

Castle island

A visit with Don Kracht

Don Kracht, a retired high school algebra teacher, has been building a castle in his Junction City, Kansas backyard since 1993. The story of Mr. Kracht's castle begins in 1977 when he had a well dug for his garden. The creation of the well resulted in a large water-filled trench. Finding himself with a moat in his backyard and inspired by the grounds of Elvis Presley's Graceland, Don began work on a waterfall to compliment his moat in 1988.

To build his waterfall, Don purchased an old stone house which he subsequently deconstructed for materials. He hauled the salvaged stone back to his home where he split the stones, and began construction. While he was building the waterfall, Don decided to build a castle on the island in his backyard.

Despite not having any training in architecture, engineering, or construction, Don began to design, modeling the project on several German castles. As he developed the design through producing plan, elevation, and axonometric drawings, Don taught himself masonry, carpentry, and other skills, making the construction of the castle a true learning process.

The *Oz* staff visited Don at Castle Island in April 2009. He gave us a tour of more recent construction, including a structure patterned after Neuschwanstein Castle, and demonstrated one of his two working cannons.



