

Remaking molds

Veterans' Memorial statues being recast for casino

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The fountain just outside of Spirit Mountain Casino's new Cedar Plank buffet, depending on your point of view, could use a little embellishment.

At the end of last year, as work on the new two-story addition — the buffet, concert hall and offices — was being completed, casino managers, headed by interim General Manager Roy Rhode, were asking themselves, "What can we put back there?" according to Tribal Elder Reyn Leno, vice chair of the Tribal Council and Spirit Mountain Gaming Inc. Board member. Casino managers report to the Gaming Board.

"They started thinking about something like the Veterans' Memorial, and then they thought, 'Why not bring a duplicate of those statues over to the casino?'" Leno said.

When it came before the SMGI Board last December, board members liked the idea right away, Leno said. "We get so many comments, positive comments, about the memorial, why not share that with the casino?"

Those statues, however, are large. And the molds made to create those statues are even larger.

"There were 50 pieces to the mold," said Tribal Elder Steve Bobb Sr., creator of the memorial and Tribal Council member. "They

filled a pallet."

As a result, three years after the first statues were completed in 2003, Boring, Ore.-based Burning Palace Bronze, the original mold and statue maker, called Bobb and asked him if he thought he would ever request a duplicate because the molds were taking up a lot of warehouse space.

He is kicking himself today, but at the time Bobb gave them permission to destroy the molds. "I really didn't think so," he said of the idea to make the statues again.

They cost \$70,000 the first time they were made, including the rock form on which they stand.

Today, the total for the new statues, also being made by Burning Palace Bronze — including the \$15,000 cost of creating new molds and the rock base — will be \$77,000, Bobb said.

The need for new molds explains why the Veterans' Memorial on the Tribal campus has been draped in blue tarp and surrounded by a skeleton of scaffolding for several weeks.

Everyone's being paid except the artist.

"I'm a Tribal member, a veteran and an artist," Bobb said. "These are my people. Why in the world would I want to benefit from the work financially?"

When the Tribe dedicated the statues in May 2003, country singer

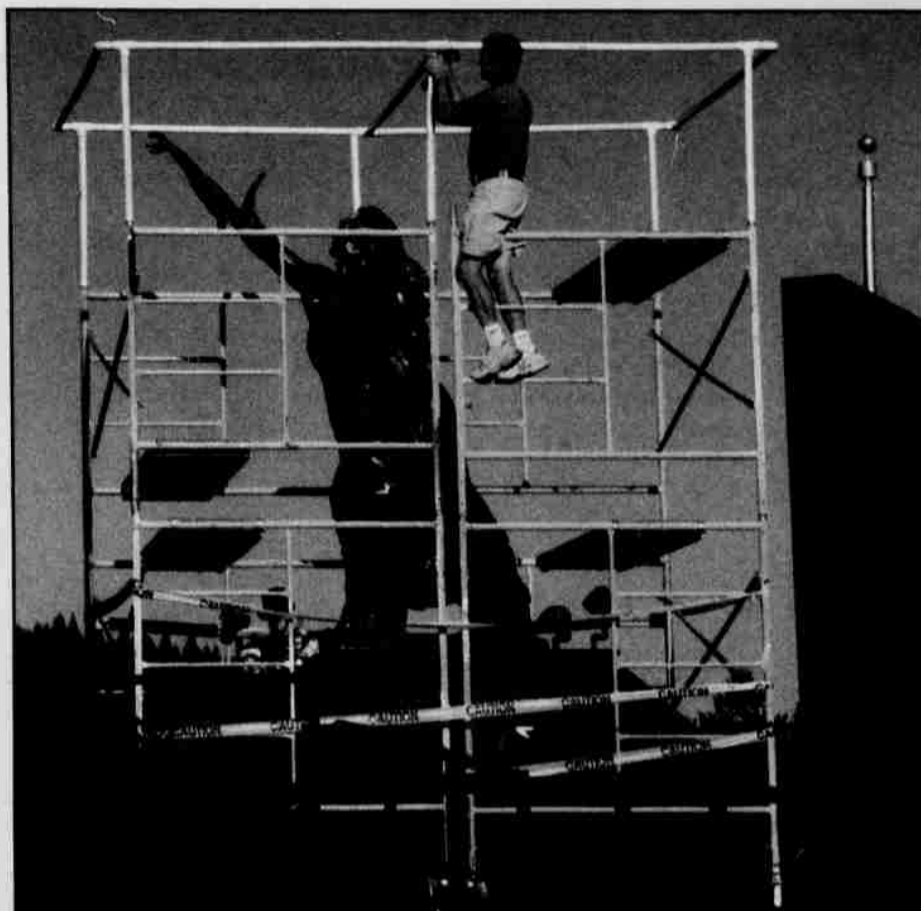


Photo by Ron Karten

Steve, a mold maker from Burning Palace Bronze, prepares the scaffolding to create a new mold of Tribal Elder Steve Bobb's West Valley Veterans' Memorial figures on Aug. 13. He declined to give his last name. The new molds will be used to create replica statues to be installed at Spirit Mountain Casino.

Lee Greenwood, a favorite of veterans, was on hand. "He shook my hand and told me it was world class," Bobb said.

"To have the governor of the state tell a room full of people that when they come out this way, they have

to see the West Valley Veterans' Memorial, those things mean more to me than money."

The new statues are expected to take their places on top of the casino fountain in time for Restoration celebrations in November. ■

Cultural Corner

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Hemp basket weaving class
Sept. 13, 20
9 A.M. to 3 P.M.**

Education Room 126
Participants need to bring scissors
and a sack lunch.

\$25.00 to take the class
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