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Fairfield company to add Columbia crew to Astronauts Memorial Space Mirror

Creative Edge hired to add names of the Columbia crew to the Astronauts Memorial Space Mirror

By **DUNCAN H. BROWN**
Courier correspondent

FAIRFIELD — The space shuttle Columbia astronauts are gone, but they will not be forgotten. And a Fairfield company will ensure that indeed is the case.

Creative Edge in Fairfield has received a contract to add the seven names of the Columbia crew to the Astronauts Memorial Space Mirror at Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

The Mirror is 42.5 feet by 50 feet, and the highly polished black granite slabs that together make up its face weighs more than 50,000 pounds.

There are currently 14 names on the memorial, including the seven Challenger astronauts who perished in 1986 and the three Apollo 1 astronauts who died on the launch pad in 1967.

Using a computer program, the memorial moves to track the sun each day. Sunlight illuminates the names on the mirror from behind so that they appear like bright stars on the face of the mirror amidst the reflected sky.

Harri Aalto, president of Creative Edge, got word from the Astronauts Memorial Foundation early this week that Creative Edge would be doing the job.

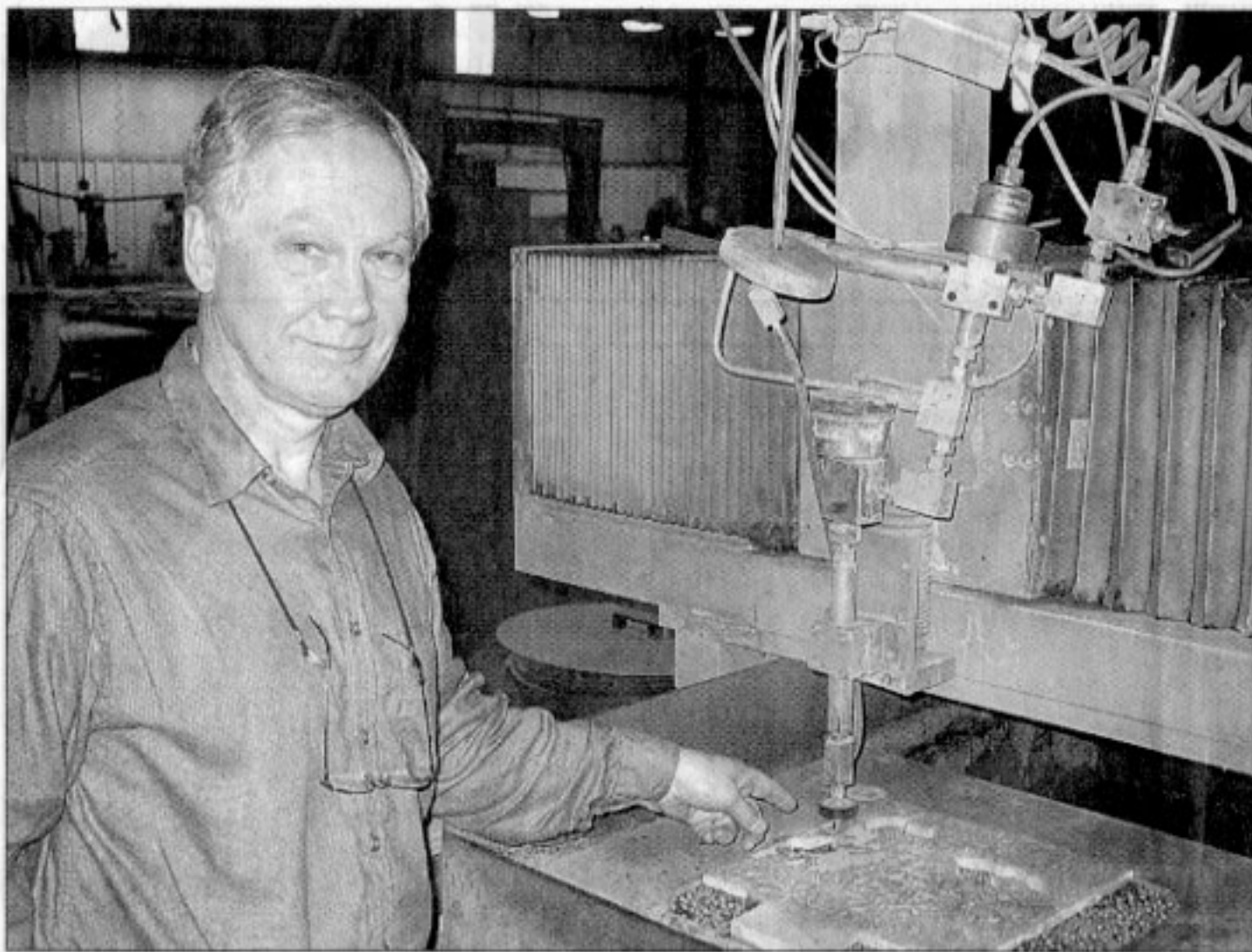
Aalto said it will take a month to complete from the time they get final design approval.

The 1.5-inch thick black Indian granite slabs (5 feet by 5 feet) that make up the mirror can each hold up to four names of astronauts who died in the line of duty.

Two slabs will be freighted to Fairfield for the job. Each weighs 600 pounds.

