



BENSON TECH

ALUMNI TEXT

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The Official Newsletter of the Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association (BPHSAA), February 2022 Edition

Benson Tech Modernization Project is under way

Gerry Ochs (Class of 1977) holds a seat on the BPHSAA Board, and is a senior construction manager at Jacobs Engineering here in Portland. His knowledge and experience with construction projects made him a logical choice to keep the Board informed of the progress achieved in the plan to modernize Benson Tech.

He recently submitted a report summarizing the work to date and highlights of his findings, which is included in this issue of the newsletter as the accompanying article to the right

Among the early chores that the Andersen Construction crews and their subcontractor teams attended to after the groundbreaking on August 7 was to move the Benson bubbler fountain at the front of the school out of harm's way, and to send the best of the roses in the front lawn beds to safe keeping at a local garden.

Throughout the renovation, structural members are evaluated for reuse or recycling. Most of the original windows are still better than replacements currently available. Bricks have been set aside for reuse as needed, and numerous large Douglas fir beams have been salvaged for future work.

Much has been accomplished in the first six months of the modernization project. The next 30 months will be of interest.



Above: Local officials and PPS leaders at the groundbreaking ceremony kicking off the Benson Tech Modernization held on August 7, 2021. Photo courtesy of Gerry Ochs, Class of 1977.

January 2022 Status Update: Benson Tech Modernization Project

By Gerry Ochs (Class of 1977)

The Benson Polytechnic High School (Benson Tech) Modernization Project to upgrade and rebuild the school campus began with a formal groundbreaking event on Aug. 7, 2021, attended by dignitaries from the Portland Public Schools (PPS) Board, Benson Tech staff and students, the OSM – PPS project team, Bassetti Architects, Andersen Construction, the BPHSAA Board, Benson Tech alumni, and the general public.

The site was fenced off to allow construction activity and demolition work to commence. The construction phase is scheduled from the fall of 2021 through the summer of 2024, with project completion and educational occupancy anticipated to occur in the fall of 2024.

The on-site project offices are housed in the KPBS radio building and staffed by the project management teams of PPS - OSM, Bassetti Architects, and Andersen Construction.

The general contractor for the project is Andersen Construction Company. The main subcontractors at present time are shown in the sidebar on Page 3.

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A tribute to Bud Lewis, Benson Tech Class of 1939

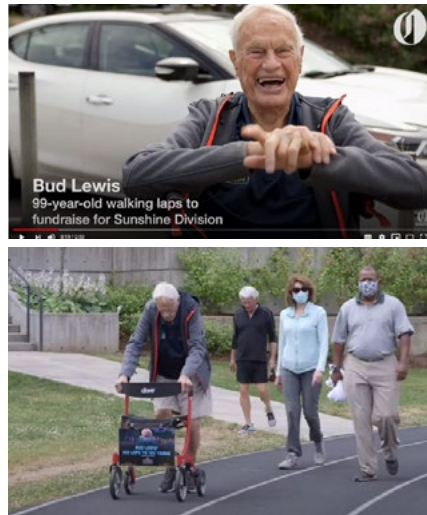
Among the senior photos in the January 1939 Poly Tech is one labeled “Lewis, Leland Stanford, vocational, cabinet making.” At the time this photo was taken, Bud Lewis was already enlisted in the 41st Infantry Division of the Oregon National Guard. His unit began systematic patrols of the coast after the United States entered WWII and in April 1942, they were deployed to the South Pacific. After two bouts of malaria, munitions Sgt. Bud Lewis returned home on a hospital ship.

Upon his discharge in 1945, Bud joined the Portland Police Bureau and began a life-long association with the Sunshine Division, a bureau resource of community donations that officers could call on for needy people they encountered during their patrols. He became the Sunshine Division commander in 1963 and was still soliciting donations on his 100th birthday on August 8, 2020. In the preceding three months, he completed 250 laps around the track at Duniway Park and the pledges he gathered raised more than \$125,000 for the charity.

