

November 2020

Horizons

A Golden West Customer Newsletter

Legendary **Airbrush Artist** Leaves Mark on Menno

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Legendary Airbrush Artist Leaves Mark on Menno



Mickey Harris is considered both a pioneer in the practice and one of the country's best airbrush painters – and he lives in Menno, southwest of Freeman.

He's also written books, recorded videos and conducted seminars to teach others the skill of airbrush painting.

"I'm one of the grandfathers of airbrush painting," he says. "Anybody that's in this business knows who I am, that's for sure. I've kind of got legend status."

Anyone who's driven around Menno has experienced his work, as well. His art can be seen on countless signs and in murals on the sides of buildings all around town.

Getting Started Young

Harris honed his art skills early. His second-grade teacher pointed out his knack for drawing to his mom, which led to private art lessons as a child. He started airbrush painting professionally at the age of 19.

"The airbrush is a tool that allowed me to start making a living as a young kid by painting t-shirts on the beaches in Florida," he says. "I would do that all summer season and then in the winter go do bike shows and paint cars and whatever we could get."

Over the past 43 years, he's painted many detailed scenes on all kinds of surfaces both on canvas and beyond, including automobiles, motorcycles, aircraft, buildings and silos.

“*Now I want to sit in Menno for the rest of my life and do the work that comes my way and maybe paint a few masterpieces.*”

Mickey Harris

Coming to Menno

Harris came to Menno for the first time in 2009 to paint a car for a client of the local auto body shop. It was just six days of work, but he stayed for six weeks and made several return visits. He and his wife became permanent residents in 2012.

"We lived for more than 20 years in the Smokey Mountains of Tennessee,

which is a gorgeous place, but the crime levels are just horrible there," he says. "Our kids were all grown, so we decided we wanted to live in a smaller community, more in line with our values and with a slower pace."

When locals ask why they moved to Menno, Harris says, "I don't think you people know how good you have it."

Happy to Stay

Harris communicates with potential clients all over the country online. He also uses his internet connection to regularly conduct photographic research for accuracy. He's already traveled extensively, and now he's content staying in Menno.





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Mickey Harris

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“I have access to people in a small town who can do world-class work,” Harris says of the men who own Classic Collision & Framework. “I also have good friends here that I’ve developed over the last eight years.”

Harris’ son moved to Menno from Tennessee, as well, and has his own construction business. He recently built a new one-level home for his parents.

“Now I want to sit in Menno for the rest of my life and do the work that comes my way and maybe paint a few masterpieces.”

Patriotic Projects

As the son of an Air Force fighter pilot, patriotic scenes honoring veterans are Harris’ specialty. “I tell the story in pictures,” he says.

Among his many artistic projects, Harris has painted:

- Artwork on display in the Pentagon.
- A car for the Lone Survivor Foundation, established by decorated U.S. Navy SEAL Marcus Luttrell.
- Pat Tillman’s 1969 Impala convertible on behalf of the Pat Tillman Foundation, which brought many of Tillman’s football friends to Menno. Tillman left the NFL, joined the Army Rangers, was killed by friendly fire in Afghanistan and honored posthumously.
- A memorial motorcycle donated by Harley-Davidson to celebrate the U.S.S. South Dakota submarine. The motorcycle is at the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum & Hall of Fame. Any sailor ever assigned to the sub can ride the bike anywhere in South Dakota.
- A 1956 Thunderbird Congressional Medal of Honor tribute car that was displayed at the Gettysburg Battlefield where 25 medal recipients signed the hood.
- A vehicle promoting the General Motors military discount program each year.
- A firetruck Menno received from the New York City Fire Department that was at Ground Zero when the towers went down.
- And many, many more.

For more information, visit mickeyharris.com.

With Precautions in Place During Pandemic Members Elect New Director at Annual Meeting

With many precautions in place to protect people from COVID-19, over 200 members attended the 68th annual meeting of the Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative on Saturday, Sept. 26.

The meeting was held at the Wall School to allow for social distancing. It was moved to the morning for a simplified schedule with meal tickets shared for lunch afterward. Employees, board members and many attendees wore face coverings, and hand sanitizer was distributed.

During the required business meeting, the membership elected one new director and re-elected three incumbents to new four-year terms on the Board of Directors. Those elected include Tanner Handcock, new director for District II; Jeff Nielsen, District IX; Lee Briggs, District III; and Stu Marty, District V.

In addition to electing board members, the membership voted to not approve proposed amendments to the Golden West Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.



Tanner Handcock



Lee Briggs



Jeff Nielsen



Stu Marty

The board, staff and legal counsel will review the proposed changes again with consideration for the concerns the members expressed at the meeting.

President Nielsen told members how – much like them – the cooperative relied on hard work, perseverance and a strong sense of community to get through recent challenges, including COVID-19.

“When the pandemic hit, it obviously rearranged the cooperative’s priorities,” Nielsen said. “Cooperative members needed our help, and we responded by delivering telecommunications services to areas affected by the crisis.”

Golden West General Manager Denny Law provided an overview on the status of the cooperative. He addressed how Golden West kept people connected and helped members financially this past year, while also continuing to improve infrastructure and advocating on behalf of members.

“Golden West’s employees responded remarkably to the challenge of ensuring that cooperative members received the services they needed,” Law said. “I am also proud of Golden West’s efforts to help membership financially by halting disconnects and late fees for several months. In addition, the board retired more capital credits this year and distributed them earlier than usual to help members affected by the pandemic.”

While there was no entertainment this year, Golden West gave away over 20 prizes including gift cards, beef certificates and cash. Marvin and Debra Moor of Kadoka won the \$500 grand prize.

