

From THE TIME BUILDERS

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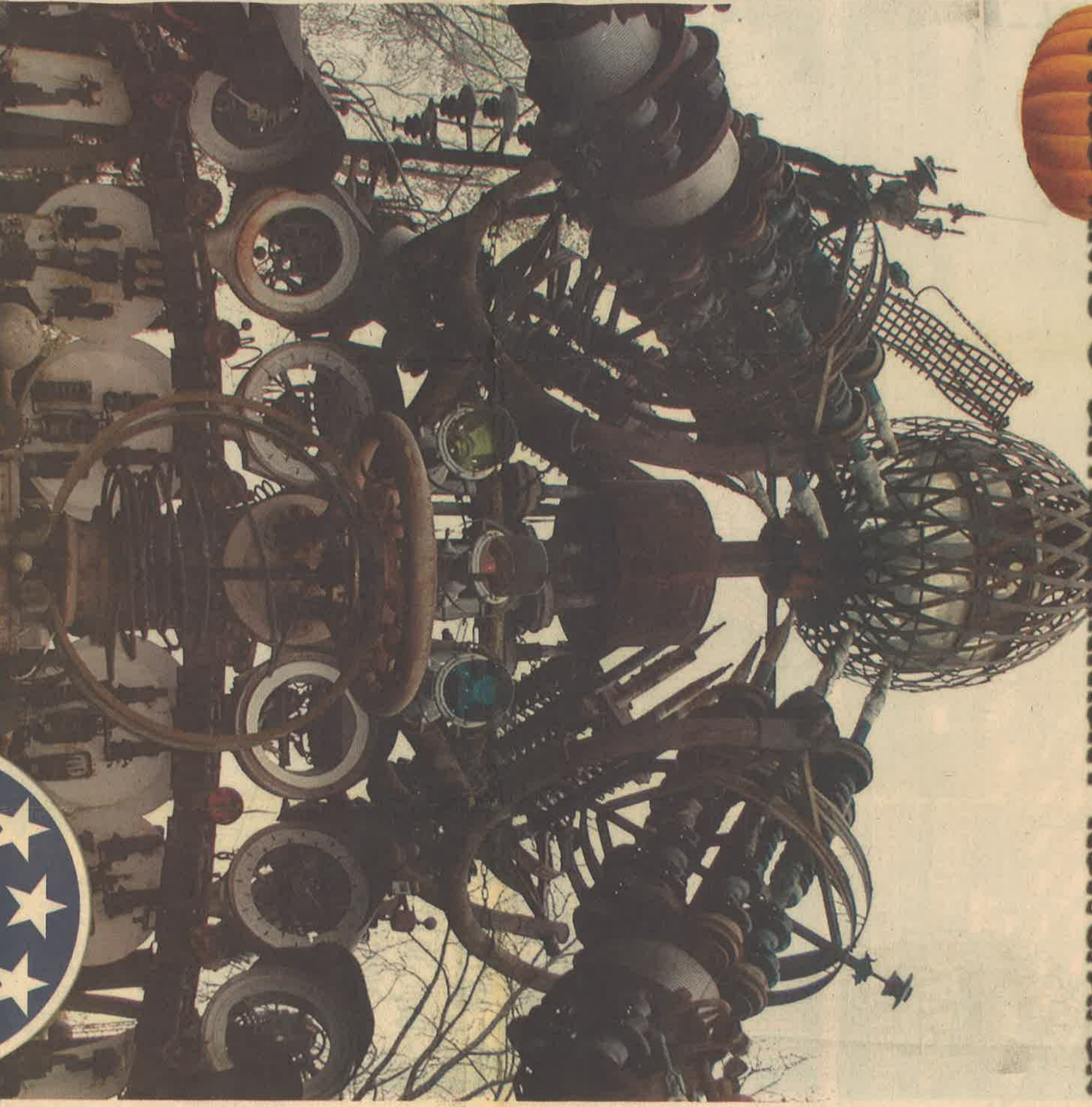


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October 21st - Nov 3rd, 2004

# THE EXPRESS

FREE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT NEWSPAPER



**November 2nd.**  
"Bad officials are elected by good citizens  
who do not vote."

*George Jean Nathan*



**DANGER**  
HIGH  
VOLTAGE



# DELLS AUTUMN

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23rd.