Bud died during the dark days of February 2021. To provide friends and family a chance to say farewell, the

Sunshine Division announced a memorial service would convene at Duniway Park on what would have been Bud’s 101th birthday. On the appointed day, Bud’s Duniway walker was on display and the BPHSAA was there with his yearbook, the updates he submitted for each of the four Benson Tech Alumni Directories, and with news clippings of the accolades he had earned during his many years of public service. Bud’s daughter Diane said she remembered her dad wearing a tool belt as he helped with the construction of their house. She said, too, that he was named for an uncle, who was not the Leland Stanford that most people think of when they hear that name.

There were other attendees with Benson Tech connections as well. Shari Anderson, wife of the late Ken Anderson (Class of 1962), who grew up to become a lawyer, told us that “Although none of the shop stuff ever took,” she was pleased to see his obituary included in our collection. The Directories and class lists also had to be consulted for alumni questions, which may have been prompted by the explicit Benson Tech canopy that declared our participation.



Above: Bud Lewis was featured in the Oregonian in 2020 for his fundraising efforts for the Sunshine Division.

Arthur McLean: Friend to Benson Tech

There was a 1977 Oregonian news clipping tucked inside one of the yearbooks the BPHSAA was given during the preparation for the Benson Tech renovation. The article highlighted the effort of Arthur McLean to help establish an early, if not the first alumni association for the school. Curiously, Arthur was not a Benson Tech grad. He finished high school in 1917, studying electricity at the Portland School of Trades. His graduation occurred before the Benson Tech buildings were ready for students, but his school was known as the Benson School of Trades after Simon Benson had made his donation to the school board in 1915. Arthur’s brother Charles is listed in the Benson Tech Directories as a 1918 graduate.

As a newly trained electrician, Arthur took part in the construction of Benson Tech, and remained a supporter

of the school throughout his career with the Bonneville Power Association. Following his retirement, he joined Tom Daklos, Class of 1949, and Carl George, Class of 1947, to form their alumni association in 1975, and awarded \$500 scholarships to two graduates in that year. Their objective was to serve the school, its graduates and students. Doing so would help promote a strong Portland community, much as Simon Benson had predicted decades before.

Arthur McLean died in January 1987. For his lifelong advocacy of Benson Tech and the programs and training available there, it is fitting that his name is listed in the alphabetical section of the 1996 edition of the BPHS Alumni Directory. It is a recognition that he earned.



January 2022 Status Update, continued from front cover

Presently, the project is five months into the process with the major elements of the mass demolition work now completed. (See “Benson Tech Modernization Construction Spotlight” on following page.)

An interesting side note is there are a number of Benson Tech alumni who are employed and working on this historic project to modernize the school. I personally met three alumni working on site on the day of my visit.

The schedule of upcoming construction work in the next few months include:

- Completing mass demolition of Building C and Building H.
- Continuing structural renovation in the main Building E, Building A – Auditorium, and the G1 and G2 gymnasiums.
- Continuing site underground utility work in both the central courtyard and the front entrance west courtyard.

My thanks to Jen Sohm - Senior PM PPS and Mark Kline - Senior CM PPS/CBRE for their communications regarding the project progress and hosting my site tour on November 3, 2021.

The next update on the Benson Tech Modernization Project will be included in the BPHSAA Alumni Text newsletter for spring quarter.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BENSON POLYTECHNIC MODERNIZATION PROJECT

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Benson Polytechnic High School Modernization Project

- Project [main website](#), including construction updates
- [Benson Polytechnic Project FAQ](#) (English version - translations into other languages available on the project's main website link above)
- [Project animated flythrough](#)
- Latest [construction image gallery](#)

PROJECT TEAM

- [Bassetti Architects](#)
- [Andersen Construction](#)

BENSON TECH MODERNIZATION PROJECT CURRENT MAJOR SUBCONTRACTORS

DEMOLITION WORK

- **PCI/PAS:** Selective demolition in the renovated building
- **Konell Construction:** Mass demolition in the building being removed

