



BENSON TECH

ALUMNI TEXT

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The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA), November 2023 Edition



Photo top left: Progress and improvements on the front access into the main entrance, view is east. The site has been re-graded for Handicap and Wheelchair access with sloped ramps diagonally across the main approach. **Photo top right:** View north. New Building C on the left and Building D, or the original Foundry Building on the right. Note the new darker and nicely contrasting brick installed on Building C and the original brick façade on Building D. **Photo bottom right:** Yellow, iso-thermal foam insulation on the east exterior wall of Building F to be covered in brick. Building F connects directly into new Building B. (Photos courtesy of Gerry Ochs.)

Benson Tech Modernization Status Update for Fall 2023

By Gerry Ochs (Class of 1977)

Equipment procurement for the project has been on track with many components already stored on site and organized for forthcoming installations. The project is progressing nicely and is busy with a multitude of crews active throughout the facility. All work activities continue to be performed safely on a well-organized and productive job site.

Starting with this article, I will address the progress on each building in alphabetical order.

Building A – Auditorium. Progress continues in all areas of restoration and upgrade. The new sheet rock, painting and restoration of original wooden trim continues as well as the ceiling restoration. The new Alumni Room, located on the second floor at the west end, is painted, with utility and finish improvements continuing. There will be nine of the original wooden balcony seats restored and set in place in the alumni room. The seats will be against the back, or east wall and face west into the windows along

12th Avenue. HVAC components are located in the mechanical room in the lower level of the auditorium. Components are in place and in process for connection and start-up testing. Major duct work continues to be fitted up and installed throughout the building. A “black box” practice room is under construction in the basement area below the stage. It will be soundproof and allow casts the opportunity to try out stage props and practice privately in preparation for upcoming performances.

Building B – Library, Band Room, Counselors Offices and Classrooms. Building B is well underway with the interior framing in place and extensive progress on sheet-rock and painting. The large library windows are finalized and secured in place. The library will be on the second level, above the soundproofed band room in the basement with classrooms located on the top level.

Building C – Chemistry, Manufacturing, Construction and Class Rooms. Building C has interior steel framing complete. Progress continues with installation of

Find more news and information at www.bensontechalumni.org

(story continues on Page 4)



IN BRIEF | BPHSAA AND BENSON TECH NEWS

2023 graduation rate goes up

During the summer, five more 2023 seniors finished their high school requirements to graduate. With the additional graduates, 211 of the class of 217 graduated on time. As in recent years, Benson Tech's 2023 graduating rate will be in the mid-90s ranking high among Oregon's high schools during a time when graduation rates slumped nationwide due to the pandemic.

Enrollment at Benson Tech remains low

Due to the difficulty for many students to travel to Benson Tech's interim location on the Portland east side, this fall's enrollment was 819 on October 3. Enrollment is expected to increase next year when Benson returns to its modernized campus on NE 12th Ave., which is being built for 1,700 students.

An application period to attend Benson Tech opens up

PPS eighth and ninth grade students interested in attending Benson Tech beginning in 2024-2025 may apply between November 15 and December 15. To help them make their decisions, there will be a chance to hear more about Benson Tech's unique programs and meet some teachers and staff during "Info Night" on November 28 at the school. With Benson Tech scheduled to move into its central modernized building in August 2024, Principal Curtis Wilson expects an extra-large number of eighth graders to attend "Info Night" and apply to enter the school next year.

2023 Benson Community Picnic

The annual Benson Community Picnic was held on August 12 this year (photos above). The family-friendly event featured the famous "Jeff's Big Dawg" meal and Benson@Marshall Campus tours for attendees.

Past Benson Tech yearbooks being digitized

It was recently announced that all of Benson Tech's old yearbooks are being digitized. About half are now done. This will make it far easier to access and search for them. Completion is expected in 2024.

BPHSAA Annual Meeting

Jeff Strachan and Bob Walker were elected to a second term as a Directors at the Association's Annual Meeting on November 13 that was held virtually this year. Going into 2024, the BPHSAA will have five vacant director positions that pursuant to the Association's Bylaws, the Board of Directors has the power to fill. Vice Chairperson Rachael Kuryunny said she is hoping some interested alumni might attend a few Board meetings and be nominated to fill the vacant positions during the year.