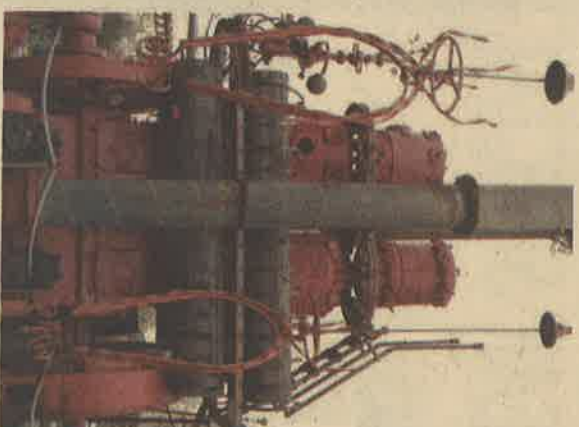
### WISCONSIN DELLS ON TAP ~ @

MEETING ZOO ~ PONY & HAY RIDES ~ SCAR  
 CIRCUS WORLD MUSEUM ~ KIDS WORLD CIRCUS  
 INTERNATIONAL CRANE FOUNDATION DEN  
 DELL'S POLICE DEPT. CANINE DEMONSTRAT

### SWING CREW

SATURDAY NOON - 6 PM  
 DEEP FRIED PICKLES  
 SUNDAY 11 AM - 3 PM

## DOWN



If you're in the mood for something a little different than your average drive in the country, check out the Foreverton and other scrap metal sculptures.

## The Foreverton

### From the cover



This "scrap metal park" is the creation of Tom Every aka Dr. Evermore. It's a great place to spend some time walking around and snapping a few pictures. It's one of the most dynamic and eclectic collections of folk art in the country and it's free of charge.



The Foreverton is a monumental sculpture weighing 300 tons and standing 120 feet wide, 60 feet deep and 50 feet high. It consists almost entirely of metals — iron, brass and stainless steel are the most evident — and it is both welded and bolted together to maximize stability. The overall arrangement is symmetrical with the central section anchored by a broad bank of generators, thrusters and other electromagnetic power sources. The whole structure is capped by a copper-strapped glass ball meant to serve as Dr. Evermore's space capsule.



If you're passing through the area or if you've driven past this site for years and wondered just what that was peering through the trees along highway 12 stop and have a look, it's well worth it.



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## Power On! A Conversation With Dr. Evermor

The good Doctor talks to Jeffrey Hayes about his impending flight into the heavens, Henry Ford, Vollis Simpson and the Forevertron Bird Band.

Dr. Evermor began building the more than two hundred ton Forevertron in 1983 following his "early" retirement from the large-scale wrecking and salvage business. He remembers being depressed at the time and wanting to convert a destructive process into something constructive and uplifting. He has since developed an elaborate, park-like setting with numerous satellite pieces around the Forevertron which rises from the Sauk Prairie between Baraboo and Madison, Wisconsin, and ranks as the world's largest sculpture made from scrap metal. It is also worth noting that the following interview was conducted on a recent spring afternoon in one of Dr. Evermor's several open-air gazebos where just above his head a mother robin attended to the needs of three hungry nestlings.

**Jeffrey Hayes:** Your name at birth in 1938 was Thomas O. Every. Now you are called Dr. Evermor. When did you become Dr. Evermor and why?

**Dr. Evermor:** *I became Dr. Evermor around 1983 when we started to build the Forevertron. I was a bit upset with the world, not so much the economic conditions as the judicial system and things like that, and I wanted to perpetuate myself back into the heavens on this magnetic lightning force field.*

**JH:** But why call yourself Dr. Evermor? Would you explain a little more fully who Dr. Evermor is and why you became him?

