

ACCORD

GNOME, GNOME ON THE GRANGE

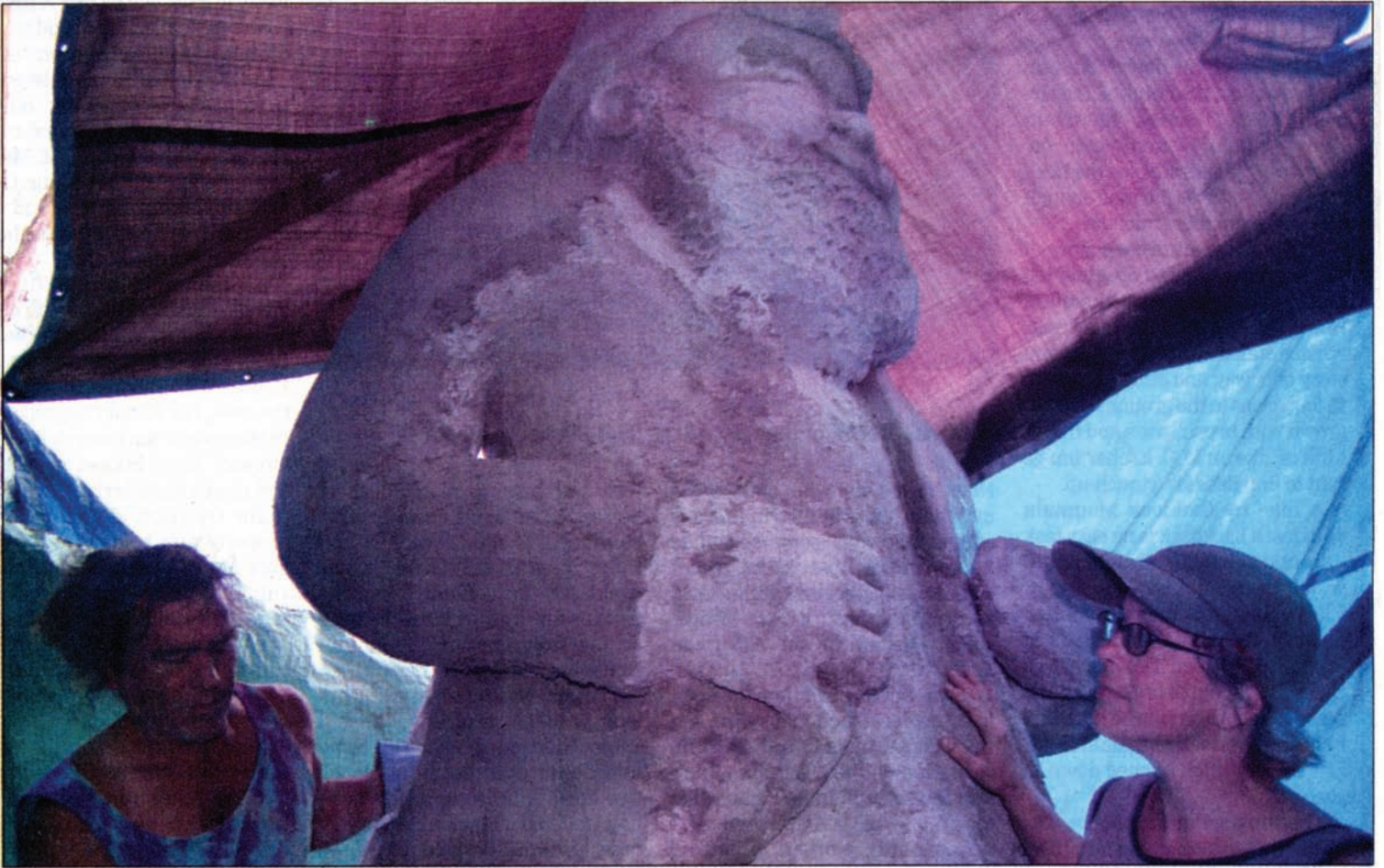


PHOTO BY ROCHELLE RISERVATO

JOLLY GREEN GNOME. In addition to the obvious fruits and vegetables, Kelder's Farm in Kerhonkson also has a petting zoo and tours. Now it has something even more unique - miniature golf. The putt-putt course was the brainchild of Maria Reidelbach, who added a most interesting feature to the golf: a garden gnome that she believes might be the biggest on earth. We're not kidding. Staff writer Andrew Hickey shares his round with us.

