

Remains of the Shack, Salvaged and Shaped With New Jersey Pride

By JULIET KASZAS-HOCH

In the marsh on the eastbound side of the Causeway Bridge, all that endures of the Shack – that implausibly (formerly) long-standing and beloved Long Beach Island landmark – is pilings. In the workshop at his New Gretna home, though, Ben Wurst is at work with a scroll saw creating cutouts in the shape of the state of New Jersey from Shack wood he salvaged after Superstorm Sandy.

A batch of 20 sold out in 48 hours after he posted them for sale online through his business, Reclaimed LLC, at the end of December. Initially, Wurst was a bit bowled over by the popularity, but then thought, “I wasn’t really surprised, knowing how people are connected to the Shack.”

On the Reclaimed LLC Facebook page, one user called the items “a piece of history.”

More Shack wood cutouts will be available on Wurst’s Etsy page beginning Jan. 11 – at a cost of \$50 – along with other cutouts and frames made from non-Shack, but still storm-salvaged, wood. And, “for the month of January,” he explained, “I’m donating 30 percent of proceeds from the sales of items made from Sandy debris to a couple local nonprofits,” Habitat for Humanity of Southern Ocean County and the Tuckerton Seaport.

“People can have a piece of the Shack and help a local organization,” Wurst noted.

Outside of his job with the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of N.J., and as a husband and dad of two young kids, Wurst steadily built Reclaimed LCC from a love of the natural environment, woodworking and art. He makes handmade wooden frames, driftwood trees, corkboards and other custom creations entirely from re-purposed material, thereby reducing the amount of waste destined for landfills.

Soon after Sandy ravaged the local area, Wurst said, “Me being a collector of wood ... definitely I’m looking on the side of the road. After

the storm, it was something you just couldn’t miss.”

His intentions, as always, were to save wood from the landfill to use for his projects.

On Oct. 30, the Harvey Cedars Police Department had reported that the Shack – after just a few years shy of a century – was gone. Weeks after the storm, there were still significant debris piles in the right-of-way on the side of the Causeway Bridge – “a lot of mixed lumber,” wood from decks, sections of dock, and said Wurst, “the obvious remains of the Shack.”

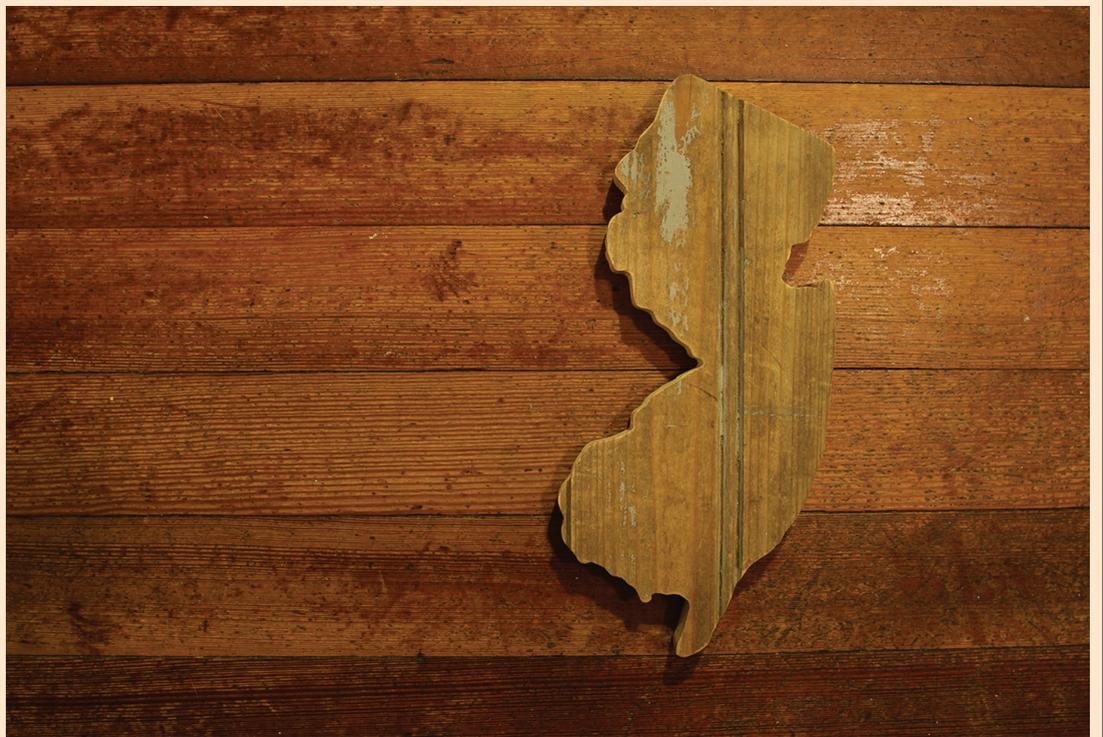
“It was easy to tell it was the Shack because there were whole sections of wall” of old yellow pine, as well as joists, and the structure’s familiar cedar shake siding, about 200 to 300 yards away from the spot where it had stood.

As Wurst explains on his business website, reclaimednj.com, “I managed to salvage a whole truckload of wood as grappler trucks from out of state were clearing debris from where I found the remains of the Shack. I was lucky to save a large amount of wood before the trucks came and took it all away. The Shack is officially gone now; it’s headed to a landfill or incinerator. At least the wood that I got will be cherished by those who always admired the Shack.”

A journalism student at Columbia University, working on a piece about reusing storm debris, even filmed footage of Wurst collecting the wood and in his workshop for her video project (<http://vimeo.com/55945575>), which is how he first discovered the pieces of the locally famed structure.

