from the North Shore to Duluth when his truck broke down in KR, and he started to sell the fish before they spoiled. His son, Russ, eventually took over the business that now bears his name. The operation included a dance hall and tavern.

Russ died at age 85 in 2007. Kristi Kendall Olson is Russ's daughter and now represents the third generation running the business along with husband Gordon (Gordy) Olson.

Pastor Susan Berge began the Mother's Day service with a prayer for the safety of the fire fighters and a plea to help Kristi and Gordy recover from the tragedy that was

unfolding. By the end of the service, the smoke had been reduced and all hoped the building, or at least part of it, was still standing.

By late afternoon KRers learned that the fire had been seen by a passer-by about 7:30 that morning and apparently started near a water heater in the smokehouse. The production area at the back of the business was gutted; the familiar red storefront and attached bar remained standing, but with significant smoke damage. No one was injured. Firefighters from Two Harbors and Clifton had the fire contained within an hour.

The evening of the fire, Randy Ellestad, owner of the KR Campground, called me and said a fund – like today’s “GoFundMe®” account - should be started to help the Olson’s recover from their loss.

The next morning Randy and I were at the scene of the fire, an awful sight. Gordy was trying to make some sense out of the chaos and as soon as we had a chance, we asked him if it would be OK to start a fund to get them back on their feet. He said that would be OK and so we went to Two Harbors Federal Credit Union and set up an account. I agreed to temporarily put the account in my name. Time was of the essence to get word of the donation account to the public as local and state media were still covering the story.

The clean-up

KRers soon began to organize to help the Olson’s clean up the mess as soon as insurance people and fire investigators had completed their work.

On the following Saturday about 20 KRers showed up in old clothes with cleaning buckets and mops and went to work. If you have ever helped clean up after a fire you know what a dirty, stinky and even dangerous mess it is, and to this fire add oily fish remnants.

At noon, Steve and Carol Carlson, who owned Emily’s at the time, brought sandwiches and beverages for everyone. I can’t recall if we worked two Saturdays in a row or both days of the weekend, but at the end of two days’ work, Gordy gave me the longest handshake I ever experienced. He admitted he and Kristi had seriously considered not reopening, but the show of support from KRers and also friends who hosted a spaghetti fund raiser, convinced them to give it their best shot at rebuilding.

Contributions from all over the area

At the end of the month, I received an accounting of the donations received from the credit union. It showed generous donations not only from KR, but from the metro and

all over the area, probably as a result of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* covering the fire. To me, it confirmed Kendall's reputation for tasty smoked fish was well known.

I turned the donation account over to Kristi and Gordy at that time and I can only assume, and hope, the level of giving continued and was a big help in recovering losses that may not have been insured, and replacing lost income.

As we all know, Kendall's was rebuilt thanks to the resolve of Kristi and Gordy and the support from KR and all over the state. As I recall, Kendall's was ready to reopen for the 2014 holiday season.



To many visitors to the North Shore, Kendall's is KR.

There are several photos of the Kendall Smokehouse fire online. We could not use any of them because they were all noted as copyright protected, and as frugal Norwegians we would not pay the requested one-time use fee. But, you can Google "Kendall Smokehouse fire DULUTH NEWS TRIBUNE" and view them.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

"SYTTENDE MAI" CELEBRATION KICKS OFF KRHCC'S SEASON OF HOSTING EVENTS

The restoration of the KR train depot is finally complete, and the depot is open, albeit on a limited basis, to host events.

The first event of the 2022 summer season was "Syttende Mai" ("17th of May") that celebrates Norwegian Independence Day. The celebration by Norwegian/Americans and "wannabes" was held on Sunday, the 15th to take advantage of the weekend. Event organizers were the Duluth Sons of Norway, Nortun Lodge and the Save Our Ship (SOS) organization that owns the Viking ship LEIF ERIKSON, now at the KRHCC.



A gusty SW wind sent paper picnic plates flying at times but filled out the American and Norwegian flags magnificently!

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

Randy Ellestad, who serves on both the boards of the KRHCC and SOS said he counted 65 people in attendance at one time and the suggestion to “Bring a dish to share” paid off handsomely with plenty of American picnic food and of course, pickled herring, smoked fish and lefse.



The best of Norwegian and American picnic foods satisfied everyone.

Photo credit: Paul von Goertz

KR’S FIRST SMOKED FISH CONNOISSEURS

Our son and family have property north of Two Harbors that supports 50 some odd maple trees, and so all five of them have gotten into maple syruping.

Mary and I spent a day in mid-April watching them gather and boil down the sap. It is a very time-consuming process as 40 gallons of sap will yield only one gallon of syrup. 39 gallons of water need to be boiled off.

One of the perks of being KRHCC newsletter editor is that you can show off your grandchildren. Here, Elin von Goertz, age 7, helps her family collect sap on their property north of Two Harbors. Photo credit: Papa



I was curious to what degree, if any, KR’s indigenous peoples may have dabbled in maple syruping, given there was a fish collection station and summer village in KR, and a ridge of maple trees above KR extending to Larsmont.

So, for the answer, I went to the KRHCC’s “go to” historian, Todd Lindahl.

Todd said that, yes, indeed native people maple syruped. We can only presume the sap came from the maple ridge above Knife River.

Native people used maple sugar to season fish. If fish were not eaten fresh, it was prepared on a rack over a fire and stored for later use during the winter months in makuks buried in the ground. "Makuks" are sewn birch bark containers used for storage of food and other small items. The maple sugar was stored in makuks along with the fish.



Image: A Native woman boiling maple sap. Metal pots were used after the arrival of Europeans. Photo credit: Bureau of American Ethnology.

