

# TV Crew Films Top of Bridge Towers, Dirtiest Jobs on Mackinac Island

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make their way to the tower. After a brief elevator trip, they carried heavy camera equipment up a ladder through a series of small openings.

Mr. Ulrich called the wind "breezy" on the tower.

"It was not enough to make you unbalanced," he said, "but you knew it was there."

Mr. Rowe painted the suspension cables by standing in a spider climber, which is similar to a window washing unit used on high-rise buildings.

The cables are painted by wearing gloves similar to car washing mitts, said Mr. Sweeney. The gloved hands are dipped into a bucket of foliage green paint, and then wrapped around the cable. The cables are made of wires wrapped together, and this process gets paint into all the cracks.

While Mr. Rowe was in one spider climber, a camera crew filmed from a nearby spider climber. Larry Antkoviak of the bridge maintenance team was with the camera crew.

"I thought it was really neat," he said. "People finally will see what we do."

While filming took place on the bridge, the MBA's boat *Northern Air*, piloted by Paul White and Todd Joseph, stood safety watch in the Straits below. The rescue boat always is near the bridge when crews are working, said Mr. Sweeney.

Removing rust and painting also was performed inside the tower cells. Just above the concrete base inside both the north and south towers are a series of steel cells designed to make the towers structurally stronger, Mr. Sweeney said. The steel walls that form the hollow cells run parallel and perpendicular to



With cameras rolling, Mike Rowe (seated, right) and sloop wagon driver George Wellington guide horses Phil and Barney to the Island's Solid Waste Handling Facility Tuesday, May 22. Their cargo of restaurant food scraps, called slop, is mixed with horse manure to create compost. (Photograph by Dale Peterson, Mackinac Island Carriage Tours)

each other, connected by a series of small rooms with eight-foot ceilings. The rooms are approximately five feet by six feet in size.

Maintenance crews regularly inspect the cells for signs of stress, he said, although none has ever been found. Moisture, however, gets into the cells and rusts the steel. Maintenance crews remove the rust with a needle gun. The gun operates like an air hammer, with 37 needles jetting in and out to remove rust. Once clean from rust, the steel is painted with a long lasting zinc-based paint, said Mr. Sweeney, that is environmentally friendly.

The bridge is a vital link between Michigan's peninsulas, said producer Mr. Barsky, and

the 50th anniversary celebration of the opening of the bridge also makes the story interesting.

On Mackinac Island, Mr. Rowe joined six-year street sweeping veteran Herman Kamphuis in cleaning up horse manure from Main Street. Mr. Kamphuis carries a broom and shovel in a cart attached to a bicycle.

He took the shovel and broom and went to work, said Mr. Kamphuis, a Mackinac Island Carriage Tours employee. Mr. Kamphuis considers his job good exercise, and not so dirty.

"You can't beat the working conditions. Just look around you," he said, pointing to the harbor and shops along Main Street.

With horses still arriving on the Island for the season, Mr. Rowe met the Arnold Transit Company freight boat and help lead arriving horses to the Carriage Tours barn on Cadotte Avenue.

Mr. Rowe then met up with Island native George Wellington, who drives the horse-drawn sloop wagon that hauls about 17, 30-gallon containers of food waste from restaurants.

"It's probably the dirtiest job we have," said Dr. Bill Chambers of Mackinac Island Carriage Tours.

The general rule for driving the sloop wagon to keep from getting nauseated from the smell, said Dr. Bill, is to place barrels with orange and grapefruit waste to the front of the wagon, keeping the smellier containers to the back.

"Otherwise, you'll lose it," he said.

The containers are taken to the Solid Waste Handling Facility, where contents are mixed with horse manure collected from Island streets, creating compost. Some of the compost is used on Island flower beds. To show the complete cycle, Mr. Rowe then helped plant Grand Hotel geraniums. The hotel hosted the crew while they filmed on the Island and at the bridge. R. Daniel Musser III, hotel president, also is an MBA board member.


Bruce Zimmerman, director of the Department of Public Works on the Island, said Mr. Rowe understood the unique environmental issues the Island faces dealing with waste and the cost of transporting it from the Island.

"We essentially identified Mackinac [Island] as, in one sense, this place that time kind of forgot," said Mr. Rowe. "In one

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Mike Rowe (left), with field producer Dave Barsky of "Dirty Jobs" and an unidentified crew member (hidden), determine camera angles in one of the Mackinac Bridge tower cells Wednesday, May 23. Filming bridge maintenance work for the show took place May 24 and 25. (Photograph by Tim Burke, Michigan Department of Transportation)






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## PATRICK M. SHANNON

ATTORNEY AT LAW

MACKINAC ISLAND  
906-847-8139  
906-847-8140 Fax

SAULT STE. MARIE  
906-632-4706  
Fax 906-635-1724

P.O. Box 503, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783  
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