Wurst said he originally had no idea what he’d do with the Shack wood; his only initial thought was that he wanted to save it “so that it wasn’t thrown out and treated like trash.” Then, he hit on the idea for the N.J. cutouts.

The reception so far has been great, he pointed out. “I’ve been the one who has been hesitant or afraid” to sell items he created from wood found after Sandy’s devastation because, he said, “I didn’t want to seem like someone who wanted to profit



Supplied Photo

RECLAIMED: (Top) In the marshy right-of-way south of the eastbound Causeway Bridge, Ben Wurst salvaged pieces of the Shack following Superstorm Sandy. (Above) Wurst transforms the old yellow pine wallboard into cutouts of New Jersey.

from the storm.” His concerns were put to rest, though, after he listed his first batch of Shack cutouts and learned friends and customers were happy to see the wood reused and kept from a landfill.

And now, for a few individuals, a piece of one of the Island’s most recognizable landmarks can be theirs.

In addition to Shack remains, Wurst also collected a great deal of additional wood after the storm to use for his creations: shingles, pilings, floorboards, “random little pieces of driftwood” from the beaches in Barnegat Light and elsewhere, sections of fence from his brother-in-law’s house in Tuckerton, wood from his brother-

in-law’s girlfriend’s parents’ house in Beach Haven Crest, and more.

To see Wurst’s Sandy debris creations, visit reclaimednj.com/, reclaimednj.etsy.com or facebook.com/reclaimednj. Contact Wurst directly at ben.wurst@gmail.com or 609-713-4464.

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society seeks people who can give a few hours of help per week or month in the museum education department or library research center. Prior knowledge is not needed. Call Diane Lingsch or Linda Kay.

“**Martha Mary Design Ministry**,” St. Mary’s Church rectory, Barnegat. Decorating Committee meets 2nd Sat. of each month. New members are welcome. Call 698-5531.

Library for the Blind & Handicapped, (800-792-8322) Books are available on cassette and in large print at no cost.

American Legion Fredrick W. Born Post 511 94 Stafford Ave., Manahawkin. 3rd Mon. of each month, 7 pm. New members are welcome; rides available. Call Cmdr. Bob Winder at 609-597-4309.

Adult Health Promotion, LBI Health Dept. provides blood pressure screening plus health education on diet, medication and risk factors for diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and breast, cervical and colon/rectal cancer. **Beach Haven Borough Hall**, (609-492-0111) 1st Mon. of each month, 10 am-noon. **Island Branch**

Ocean County Library, Surf City (609-494-3064) 1st Tues. of each month, 11 am-noon. **Harvey Cedars Police Dept.**, (609-494-2843) 3rd Tues. of each month, 9:30-10:30 am. **Barnegat Light Borough Hall**, (609-494-9196) 3rd Tues. of each month, 11 am-noon. **LBI Health Dept.**, 11601 Long Beach Blvd., Haven Beach (609-361-1000, ext. 250 or 609-492-1212) 2nd & 4th Wed., 10 am-noon.

CONTACT of Ocean County Offers Service, CONTACT is a 24-hour crisis intervention/listening telephone service available to the troubled, lonely, depressed or suicidal, as well as the individual who just needs someone to listen. Call 732-240-6100.

Nurses Group, St. Mary’s Church, Msgr. Reinbold Hall, 747 West Bay Ave., Barnegat. New nurses and ideas are welcome. 2nd Wed. of each month, 7:30 pm. Call Peg Watson at 609-693-3645.

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 7-10, Ocean Twp. Community Center, 239 11th St., Waretown. Visitors are welcome. 3rd Tues. of each month, 7:30 pm. Call Cmdr. Elise Carson at 609-971-0928.

Family Child Care Providers Sought, Providers can earn an income by caring for up to five children in their Ocean County home. Call The Children’s Home Society of NJ at 732-905-6363, ext. 136.

Breakfast Is Served, Stafford Twp. Firehouse, 133 Stafford Ave., Manahawkin. 3rd Sun. of each month, 8 am-noon.

Helping Hands Mission Seeks Donations, This nonprofit, charitable organization purchases, collects and distributes supplies such as food, clothes, furniture, hygiene products for local children ages newborn-13 years who are in need. Write the mission at PO Box 504, Barnegat, NJ 08005.

Soroptimist International of LBI, Soroptimist International is a worldwide organization of women in management and the professions, working together to advance human rights and the status of women. The chapter meets 2nd Wed. of each month, September-June, 6:30 pm at various LBI restaurants. Anyone interested in attending a meeting may call Beverly Welling at 609-492-1032.

Boys & Girls Club Car Campaign, (1-800-246-0493) The clubs will accept most any car, with no restrictions. Cars will be sold at auction, and proceeds will help local clubs. Call for info.

English Conversation Group, Island Branch Ocean County Library, 217 South Central Ave., Surf City (609-494-2480 or theoceancountylibrary.org) Groups meet in an informal environment and are led by trained volunteers. The group is intended for people who are new to speaking English. Tues., 3-4 pm or 4-5 pm.

Artists Wanted, Pine Shores Art Assn., 94 Stafford Ave., Manahawkin (609-597-3557 or www.pineshore-artassociation.org) Members can exhibit their work and attend classes, demonstrations and bus trips at discounted rates.

BNI Meetings, This is a business referral organization. **Manahawkin chapter**, Holiday Inn, Rte. 72, Tues., 8-9:30 am. Call Chris DiFrancia at 609-384-6059. **Waretown chapter**, Ocean Breeze Diner, 562 Rte. 9 North, Thurs., 8-9:30 am. Visitors are welcome. The only cost is for the meal. Call Patti Greenwood at 609-698-5347.