

'Always liked electricity,' LeCloux says of long career at Algoma Utilities

General manager of the Algoma Utilities since Sept. 7, 1999, but on the staff in various capacities since 1973, Jim LeCloux said, "I was always interested in electricity."

After 31 years, LeCloux has had the pleasure of contributing to the efficient and successful growth of Algoma's municipally-owned utility, working in a field he has always loved, in a community he loves.

LeCloux said, "On behalf of the utility, its commissioners and staff, I welcome the residents of Algoma to the celebration Friday, Oct. 1, of a century spent helping develop the community into a prosperous and highly-regarded city on the shores of Lake Michigan."

He said, "For those of us who have seen much of the changes and improvement in our splendid city, it is an occasion of considerable joy."

LeCloux noted what most here must agree have truly been huge changes and

development. He said, when the utility began its service in 1904, there were 32 streetlights established. Though just a few then, it was a step of which the city was very proud. Today we have approximately 1,978 electricity customers, he noted. Back in 1904, when this all began, they had 40 water customers. Today there are approximately 1,580.

The utility represents a very large business, with its annual gross revenue of over \$3 million, in contrast to the first year's revenue of \$6,777.

LeCloux said it is very obvious that the residents of Algoma made the correct decision, opting to have their own municipal power system in 1904. A century later, it not only continues to deliver reliable service, but is quick to respond to whatever changes are needed to accommodate growing businesses and industries, all at a significantly lower rate than charged by the major area-wide, investor-owned utility serv-

ing this region.

The utility has responded to every need for safe, pure water in abundance, LeCloux said. That growth has been quite remarkable, starting out with just 40 customers that first year and soaring to 1,580 today. "There were no records available regarding the annual water production that first year, but now it is at over 99 million gallons," he said.

LeCloux, of French descent, was born in Algoma in 1950. He graduated from Algoma High School and completed lineman training at Chippewa Valley Technical School. Jobs following that were at Kewaunee Engineering and the Algoma Hardwoods. Then, on May 1, 1973, he began as a lineman for Algoma Utilities. He said his duties included maintaining overhead and underground distribution, all transformer settings and the substations.

Though high voltage lines can be lethal, LeCloux does not recall any employee of



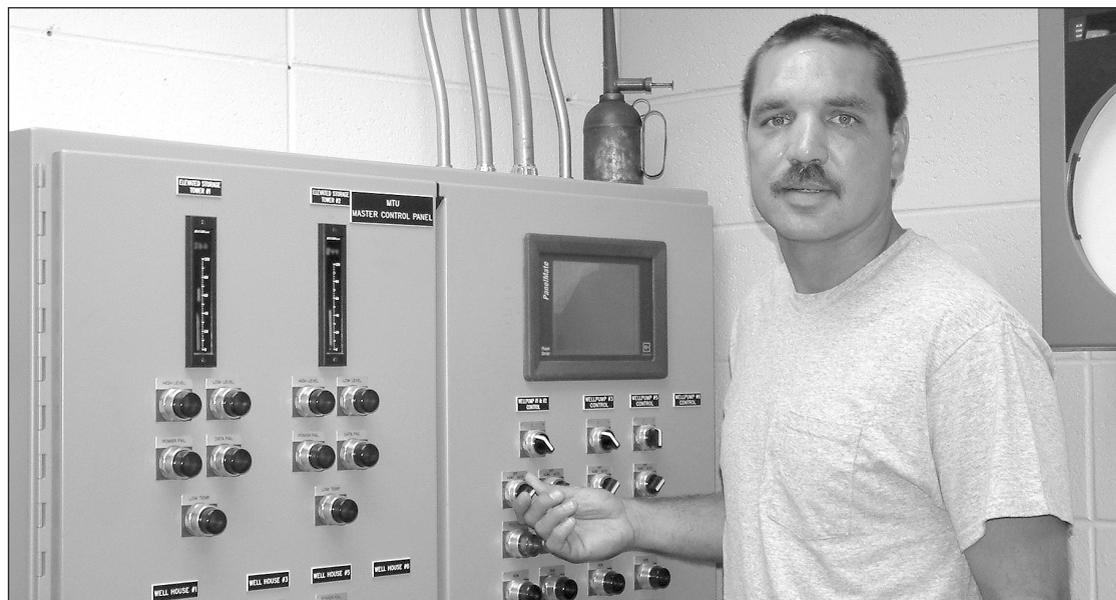
JIM LE CLOUX, general manager of Algoma Utilities, and on its work force since 1973, has a hand-carved, basswood model of a sailing ship in his office. He said it was carved by Sydney Holub, who worked at Algoma Hardwoods. First owned by his father, the ship was called "Blue Goose," his father's nickname and the name of his shoe repair shop. LeCloux tells of the growth of Algoma Utilities, which serves the city of Algoma with power and water.

Algoma Utilities being injured or electrocuted in its 100-year history. But he said, "I remember the time I was hit by lightning, working on a pole on Evergreen Road and Hwy. 54." He said he was not injured enough to require medical treatment.

LeCloux said there was a time when he helped with the installation of water mains, repairing them or replacing hydrants hit by

vehicles. A particularly big project was when they rebuilt the water system on the entire north side and established the river crossing for the water line on Fourth Street.

LeCloux and his wife, Judy, have two children. Their daughter, Jamie, works at the Cerebral Palsy Center in Green Bay and their son, Jacob, is attending UW-Stevens Point.



Water system controls delivery to 28 miles of water mains

MARK KOSTICHKA explains the water system controls, which are located in the utility building on Flora Avenue. From this location the water levels in the two water towers are controlled, though this is usually automatically done. But when a problem is spotted, it can be adjusted or corrected from this point. There are 139,134 feet of water mains, roughly 28 miles. The two 126-foot-tall towers can each hold 300,000 gallons of water. The water comes from four deep artesian wells. Two wells go down to about 1,300 feet, the other two about 500 feet. Each has a pump capacity of from 300 to 925 gallons per minute. Utility Manager Jim LeCloux says, "Algoma has one heck of a water supply."