**DE:** *A psychiatrist would probably say it is an alter ego or something like that. It just kind of evolved.*

**JH:** What exactly is the Forevertron—would you briefly review the history of this project?

**DE:** *Yes. The Forevertron was conceived with the idea of a professor or scientist who in the timeframe of about 1890 thought that he could perpetuate himself inside a glass ball, inside a copper egg back into the heavens on a magnetic lightning force beam. That's the crux of the concept. Of course, today we've made all these rockets, but a century ago they would have done this with electricity and its powers. So this is a conceivable thought that a professor could have had at that time. The Forevertron is totally designed not only with the component parts from that timeframe but also with that historical mindset. In it you can see examples of wiring and every other kind of electrical part or mechanism that I salvaged from powerhouses, factories, and other sources. In fact, a lot of people come here just to study aspects of the engineering technology from that time. Dr. Evermor really is a character who could have been a professor around 1890 working on an experimental means of flight to push some sort of vessel into the heavens.*

**JH:** What makes you want to be propelled into the heavens? What is your motive? What are you after?

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Dr. Evermor and Tall Bird, 1998

All photographs courtesy Jeffrey Hayes

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**JH:** So, as we move from past to present considerations, would it be fair to say that much of the original motivation for starting this project stemmed from your frustration with society on ethical or emotional grounds rather than from any artistic inspiration per se? But now it seems that the artistic end of it has become your primary concern, right?

**DE:** *Yes, I would say you're a 1,000 % on target. I think that humans wear many different hats, and I never looked at the Forevertron or any of the other things I was building as art projects. It's the scholars who came along and said this. I was*

*just building these things that involved historic material in their creation, so I had not calculated that any of it was of an artistic nature. It may end up being so, but it was never directed or calculated that way.*

**JH:** That takes care of the past. Can you say a few words about what lies ahead? Is the project largely completed or is there a lot more work to be done?

**DE:** *Even after I finish the Juicer Bug and Overlord Master Control later this summer, there will still be quite a bit of work left to be done on the Forevertron. I hadn't completed that work because I thought I was going to move the whole thing to another spot. You see, the Forevertron is a kinetic sculpture, and I wanted to have—if not the fact—at least the illusion of the egg taking off, so I still have to put some things in so it can go up and down, and I want to drape cables in downward curves and then wrap them with fiber optics. And there are bridges over there that I need to put the decking on. Two of those bridges bring it into the form I wanted to have in this mechanical fantasy or whatever you want to judge it as.*

**JH:** Does the Forevertron have a practical or philosophical application to the world at large—in other words, is there something going on here that you feel we can all learn or use, something that is perhaps missing in present day society, or is the Forevertron a purely personal matter?

**DE:** *I don't think it's a purely personal matter. It includes philosophical thoughts about what society is, and it's also there so that people can look at all of its historical and mechanical aspects. And it does have very good form and balance to it. I don't know how it came out that way, but it does. It's all done in curved arches and circles, and in formal series of 3, 5, 7, and 9. It's a whimsical, mechanical fantasy which serves Dr. Evermor's plan to perpetuate himself back into the heavens, but I think it also has a lot of messages. It certainly brings an awful lot of joy to people. It is not a satanic piece. It's something that has a different kind of aura that I can't explain.*

**JH:** Does Dr. Evermor have any heroes? Are there any historical or contemporary figures that you particularly admire?

**DE:** *Yes, I do. I happen to like Mark Twain, Thomas Edison, and Henry Ford. I like Ford for standing up to those people who were going to put him into bankruptcy and take his company, and he stood there and said, "I'll cut all the steel out of my River Rouge plant before I'll yield to you son-of-a-bitchin' bankers!" or something like that. He was a strong person and realistic too, like when he had parts made he had them shipped in a certain kind of packing crate which then could be used in the floor boards of his Model T's. That showed a recycling image that Mr. Ford was involved with. And I like Thomas Edison, although Nicholas Tesla was smarter by far and would never stand on the same podium with Edison. Edison was more interested in the practicality of his inventions, and he worked on using a lot of young people to come up with innovative ideas. Those are the kind of people I admire as far as Americana and history.*

**JH:** What is the general public's reaction to the Forevertron? Do you feel that they understand its purpose and meaning, or do most visitors simply see it as a curiosity or just a big, cool-looking machine?