HAZARDOUS WASTE ABATEMENT

- **PCI/PAS:** Selective abatement in renovated buildings
- **IRS Environmental:** Mass abatement for buildings being removed

CARPENTRY

- **ASI Structures:** Rough carpentry and concrete.
- **The Harver Company:** Building carpentry

STEEL

- **Fought & Company, Inc./REFA**

ELECTRICAL

- **OEG Inc. PDX**

MECHANICAL

- **Apollo Mechanical**

PLUMBING

- **Apollo Mechanical**

TESTING AND INSPECTION

- **Carlson Testing, Inc.**

FIRE PROTECTION

- **Viking Automatic Sprinkler Co.**

MODERNIZATION CONSTRUCTION SPOTLIGHT

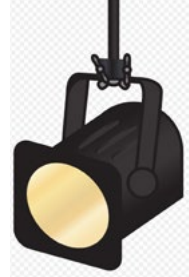


PHOTO CAPTIONS

All photos courtesy of Gerry Ochs, Class of 1977

Photo 1: The historically significant main entrance to the school is being preserved and maintained during the construction phase and will be fully restored.

Photo 2: The original woodwork in the main entrance will be preserved and maintained. The ceiling tiles have been removed for safe keeping, restoration and will eventually be reinstalled for completion.

Photo 3: This photo shows the doorway of the old gym looking toward the main entrance with the auditorium in the background. Scaffolding is in place to the second story of the building with trash chutes in place for the interior demolition work.

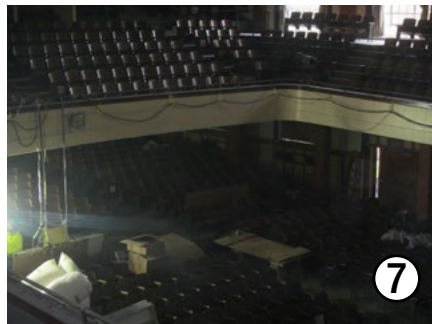
Photo 4: Benson Tech's existing automotive shops were demolished and removed in the first phase of the dem-

olition work, which was completed in late October of 2021. Several areas of brick were removed and salvaged for future use.

Photo 5: Seismic upgrades to framing and ceiling joists was ongoing at the time this photo was taken. Throughout the building, several interior walls have been removed to allow for the future construction upgrades.

Photo 6: Existing brick walls of the school wings at C and H (C along NE Irving Street and H-Buckman Field or south side) have had structural support beams bolted in and attached inside the face to allow demolition work to continue while maintaining support and stability of the walls during the modernization upgrade.

The new school wings will have two stories, which requires foundation improvements to accommodate the new building. The foundation improvements are scheduled to begin in the spring of 2022.



The majority of the abatement work, which consisted mainly of asbestos, has been completed, along with some lead paint removal. Building C is still under abatement for asbestos located in the roof section.

Photo 7: The Benson Tech auditorium and stage have received partial demolition for the future design improvements and the auditorium chairs have all been removed since this photo was taken. The auditorium will maintain its historical elements while including new amenities; there will also be new audio/visual technology and light-

ing elements. A portion of the seats in the upper balcony will be restored and returned to the aisle way section along the perimeter walkway.

Photo 8: The old gymnasium will remain but is receiving seismic upgrades as part of the improvement work. The upper running track will be released and raised to accommodate seismic upgrades and then set back in position.

The main gym (pictured) is undergoing upgrades and remodeling, including complete locker room renovation, new floors, and roofing.

Message and update from new Benson Tech athletic director

My name is Mat Clark and I am the new athletic director at Benson Polytechnic High School this year. I am very excited to be here and have enjoyed getting to know the students, staff, coaches, and the Benson Tech community as a whole. Everybody has been very welcoming and very supportive!

Here's a little bit about myself. I was born and raised in Vancouver and graduated from Cougar training at Washington State University in 1994. In 1995, I was married and traveled with my bride Michelle to Texas, where I taught and coached until the summer of 2000. We returned to Vancouver and I taught social studies and English until 2017 and then moved to administration as a dean of students for the four years before coming to Benson Tech. I coached basketball for 20 years and also coached tennis for 23 years ... many of these years as a head coach. Michelle and I will soon celebrate our 27th anniversary with our three kids.