KERHONKSON

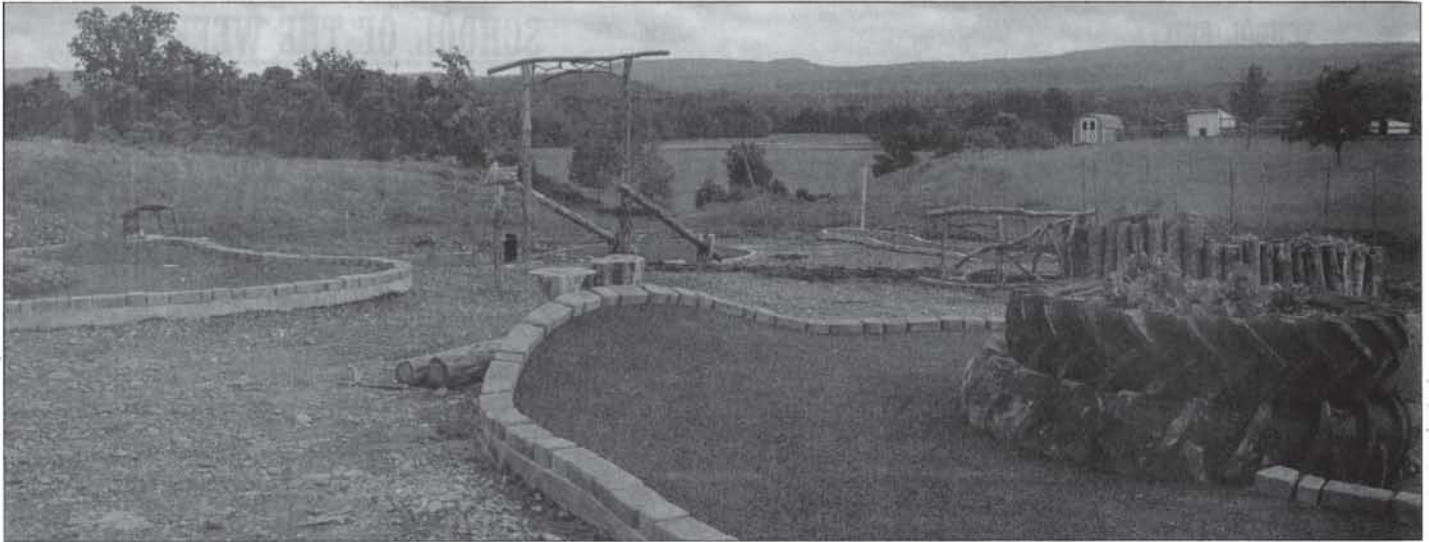


PHOTO BY ROCHELLE RISERVATO

GNOME ON THE GRANGE, being prepared for its July 1 opening, sits roadside to Route 209 in Kerhonkson on the Kelder Farm.

Mini-golf with a message

...and maybe the biggest garden gnome in the world

BY ANDREW HICKEY
Ulster County Press

Maria Reidelbach wrote the book on mini-golf – literally.

But she didn't stop there. Reidelbach built a course in the middle of Manhattan and now she's partnered with Kerhonkson's Kelder Farm to build another.

"Ten years ago I had the idea to design an agriculture-themed roadside attraction," Reidelbach, co-author of the 1987 book "Miniature Golf," said as she took a break recently from working on her newest project.

But it's not just a row of corn and a couple of putters. Reidelbach's vision includes what maybe the biggest garden gnome on earth – thus the name "Gnome on the Grange Mini-Golf."

Reidelbach, a New York City resident who has been spending summers in Ulster County for 15

years, rescued the gnome's frame in the city for a course she was building there. Having stored the "homeless gnome" in a local shed, she decided to integrate the enormous figure into her theme, and named him "Chomsky."

And, Reidelbach said, she has invited a representative from the Guinness Book of World Records to inspect the gnome and create a new category for "Chomsky" to dominate.

As Bridget Weaver and John Hutchinson worked last week to prepare the garden gnome for his close-up, Reidelbach worked to prep the course for its July 1 opening day.

And if Reidelbach's persistence in finding a home for her dream has any bearing on the final product, it should be unstoppable.

"About three years ago, I started knocking on barn doors," she

'When Maria approached me about collaborating on the project, it seemed like a win-win proposition.'

CHRIS KELDER, *Owner, Kelder Farm in Kerhonkson*

said.

Reidelbach's cold calling method paid off when she caught the attention of Chris Kelder. She asked the Kelder family to dedicate a small swath of their massive spread, which features a farm stand, U-pick fields, a petting zoo and farm tours, to her creation.

"When Maria approached me about collaborating on the project, it seemed like a win-win proposition," Kelder said. "More ways for the kids to enjoy the farm and something fun for all ages."

The 10-hole course is fes-

tooned with edible, herbal and medicinal fruits, vegetables and plants – many of which Kelder grows on his own farm.

Among the corn, wheat, sweet birch and hazelnut trees, purple brussel sprouts and herb gardens, Reidelbach plans for chickens and ducks to populate the course. As golfers putter from hole to hole, they can read signs annotated with the history, lore, myths and culinary tips about the vegetation around them.

Pieces of old farm equipment are scattered around the site and incorporated as obstacles on a few of the holes. A hollowed log

sits in front of the cup on one hole, a mini-golf hazard from the old days, Reidelbach said. Another standard, the tractor tire twisted slightly into a loop-the-loop, looms on another hole.

Reidelbach said because the plantings will take about a year to fill in correctly, this first season will be "pretty much experimental."

Starting next year, the season will run from May through October.

Reidelbach's future plans include adding another eight holes among the rolling hills of Kelder's roadside meadow.

"The whole idea is to promote agriculture," Reidelbach said.

Gnome on the Grange, which will be open from 10 a.m. until dark, is located at Kelder's Farm, 5755 Route 209 in Kerhonkson. For more information, visit www.gnomeonthegrange.com or call 845-626-7137.