

Gaylord's Claude E. Shannon 'Einstein of mathematical theory'

GAYLORD — Some of the most noted electrical and electronics engineering professors in the world made one thing very clear on their visit to Gaylord Friday.

Gaylord native son Claude E. Shannon is a man who will be revered forever as the Einstein of the mathematical theory of communication — a theory that set the stage for such modern-day technology as the Internet, compact disk, satellite and cellular and digital phones.

SHANNON was honored Friday evening with the unveiling and dedication of a life-size statue in the Claude Shannon Park in the 100 block of West Main Street in downtown Gaylord. Almost 100 people attended the dedication, including Shannon's wife, Betty.

"I love Gaylord," she said. "I wish he could be with us today, but he is afflicted with Alzheimer's. But he is very healthy," she said with a smile. "Thank you, all the people of Gaylord."

The statue shows Shannon in a thinking position, one hand on his chin and the other holding a paper that depicts his information theory.

Shannon, who is 84 and living near Boston, spent the first 16 years of his life in Gaylord and is a 1932 graduate of Gaylord High School. His father, Claude Sr., was a businessman and probate judge here, and his mother, Mabel Wolf Shannon, was a principal and teacher at Gaylord High School.

The site of the statue is the location of the former Shannon building, constructed in the early 1900s and demolished three years ago to make way for the park. First called Project Parkway, the site was renamed Claude Shannon Park in 1998.

THE STATUE was donated by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), an international organization with more than 300,000 members. The project was a joint effort of the University of Michigan (Shannon's alma mater), U of M Club of Gaylord, Gaylord Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and IEEE. Noted California sculptor Eugene Daub was commissioned to create the statue.

Sherrice Schuster, DDA executive director who gave the dedication welcoming, said the community was extremely proud to call Claude Shannon its native son and that the statue was a tremendous asset. Prof. Vijay Bhargava of the University of Victoria, B.C., Canada, performed the unveiling with Mrs. Shannon.

Six noted professors and acquaintances of Shannon kept the audience spellbound as they addressed Shannon's accomplishments at a reception at the Otsego Club following the dedication.

The authors of the inventor's book, "The Mathematical Theory of Communication" published in 1949, sum up in the book's foreword the significance of the professors' comments:

"The fact that a specific capacity can be reached, and that no data transmission system can exceed this capacity, has been the holy grail of modern design for the last 50 years. Without the guidance of Shannon's capacity formula, modern designers would have stumbled more often and proceeded more slowly.

"Communication systems ranging from deep-space satellite links to storage devices such as magnetic tapes and compact disks, and from high-speed internets to broadcast high-definition television, came sooner and in better form because of his work.

"Aside from this wealth of consequences, the wisdom of Claude Shannon's insights may in the end be his greatest legacy."



HT - Bill Serveny

AMONG COMMITTEE MEMBERS who worked on the Claude Shannon statue project (from left): Professor David Neuhoft, University of Michigan College of Engineering; Sherrice Schuster, Gaylord Downtown Development Authority executive director; Professor Vijay Bhargava, president of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Information Theory Society; Jim Grisso, vice-president of the U of M Club of Gaylord; Bill Granlund, former Gaylord High School principal and member of the Otsego County Historical Society; and Don Krieger, president of the U of M Club of Gaylord.



MEMBERS OF THE GAYLORD community brave the rain and cold winds to honor native son Claude Shannon at statue dedication ceremonies Friday evening in Claude Shannon Park in downtown Gaylord.

WORDING ON PLAQUE

"Claude Elwood Shannon, father of the Information Theory, electrical engineer, mathematician and native son of Gaylord.

His creation of the information theory, the mathematical theory of communication, in the 1940s and 1950s, inspired the revolutionary advances in digital communications and information storage that have shaped the modern world.

This statue was donated by the Information Theory Society of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers whose members follow gratefully in his footsteps.

Dedicated October 6, 2000.
Eugene Daub, Sculptor

Harvest Memories Senior Prom
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