

Steve “Spoonman” Tankersley is mad. Not only did the World Record for the largest spoon ensemble he helped his hometown – Pekin – set in 2011 get broken last summer. It was broken by a Japanese group at Pearl Harbor.

Given the history of the Japanese at Pearl Harbor, Tankersley feels like that was a double slap in the face and he is determined to bring the record back to the United States.

“I did a concert and mentioned that a Japanese group had broken our record and these veterans were standing around me after it was over and encouraged me to go for it again,” he said. “I told them I am going to break the record again and this time it’s for them.”

The record set in Pekin in 2011 was 1,362 and the new mark to beat is 1,970.

Tankersley said he feels like there were enough people at the Pekin Park in 2011 to get the number to 2,500, but the process to register combined with time restraints slowed things down. His goal this year is to have 3,000 or more taking part in the record.

This year, he said there will be multiple registration tables and he has a lot of people planning to help, which will allow more people to sign-up and participate.

Tankersley said registration will begin in the park on July 4th at 8 a.m. He said folks can then go watch the parade and return to the park to take part in history later that day.

“We won’t give them their spoons until they come back,” he said.

Tankersley said it would help for people to bring their own spoons, but he will have plenty to hand out.

One of the hardest things to do in organizing such an undertaking is making sure all the ts are crossed and is are dotted.

“(The Guinness World Record people) are strict,” Tankersly said. “There is a 25 page rule book that we have to go by before they will accept and confirm our record. They even send a person to float among the crowd.”

Tankersley said he also plans to have people available to go around and help folks get signed up who are unable to stand in line.

“They don’t even have to get out of their chair, we will bring them the sheet, hand them their spoons and show them how to play,” he said.

The idea to break the world record in 2011 came to Tankersley and his family after they had success doing a workshop at the Indiana Arts and Crafts Festival at Patoka Lake.

Tankersley’s daughter Jasemine, who started playing spoons when she was three, said she was surprised at how quick people (at the workshop) caught on to the basics.

Steve said a discussion with his cousin Phillip Collier led to a google search for the record and after running the idea past the Pekin Community Betterment Organization, the Tankerslys decided to make the attempt in Pekin part of the Fourth of July Celebration that year.

Collier, who is in Colorado, was also the one who broke the news to Tankersley that the old record had been broken in Pearl Harbor.

“I told him he was coming home to help us beat it again,” Tankersley said.

As enthusiastic as Tankersley is about breaking the record again, that is matched by his confidence.

“We don’t talk in terms of if we are going to break it,” he said. “If I have to walk up to every person in the park, we are going to do it. We don’t talk number two at our house, we only talk about being number one.”

Jasemine shared her dad’s enthusiasm.

“I think we can do it,” she said. “It brought me to tears when we broke the record the first time. Me, dad and Dennis (Tankersley) play music together all the time, but to look out and see everybody standing there as one, having a good time, it was awesome for me to see.”

In addition to breaking the record, Tankersley hopes to see a lot of service men and women in the crowd so he can recognize them before the record-breaking attempt. He said he’d love to see soldiers who served at Pearl Harbor in attendance, as well.

The World Record attempt, which will be at about 4 p.m. on the Fourth of July, will be filmed by David Carty.