



Cold One, Eh?

Connie Sauve reflects on the cold temperatures in Minnesota, while growing up, as she shares one of her amazing one-inch scale dioramas.

BY CONNIE SAUVE

I lived in Minnesota for the first 30 years of my life. Minnesota is known for its 10,000 lakes (there are actually more), which means fishing is a big industry and takes place during most seasons of the year, including their brutally cold winters. Eventually, my husband and I escaped the cold winters in MN, by moving to sunny California in 2001.

Upon returning to northern MN for a visit with the family, we were driving around looking at all the fishing resorts they have "up North," as Minnesotans tend to call anything North of the Twin Cities. I spied a bunch of ice fishing houses being stored on some property. They each had their own colorful personality, some new and some old, and most of them were a bit

dilapidated. During the winter, fishermen pull their ice fishing houses onto the frozen lakes for the entire season, and create little "cities" with the houses. Think of the movie "Grumpy Old Men", and that's a great representation of what ice fishing is really like. The little "cities" have so many ice houses, that the fishermen paint their houses in lots of fun colors, so they can find them again. They have even been known to put up street signs.

A couple of weeks before we visited MN, I had found a chicken coop from Tiny Timbers that I had in my mini stash for several years. I like chicken coops for some reason, so I had several of them. This one was rather large, so I was trying to decide what to do with it. Then it all suddenly clicked in my head after



Beautifully made snow shoes hang from the side of the ice fishing house along with a drill to make the fishing hole.

seeing all the colorful ice fishing houses. I would turn my chicken coop into an ice fishing shack!

I didn't want this project to turn into a long drawn-out, large



1 Back of the chicken coop before alterations. **2** Finished ice fishing shack after being converted from a chicken coop. **3** Chicken Coop by Tiny Timbers before altering. **4** Finished ice fishing shack after being converted from a chicken coop.





The finished ice fishing scene called "Cold One, Eh?". Loosely based on the movie "Grumpy Old Men", and those cold MN winters. The dog checking out the fish the guys just caught.

expensive project, so I decided to keep it small and try and use things I already had. The scene quickly developed in my head, but I was missing a few key elements. I had remembered Joann Swanson had made some fun scenes, so I looked them up in some old mini magazines. One of them showed two figures that would work perfectly for the fishermen. They were Bob and Doug McKenzie, who are a pair of fictional Canadian brothers who hosted "Great White





The beer in the back is evidence that the guys do more than just fish!

North" on Canadian television. Todd MacFarlane Action Figures produced a great representation of the pair, plus a lot of fun accessories to go with them. I also wanted a snowmobile for the scene, so I searched and found everything on eBay.

I now had the major pieces that would dictate the size of the base I would need. I started with a stock 11 x 14 frame, laid flat, then added plywood for the base. On top of the plywood I glued a thin sheet of Styrofoam. I roughed the Styrofoam up a bit so it wasn't completely smooth. I will be adding "snow" to it later. I then played with the main pieces for the scene like the building, figures and snowmobile until I found a pleasing arrangement. This also showed me where the outside fishing hole would be. I ended up cutting a hole through the Styrofoam and made it look like water inside the hole, on

the wood base.

For the ice fishing shack, I took out the screens in the door and windows, and put in a solid door and added windows with mullions. I really liked the colors I had used on a previous project I had made, called "The Garden Shed", so I decided to use the same color scheme, and besides, red is my favorite color. I painted the whole building in a barn red with yellow ochre trim, then aged it. I also built a small addition onto the back of the building to hold firewood. It actually holds the battery pack that lights the hanging Coleman lantern inside the shack. The wood box is hinged, so I can replace the batteries when needed and also switch the light on/off easily. Near the base of the building there was a small swinging door for the chickens to get in and out. I didn't want the little door, so I made the wall solid and I ended up putting a

pile of wood in front to cover up the patch on the wall.

For the roof, I added corrugated tin and aged it really well, making it look battered and rusty. I was going to put a pot belly stove inside the shack, so I made a chimney with some "smoke" coming out, which is actually loose fiber fill. The roof is removable, so I still have access to the interior.

