

The Next Step Toward Restoration

Shack Ownership Problem Resolved, Permits Next Issue

After a two-year-long intensive forensic title search, Jersey Outdoor Media owner Chet Atkins has finally proven ownership and taken title of the land on which the beloved Causeway Shack still stands ... barely. This means an effort to restore the dilapidated edifice could move forward, though the question as to how remains a mystery.

Atkins' claim to the land began upon procuring ownership of the billboard adjacent to the Shack after purchasing Wes Outdoor Advertising in 2009. He said the search delved as far back as the 1600s, at which time an Eastern Jersey Land Company owned the land where the Shack stands today. The structure itself dates only as far back as the 1920s.

Atkins would not comment on a recent meeting he had with Stafford Administrator Jim Moran, Stafford Historical Society President Tim Hart and others regarding a possible Shack restoration.

"At this point and time I have no comment on that. I need to keep it as private as possible until we know what we're doing. The more notoriety we get, the harder it's going to get to do the things we want. We just don't want to ruin our opportunities that we might have to make it right. We just don't know at this point. If you do the wrong thing or say the wrong thing ... there are some people that, believe it or not, would rather the shack not be rebuilt. I'd rather just

say hang on for the ride and we'll call you when it's ready to take pictures of," Atkins said.

Moran did comment on the meeting, citing the next step in the Shack's possible restoration being acquiring necessary permits from the state Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to be able to build on the wetlands. This process, according to Atkins, could take years.

"Stafford Township has made some informal inquiries as to the extent we would have to go to get permits, and I have let some individuals who are involved in this know that if in fact they're able to put forward the money to escrow for the engineering work, I would be happy to work with them on behalf of the township to try to get the permits, but the taxpayers could not fit the bill for the permits," Moran said.

In the past Atkins had mentioned the possibility of turning the title over to the township once proving ownership, which, according to Moran, has not and will not happen. "This is not a Stafford Township project. We are simply assisting those that want to do this and we're happy to do so, but it is not directly a Stafford Township project." That being said, no details of restoration plans are known to Moran.

What is known is that Atkins has asked Barnegat resident Jim Yuhas, who was not at the meeting, to take on the responsibility



Supplied

HAPPY PLACE: A weathered print of the Shack, circa 1977, from an original painting by Wellington Ward Jr.

"It was 11 o'clock at night with a three-quarter moon and I'm on a six-foot ladder trying to nail that thing by myself. I think I'm conducting this very secretive Navy Seals operation, sneaking through the weeds and all."

of fundraising for the restoration. Yuhas is responsible for putting up the reinforcements that have helped keep the building standing, as well as the holiday decorations adorning the Shack that were visible this past Halloween and Christmas.

Yuhas' most recent mission came around July 4th during which he attached a wall's worth of American flags to the Shack. He later added a banner that reads, "Please help me! What are you waiting for?"

"It was 11 o'clock at night with a three-quarter moon and I'm on a six-foot ladder trying to nail that thing by myself. I think I'm conducting this very secretive Navy Seals operation, sneaking through the weeds and all. Then I get to the Causeway, start running across and trip and fall down on my face, rip my pants up, bloody my leg up, then the spotlight goes on me and I hear, 'Drop the hammer ... drop the hammer,'" said Yuhas, describing being stopped by Stafford police. "They've been good about it all along. Every time I go out there I get caught."

The current look of the Shack has spawned critics, noted Yuhas, who

complain that its appearance takes away from a classic nostalgic visage people had come to adore.

"I hear all these people writing letters about how gaudy it looks. Well, I didn't do it for the aesthetics. I did it to draw attention to it, which worked. It got people acting, it got people talking about it, it got people interested in it again."

A sense of urgency remains following the Shack's survival of Hurricane Irene while a nearby billboard went down. According to Yuhas, there are issues with getting that billboard reconstructed on the wetlands similar to those the Shack's reconstruction may face. "If the Shack was to blow down, that's the end of it. There's no more discussion to be had."

Yuhas believes the plan for restoring the Shack most likely will follow

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Brown Goes Green: LBI A Fitting Route for Two Hybrid Electric Vehicles

At the start of the summer, two UPS vehicles responsible for year-round deliveries on Long Beach Island were replaced with low-emission, hybrid electric vehicles. The HEVs are two of 130 UPS deployed this year – 30 in New York and New Jersey, 100 in California – saving roughly 60,000 gallons of fuel and 600 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually, or the equivalent of taking 128 passenger cars off the road, according to UPS estimates. The HEVs are estimated 35 percent more fuel-efficient than conventional "package cars," as they're called.

Drivers John Kelly of Pitman and Charles "Chick" Veasey of Riverton share the Island territory, with Kelly on the north end, Veasey the south. The men said the new vehicles took a little (but only a little) getting used to. After Kelly's 29 years with the company and Veasey's 26, mostly they have been as excited as kids with new toys, according to Jill Hayes, business manager at the Chesapeake District's Lawnside center.

For one thing, the new package cars are totally keyless. "For 25 years I wore a key on my pinky," Kelly said. When

he started driving his new vehicle in June, his hand felt naked for the first few days. They're also equipped with remote starters, remote-controlled bulkhead doors and a no-idling feature, whereby the vehicle's engine automatically shuts off when the vehicle has come to a stop with the brake engaged for three seconds.

The HEV is supported by a Freightliner custom chassis and a hybrid power system by Eaton Corp. that combines a conventional diesel engine, a battery pack and "regenerative braking," whereby the energy generated by depressing the brake pedal is captured and returned to the battery as usable electricity. The external truck body, made exclusively for UPS, is identical to the rest in the signature brown fleet but is labeled as a hybrid electric vehicle on the side.

"It's been pretty cool to watch the evolution of our vehicles," Kelly said. The old trucks had holes in the floor for the clutch pedal, and the cold winter air would just come billowing up from the floorboards. Of course, back then the whole system was on paper, and now everything is computerized.

But even more than the vehicles,



Ryan Morrill

ROAD TEST: Driver 'Chick' Veasey (left) covers the south end of the Island, and John Kelly handles the north. Both are well known and well liked in the communities they serve. This summer they made the switch to hybrid trucks.

Hayes said, she is proud of the drivers. "Pretty much the truck is the truck, and we deliver the packages," but the drivers add the personal touch that means the difference between protocol and a pleasant experience. Kelly admitted a personable attitude is just as useful to the job as strong memorization

skills and physical strength. Through the years he has gotten to know the residents and businesspeople on his route, watched children grow up and made countless personal connections and lasting friendships.

"We believe in sustainability," UPS spokesman Tom Farrell said, a concept

that applies not only to environmentally friendly vehicles but also to the drivers – "They're the face of our company," he noted – and to their dedication to the communities they serve, by way of charity and volunteerism. Each year Veasey, also affectionately known

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