

# Pyramid House reopens to public

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WADSWORTH - The Great Pyramid at Cheops has stood for more than 4,500 years, a testament to decades of labor endured by workers - possibly slaves - that might have numbered in the tens of thousands.

On a recent warm early-summer afternoon, Jim Onan Sr. could be found all by himself outside his Golden Pyramid House on Dilleys Road, piecing together a fresh row of landscape bricks in preparation for the public reopening of the Lake County icon.

"This isn't anything," the longtime Gurnee contractor and businessman said. "I could finish this in a day if I had to."

It hasn't quite been 4,500 years, but it has been longer than you might think since Onan's gold-plated domicile emerged from an 11-acre field north of Stearns School Road - and it's also been surprisingly long since it was open to tourists, Egyptologists and the generally curious.

"I'd say it's been about 15 years," Onan said. "I never really planned to open it up again, because it was a pain ... But I feel I have an obligation to do it now." On Father's Day, Onan planned to re-open the five-story building, which has served as his family's home since 1981, in an effort to raise funds for treatment of U.S. war veterans suffering from brain injuries.

Asked about his long-term plans, Onan said he didn't have anything concrete in mind as far as days or hours or admission. He did say that he wants to limit the size of groups coming through to make them more manageable than in the 1980s, when Onan recalled that "we were getting busloads - some days as high as 12 of 'em."

Originally, the stone-on-wood structure - which is a one-ninth scale of the Great Pyramid - was covered with an estimated 4,000 hammered gold plates. Onan said the glare on a sunny day "was like looking into a mirror," and about five years ago he had the plates removed and melted down. Today, the exterior is covered with a gold-colored paint.

The interior of the ground floor features a pyramid-shaped Russian fireplace and murals by Zion artist Alan Wright with such Egyptian figures as Akhenaten and Nefertiti. On the first floor, the only part of the private residence open for tours, Onan family mementos share space with gold-appointed furniture that Onan said once belonged to "Ten Commandments" producer Cecil B. DeMille.

Along with re-opening his creation to the masses, Onan said he has plans to raise more funds for veterans' assistance by marketing Gold Pyramid Freedom Water and an energy drink, both made from water subjected to the Pyramid's House's mystical properties.