Thanks to all the members who attended this year’s meeting. The 69th annual meeting will be held September 25, 2021.



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Offer good through January 15, 2021.

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Local Broadcasters Charge Fees

Retransmission Consent Time Returns

All Golden West cable TV subscribers have access to local broadcast stations affiliated with ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC for which monthly fees will soon increase.

“These stations provide information our customers want such as local news and weather,” says Golden West General Manager and CEO Denny Law. “Yet without Golden West’s video service, many customers would not have access to one or more of the major networks even with an antenna due to their distance from the broadcaster’s transmitter.”

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Over the past 15 years broadcasters have demanded higher retransmission consent fees for their programming, and cable companies have had little choice but to pay up.

Consumer Reports
Report Published October 2019

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To continue providing these stations to video subscribers, federal regulations require Golden West to renew retransmission consent carriage agreements with each local broadcast station every three years. Golden West is currently renegotiating with three of the four affiliate broadcasters in South Dakota as current agreements expire in December. Previous retransmission consent renegotiations have resulted in substantial monthly rate increases for subscribers.

Just as it passes signals from stations to viewers, Golden West also passes retransmission consent fees from affiliate broadcasters to subscribers. All fees paid go directly to the broadcasters. Golden West does not keep any portion of the retransmission consent fees paid by subscribers.

When did the fees start?

Affiliate broadcast stations first charged for retransmitting their signal to cable or satellite television customers in 2009. During each subsequent renegotiation, local affiliate stations have demanded a large fee increase per subscriber to continue offering their channel. At the same time, these stations still offer programming over the air for free to viewers who can receive their signal via an antenna. Unfortunately, most broadcaster’s off-air signals do not cover large portions of rural South Dakota.

Besides increasing fees for their network channel, broadcast affiliates also require providers to distribute and pay for additional channels, such as the CW, MyTV and many others, for an extra monthly fee as part of retransmission consent. Agreements mandate these channels are distributed to all customers, as well, which rules out options for a la carte programming.

Retransmission consent fees appear on a customer’s bill under “Other Charges” as “Local Broadcast Retransmission Fee.” Because Golden West negotiates with local affiliate stations in each market separately, fees vary by location.

Historic increases

“Over the past 15 years broadcasters have demanded higher retransmission consent fees for their programming, and cable companies have had little choice but to pay up,” says Consumer Reports in an October 2019 report.

Affiliate broadcasters hold the upper hand during negotiations for retransmission consent. If Golden West doesn’t agree to their significant rate increases and demands to carry additional programming, each broadcaster can force the removal of their channel from Golden West’s lineup, leaving viewers in the dark. Until regulations change, or the affiliate broadcasters stop the substantial increases, customers will likely see increasing retransmission fees on their cable TV bills.

Why Shopping Local Matters More Than Ever

Even in a normal year, shopping local makes a difference. With the challenges of 2020, it's more important than ever to support businesses in your community.

Some Golden West communities like Dell Rapids, Hartford and Martin have benefited from a resurgence in local shopping. Sales tax collections there have increased as more people work from home and limit travel to stay safe during the pandemic.

Spending dollars locally this holiday season is one way to help pave the way for a brighter year in 2021. Here are six reasons to shop local:

- **Unique Products & Offers.**

Every community has interesting shopping opportunities in places like the coffee shop, convenience store or local newspaper and more.

- **Friendly Service.** You run into local business owners all around town, so their service often extends well beyond the sale. Forging relationships with them helps foster deep connections that often last a lifetime.

- **Local Expertise.** Local business owners are also knowledgeable, and supporting these businesses helps ensure the knowledge remains available for you in the future.



The Mason Jar Boutique offers unique products in Dell Rapids, a community that saw an increase in sales tax revenue during the pandemic.

- **Support the Business.** When you spend dollars locally, you're helping to boost the local economy. Your support allows these businesses, in turn, to contribute to a variety of community causes and organizations.

- **Create Jobs.** Extra income for a business leads to jobs for your community, which increases the overall tax base. When these employees also spend their income in the community, the benefits compound.

- **Grow Sales Tax Revenue.**

A small percentage of every purchase you make in your community comes back in sales tax receipts. Communities use these funds for things like fixing streets, maintaining and developing parks and ensuring public safety with police and fire support.

This holiday season, as in years past, Golden West is sponsoring

a "Win Big, Shop Local" campaign to encourage residents to spend money in their towns. Golden West will award \$3,000 in gift certificates to 23 lucky Golden West customers to be spent locally. See below for additional information. Visit goldenwest.com/giveaway to enter.

Shopping local is a win-win for everybody. Do your part this season to help make the holidays brighter for your local community!

**WIN BIG
SHOP
LOCAL**

Customer Appreciation Giveaway

1 GRAND PRIZE **2 RUNNERS-UP** **20 WINNERS**
\$500 Local Shopping **\$250 Local Shopping** **\$100 Local Shopping**

Win a Local Shopping **GIFT CERTIFICATE**

You must be a Golden West residential customer and be at least 18 years of age to register. Only one entry and prize awarded per household. No purchase necessary. **You must list a local merchant's name when you register. The retail or service-based merchant must be in a Golden West community.** The value of the gift certificate must be spent with only one merchant. Entries close at noon and drawing will be held at 4 p.m. MT on Friday, December 11. It will be broadcast LIVE on the Golden West Facebook page.

Register to **WIN** at:
goldenwest.com/giveaway

Those without internet access can call 1-855-888-7777 to register.

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