2024 Tech Show

Tech Show 2024 has been set for April 18 and 19, 2024. As in 2023, it will be held at Benson Tech's interim home on the Marshall campus. While the 2025 Tech Show in the modernized building may be "bigger," Benson Tech's current students are looking forward to "showing their skills off" while the school is still at Marshall in April 2024.

Annual fundraising for Alumni Scholarship Fund underway

Beginning with a generous gift from the Benson High School 50-Year Reunion Committee, the Benson Alumni Scholarship Fund was established in 1990. In the 33 years since, more than 80 scholarships have been awarded to graduating seniors. This fall, as in past years, the BPHSAA is asking for donations to the Fund to increase the size and number of future scholarships. To donate, visit the Scholarship Fund page on the [BPHSAA website](https://www.bphsaa.org/section/scholarship) ([bphsaa.org/section/scholarship](https://www.bphsaa.org/section/scholarship)).

ALUMNI TEXT CREDITS

Co-Editors: Dale Bajema and Roger Edwards

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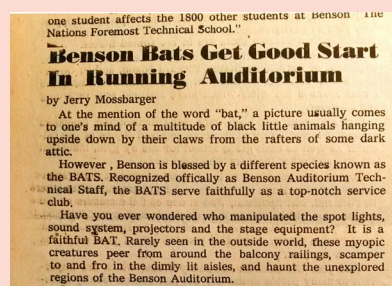
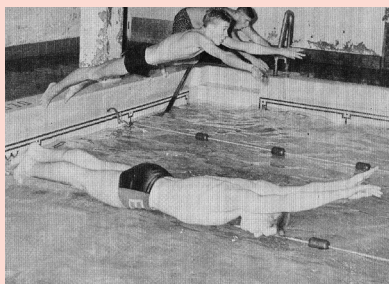
BPHSAA TRiViA QUIZ

- **Question 1:** Was there ever a swimming pool in the old gym??
- **Question 2:** How has the library wandered about the Benson Tech campus?
- **Question 3:** What is the value of the fund that awards recipients of the Alumni Association's scholarship?
- **Question 4:** When did the students of the auditorium crew become known as BATS?
- **Question 5:** Can the BPHS obituaries indexed on the alumni website be displayed for viewing?

- **Answer 1:** The pool has been rumored to exist for generations but no evidence has been found to verify the claim. The January 1924 Poly Tech claims on Page 10 that the gym "is planned to have a swimming tank with hot and cold showers for the use of the students". After the "old" gym was completed in 1926, a swimming club was formed in 1928, but it used the pool at Couch Elementary School, which now is the Metropolitan Learning Center, in NW Portland. The water polo team that competed in 1929 used the Buckman School pool.
- **Answer 2:** The library was on the second floor over the front entry of the main building when Benson Tech opened in 1917. It was moved to the first floor in 1953 when the new science building was completed. Entry doors were in the north hall off the main corridor. The construction of the health science building included ground floor space for the library in 1992. There it regained placement on an exterior wall, still along the north hall, between the counseling center and the shop wing.
- **Answer 3:** The Benson High School 50-Year Reunion Committee (Classes of 1939, 1940 and 1941) set up the scholarship in 1990 after they celebrated a joint reunion. Donations totaling \$4,000 were deposited with PPS, which administered the fund until 2001 when the money was transferred to the Oregon Community Foundation. Awards come from the returns of investment and provided scholarships of \$250 beginning

in 1991. Because these awards come from fund dividends, growth of the fund is largely dependent on donations, which had increased its value to \$132,058 by 2020. Scholarships awarded in 2022 were for \$2,000, \$1,400, and \$1,400.

- **Answer 4:** It was 1931 when the opening of the auditorium was celebrated. Students running the place were variously called Auditorium Crew, Auditorium Staff, Stage Crew, Projection Booth Operators, and Usher Corps. In the 1955 Blueprint this group was pictured as the B.A.T.S., which from 1958 on became BATS, or Benson Auditorium Technical Staff. This acronym is appropriate as the lofty expansions behind the curtain could well be home to chiropterans. A different logo might have been adopted in January 1934 when they were noted as the Auditorium Stage Staff.
- **Answer 5:** Yes. The obituaries have been scanned and now appear on the website of the Genealogy Forum of Oregon, www.gfo.org. To access the database, seek RESOURCES or SITE MAP on the HOME page and then select INDEXES or ALL INDEXES. The hyperlink "index files provided here" is located on the ALL INDEXES page and it takes you to a list of research indices where "Benson High School Newspaper Clippings" is located. This index is an alphabetical list of the names it contains. Each name has an alphanumeric file identifier that will display the clipping when clicked.



