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Century carved in Millennium Stone

By Wilma Blokhuis
BEAVER FOCUS EDITOR

Got your Millennium Stone?

John Bridges has one available – a huge rock.

It sits at the end of the driveway of Old World Stone and Summit Restorations at 1151 Heritage Rd., in an industrial area of Burlington.

It weighs 50 tonnes and rises 20 feet (five metres) into the sky.

This stone is up for grabs.

It depicts the evolution of mankind on two sides of the Obelisk, and the history of the world since 1900, with 34 images, on the 9 by 9 foot mushroom shaped Century Stone symbolically held by hands carved on a much smaller stone collar. The Obelisk served as the entrance sign to Old World Stone for almost 10 years.

"I've been thinking about creating a millennium stone for a long time, almost since I opened Old World Stone 10 years ago," said Bridges, an Oakville resident, who designed the Millennium Stone. Four artists others did the carving.

He founded Summit Restoration 25 years ago, and has built the business into an international venture, having restored 4,000 historical landmarks including Osgoode Hall in Toronto, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Denver, and the Cleveland Tower at Princeton University.

A 32-tonne chunk of Indiana limestone arrived at Old World Stone in September 1998 "and for the next 10 months, 10 tonnes of stone was carved away" to complete the four-sided tribute to this century.

"The stone depicts the most significant events that happened in history, science and medicine over the last 100 years," said Bridges.

"It also includes the four most prominent individuals whose lives in that period contributed to the betterment of the human race, who united the races and keep the world free from tyranny." These four, seen on the corners, are Mother Teresa, Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King, and Winston Churchill.

Bridges admits to not fully realizing the significance of the stone he designed until three to four months after it was completed.

"I show a black American, a Third World

woman, a European, and a Middle East man. It wasn't planned this way, it just happened."

The stone also depicts, in a more subtle way, Elvis Presley on television, a symbolic shaking of hands over Africa, "uniting the Jew and Arab, black and white," and physicist Stephen Hawking's "black hole."

Standing on top is Neil Armstrong, the first man to land on the moon, and the only living person depicted on this stone.

"The stone also shows the accomplishments – the invention of the telephone, television, the evolution of architecture from cave men to the skyline of Toronto, the beginnings of civilization, from fish and dinosaurs to the dodo bird and the first upright humans discovered in Africa, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the solidarity movement bringing about the collapse of socialism, the computer age, cloning of sheep, the discovery of insulin, polio vaccine and penicillin, Thomas Edison and his light bulb, the gramophone, Kitty Hawk, the dawn of electricity, airships, Model T. Ford, and Alexander Graham Bell, who not only invented the telephone, but also sign language."

Not one to miss an opportunity, Bridges incorporated the name of the company, Old World Stone, in sign language into his Millennium Stone.