From Mid-March for about a month maple syrup was gathered and boiled down to sugar. Often families would go from the stand of trees directly to the fishing area, like the mouth of the Knife.

One large stand of maples next to the Knife yielded a cache of nested makuks, wooden ash splines, and an ancient copper axe for making cuts to insert taps, called spiles.

Image: Wooden taps (spiles) and a birch bark makuk. Photo credit: Bureau of American Ethnology.



I would like to believe KR is the smoked fish capital of Minnesota starting from the 1920s, when smoked fish houses lined the KR highway 61 "business corridor." It's fun to speculate to what degree native people played in developing the smoking process, and recipes that bring smoke fish aficionados to KR today.

In next month's KRHCC newsletter I will present one theory of who originated the smoked fish recipe for which KR became known. Hint – it was not a Norwegian! (smoked lutefisk? – urp).

THE NORTHEAST TAKES ITS TOLL ON OUR COMMUNITY FLAG

I am always saddened to see our flag faded and torn flying from a pole owned by someone who apparently never looks up when they walk past it.

When we had our “First Flag Raising” ceremony conducted by the Two Harbors American Legion Post the fall of 2020, we bought a special “Ceremonial Flag” that measured about 4’ x 10’, very big and impressive. We figured we would fly it just on national holidays and very special occasions and then take it down for a smaller “every day flag.” However, the larger flag looked magnificent and should for sure spark a bit of patriotism in passers-by.

The flagpole and 24/7 lighting were gifts of the Alert Wieme family of KR in honor of Wieme family members. Krista Sannes Mosby, Albert’s granddaughter, offered to pay for the special occasion flag.

Last summer, Krista visited KR and the KRHCC, noticed the flag had faded, and also had a tear. I had noticed the fading, but not the tear. She offered to buy a new one and that is the one you will see flying this Memorial Day.

It appears our community flag will have to be replaced on a yearly basis or earlier if we expect it to stand up to the Northeast. It’s a special “weather resistant” (?) stitched flag and costs about \$120. For sure it’s American made as is our flagpole.

We cannot expect Krista to replace the flag every year, a flag that honors all County veterans and speaks for KR patriotism. So, if you would like to pay for a replacement flag as may be needed, please let me know and I will make a note of it.

Email: info@krhcc.org

DAVID GRONG ELECTED TO KRHCC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At the KHRCC’S annual meeting held March 2, its directors unanimously approved the nominating committee’s recommendation that David Grong be elected to the KRHCC’s board of directors. He fills a vacancy created when Duane Madison completed his term and elected to focus on KR family genealogy. Thank you, Duane, for your continued service to the KRHCC!

“Dave has been one of the legs of a three-legged stool that has brought the depot to where it is today,” said Paul von Goertz, KRHCC board president.” We are now entering Phase II of our long-range plan to create a fishing exhibit built around CRUSADER and detail our plans for programming.” Dave has demonstrated his commitment to the KRHCC and has the career experience we need to go forward.

More about David:

David was a long-time resident of Marshall, MN, where he owned Carlson & Stewart Refrigeration, Inc., a contracting firm that designed and installed commercial and industrial refrigeration systems throughout the upper mid-west.

While in Marshall David served on the Airport Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission, and Marshall Municipal Utilities Commission. As part of his professional career David served on the board and chaired the International Institute of Ammonia Refrigeration (IIAR).

Dave served five and a half years as a pilot in the USAF and is a veteran of the Viet Nam conflict. He enjoys woodworking and mechanical devices.

Upon retirement Dave and his wife, Linda, divide their time between Minneapolis and KR. They are active members of Knife River Lutheran Church.



Image: David H. Grong. We could have used a typical mug shot here but thought Dave would prefer this one. That’s about a 14 lb. Chinook salmon Dave caught off McQuade Harbor and netted by Linda. Photo credit: Linda Grong

JUNE “PICNIC TRAINS”

The North Shore Scenic Railroad’s (NSSR) popular “Picnic Trains” with KR as destination will be here for the Saturdays of June 4 and 11. Riders will be capped at 60 and if past ridership is an indicator, most will be families. It’s been observed by the KR Station Master that about a third will picnic at the depot, a third will head for the beach, and a third for Great Lakes Candy Kitchen!



Image: Picnic Train riders arrive at the KR depot in 2019. Photo credit: Paul von Goertz
For ticketing information go to:
<https://duluthtrains.com/event/kniferiverpicnic/>

MEMORIAL DAY OPEN HOUSE AT THE DEPOT

Have your morning coffee at the KR depot 9 AM – Noon

We hope your Memorial Day includes paying tribute to our veterans. A good time would be first thing in the morning at an Open House at the depot.

Take a moment to offer thanks and gratitude to Lake County veterans at the granite memorial placed on the Heritage Center site last summer by the Two Harbors American Legion Post 109.

The depot is now open on a limited basis until staffing is in place, so come and see all that has been accomplished in less than 30 months, including displays and exhibits.

MARCH DONATIONS, MEMORIALS, HONORARIUMS AND SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorship:

Depot clock in honor of Todd Lindahl by Jim and Deb Alert

The KRHCC is a 501 (c3) non-profit so all donations whether in the form of a memorial, honorarium or sponsorship are fully tax deductible. Your comments and suggestions for this monthly emailed newsletter are always welcome. Email to: info@krhcc.org

If you have family or friends who may enjoy reading this newsletter, they can access the current and all past issues on the "Current News" page of our website at: krhcc.org

Newsletter published and copyrighted by Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center. Editor/Writer: Paul von Goertz; Historians/Researchers: Todd Lindahl, Randy Ellestad and Paul von Goertz; Graphic Design and Production: Anne-Lù Hovis.

No portion of this newsletter may be reproduced without written permission from the KRHCC. Contact: info@krhcc.org