Above (left to right): Benson Tech swim team member at a meet in 1959; The school's original library on the second story of the main building (photo courtesy of PPS archives); A historic Tech Pep article by Jerry Mossbarger (Class of 1960) features the BATS.

A shout-out for our newsletter designer

Yes, there is a person behind every issue of the BPHSAA Alumni Text – Connie Mar (Class of 1990). Ever professional and patient, Connie is the one who takes the articles, photos, and ideas of the many contributors and incorporates them into a well laid-out, cohesive, attractive whole. And, most

importantly, getting the last-minute edits and changes made, the proper attribution and approvals secured, and other loose ends tidied up to meet publication deadlines. Connie, you make all of the contributors and the BPHSAA "look good." Thank you!

MODERNIZATION CONSTRUCTION SPOTLIGHT



This page, Photo 1: View north inside Building F and progress on the concrete Learning Stairs. The seats of the Learning Stairs will be covered with the repurposed gymnasium flooring removed during the renovation. **Beginning on Page 4, Photo 2:** Progress and improvements on the auditorium restoration as viewed from the upper balcony looking east, toward the stage below. **Photo 3:** Progress on restoration of Building G1, the Old Gym. Seismic improvements are in place, ceiling restoration complete. Crews are now working on rebuilding the running track on the upper perimeter deck. **Photo 4:** The new backup generator in place at the SW corner of Building H, view is SE. **Photo 5:** Two of the five new boiler units for the hydronic piping and heating system that have been stored on site and ready to be moved for installation in the NW section of Building H. **Photo 6:** Typical of the new hallway lockers being installed, this photo is taken inside of Building C, outside the chemistry rooms. (Photos courtesy of Gerry Ochs.)

Benson Tech Modernization, continued from front cover

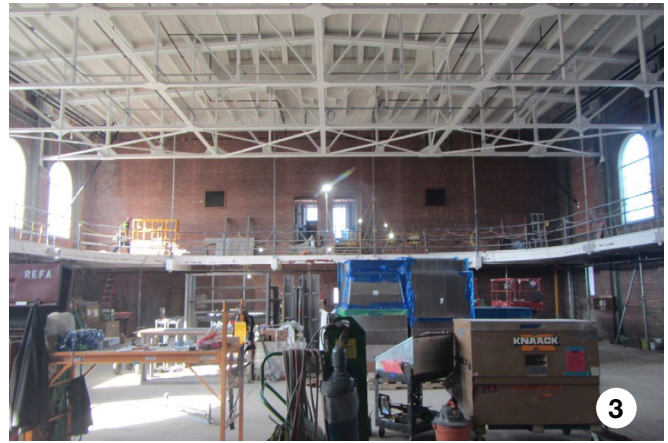
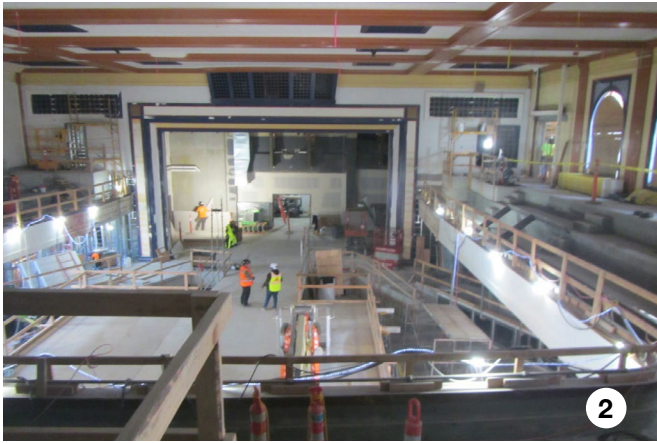
the finish wood paneling and painting in the hallways. Hallway lockers are being installed as well. The chemistry rooms have received sheetrock and painting. Utilities and related components continue in process throughout the building. The construction shop on the first floor has a dedicated dust control system in progress and a designated work bay for construction of the tiny houses and a paint booth area now framed in at the far west end of the first floor. The freshman lathes shop will be located on the second floor of Building C. The extensive section of solar panel frames along the length of the south-facing exterior wall of Building C are in place and painted.