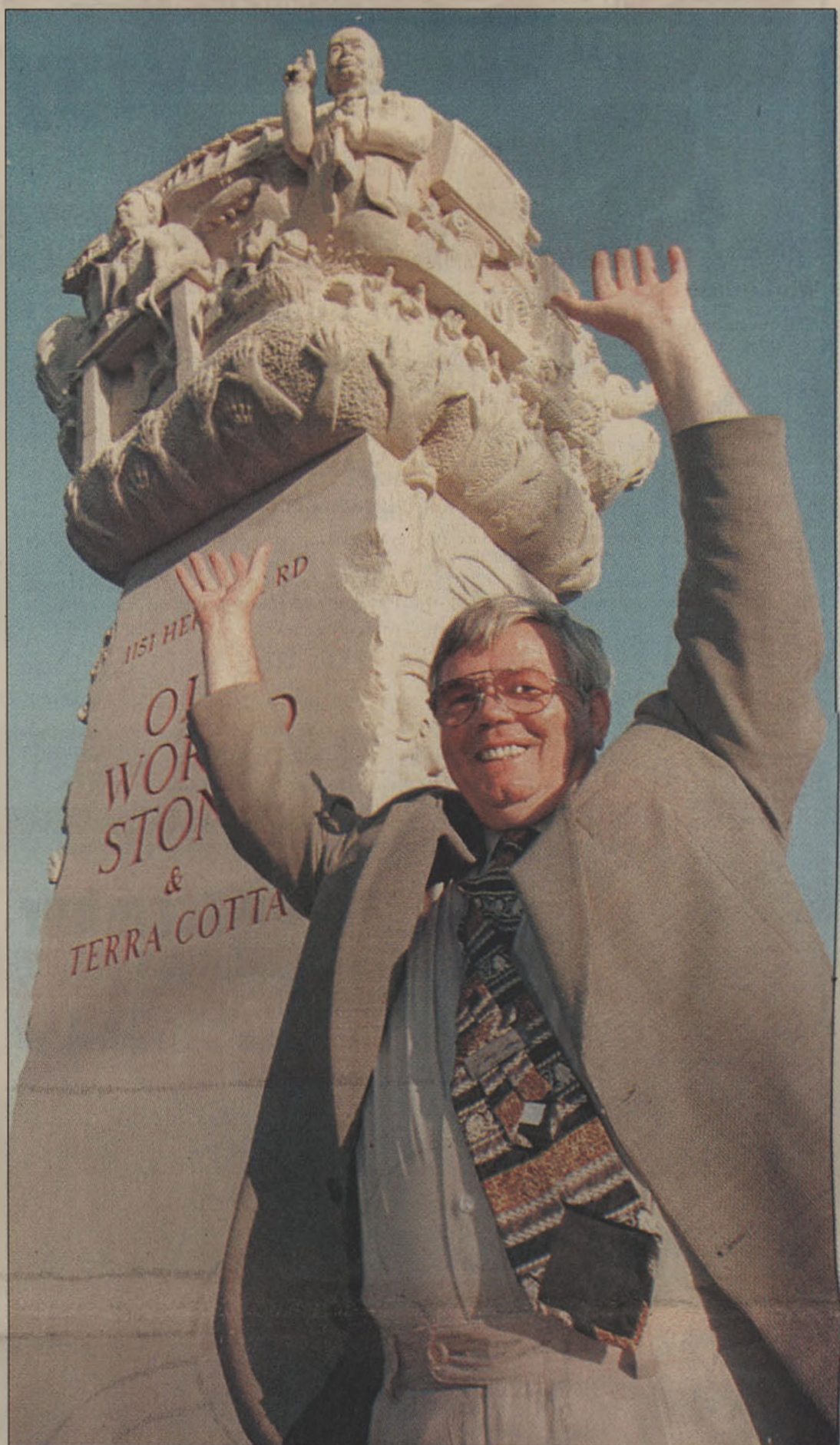
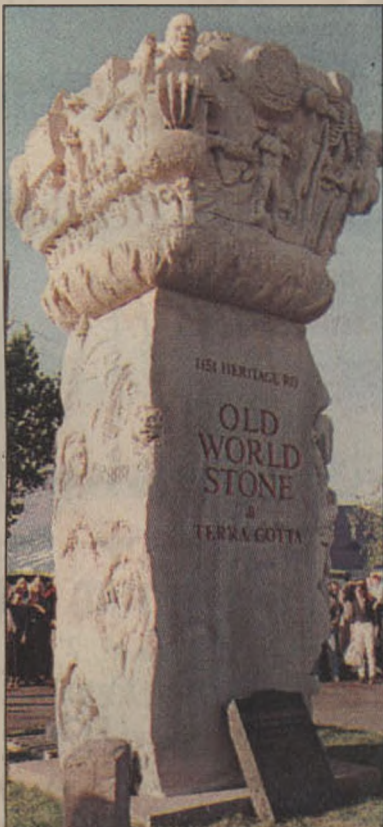
It also shows Terry Fox, who Bridges regards as "the man of the century. He's done more to unite Canada, and 15 years after his death, the name Terry Fox is still on people's minds. Terry Fox Runs are being held in at least 80 countries raising money for cancer research. He's done more for cancer than any other individual." The Fox family has seen the stone.

Bridges' initial intention was to keep his Millennium Stone at the entrance of Old World Stone, but interest in the carving has prompted him to make it available to be moved.

"I've had a lot of interest from different levels of government," said Bridges, "however no decision has been made."

Interest has come from Burlington, Hamilton, the provincial government, and from people in Oakville. "I've seen about two or three cars per day come by here to take a look at it."

Interested? Call John Bridges at Old World Stone, 332-5547.



Photos by Peter J. Thompson

John Bridges of Old World Stone and Summit Restoration, and an Oakville resident, raises his hands in victory at the Sept. 26th unveiling of his Millennium Stone. Since the unveiling, people have driven by to look at the stone, and interest has been expressed to move the stone away from its industrial location in Burlington to a public site. The four-sided Century Stone depicts the major achievements of the last 100 years, and the Obelisk shows the ascent of mankind.

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