



Ted Jacob, Calgary Herald

Gene Edworthy, centre, holds a cement brick smuggled from Ernest Manning High School by members of the school band and performing arts program in 1975 after the group decided to secretly chisel out the item and take a piece of their school with them on a southern Alberta tour. Shown with Edworthy are Cindy Holt (nee Bishop), Alec Holt, Nancy Jackson (nee Clayton), Sharon Redstone (nee Polutnik), Al Kirk, Kevin Biggar and Bruce Reynolds.

Beloved school brick saved from wrecking ball

Manning students took block on tour

JOE FRIES
CALGARY HERALD

A well-travelled cinder block with a quirky history has been removed from service at a Calgary school, sparing it from a date with a wrecking ball.

In the spring of 1975, the brick accompanied students in Ernest Manning High School's performing arts program – a combination of band, choir

and drama – on a five-day tour of Alberta. The brick, removed from a wall in the school, rode at the front of one of the group's tour buses and was placed on stage during performances.

"We wanted to take a piece of the school with us," explained Gene Edworthy, an optometrist and alumnus who helped organize a ceremony Monday to liberate the block.

When the tour was over, students signed the back of the brick and replaced it in the wall where it remained undisturbed for 35 years.

It took months to free the block in the first place, as students used pens and keys to

chip away at the mortar that held it in place. A poster was hung over that portion of the wall to hide the damage.

Bruce Reynolds was the first student to begin working on the illicit project.

"I don't know how it even started," he said.

Now employed by a cell-phone company, the former trumpet player said the block elicited some strange looks during its travels.

"People were kind of, 'What's with the brick?'"

Reynolds, one of eight alumni who helped extract the brick, felt "very nostalgic" in the hallways of his former school.

"Some of these folks . . . I

haven't seen them since graduation 30 years ago."

Ernest Manning High School, which started the last school year with 952 students, will be demolished to make way for the west LRT line.

A replacement school that will bear the same name is under construction at 69th Street and 17th Avenue S.W. and is expected to open next fall.

School trustee George Lane said the brick will be given "a place of honour" at the new facility.

A reunion is planned for next week to celebrate the school's history.

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