Building D – Foundry, Pattern and Senior Manufacturing. Improvements to Building D continue with seismic upgrades now complete. The ground-level concrete

floor is in place and progress on the interior will soon be underway. The original “sand mix muller machine” was saved on site in the foundry and now prepared for installation in the east portion of the north ground-level room. The muller cleans and processes used foundry sand for future use. The Pattern Shop will occupy the west section of the northern ground-level room. The senior manufacturing classroom is on the ground level in Building D in the south portion of the building.

Building E – Main School Administration Offices, Classrooms, Health Center. Restoration of the original wooden staircase banisters continues in the main Building E. Crews have begun restoring the original trim and casing woodwork in the main school entrance foyer. Finish work continues to progress throughout the building office

(story continues on next page)



spaces, classrooms and restrooms. The front area of the school is now being graded out for disability and wheelchair access. Construction of new concrete steps to the main entrance is underway.

Building F – Grand Gathering Space, Cafeteria and Kitchen facilities. Progress continues throughout Building F. The concrete Learning Stairs are now all in place and interior walls are framed in with metal studs. Sheetrock, painting and duct work are ongoing throughout the building. The new kitchen/cafeteria facility is framed in along the east side of the building. Building F serves as a common open space/cafeteria with a large “Curtain Wall of Glass” on the west face and the Learning Stairs at the north end for seating during gatherings and presentations. The Learning Stairs seats will be covered using the repurposed wooden gymnasium flooring. The east face of Building F is presently covered with insulation foam and will receive new brick.

Building G1 – Old Gym and Classroom Space. Progress continues with upgrades to the Old Gym, G1 and sheetrock and painting of classrooms. The upper-deck running track has been removed for restoration and crews are presently welding structural components on the deck for installing the track components.

Building G2 – New Gym. Roof restoration is now complete. The Densglass sheeting has been coated with a 2-1/2” layer of foam insulation. The finish step will be to attach the new brick into the wall using structural clips. Work continues on the team and student locker rooms as

well as the weight room and the wrestling room located in the basement level.

Building H – Automotive Shops, Classrooms, Hydronic Heating and Chilling Equipment Building. Improvements continue with classrooms and auto shops framed, sheet rocked and painting ongoing throughout the building. Equipment for the Chiller Room, three-chiller units, are on site with installation about to be underway. A large backup generator is in the SW corner of the facility and will serve to maintain critical components of the campus during a power outage. The main electrical room for the campus is in Building H. It contains the breaker components and is the power distribution hub for the facility. There are five new boilers on site being prepped for installation. All of the new windows are in place and the exterior brickwork on Building H is 90% complete.

Building I – Radio Station is in the process of being cleared out and prepared for upgrades. Presently, the PPS Construction Management (CM) Team is still housed here. The PPS CM Team is slated to move out of the building and into its new temporary offices in Building C. Presently, the contractors have moved their offices to Building C and are set up and operating there.

Work is progressing on the four new elevator shafts located on campus and the layout and installation of initial components has started at each location.

My thanks to Mark Kline/PPS-CBRE for my site tour on October 12, 2023.

Overview of Benson Tech Athletics

Editor's Note: Jessica Russell joined Benson Tech this fall after seven years as the athletic director at Lincoln High School, her alma mater. She was a teacher and coach in PPS previously, including assisting with the first seasons of middle school sports in PPS. She looks forward to serving the Benson Tech community and helping each athletic program reach its goals.

By Jessica Russell, Benson Tech Athletic Director

FALL SPORTS SUMMARY

Cross country: October 25 marked the end of fall sports for Benson Tech, with the district cross country meet at Lents Park where four athletes earned personal records. Benson Tech alumnus and first-year cross country head coach Jay Miles (Class of 1990) led the team through a successful season, including trips to Tillamook and Astoria for the Ultimook and Three Course Challenge meets.

Volleyball: Volleyball shook what felt like a brutal curse that has plagued the team since 2021 this year. First-time head coach Claire Bailey planned multiple bonding activities, including attending a PSU volleyball game and a bowling night. Maybe the great team chemistry is the reason the varsity team was able to win multiple sets this season for the first time in two years! Many of the girls have committed to play club ball in the off season and are looking forward to summer workouts in the new gym.

