

Stone Steps Are Wilde's Gift To School

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK

It was a warm, humid day. The temperature was in the high 70s and the moisture in the air was about the consistency of Campbell's chicken soup.

Sweat dripped off Abner Wilde's nose and seeped through the shoulders and front of his shirt as he hefted the rocks and placed them in just the right spot to form the structure he kept pictured in his mind.

"Wilde is spelled with an e. I tamed it with an e on the end," he was saying.

Abner Wilde, age 69, was at Madison High School performing a labor of love, of sorts, for the school and the kids and the community.

"If a man can't help his school out a little, there ain't much to him," Wilde said.

Wilde is a stone mason. He's been building things with stones for the past 40 years. He learned the trade by helping build the stone walls located just north of Marshall "along the old road leading out of town."

"I got paid \$11.80 a week working on those walls. Lord, that was forty, maybe forty-five, years ago. I remember I had a little log house back then. Winter was coming on and I hadn't got the cracks chinked between the logs. We had a big snow, and the wind blew the snow right through. Snow was coming in all over the house," he laughed.

But now it was an almost hot September day, and Wilde

was working with no pay to build two sets of stone stairs leading from the upper level walkway behind the high school to the lower level on either side of the press box.

A crew of students helped under Wilde's direction and guidance; young men learning in masonry class what Wilde learned in 32 years of laying rock on the Blue Ridge Parkway from the "foothills of Tennessee to the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia."

The connection between these students and Wilde is the school. School and the community mean a lot to him. Wilde was a noted athlete in his own high school days at Marshall.

"I never miss a football game here," he said.

Well, technically, Wilde will be absent from the last few games when he and his wife pack up to head for their place in Florida in a couple of weeks. The cold weather hinders him a bit too much. But, he still keeps up with the team even though he is not present to cheer them on.

"I have the newspaper sent to Florida," he said.

Next spring, he'll return to Marshall, and he'll become once again a physical part of the community he enjoys so well. But, a part of Abner Wilde will never leave the stadium at the school. That part lies in the rock and cement forming the stairs at O.E. Roberts Stadium. It's called caring and skill. Solid stuff.



Photo by N. Hancock

TAKING A BREAK, Abner Wilde sits on one set of stone stairs he is building behind the press box at Madison High School. The 69 year old stone mason was once an

athlete at Marshall High School. He still avidly supports the football team, and says he never misses a game.

Preliminary Test Offered At Madison

Willa Wyatt, director of guidance at Madison High, has announced that students taking the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) on Oct. 21, will benefit from additional

services in 1980. These services are designed to provide students with more information about the content and uses of the test.

Students who plan to take the 1980 PSAT/NMSQT will receive a complete sample

test for practice, along with an answer key and scoring instructions. When scores are reported in December, each student will receive a Report of Student Answers, including the correct answers as well as the answers the student gave.

Historical Society Meeting

At a meeting of the Board of Directors (of the county Historical Society) last Wednesday, plans were made for stepping up the Cemetery Registration project. Assistance from churches, community clubs and those families with family cemeteries is needed. Information needed is names, birth and death dates of all deceased in the cemetery.

The Society plans to visit some of the more historical cemeteries during the coming months. Mrs. Lucile Roberts, county librarian, has prepared a loose-leaf notebook where all information will be gathered; mail or bring information to the Marshall Library, preferably in typewritten form.

The annual meeting of the

county Historical Society is planned for November 1. This will be a noon meeting with lunch made up of traditional country food.

Baron Manfred von Richthofen, the German flying ace known as the "Red Baron," was shot down and killed over the Western Front in 1918.



SIGMA ALPHA CHI members at Mars Hill College are: (left to right) Karen Smith, president; Pam Bailey, vice president; Lori

Patterson, secretary; Donna Stanley, pledge mistress; Myrtle Foust, treasurer; and Patti Anderson, chaplain.

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