**DE:** *I don't pay much attention to that, although I've had some very smart people here who have watched the visitors, and most people who come back to the site have never seen many of these forms or shapes. They're always smiling and joyful, and we have several thousand notes from people with their reactions to the Forevertron. All of them are very joyful and wonder what kind of cat could create something like the Forevertron. So that's the only barometer that I have to go by.*

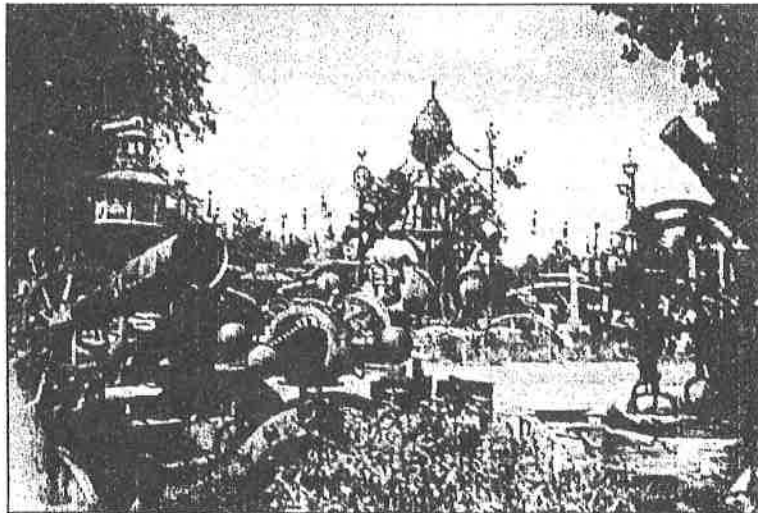
**JH:** Do you think they respond to it a little more deeply than if it were just a novelty or a sideshow?

**DE:** *Oh, absolutely! It's much more than a novelty or anything predetermined as entertainment like Disney. They tend to get themselves involved in looking in depth more, and they like to go up and touch things, and with the little pieces you have to wonder: what did the Dr. make this thing out of? So, whereas you are an art historian and you look at all those oil paintings, this is a different kind of thing. They come over, and they get right into it to look at what it is, and they wonder and they can assume that the shape looks like a bird—well, it isn't any more a bird than the man-in-the-moon compared to the great creative carvers you've witnessed. These are all whimsical things, you see.*

**JH:** Why have you gone to so much trouble to create a park-like setting for the Forevertron? What is the nature or role of the Bird Band, for example?

**DE:** *As I said, the Bird Band will be the orchestra at the time that the Dr. goes back into the heavens. Now, why have I created a park-like atmosphere? I like the outdoors, and in doing the other project south of here [House on the Rock], we built the box and we filled the box, and I didn't like that. I like the open air atmosphere, and I was always looking for a site to put the Forevertron on but I never got it, so I thought that I might as well spruce things up around here. That way,*

continued on page 12...



View of the Forevertron from the East, 1997

## Dr. Evermor cont...

*in case I checked out, at least there would be an image of what it should have been whether it's seen here or on the five hundred acres across the road which, as you know, I'm working on...*

**JH:** So, the environment here is part of the Forevertron and serves to enhance people's experience of it. You have a great variety of satellite pieces such as the historic vehicles and the gazebos that seem to relate to the Forevertron in one way or another. You mentioned the Epicurean for example...

**DE:** *Yes, everything relates to the day that the Dr. goes back to the heavens in the Forevertron, and yet the gazebos also make a statement about tranquility that I think is important. We have quite a few of them completed, and I have seven more units back there that I am going to make. Those are bug-shaped gazebos so you'll feel like you're sitting beneath a bug! You'll be able to pull your food off of the exotic Epicurean, pick up a popcorn, and also get peanuts from that oddball peanut roaster. It's kind of a festive set-up.*

**JH:** I've always had the feeling that this is your world. It's your vision of maybe the way the world ought to be. This is your home, this is an environment, and it's very different from the world beyond its borders.

**DE:** *That's correct. That's a very good observation and it's certainly true. We do have probably a thousand tons of metal around here, and I have always hoped that some young people would come by and become enthusiastic and get involved, but with the advent of the computer they are more interested in that than in using their hands. In fact, I did plan a maze that I called the "Sultan of Salvage Maze" for which I have enough blue boxes to go one solid mile. We're going to throw these little blue boxes up which should be a draw for artists who can set up in the little teahouse/gazebos. So there's a little broader scope to the Forevertron than you might think. I always knew that I was going to give everything away anyway, and I hoped the Forevertron would be a catalyst for enough income to sustain a few people who would not only maintain it but perpetuate and build more things.*

**JH:** Then you're really not a control freak—you would love to have other people come in and collaborate with you on this project. You're open to working jointly with others...