Girls soccer: The Techsters capped off a fun season competing against other lower level teams, with their last two home games at Marshall Campus under the lights. The girls soccer community showed a tremendous amount of love for their outgoing players on senior night. Younger teammates presented gift baskets, posters, and flower arrangements to the seniors.

Boys soccer: Returning head coach Kemal Vejo showed his ability to connect with players of all ages as he led three teams of Techmen through a tough schedule. The PIL had seven of eight teams make the state playoffs (more than any other league), and all seven advanced to the second round! While this is great for the league, it makes for a difficult season for a developing team like ours. Coach has continued to increase participation numbers each year he has been at the helm. This was the first year boys soccer has had three teams in over 10 years!

Want to give back and get in on the action with our sports teams next fall? Come join the coaching staff or become an official! It's never too early to express interest



and explore the opportunity. Reach out to me at jrussell@pps.net for more details.

WINTER SPORTS PREVIEW

Registration is open for winter sports, and the participation numbers continue to climb daily as Day One (November 13) quickly approaches. Boys and girls basketball have competitive schedules ahead of them, including multiple games in Medford and Vancouver for the boys and a tournament in Berlin, OH for the girls. The girls team will play in tournaments closer to home over winter break: the Capitol City Classic in Salem and Pacific Office Automation's Holiday Classic in Portland.

The swim program is in great hands with returning head coach, Benson Tech educator, and alumnus Steve Espe (Class of 1984). Coach brought the program back last year and participation numbers have already increased this year!

The wrestling community is excited to welcome a new head coach, JD Day. The program has an exciting schedule ahead, including the PIL Showcase in January and multiple girls-only tournaments throughout the season. Despite its small size, Tech wrestling is at the forefront of change by ensuring there are opportunities for our girls to enter co-ed and girls-only contests. Want to keep up with Benson Tech this winter? Scores are posted on [OSAA website](https://www.osaa.org/) each evening.

FOOTBALL PREVIEW

The head football coach position has been posted and applications are rolling in! In an effort to build a strong foundation and sustainable program, the head coach will lead a freshman-only team next fall. While the season will officially begin August 19, anyone familiar with the sport knows the season truly begins much earlier in the year. Principal Curtis Wilson and I are looking for candidates who are ready for the year-long grind the sport requires. The program will kick off this spring with workouts, scrimmages, and team bonding, which will continue through the summer.

Spotlight on Jeff Strachan, BPHSAA board member, Boosters supporter

By Rob Johns, Class of 1977

It is a rare gift to be friends with someone since your high school days which, in my case, is now approaching 50 years. It is, furthermore, an honor to see an old friend return to their roots, eager to give back to the places and organizations that nurtured them. I speak of the contributions of Jeff Strachan, aviation major from the Class of 1977. Jeff's generosity of spirit, time, and resources truly knows no end; the more he sees, the more does. In just a few years on the BPHSAA Board, he has provided the time, money, and pure sweat required to revive the concessions stand at athletic events, while also providing substantial financial support to Benson Tech activities and athletic teams.

It was nearly 10 years ago when I first spoke with Jeff regarding the myriad challenges facing Benson Tech, including an unsupportive superintendent and needless enrollment restrictions. From then on, whenever we spoke, I would update Jeff regarding challenges and changes at Benson Tech, as well as the BPHSAA's wide-ranging efforts on behalf of the school. A Delta air captain, Jeff began his days in the cockpit flying big aircraft for the U.S. Navy, after which he worked for 25 years as a commercial air



Above: Jeff Strachan (far right) helping out at the concessions stand during a Benson Tech sports event.

pilot based out of San Diego. Not long after our first conversation, Jeff began to express his desire to move back to Portland. Seven years ago, Delta accepted his bid to fly out of Seattle, making his homecoming to Portland a reality.

By 2019, Jeff was occasional guest at monthly BPHSAA Board meetings and, after taking an early retirement in 2020, he quickly became one of the BPHSAA's most dependable and active members. By the time he joined the Board of Directors in late 2020, he'd already proven to be an indispensable Benson Tech advocate and supporter.

