

Teaching an Old Car New Tricks

by Lin, Kimmie, and Kate Holtrop



Cliff Lund, resident of Fruitport, Michigan, has spent the last five years refurbishing and rebuilding his grandfather's old car.

The 1928 Chrysler Plymouth Q was originally used by Cliff's grandparents, who managed to fit six people inside for a trip from Michigan to their New Mexico homestead. Back in Muskegon, Cliff's grandfather used the Plymouth to take his daughter to school.

Around 1938, Cliff's grandparents bought a new property in Norton Shores, with sixty acres, a house, and a barn. Cliff grew up next door. Before he was sixteen, he was driving the car around a nearby field with a friend. "We'd have to put boots in the tires, and patch the tubes, and pump them up. And in ten or fifteen minutes they'd be flat again." He chuckled, recalling the memory of having to use parts of other tires to patch holes in the tire casings. The vacuum pressure fuel system didn't work very well, either, so they had to blow into the gas tank to get fuel into the reservoir. The car would run for ten to fifteen minutes before it ran out of gas.

The Plymouth was stored in a lean-to garage alongside a chicken coop by his grandparents' barn. "It was pretty rusty and kind of a mess," Cliff said, since the car was always wet, and eventually, the garage roof caved in on it. Since Cliff was sixteen, he's owned the Plymouth. He's stored it indoors ever since.

Five years ago, Cliff was finally able to start repairing his car. Fixing the radiator was a big challenge. The carburetor also had to be replaced, but he was able to patch the leaky gas tank and

coat the inside with a plastic coating.

Inside the Plymouth, he redid the seat coverings, which were originally an olive colored, pleated material, but are now a more vibrant green, plushy material. The car has a mostly-handmade wooden body panels under the exterior layer of metal. Green material matching the seat covers is tacked to the wooden panels now, to finish the interior. Cliff commented, "I bet it had thousands of little upholstery tacks, they tack everything. All by hand. Imagine them doing that in a factory. I just can't believe it." The floor in front wasn't originally carpeted, but had rubber mats encircling the gear shifter. Cliff decided the rubber would be too difficult to remake, so he replaced the mats with carpet. Under the carpet he refashioned the removable floorboards, which hide the battery.

The roof's wood, which held up the driver side door, had to be redone, because it had rotted out. The windows didn't originally have safety glass, but Cliff had to put it in the front windshield.



He also had to replace one of the side windows because of an accident when sand-blasting the rust off the body. An electric windshield wiper motor also takes the place of the original that was powered by vacuum pressure. Cliff remembered painting the car's exterior and being able to find the original drab green colors. "I was able to copy the colors off the dash where it hadn't deteriorated," he said.

There were lots of dents in the metal paneling and fenders, which needed extensive repair. He had to remake the wrecked running boards, cutting new wood copies of the old ones. But when asked what the most challenging part of the job was, Cliff explained, "Actually it got down to the door handles. The original door handles were

die-cast, and they were all disintegrated...That was probably the toughest part."

The story of the wheels was interesting. "There's a lot of grease fittings on it, and my uncle was big on greasing. So there was big gobs of hardened grease, and, oh, it was a big job," Cliff said. "I had a descaling tool that I went all over everything to get all that hard stuff off with." The original tires were shot. So, many years ago, he had to get new ones. He still has that new set of tires, which finally hit the road this April for the first time.

The Plymouth didn't originally have turn signals or outside mirrors, but Cliff added them



to make the car more roadworthy. To top off the ancient car's repairs, Cliff also got a refurbished 1929 license plate from someone in Zeeland, who painted on the letters, and Cliff put on a clear coat over the paint.

Over all, Cliff's favorite part of the Plymouth to repair was the engine—mechanical parts are the things he likes most. The engine is a four-cylinder flathead engine, 27 HP, and 174 cc, developed from a 1916 Maxwell. Chrysler bought out Maxwell, using their four-cylinder when they came out with the Plymouth model. Most of the other Chrysler engines were six-cylinder engines at the time.

The speedometer isn't quite accurate, but rumor has it that the car will go up to 60 mph. Cliff remarked, "I had it going fifty. But it's not made to run like that, you know." Cliff thinks he'll drive the car in the Old Fashioned Days parade this year, and if he decides to do any traveling with the Plymouth, he'll probably try to figure out how many miles per gallon it gets.

Cliff's grandfather would certainly be thrilled to see his ancient car on the road again.

Maple River Comeback? Meeting Discusses Restoration Prospects

From the Times Indicator

Written by Richard C. Wheeler Sr., Editor/Publisher, Times Indicator

A recent meeting at the Cedar Creek Township Hall could lead to a historic reversal of man-made changes to the Muskegon River.