CURRENT EVENTS AND INFORMATION

Currently, it is tough to give an update on our Winter Sports Schedule right now. A lot of schools have been dealing with COVID in a variety of ways. This has led to a lot of cancellations and rescheduling them is currently in process. In short ... a lot of moving parts right now.

Spring sports are scheduled to begin on Monday, February 28, 2022

UPCOMING EVENTS

There are a lot of things that are in process right now in the Benson Athletic Department. I would like to draw your attention to a few upcoming ones:

- Saturday, April 23: Benson will be hosting its own Invitational Track Meet. Our head track coach, Jay Miles, has been knocking it out of the park and I'm very confident that this meet will be a success for years to come.
- I am pleased to announce that football will be back in the fall of 2024. The PIL and Benson Tech have been having very positive discussions and more details are to come.



Photos courtesy of Benson Athletics Twitter and Facebook.

- We are also in the midst of trying to bring back boys and girls swimming for the 2022-2023 school year. We have the framework in place and all we need is the kids to turn out. We tried to bring swimming back this year but were not able to meet the minimum number of students to do that. We have been actively recruiting all interested students and will be doing another push in the spring when 2022-2023 Sports Registration begins.

- I am pleased to announce the creation of the Tech Youth Project. This is an athletic department-wide initiative that will provide students and families of PPS the opportunities to be active and exposed to sports.

It will also allow Benson Tech Athletics to serve the community along with marketing ourselves. Our kickoff event will be in mid-June with a summer day camp for 3rd through 8th graders.

HOW TO CONTACT ME

In short, the Benson Tech Athletic Department is a busy and growing place right now.

However, I am learning a ton about Benson Tech's rich history and the pride that its community has in the school. Not many high schools have this type of community and I want to make sure that my door is open to welcome them into our Athletic Department.

If you are interested in learning more about where Benson Tech Athletics is heading, how you can help, or just want to talk with me please feel free to do so! I believe in an "open-door" policy and I feel the more that I can learn about the Benson Tech community, the better. My contact information is maclark@pps.net via email or 503-916-5100 by phone.

Thanks so much for reading. Please feel free to reach out. I look forward to getting to know the alumni more and working with you ... your reputation is really good!

Another friend on the PPS Board

While there had actually been a substantial amount of preparation done prior to this day, August 7, 2021, was the scheduled date of the official groundbreaking for the modernization of Benson Tech High School. A large sign had been placed in front of the school proclaiming this project, and credited the Benson Tech alumni as one of the forces of public engagement that helped the Portland Public Schools (PPS) secure the needed funding.

Gary Hollands (Class of 1994), was one of the speakers queued to share their thoughts at the event. He had won a seat on the school board in the May election and had begun his four-year term on 1 July. His heartfelt comments praised the Benson Tech programs and the training he received there. These remarks were welcomed by the crowd assembled below the school's front steps, and especially so for being stated publicly and with so much enthusiasm.

During his four years at Benson Tech, Gary's big smile had surely become recognizable in the school's shops, classrooms, and halls. Yet his yearbook appearances just suggest he majored in electronics and participated in track. His school board campaign material states he had an unstable domestic situation during his youth, and indeed, he finished grade school at Irvington and middle school at Whitaker.

After receiving his Benson Tech diploma, Gary spent a year at an historic Black college in Atlanta and later took additional classes at Portland State University. After earning a commercial driver's license (CDL), he got a truck and began hauling things. Between deliveries, he would show off his truck to students. Their interest convinced him to register a CDL apprentice program with the Bureau of Oregon Labor and Industries (BOLI), and now he recruits minority students to his training for an occupation that is desperate for more workers.



Above: Gary Hollands, new PPS Board member and Benson Tech, Class of 1994).