Initially, Jeff stepped in to help fill financial and volunteer needs of the girls basketball and both the boys and girls golf teams. This, however, was just the beginning. Jeff recognized that the move

to Marshall provided an opportunity to use the well-situated concession stands as a way to raise funds for the school's various clubs and athletic teams. Jeff launched, and continues to stock and staff, the concession stand sales at both indoor and outdoor athletic events, all proceeds of which go directly to Benson Tech student activities. This has allowed school teams, clubs, and organizations to earn thousands of dollars from sales, funding much-needed supplies such as new uniforms, and activities including travel to out-of-town competitions.

Jeff's giving spirit can be found on display at the concession stand where he works side-by-side with Benson Tech students. A model of strong work ethic and organizational skills, Jeff's natural good humor and genuine concern for others endear him to the high school students with whom he works.

Throughout the school year, Jeff spends at least 15 hours per week volunteering on behalf of Benson Tech, its programs, athletic teams, and students. The BPHSAA, Benson Boosters, and Benson Tech athletic students and staff salute Jeff for his significant contributions to the Benson Tech community. Thank you!

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Benson Tech Boosters are back!

By Kelly James, Benson Tech Boosters President

Greetings Benson Polytechnic Alumni and Sports Fans:

The Benson Tech Boosters have kicked off the 2023-2024 school year in high gear supporting Benson Tech students, faculty, staff, and sports. Some highlights:

- Concessions Coordinator Jeff Strachan (Class of 1977) continues to manage concession sales, providing a fundraising opportunity for Benson Tech athletes and non-athletes alike. (See spotlight article above.)
- We plan to partner with the BPHSAA again to show some love with personalized banners to our graduating senior athletes.
- We celebrated Benson Tech teachers by providing hot dogs, chips, and soda the week before this school year started. We also plan to provide food at teacher conferences again.

- Our new officers for 2023-2024 are: Kelly James, President; Jeff Strachan, Treasurer; and Ginny James, Secretary.

We welcome all who are interested in joining the Boosters to support Benson Tech's athletic teams and student organizations. Come to a virtual meeting—we hold them every month—next month's meeting will be December 21 at 6:30 PM. Visit Bensontechboosters.org and click on the "Join Our Monthly Virtual Meeting" on the homepage.

We also recently added a mailing list sign-up to Bensontechboosters.org. Going forward, this will be the best way to receive volunteer requests from Tech Boosters. Please sign up if you're so inclined! Reach out to us with any questions, through our website. Go Tech!



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2023 summer and fall reunion wrap-ups

The BPHSAA extends a special thanks to the Class of 1978 for using its 45th reunion as an opportunity to raise funds for Benson Tech! Class members, with some help from the Class of 1977, generously donated \$1,000 for new state championship banners, which will be displayed in the modernized gym when the 12th Avenue campus reopens for students in fall 2024.

The Class of 1993 (Photos 1 & 2 above) had perfect weather and a sizable turnout for its 30th reunion, held on Friday, August 11, at The Cave at The Aerie at Eagle Landing.

The Class of 1973 (Photos 3 & 4 below) hosted a multi-day gathering in honor of its 50th reunion, beginning with dinner and dancing at Sah Hah Lee Golf Course on Saturday, August 19. The group reconvened the afternoon of Sunday, August 20 for a picnic at Blue Lake Park.

The Class of 1983 (Photos 5 & 6, Page 8) had more than 100 alumni and partners turn out for its 40th reunion,

which was held on Saturday, September 23 at The Village Ballroom.

The Class of 1978 celebrated its 45th reunion (Photos 7 & 8, Page 8) on Saturday September 9 at The Kennedy School. The Friday before the reunion, approximately 20 members of the class (Photo 9, Page 8, with a few non-Class of 1978 alumni) partook in a “behind-the-scenes” tour of the Benson Tech construction site.

The Class of 1950 (no photos) gathered for an informal 73rd reunion on Thursday, September 25 at Elmer’s Restaurant in Clackamas. A sizable number of the 27 graduates still on the mailing list attended, joined by partners or relatives. At the request of the organizers, BPHSAA Directors Roger Edwards (Class of 1963) and Gerry Ochs (Class of 1977) attended and spoke about the progress and status of the Benson Tech modernization project. The alumni scholarship files class leader Jim Robb passed on to them were gratefully received.



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