Approximately 40 people, including Cedar Creek and Bridgeton Township officials and several Maple Island area residents and property owners, met on Friday, March 4 to talk about the prospects for restoring the historic Maple River.

The Maple River once ran for more than four miles around the south side of Maple Island, straddling the border between the two counties. The stream, called an "anabranch," carried some of the Muskegon River's flow to where it rejoined the big river downstream. According to a 2015 report prepared for the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly, the southern anabranch was progressively closed while the northern branch was deepened. An embankment built as part of a highway project left the Maple River completely severed from the Muskegon River at its head, with Muskegon River backflow still filling parts of the former stream bed at times.



The report by a University of Michigan hydrologist noted that an 1837 plat map appears to indicate that the river flows were nearly equal between the two streams.

Flooding in the Maple Island neighborhood, especially in recent years, helped motivate property owners to investigate the possibility of restoring the Maple. Their investigations led them to the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly.

At the start of the March 4 meeting, MRWA Executive Director Scott Faulkner said that the Maple River project, like other watershed projects, is being evaluated on the basis of four key questions:

- Does it represent a net gain for the health of the watershed?
- What is the likely economic impact?
- Do people want it to happen?
- Is the project sustainable?

That 2015 report indicated that a restoration of the anabranching, split-channel river system could dramatically improve the habitat for many fish species. The report states that, while some wild rice still grows in the former river course, wild rice flourished in the area before the river's course changed.

The same report found that a restoration of the original river channel would help reduce flooding and erosion in the main branch, the Muskegon River.

MRWA Principal Scientist Marty Holtgren PhD said that pursuing a restoration project will require plenty of collaboration.

"It's important for us to have diverse partners in something like this," Holtgren said. Holtgren said that the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the local agricultural community will all have to be involved in the studying and planning.

Other people with an ancestral connection to the rivers have become part of the project. The MRWA recently announced a "far-reaching" partnership with the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians (LRBOI).

"The tribe is very pleased to be partnering closely with MRWA," said Frank Beaver, Director of the tribe's Natural Resources Department. "Our interests in Maple River center largely on our traditional cultural interests, including the revitalization of resources that could include expanded fish and wildlife habitat, and improved conditions for manoomin (wild rice)."

The partnership also includes working with the US Army Corps of Engineers, in hopes of conducting an advanced hydrological analysis of the proposed project area over the next year.

The LRBOI will serve as a non-federal sponsor of the project through the Army Corps of Engineers. The hydrological study is expected to provide in-depth information about how the restoration project would affect the proposed project area during future high-water conditions.

"We both (MRWA and LRBOI) have staff scientists and biologists," said Dr. Holtgren. "However, the real excitement for me is how watershed restoration will

benefit from the indigenous knowledge that LRBOI brings. This knowledge has been passed on through generations of people that have a deep relationship to the watershed."

Scott Faulkner said that project partners will continue sharing the information they gather. Faulkner said that the MRWA may hold a similar meeting in the fall to provide updates.

Early funding for the Maple River Restoration Project is coming from the Ice Mountain Environmental Stewardship Fund and the Fremont Area Community Foundation.

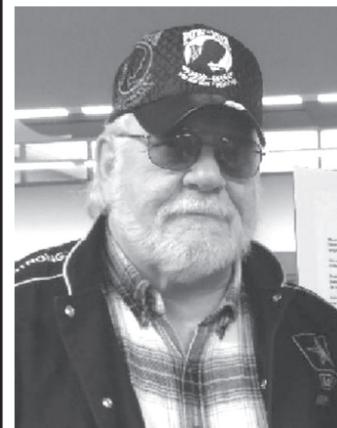
More information about MRWA's Maple River Restoration Project is available online at https://mrwa.org/mrwa_projects/maple-river-restoration-project/.

A video recording of the March 4 meeting is available online at cedarcreektownship.org.

William "Bill" Drake Jr.

1949 - 2022

William "Bill" Merritt Drake Jr., age 73, passed away in Muskegon on March 20, 2022.



Bill was born on February 17, 1949, in Grand Haven, MI, to his parents William and Elaine (Ernst) Drake. He married the former Donna Bramer on August 7, 1970, and they spent 52 wonderful years together. Bill was a proud Vietnam

Veteran who loved his country. Bill will be lovingly remembered by his wife, Donna Drake; two daughters: Nicole (Robbie) Lucas and Candi (Dean) Zambelli; six grandchildren; five siblings: Mary Evans, Carol Hall, Tom Drake, Doug Drake, and Sheila Drake.

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