Gary's attraction to public education is no surprise. He has volunteered his help for the classes of his four children, the two oldest of which are enrolled at Benson Tech. Gary helps with the coaching of the Benson Tech track team and has long been a mentor for the Albina Sports Program, a community organization pairing young and experienced athletes in structured competition and comradery. He has made himself known to educators and has gained an understanding of how school districts function by helping at the Multnomah Education Service District, where he has served on its Board.

His stated concerns for his term at PPS is to increase access to career technical education, improve the reading and math skills of minority students in grade school, and promote diversity throughout the district. Gary's first term will end soon after the Benson Tech Class of 2025 has spent their senior year in the refurbished buildings at Benson Tech High School. There may be another future school board director among these graduates.

Yearbook Questions? Contact the BPHSAA



Above: The BPHSAA's newly discovered treasure trove of Benson Tech yearbooks helped return a 1920s linotype catalog to Benson Tech grad Steve Gann's family.

Benson's renovation officially got underway in June and the BPHSAA has already gained a useful benefit from this project. An early stage of preparation was to empty the buildings. Everything that could be moved was either taken to Marshall, stored, sold, or scrapped. The contents of closets, cabinets, shelves, and drawers were subjected to this directive, bringing many long-forgotten treasures to light. Numerous caches of yearbooks were discovered, and from these exhumations, a near complete set of Poly Techs and Blueprints were assembled, delivered, and graciously received by the BPHSAA.

A key activity of an alumni organization is to serve the graduates of their institution. To perform this service, the organization must have some knowledge of the students who have passed through the campus. The BPHSAA class lists have been compiled from the senior classes appearing in the yearbooks dating from 1940 to the present. But this work was done in the Benson Tech library as time permitted and questions that came up for specific people had to be verified there as well. This alumni service is now much easier to perform with ready access to the yearbooks.

As an example of how this collection expands the reach of the BPHSAA, here's a situation that was resolved by a peek into the June 1944 Poly Tech:

One of the yearbook delivery parcels we received included a thick, well-preserved linotype catalog from the 1920s. It displayed pages of multiple fonts, available in different sizes, of the reusable alphanumeric molds, which were formerly sorted into typeset lines of type. The catalog recalled the obituary of Steve Gann, a Benson Tech grad who had passed down his family print shop onto its third generation. In spite of its move from downtown Portland to Forest Grove, the shop was contacted and expressed interest in the catalog. The shop still had and used some printers from their grandfather's days and they were familiar with linotype machines. This exchange produced a happy ending, which extended a bit of history and saved a little dumpster space.

Similar attention is now offered to alumni. While the more recent Blueprints have little information about individuals, they still have photos from high school days of you, relatives, and friends. More elderly alums have grade schools, majors, activities, and honor roll appearances listed. Answers are available, too, for such questions as "Who were the Aardvarks?" or "Did Benson ever compete in Leap-Frog?" or "When did BATS infest the stage crew?" Submitting queries of this sort now becomes another feature on the [BPHSAA website](#).

Alumni, help your association!

BPHSAA's activities are currently administered by a board of 14 Benson Tech graduates from classes ranging from 1954 to 1997. Six directors are from the Class of 1977. While the make-up of the Board changes yearly, direct representation for all classes is not possible. The Board relies on class lists to overcome this failing. These lists have been compiled from the four Directories that have been commercially published, and from the senior classes that have appeared in the school yearbooks. Still, it is not unusual to come across mention of someone who claims to be a Benson graduate, but is undocumented in our lists.

The programs that are distributed at graduation ceremonies each year offer a way to improve the BPHSAA class lists. A collection of the annual commencement programs, with its formal naming of the graduates, would provide a systematic refinement for our current lists.

If you happen to come across your commencement program, consider donating it to the BPHSAA. The program itself or its copy can be mailed directly to:

Roger Edwards
1028 NE 110th Avenue
Portland OR 97220

Digital copies should be sent to info@bensontechalumni.org. We have so few of the programs right now that there is scant chance of getting duplicates.

As the collection grows, a list of missing years will be placed on the website.