

“Really Cool” Ice Sculptures Attract Big Crowds

Want to see some really cool ice sculptures? They're the creation of Roger Nelson of Ellsworth, Wis. A plumber by trade, he owns a small acreage a few miles outside town. He started creating the ice sculptures about 15 years ago and has continued to make them every winter.

Nelson has artesian wells flowing from porous rock formations on his property. He taps into the wells with underground pipes, which run to a couple of dozen locations throughout the property. He then attaches pvc pipes that rise out of the ground up to 30 ft. high. Holes drilled randomly into the pipes allow water to spray out and eventually creates bizarre ice formations. Even after a couple months of ice build-up, often you can still see streams of water squirting out of the pipes. Wind blowing from different directions causes the ice to change the way the ice builds up, which causes the bizarre shapes.

Nelson starts creating the sculptures in December. Since the water flows all winter long, the sculptures continue to change throughout the season depending on the weather conditions. “You never know what they're going to look like,” says Nelson.



Photo by Luke Gergen

Lots of giant, sparkling white “ice castles” rise up out of the ground every winter near Ellsworth, Wis. They're created by Roger Nelson, who taps into artesian wells on his property with underground pipes, then attaches pvc pipes that rise up to 30 ft. high. Holes drilled randomly into pipes allow water to spray out and eventually creates the bizarre ice formations.

Kids Love His Tough Aluminum Toys

Norman Hornburg makes toys that are tough.

Built big out of 1/8 and 1/4-in. thick aluminum, they are strong enough for his 6 and 8-year-old boys to ride. Plus they are personalized with individually stamped letters with the child's name on the top and an encouraging message on the bottom.

The Pennsylvania welder and mechanic began making toys when his sons were 3 and 5 – and seemed to break all their purchased toys. A friend suggested he use his talents and leftover materials to make a bulldozer.

“I made it out of steel, and it weighed 53 lbs.,” Hornburg says. “A grader weighed 30 lbs., so after that I decided to use aluminum.”

His first aluminum toy was a pickup and the second was a dump truck that he painted blue. He followed up with a bulldozer. The toys now weigh a more manageable 10 lbs.

“They are about double the size of Tonka toys,” Hornburg says, noting the size is determined by the wheels he uses. Some are lawn mower wheels, and he purchases others from a supply house.

Hornburg makes axles out of 1/2-in. stainless steel.

“I built a grader that is steerable, and the kids can ride on it. They love the ones that steer,” he says, noting he has also made an articulating dump truck and front-end loader. He makes them Lego compatible so the toys can have passengers.

The toys are TIG welded for strength and sandblasted before priming and painting. When others saw the toys, they started ordering them for their children, and Hornburg sells them for \$225 and \$300.

“Kids appreciate anything that's personalized to them, and kids realize that nobody else has these things. Make something unique and a kid will love it – that takes the pressure off if it isn't perfect,” he says.

He's also discovered a couple of other benefits from toy making.

“Since they've been getting my toys, my boys call them the ‘Dirtworks toys,’ and they haven't asked for toys from the big box stores. They know the difference now, and they know we can make them better than what you can buy,” Hornburg says.

And, even better, they are learning to make their own. He worked with his youngest son to draw and form his first toy recently – a



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“monster” truck. Hornburg welded it for him. “It's been a real joy. The kids want to come to my shop. The toys are good because they are unique, long lasting and it gets them involved,” he says.

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Carousel lets Vince Carr display hundreds of farm toys at a time. Twelve 2-ft. deep shelves rotate on a 16-ft. long shaft, with lights spotlighting toys as they go around.

Rotating Toy Collection Carousel

Wow!

That's the reaction Vince Carr, and his brother, Alvin, were going for when they installed a spinning display in Vince's Baton Rouge, La., farm toy shed. Modifying two 17-ft. tall Ingersoll Rand parts cabinets to create a carousel that fits in the shed required conquering plenty of physical and mental challenges.

With more than 1,000 toys, Carr wanted a unique way to display them. So, when an electrician buddy told him the parts cabinets were available for \$500, he couldn't pass it up.

“I went there 3 times to look at them, because there were no exterior bolts or screws. I thought, this isn't possible to take apart,” Carr recalls. So, he called Alvin, and they spent a couple days figuring out how to take the machine home in pieces.

“It runs like the carpet machines at big box stores,” Carr explains about his final setup. A 4-in. solid steel driveshaft turns 3-ft. dia. gears, smaller gears and chains, with everything timed.

“It took four men to lift it and put it in place in the toy shed,” Carr says. The parts cabinets, built in Germany, used 3-phase electric. Carr purchased a converter to convert to 60 hertz.

He took the two driveshafts to a shop to make one 16-ft. long shaft. After it was back home, the Carrs welded the steel shelves

together to build 12 shelves, adding extra support between the joints. When finished, the carousel was 16 ft. long, 5 1/2 ft. deep and 10 ft. high.

Carr pressure-washed old cedar fence boards to frame it in so that two shelves can be seen at a time. He glued red and green felt to the shelves to contrast with his red and green tractor models. Lights on the inside of the top of the frame spotlight the toys as they slowly spin, revealing 12 2-ft. deep shelves that hold about 700 toys.

“I don't want it to go too fast, but sometimes I have to rev the speed when it won't start,” Carr says, noting he has a switch to turn the carousel on and a dial to set the speed.

He adds that though the carousel is big, it frees up space in the shed, which is used often for family gatherings that he and his wife, Linda, host.

Altogether it took about a year to create the display. Carr is grateful to his brother and friends, Jay Manno and Randy Fountain, who helped build it. It's been worth it, he says.

“It wows everyone - even if they've seen my collection before,” he says.

He invites collectors interested in his display to contact him.

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