The windows needed ice on them, so I spread clear Gallery Glass in the corners of each window pane. Then topped the whole shack off with snow and icicles. The icicles are plastic and were from a Christmas garland I had found at a craft store.

For the Bob and Doug McKenzie figures, I added hair and beards, fur to the inside of their jackets and around the hat, flocking to the earmuffs, and snow on their boots. I didn't alter the figures too much, just enough to give some texture to them. The two figures came with some great accessories: beer boxes, beer bottles, coolers, donuts, chairs, tables, etc. It was great having all these extras to help accessorize the scene. I ended up making the two camping chairs from scratch for the guys to sit on while fishing outside.

The inside of the shack didn't need much work at all. I added corrugated tin behind the stove and a layer of bricks underneath, so the shack doesn't burn down when the stove is lit. I had a small resin easy chair from Take a Seat by Raine, that was a leftover from another project. It fit perfectly inside the little shack. I cut a small hole in the floor of the shack for those days when it was just too cold to sit outside and fish. This way they can sit inside next to the nice warm stove and fish right from the easy

chair. What guy wouldn't like that? To keep things as simple and guy-friendly as possible, I added wood crates for a shelf and end table. They hold all the stuff guys can't live without while fishing, including all the beer and snacks they can eat. Of course, there had to be a prize-winning mounted fish on the wall, something for the fishermen to aspire to. I added coat hooks to a large, flat one-sided fish, which made it the perfect coat rack for a fishing shack.

The snowmobile that I found on eBay was a little too new looking, so I gave it a dirty water wash and added the snow. It looked much better!

Once all the major pieces were done and in place, I added Snowtex to the Styrofoam and while it was still wet, sprinkled very fine white glitter for a bit of sparkle on the snow.

I like to create little stories that pull viewers from one part of the scene to the next, as they discover all the little details that I love adding to all my projects. Like the dog checking out the fish the guys just caught, the empty beer bottles and bottle caps laying around, the boxes of beer behind the shack, the ice skimmer next to the hole, the pile of fish they caught, and the fishing tackle box. I finally had a place to hang the "It was this big!" fish measuring sign that I wasn't sure why I had bought it.

In 2018, I attended IGMA Guild School for my 10th year and took a 12 hour class taught by Bonni Backe, on how to make a pair of traditional Maine snowshoes. The snowshoes were made exactly like full-size snowshoes. The wood frames are made up of 5 layers of very thin Black Ash Splint 3/32" wide, woven fiber webbing and leather strappings with buckles.





They were surprisingly difficult and tedious to make, but I absolutely love how they turned out. They are a perfect addition to my ice fishing house.

The one item that took me the longest to find was the ice auger. I couldn't find anything that looked appropriate for the auger part. The only thing I could think of was a drill bit, so I looked at small drill bits, big drill bits and really big drill bits. None of them were right. Finally, I thought of a wine cork screw, though it was a bit small compared to a real auger, but at this point, worked for my needs. I cut the screw part off, shaped a couple pieces of wood for the handle and added it to the top of the screw. It looked great! Just the right final touch the scene needed.

All in all, 99% of the scene went together beautifully in about two months (not counting the ice auger). I was thrilled how it turned out and it gave me great

satisfaction to be able to use some of the items that have been lurking in my mini stash for so long.

A good friend of my dad, Maurice Sauve, was Al Baert who is an avid fisherman and antique lure collector for many years. He asked my dad if he would help him start a fishing museum to hold all his lures. So, in a strange twist of fate, my dad who was not a fisherman, is now one of the co-founders of the Minnesota Fishing Museum & Hall of Fame, 304 West Broadway, Little Falls, MN 56345, <http://www.mnfishingmuseum.com>. I thought my ice fishing scene would be a perfect fit to exhibit at the fishing museum, so it was on display there for 11 years from 2010-2021, and just recently came back home to me.

If you have any questions about this project, feel free to contact me, Connie Sauve at cmsauve2@gmail.com

