September 13, 2017 Meeting

The September 13, 2017 Waterloo Technical Society (WTS) meeting was called to order by President Gary Dorhout at 7:20 pm. President Dorhout noted that this was the first meeting of the 104th year of the Society.

A total of 31 members and guests attended.

Treasurer's Report. Ken Friend submitted the Treasurer's report via email after the meeting. The beginning balance of $844.17, income of $20 for two members' dues, expenses of $18 for the May 2017 speaker's meal and $250 payment to the Electric Boat Club at UNI leaving a balance of $596.17. Treasurer Friend's report stated a total of 9 honorary (Darrell Wright added) and 2 paid members gave a membership roster of 11 members.

Introduction of Officers. President Dorhout introduced the 2017-2018 officers for the 104th WTS year:

Officers for the 2017-2018 year (year 104) are:

President:	Gary Dorhout
Co-Vice Presidents:	Jerry Mohling and James Stevenson
Treasurer:	Kenneth Friend & Paul Anderson
Dinner Reservations:	Derek Eagles & Steve Lang
Secretary:	James Stevenson
Publicity/Recognition:	Todd Whiting
Auditing:	Bill Mitchell & Jim Garrett
Nominating Committee:	Open
Web Site:	Tim Schoenfelder

Old Business. President Dorhout reviewed the topics presented in the past year. The dates, speaker and topics for the 103rd WTS were:

Speakers for the 2016-2017 Meeting Year (Year 103)

- 14 Sep 2016 - Dr. Donald Gurnett from U of I. Voyager Spacecraft
- 12 Oct 2016 – Dr. Tim Nagel – Sign Technology
- 9 Nov 2016 – Mr. Steve Crouse – Facilities Changes at PEC
- 14 Dec 2016 – No Meeting
- 11 Jan 2017 - Brian Keierleber – County Engineer, Independence – Ultra High Performance Concrete used in Bridge Building
- 08 Feb 2017 – FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics – Team Presentation
- 08 Mar 2017 -- Mr. Erick Mandt– Vice-President of Sales and Marketing at Fluidyne Corporation in Cedar Falls -- “ISAM™” (Integrated Surge Anoxic Mix), an innovative wastewater treatment process for municipalities and industries.
- 12 Apr 2017 – UNI Solar Boat Team
- 10 May 2017 – Jeremiah Treloar -- Virtual Painter Training System

New Business. No new business was discussed.

Guest Speaker: Member Phil Berger arranged Mr. William Close to speak to WTS. Bill Close designed and supervised ninth grade art students in the construction and installation of larger-than-life sculptures such as a gigantic computer, 24 foot tall Olympic torch, a 22 foot tall Godzilla and a 115 foot long by 15 foot tall Carnival Cruise ship. He taught at Peet Junior. High School for 33 years before retiring. He recently published a book featuring the stories and photographs behind these Mega-sculptures. The Mega-sculptures that Mr. Close and his students created became a phenomenon in Cedar Falls from 1979 to 2002. Bill holds BFA and MFA degrees from the University of Northern Iowa.

Bill's topic **THE TECHNOLOGY INVOLVED IN THE BUILDING OF 23 MEGASCULPTURES BY 9TH GRADERS AT PEET JR. HIGH SCHOOL**.

Overview. The mega-sculptures at Peet Junior High provided more than an exercise in creating large sculptures of common objects. The students in art were lackluster about studying art. To build enthusiasm, Bill thought a challenging project that would excite the students about art and engage their interest in art would be an incredibly large sculpture that would be displayed for the school and community to see.

These sculptures had more than artwork. There were process and construction techniques to learn. The school had to provide space by permitting construction in all the hallways and cafeteria stage. The project required breaking the mega-sculpture into smaller pieces and organizing groups to create parts. The students policed each other to ensure total participation. Mating features had to fit correctly so any mis-fittings had to be resolved by the student groups affected. The construction was completed in six weeks with the sculpture displayed for one week then removed. In 33 years the students never missed the deadline. There were no student injuries on any of the projects.

Mr. Close established a $1,000 scholarship for a student majoring in Art Education. Currently the scholarship fund has $15,000.

Mega-sculptures. "A mega-sculpture is a monumental art structure depicting a popular or common object. These sculptures were inspired by the pop art works of internationally acclaimed artist Claes Oldenburg." This is the definition given by our guest speaker Mr. William Close.

The first mega-sculpture, as all others, was chosen by the art students. In 1979 Mr. Close was asked if his students could create a Lunch Week poster. This led to a discussion of what could be made to catch the attention of the student body. The conclusion was a large sculpture of a student lunch as pictured in Figure 1. . Lethargy turned to enthusiasm and a tradition was born at Peet Junior High.



Figure 1. 1979 Lunch Week Sculpture



Figure 2. 1980 Pencil. First mega-sculpture.

In 1980 for National Education Week the class decided to create a mega-pencil as pictured in Figure 2. This first outdoor sculpture was an idea for a 20 by 13 foot sculpture of a pencil. The students divided into teams, divided the sculpture into projects and completed the work in six weeks. It was displayed for one week then removed.

The construction continued in 1981 with a huge Master padlock. It was during this year that budgets for the arts were reduced and it became apparent that mega-sculptures were too costly to fund through the school arts budgets. An Associated Press article featured the mega-sculpture and caught the eye of the Master Lock management who had the company move the sculpture to their Milwaukee headquarters and donated $700 to the Peet art program.