**DE:** *Yes. I don't believe in imposing one's will on another person's spirit force, and as for the possibility of others taking my ideas—well, wouldn't that be wonderful! You have to have people in order to make some of these thought patterns work. I've been back here welding an inhuman amount of stuff together for quite a few years, but now my bones are aching a bit. So you recognize that you've got to have a little help.*

**JH:** Do you realize that there are thousands of other self-taught artists' environments throughout the world? Do you ever feel connected to a larger artistic movement or community of fellow spirits? In a world filled with people who spend their days sitting idly in front of computer screens, or worse, performing menial labor, many others remain who are dedicated to living creatively, building environments or shrines or structures that don't necessarily look like yours, but the motivation seems allied to yours. Do you pick up on that, or are you essentially in your own world?

**DE:** *Well, I wish I was. As you know, I was an industrial wrecker and I also did that House on the Rock project. I need to stay focused on trying to get my own things done, and I*

*have enough computer breakdowns in my own head on some things I guess. I don't know too much about what others are doing anywhere else. I don't take any newspapers and I don't really watch television, so I'm just trying to finish up my projects and get going. That's the goal-of-the-day, as well as trying to keep the cash flowage in balance with the expenses.*

**JH:** Recently a friend told me that she had used several of your smaller sculptures as decorations for her son's Bar Mitzvah—so, now that your work has entered into the mainstream of American culture, are there any worlds left for you to conquer?

**DE:** *I don't know about that! But we have had three or four thousand little sculptures go away from here along with their birth certificates which we give out. So they get an original Evermor. This is a very different kind of art, because there's never anything imposed on the piece itself—the parts are always used as they are. Thus, you have to put a little twist or torque into it in order to get some kind of human communication between the finished piece and the more or less rigid, sterile, preexisting shapes and forms. You have to get some kind of magic going there, and we have a lot of people who have come here, taken pictures, and then they go home and produce things. There are fifteen to twenty people out there trying to do Evermors, but they fail on just that issue of getting enough energy flowing so that the piece has a little magic.*

**JH:** Do you still hope to move the massive Forevertron across Highway 12 onto the grounds of the old Badger Army Ammunition Plant? What was or is your motive for undertaking this enormous task?

**DE:** *Well, you'll remember that we both walked inside that compressor building and I said, "This is the spot," because the compressor house represented the heartbeat of Badger, but it also has another layer of historic value in its more than a thousand tons of steam and electrical generators—eighteen of them altogether. And the size is just exactly right. So we took that prospective shot, and it was my hope that we would be able to do it. But there's lots of red tape. First of all, we got them to stop liquidating the compressors, and then we have to set up a 501C-3 foundation in order for the government to pass the compressors on. Then we've got the land problem. Whether all of this stuff can transpire within the timeframe of my physical abilities...*

**JH:** But why did you want to move over there in the first place? Why would you rather be there than here?

**DE:** *I've had all kinds of problems buying the connecting land around here. I'm only on about ten acres here, and I thought that I needed another fifty to one hundred acres. I also wanted it to be a repository for art from around the country and the world. For example, Vallis Simpson is an old mover down there...*

**JH:** In North Carolina, the big metal whirligigs?

**DE:** *Yes, he's got acres of stuff so maybe we could get a couple of pieces of his up here. With the open air atmosphere and the amount of salvage over there, I'm thinking that we could just remove the walls of the buildings and leave the great machinery on its original footings to be seen. It's a big challenge, and I can see that it will be fairly costly to do, but not compared to the money that some people are throwing away on buildings—Ruth Kohler, for example, spending nineteen million dollars up there in Sheboygan to house a bunch of stuff. When you think about moving the Forevertron which is the largest scrap metal sculpture in the world and*

*putting another dimension on it, and there it would be in a setting where it could support itself...*

**JH:** Is there something about the land and its historic aura that draws you to that particular site? You've mentioned its connection to the early Native American inhabitants, to the original farm settlements, and to the more recent generations of American munitions workers for whom you would like to see a national memorial established—is that part of the larger plan?

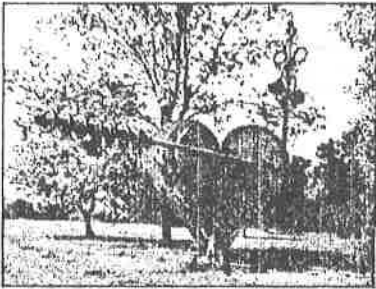
**DE:** Right—that was part of our overall proposal. And it has a beautiful backdrop of the [Baraboo] bluffs and water is there, not only in reservoirs but in other little ponds. If we could get that Northwest corner, it would also make the Forevertron far more visible whereas back here it's OK but a little hard to find. We don't have signs out, so it's more like a discovery in here.

