



The Little Acorn

The Official Newsletter of the



VSD Alumni Association

Formerly The Aud Lang Syne Alumni Association of the
Virginia School(s) for the Deaf and the Blind,

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Robert Cason pulls the time capsule, that was buried 25 years ago, out of the ground. The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind celebrated their 175th anniversary on Friday, November 14, 2014 by digging up the capsule. (Photo: Holly Marcus/Special to The News Leader)

As the 175th Anniversary comes to a end ...

STAUNTON – Twenty-five years ago Sheldon Melton was sitting at his desk, well after midnight looking at a time capsule that would be put in the ground the next day.

The former superintendent of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind was thinking about the school's future, what would happen in the next 25 years and if the school would still be there.

He wanted to leave behind something to remember that time. On his shelf was a two-inch tall figurine of E.T. given to him by his son and daughter-in-law.

He wrote the year, 1989, and the names of his two grandsons on the bottom and tucked it away with the other memorabilia that would go into the ground for 25 years. He didn't tell anyone at VSDB what he'd done.

On Friday, 2014, Melton stood in front of more than 150 students, staff and alumni and pulled the figurine from the capsule.

Emotionally, he told the audience that at the time students weren't allowed to go home on the weekends, the way they do now. That despite his efforts, he had not won that battle for the students.

"But E.T. did his job," Melton said, as those in the audience clapped and

cheered.

Friday's event was part of the 175th anniversary celebration of VSDB's founding. Many in attendance were present when the capsule was buried or were students at the time.

As the cement slab was pulled back revealing the trash-can sized capsule, more than 80 years of students and alumni stood by despite the chilly weather.

Alissa Conover, class of 1999, and her mother, Frances Conover, class of 1970 spoke fondly of their time at VSDB and their excitement over seeing classmates, teachers and friends.

"I was here when they put it in the ground," Alissa said of the time capsule.

Her mom added, "I have a lot of great memories from here, acting, camping, drama. Too many to express."

"I miss it," she said.

Alumni ranged from the class of 1944 to the present.

"It's like old times," said Kathy Martin, class of 1976. "There have been some changes, and that's disappointing."

After the capsule was removed from outside of Main Hall, it was carried into the chapel to be opened.

Not only were alumni in attendance, but many state and local government officials. Former VSDB principals and superintendents were also there for the occasion.

Interim superintendent Pat Trice told Melton that because he put the items in the capsule, he should take them out.

The contents survived their time underground as if they had never been buried. The last item Melton pulled from the capsule was the E.T. figurine.

"It was a blessing teaching in the elementary department, as a principal and finally as superintendent," Melton said. "That has been a blessing to me."

The time capsule's items will be housed in two glass cases and placed in Main Hall to be viewed.

A second time capsule was buried in 2012 to mark the end of the school's three-year long renovation and will be opened in 2037.

Credit: The Staunton News Leader, 11-15-2015