

CHS alums remember Bob Seymour

Grads around world help replace money Seymour lost to pickpocket

BY JONA ISON • Gazette Staff Writer • November 25, 2010

CHILLICOTHE -- Bob Seymour was at a loss for words while sitting in the Chillicothe High School cafeteria Wednesday evening.

The 90-year-old former school custodian sat quietly, holding his cane as more than a dozen people thanked him and presented him with a generous check -- something to help make up for the money a pickpocket took from him in August.

"Oh my God," Seymour said. "What can I say? I will never forget this for the rest of my life."

Seymour was sort of a memory keeper for CHS students from 1969 through 1990.

He was not only a CHS fan -- "CHS" is even notated next to his listing in the phone book --but he also was a fan of the students and a photography buff.

Seymour spent his own time during his years at CHS going to events around the district, from athletics and musicals to school dances and skating parties. At the suggestion of now-retired teacher Nancy MacCarter, Seymour's photos went on display at the school. Assistant Superintendent Jon Saxton remembers sitting in bowling alley-style chairs in front of the display case each week, just waiting to see who had made Seymour's "Wall of Fame."

"I remember going through some tough times my freshman year. ...You brightened my days, Bob, and the days of my friends," Saxton said. "We loved you, Bob, and we still do."

The love was more than shown through the power of social media and PayPal as scores of CHS alumni answered a call to help someone who meant so much to them.

The call began when Dorothy Graves heard how Seymour was robbed of his pension check while riding a Chillicothe Transit bus Aug. 2. She told her son, Steve Graves, who was talking with former classmate Jon Ekvall online.

Ekvall decided to start up a collection on the 1981 alumni website he operates (www.chs81.com), and in just a few days the message spread like wildfire across Facebook. CHS alum David Coyle also has started a Bob Seymour fan page on Facebook.

"It just snowballed. I started getting e-mails from as far away as New Zealand (where a former exchange student lives). ...It just brings tears to my eyes when I start thinking about it," Ekvall said. "It's a gift of love."

Garin Veris, former NFL player and CHS alum, made sure to stop by to thank Seymour, who called Veris one of his favorites.

"When I left Columbus, my mom, I think, was more thankful than anyone to get the pictures from us kids. ... When I heard about this, I just happened to be in town and I wanted to be a part of helping Bob," Veris said, adding he's happy to be moving back to Ohio and getting to see Seymour more often. "Your camera did a lot of magic for a lot of people."

Even those who couldn't make it Wednesday sent messages to the Gazette about why Seymour is such a special person.

"When I found out what had happened to Bob, my heart immediately went out to him. I remembered him as a gentle, sweet man who attended the plays, sporting events, parties, dances, etc. taking photos like a proud parent or grandparent," wrote Kelly Nasdeo, a 1986 CHS alum who now lives in Worthington. "My own parents weren't able to attend a lot of my activities, so the photos he took were sometimes the only keepsake I had for that event

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and that meant a lot to me. I have never forgotten that after all of these years gone by."

Stephanie (Smith) Wright, also of the class of 1986, sent along well-wishes from Laurel, Md.

"I think it is incredible how, through Facebook, so many people were able to respond and pull together so quickly to help Bob. I cannot imagine how much money he has spent over the years on film and developing pictures (no digital in my HS days). So sending a donation in seemed like a very small thing to do for him," Wright wrote. "Most of my favorite pictures from High School were taken by Bob. Having your picture in Bob's photo case was a big deal !! I always felt lucky when he put up a picture of me, especially because I know I was the worst cheerleader in CHS history!"

Seymour's photo case was updated each week, and he sought out students, or many times they got to him first, and gave them their pictures --snapshots that remain in memory books and CHS yearbooks around the world.

"I did it because I loved ya," he said. "I just wanted to put something back."

As for the pickpocket who took Seymour's money, Katrina Moore, 25, of 234 S. Mulberry St., pleaded guilty to theft from the elderly and other charges earlier this month. A photo of her snapped by the transit bus camera and handed out to media garnered tips that led to her arrest. Moore is slated for sentencing 1 p.m. Dec. 28.



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Bob Seymour, former Chillicothe High School custodian, shakes hands with former assistant principal Mike MacCarter on Wednesday in the school's cafeteria. (Frank Robertson, Gazette)

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