Figure 3. 1981 Master lock purchased by the company



Figure 4. 1984 Diamond Vogel sponsored.

Eventually, sponsors were needed in order to get the necessary materials for the mega-sculptures. In 1984 a student's father was owner of a local paint store and donated money to fund the sculpture. The sculpture was a huge paint bucket with the yard, sidewalk and street painted and leading back to the roller and bucket.

The Lion's Club distributed light bulbs to bring awareness to vision and sight. The club president suggested the art students make the 1986 sculpture a light bulb. This would benefit the students and the Lion's club mutually. The club donated $350 to cover the cost of the materials and brought education and community service into a joint benefit.



Figure 5. 1985 Light Bulb sponsored by Lion's Club



.Figure 6. 1987 Camera sponsored by Porter's Camera.

Porter's Camera, a local camera shop, sponsored the 1987 Camera with pictures of previous mega sculptures. The flash unit was too big and heavy to raise to the roof by students. Local firefighters sent a ladder truck to the school and, using the hydraulic lifts on the truck, hoisted the flash to the roof. The flash featured a strobe light at night like a flash would do taking a picture. The Chief Executive Office of Vivitar came to the school to view.

In 1991 the United States launched Operation Desert Storm to stop Iraq's aggression in Kuwait. The mega-sculpture that year honored the soldiers involved. The light system was designed by a 9th Grade student with the help of a Product Engineer at John Deere. Bill explains in his book, **BIG: THE STORY BEHIND TWENTY-THREE YEARS OF PEET JUNIOR HIGH MEGASCULPTURES**:

"The project was funded by University Book and Supply. …Flying high in his Sopwith Camel dog house, Snoopy was surrounded by Roman candles, bottle rockets, sparklers and firecrackers. Built at a time when LED lights and mini electronic flashers were not available, the marvel of this sculpture was that it lit up at night."



Figure 7. 1990 Snoopy flying his doghouse to honor Vets



.Figure 8 1991 Godzilla, first to have moving feature, arm.

The first moving sculpture was Godzilla in 1991. Godzilla was sponsored by Subway sandwiches so the arm moved to simulate the monster eating a sub sandwich.

In 1992 the NBA rookie of the year was Shaquille O'Neal ,so the students decided to create a sculpture of his large shoes. The students wrote to Shaq's publicist who said the schedule did not permit him to come to Cedar Falls to see the sculpture. The students did send a video to Shaq who acknowledged their efforts.



Figure 9. 1992 Shaquille O'Neal shoes.



Figure 10. 1993 Trek bicycle sponsored by Europa Cycles.

One thousand chevrons simulated the tread on a 13-foot diameter Trek bicycle tire created by students for their sponsor Europa Cycles. The 1993 mega-sculpture required detailed measurement and calculated scaling to create.



Figure 11. 1997 Carnival Cruise Ship, most memorable



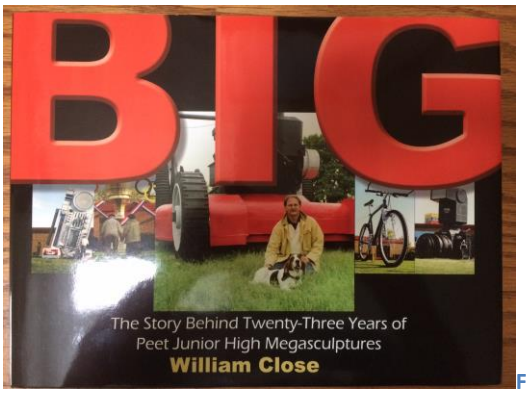
Figure 12. 2001 Final Sculpture.

The most memorable mega-sculpture was created in 1997. It required anchoring brackets to the brickwork of the school. The Carnival Cruise ship was streamed live as it was being constructed.

The final mega-sculpture re-created the first pencil with a computer in the background to signify the changes in education through the years of the mega-sculptures.

Conclusion. Bill Close wrote **BIG: THE STORY BEHIND TWENTY-THREE YEARS OF PEET JUNIOR HIGH MEGASCULPTURES** to:

- Preserve the images of the mega-sculptures
- Provide insight into the process behind the sculptures
- Record student reflections about their mega-sculptures experience
- Use the proceeds to establish an art scholarship fund



F**igure 13. Cover of Bill Close's book.**

There is more than art in these mega-sculptures. There are educational, social and occupational benefits of cooperative learning. A mega-sculpture:

- Promotes positive interaction within a group
- Provides individual accountability within the group
- Promotes appropriate use of interpersonal and small group social skills
- Provides a key to effective group work, which is to install in each student the feeling that he or she cannot accomplish alone what the group can do as a whole

The Cedar Falls School district and the students who have received an education in this district owe William Close a large debt of gratitude not only for his interest in teaching art but also for his willingness to trust student initiative, foster teamwork and develop social skills that benefit the student, the education system and society as these students became the leaders of government, business and education.

Next Meeting. Our October 11, 2017 meeting features Dr. Bert Schou, one of the founders of ACRES (Agricultural Custom Research and Environmental Studies) will present “This is Not Your Grandfathers Farm”.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

James R. Stevenson, Vice President and Secretary