Bob Ziegler: *He had a 46-year career with Endres Mfg.*

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PROFILE

There is a newly built structure amid the many located in the Endres Manufacturing park. It's a circular tower, specially made for the park's visiting goats to frolic on. The sturdy looking structure sports a spiraling walkway for the goats and multiple doorways for them to enter, all decorated with shutters.

Bob Ziegler, who recently retired from Endres Manufacturing after 46 years, is the designer and builder of the goat tower, which was his last project done for Endres Manufacturing.

"My most recent and last building project before retiring is the goat tower in the park grounds at Endres Manufacturing. I was given free rein in designing it, and I hope the community will enjoy it," Ziegler said.

Ziegler has always been a member of the community.

"I was born and raised in Waunakee, a half mile north of town on a small farm. I lived there with my parents, a brother and two sisters. I went through school in Waunakee, graduating in 1964. I have fond memories of working on the farm, and doing the things that farm children did in those days: waiting for the hay to be cut, organizing a ball game or two, or riding our bikes around."

Ziegler was first employed by Endres Manufacturing while still in high school. Larry Endres was President at that time.

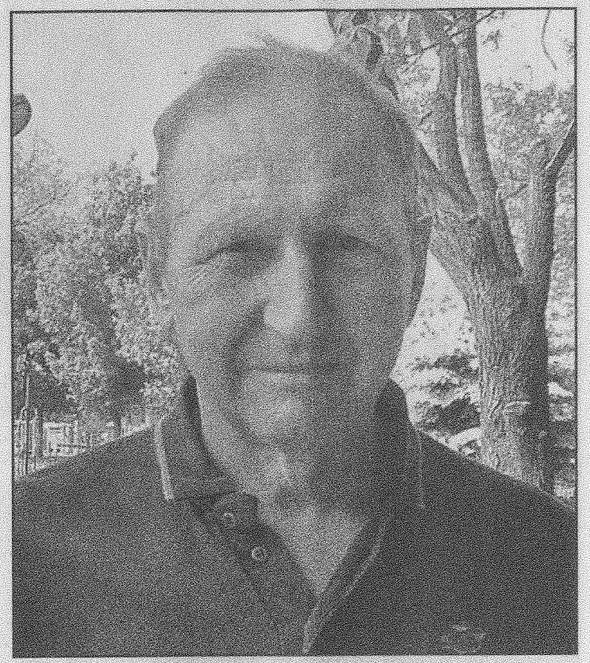
"In the fall of my senior year of high school I did some welding at home, and also took a welding class at school. I picked up a part-time job working at Endres Manufacturing on Saturdays, and soon I started working there after school too. In May of 1964 I became a full-time employee of Endres Manufacturing, and I've spent my entire working life there," he said.

In the beginning Endres Manufacturing was located on West Street, and was basically a machine and welding shop that made some farm equipment and marine shoreline equipment-piers, boat hoists and marine rails.

In 1964 Endres Manufacturing started getting into the structural steel business. The business grew and evolved, and in 1966 the business was moved to its present location located on Hwy. Q in the town of Westport.

"I was a welder and a machinist at the time I started, branching into working with structural steel. I worked on weldments for Oscar Mayer and for the Beloit Corporation, which involved doing layout work, plus cutting and drilling. Later I started fabricating overhead cranes and installing them throughout southern Wisconsin. Soon I was selling and installing overhead cranes, and did so for 20 years," Ziegler said.

These days Endres still fabricates its own overhead cranes, but due to new more stringent standards, no longer fashions them for other use. Technology and new government safety standards have radically changed the industry for businesses like Endres Manufacturing.



Bob Ziegler said repairing the railings at the Capitol Dome offered spectacular views of Madison. (Photo by Gay Strandemo)

"When I started here, most everything was welded with a welding rod, and there was just the very beginning of converting to continuous feed wire welding. Now, using a welding rod is almost unheard of. Holes are punched instead of being drilled, and cutting is done with bigger saws instead of torches. Weldments these days have a more finished edge. It is unbelievable how much the industry has changed for reasons of keeping up with the demands on the product," Ziegler said.

What hasn't changed is the admiration that Bob Ziegler holds for the company.

"For me, working at Endres has always been satisfying and fun. It's been challenging work in that it's easy to think up an idea for a project, but it's much harder to put it out in product. I've enjoyed the fact that Endres Manufacturing treats their employees very well. As of May 1 of this year, the average employee of Endres has been working here for 22 years," he said.

Endres Manufacturing, with its delightfully welcoming exterior (Ziegler mentions that a few out-of-towners have mistakenly thought they were entering a restaurant) does strike one as being a fun place to work. But Ziegler most appreciates the respect the company has for its employees, and the concern shown for the community at large.

Ziegler points out that Endres Manufacturing has always been committed to community involvement, supporting many causes and events. That company policy appeals to Ziegler, who sees the importance of stepping up to be involved in community efforts.

Over the years Ziegler has been involved in organizations such as the Jaycees, the Lions, and served as a volunteer for the Waunakee Fire Department for 32 years. Ziegler also served as Soccer Coordinator for the Waunakee area in the 1980s. Recently he has helped the local Rotary with the annual holiday lights project, one of many projects he says Ken Ballweg, President of Endres Manufacturing, has helped see to fruition, in order to make the community a better place to live.

Though Bob Ziegler is now retired from Endres Manufacturing, there are plenty of high profile projects throughout the area to remind him of his working days.

"I've worked through many phases of the business at Endres, but for the last 25 years I've done work strictly making railings, stairways and other miscellaneous projects. Some of the railings and stairways that you see at the University are pieces I've worked on (Granger and Sterling Halls). I've also worked on a project at Epic in Verona. One of the most memorable projects that I've done was to build a Frank Lloyd Wright designed 55-foot spire for a Catholic church in Spring Green, Wisconsin. I've built a lighthouse that's up at the Dells, and I've worked on a 115 foot tower for a church in Racine. I've also done a lot of residential railings for private homeowners. I have worked on railings for many homes in the Waunakee area. Whatever the building industry, private customers and the architects ask for, that's what we've tried to fabricate," he said.

One project that stands out in Ziegler's memory is the one where he did repair on the railings at the State Capitol dome. Ziegler found himself at the top of the dome, just below Miss Forward.

"The view of the Madison area was breathtaking, " he said.

Ziegler plans to have a fun-filled retirement full of family activities and community involvement.

"I've been married to my wife, Linda, since 1968, and I have three children, all living in the Waunakee area. I have five grandchildren aged 3 to 9, who are bound to keep me busy going to ballgames and other events. I hope in retirement to have more time for golfing and spending time on Lake Wisconsin boating. I'm a fan of college basketball, and I'd like to do some traveling," he said.