Creative Edge uses a huge waterjet machine, controlled by computer, to cut out the letters. The machine shoots a slurry of water and garnet sand at twice the speed of sound and the letters are then filled with lexan inserts and bonded in place with silicon sealant.

The lexan transmits sunlight from the back of the mirror to the front of the mirror surface. The silicon allows for expansion and contraction due to the heat of the



Duncan Brown/The Courier

Above: Creative Edge President Harri Aalto stands next to one of the company's waterjet machines, that will help to inscribe the seven Columbia astronauts' names onto the Astronauts Memorial Space Mirror at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

Photo provided

Right: This is the side view of the Astronauts Memorial Space Mirror at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

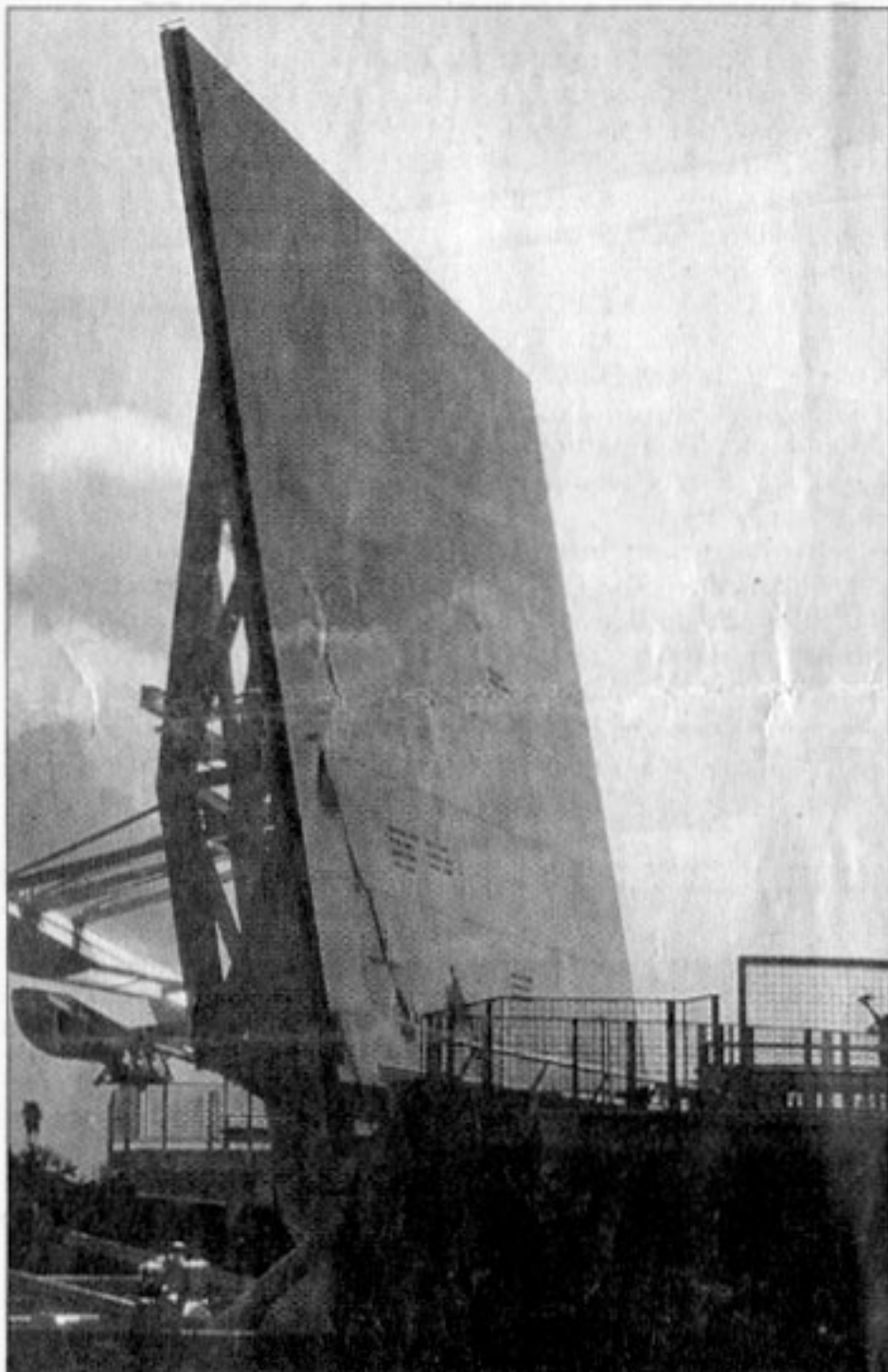
sun. On sunny summer days the mirror surface can reach 180 degrees Fahrenheit.

Once the seven Columbia astronauts' names are etched through the granite slabs in Fairfield, the panels will be shipped to the Kennedy Space Center for installation.

Examples of Creative Edge's work can be found on the floors at the Libertyville Savings Bank branch in Fairfield and at the Iowa State Bank and Trust branch at Fourth and Burlington in Fairfield.

The company also created a 20-foot high sundial at Drake University in Des Moines, and memorials to firefighters and policemen in Chicago.

Bob Sawyer, co-owner and



vice president of Creative Edge, said the opportunity to work on the memorial is a wonderful opportunity for the company

and its employees.

"We're very proud of this," he said. "It's had a profound effect on everybody."