**JH:** Yes, I'm struck by the fact that every time I come up here I discover something that I haven't seen before. That's one of the wonderful things about what you've made here. This morning I had a chance to walk around out front before you got back from your meeting at Badger, and I came across a big pink, heart-shaped piece for the first time. It has a phrase welded on it...

**DE:** "Heart of Hearts"...

**JH:** And then above it your motto—"Power On!"...

**DE:** Uh huh.



Heart of Hearts,  
1990

**JH:** Was that an early piece?

**DE:** No, I did that for art historian Lisa Stone [in 1990]. She brought student groups up here, and I worked about a month to build it. That's a seventeen foot piece. I did it for her because of her thoughtfulness. It does have a message. Not only the "Heart of Hearts," but it's tipped, meaning that at any time your heart can be tipped over. And then there's an arrow that pierces the right ventricle of the heart, and it goes through that massive steel and goes up heavenly bound. At the top there is a governor that will rotate...

**JH:** Like a weathervane?

**DE:** Well, no, it's a steam governor. Actually, I made it for the Forevertron but decided it was too big! So I converted it that way, and the left ventricle is open, showing the open heart, as all hearts should be.

**JH:** Some have called your work a monument to the modern machine age, an age that has now been supplanted by postmodern electronics, information systems, and digital technology. Do you agree with this interpretation of the Forevertron?

**DE:** Yes I do—it is a monument to the machine age.

**JH:** Why honor that age?

**DE:** We're now into an era of streamlining high technology. In that particular era, though, there were artists and creators who worked on wheels, for example, and they put a lot of heart and detail into their stuff, and I don't think that detail should be lost. It represents artists and craftsmen who put a little feeling into their industrial work.

**JH:** So you think we have lost something with the birth of the black box and computer chip?

**DE:** Yes, I think we've lost an awful lot—of the human element anyway.

**JH:** You often say that your first priority is the artistic integrity of the Forevertron and the park. How do you define "artistic" and what exactly is artful about this environment?

**DE:** Well, I think that you as a scholar could probably define that much better than I could. All I pay attention to are principles and details in blending, discipline in numbers, rhythmic patterns, and the romance of the timeframe when something was designed and developed. I'm looking across here at the Epicurean. I've got a great big wheel in there, and if you notice those spider spokes, that represents a specific period. That's got to be before the turn of the century. That wheel cranks the barbecue tray up and down. So I did collect a lot of very good historical examples of things. Being as I was in industrial wrecking, I never threw anything away. And then to take those things, all positive things of a certain timeframe, and blend them into some other kind of new creation is a major step. These are challenges, and if other people view them as artistic—I don't know what an artist or a sculpture is—I just accept that.

**JH:** Would you say that your art is an art of assemblage, because it appears that you refuse to drastically alter any of the components that you put into your sculpture? You take them and rearrange them in different kinds of relationships toward something new, but why are you so uncomfortable about altering the material that you use?

**DE:** I don't think there's any damn need to alter anything at any given point in time, because any kind of shape or form can be anything! It's all in the way you look at it! I make that vast statement in the many birds I've created here. Those special bird bodies out there—I've got electric motors in them. Who says you can't have electric motors in a bird to make it a power-bird? It's a rebellious forum that I am presenting in all these things. If an art teacher says, "You can't do that, you've got to have a bird body shaped like a bird body," I say, "The hell with that, I'll put any kind of body I want on it!"

**JH:** Last question—what do you hope becomes of the Forevertron? Do you have a vision for it beyond your own life span?

**DE:** Yes. I do hope that it goes into some kind of foundation. I hope they don't just chop it up and sell all the antique parts inside of it. I think it makes a statement about what an individual can do with nothing—yes, with nothing. All of this stuff is fundamentally that, because it was the castoffs of our society before I reverberated it into something else. That's really about all I can say.

**JH:** Then thanks for sharing so many of your thoughts with me today.

Jeffrey Hayes is Professor of Art History at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.



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All photographs courtesy Jeffrey Hayes

Dr. Evermor and Tall Bird, 1998

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