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Saving a tradition: Silverton High School bench relocated

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There are some people who just don't like being told they can't do something. It really doesn't matter what the task is or how big – they're bound to tackle it just to show it can be done.

Bob Wiesner and his brother, Norm Wiesner, along with Rick Mallorie didn't like hearing the news that the concrete bench in front of Silverton High School's Schlador Street campus wouldn't be making the trek to the recently completed Pine Street campus.

Norm learned of the bench's fate when he attended two bond committee meetings where moving the bench was a topic of discussion.

“Basically, the general contractor didn't want to fool with moving it and the school district didn't want to pay to have it moved,” Norm said.

He started talking with Bob who spoke with Rick and all three men arrived at the same conclusion – somebody had to do something and if no one else would, then they would see the project got done.

“I don't like being told I can't do something,” Rick said. “It just makes me want to prove that I can.”

Every problem has a solution, Bob said.



“There’s got to be a way to do almost everything,” he added. “It just depends on how bad you want to solve it.”

The Silverton High graduates - Bob, Class of 1954; Norm, Class of 1973; and Rick, Class of 1978 – have a long history of lending a hand to get things done in their community.

Believing the bench was too important to the history of Silverton High School and that it shouldn’t be left behind at the Schlador Street campus, Norm, Bob and Rick began formulating a plan.

“The bench connects all the classes that attended Silverton High School,” Norm said. “There have been some things lost along the wayside. This is one thing we didn’t want to lose.”

Bob, who is a member of the Silverton Alumni Association, spent three weeks making phone calls, talking to people and arranging to have the bench moved. The men thank Dennis Maulding, Bob Klaus, Wilco and others for making donations. Along the way, Bob, Rick and Norm opened their own pocketbooks to pay for some materials and tools along with donating the use of their equipment.

During his research perusing microfilm of old newspapers at Silver Falls Library, Bob learned the Class of 1920 had the concrete bench built. The bench’s first address was where First Christian Church on First Street is now, Bob said, adding that it used to be the site of Silverton High School.

The bench was moved to Schlador Street in 1957.

“I knew it had been moved once from one high school to another so I figured it could be moved again,” Bob said.

On Saturday, Aug. 15, Norm donned protective gear and spent five hours sandblasting away more than 50 years of paint about a quarter of an inch thick. On Sunday, Aug. 16, the trio spent an hour using a forklift to move the bench from the old campus to the new.

“The bench weighs 10 tons – for argument’s sake,” Bob said.

The three men gathered at 8 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 23 with hand tools, a fork lift/bucket loader, truck and backhoe to dig a hole 16-feet long, 5-feet wide and 2-feet deep.

When Bob removed the blue tarp tied down to protect the bench he wasn’t happy with what he saw. His brother was even madder.

Written on the bench in pinkish white and yellow letters was “Class of 1989.” In black letters were the words, “Saved the best for last” and “89” three times. Bob plans on finding out who painted the bench but mostly would appreciate if the person or persons came forward.



“Our plan was to fix the cracks in the bench, then have a protective seal put on it so it would last longer and then people could paint it,” Bob said.

Clearly disappointed at the turn of events, Norm said he’s not sure if he will proceed with the plan of sealing the bench.

After a little grumbling about the Class of 1989 taggers, the three set to measuring the space for the bench, marking an outline, measuring again, digging out the hole, spreading gravel and sand, measuring another time, making sure the ground was level and finally moving the bench. They encountered a few snafus along the way but nothing they couldn’t solve with some common sense, logic or ingenuity.

Old friends, they chatted a bit about this and a little about that and offered an opinion or two on several topics all the while they worked. One thing they didn’t do was worry whether or not the bench might break when they moved it.

“Our theory was nothing ventured, nothing gained,” Norm said. “We figured we had nothing to lose by trying. If we didn’t try, the bench would have stayed where it was. And if it broke, well there’s nothing we could have done about it.”

When the bench was finally settled, Bob declared, “that’s about as good as it’s going to get. The Class of 1920 would be happy that it’s still here.”

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