

First Celebration of Founder

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"This little light of mine, we're gonna let it shine ..."
Hundreds of candles shined in memory of
Robert Simon last Friday, Sept. 25 at Lake Anne.

Dedicated to Bob Simon

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About 500 people filled Lake Anne Plaza last Friday night for a candlelight vigil to remember and celebrate Simon's gift to and of Reston.



PHOTOS BY KEN MOORE/THE CONNECTION

Saharnaz Farivar, an architect and planner, takes a long look at the statue of Bob Simon. "He was definitely my mentor. He was completely available 110 percent all the time."

First Celebration of Founder

Hundreds turn out to express gratitude for Robert E. Simon.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

Bob Simon's wife Cheryl Terio-Simon wrote a letter that was read aloud at the candlelight vigil held Friday, Sept. 26 at Lake Anne Plaza in honor of Reston's founder who died earlier in week.

"Community is what it is all about," wrote Cheryl. "Thank you for your many expressions of love and support for Bob."

More than 500 people gathered to express love of Reston's founder Robert E. Simon and to offer thanks for the impact he's had on Reston and all of its people.

"He was always there to talk to you, he was so curious until the end," said Karen Cleveland. "We're here tonight to celebrate Bob, to thank him, because he's given us the biggest thing he ever could, Reston."

THE PLAZA was filled Friday, in front of the stage, by Simon's statue, by the water and the restaurants.

"Bob loved Lake Anne Plaza," wrote his wife.

"I am a kid of Reston. My dad [Patrick Kane] was a city planner and he scoped it out; he knew he wanted to raise a family here," said Leslie Kane. "I always knew how important he was, but until this week I never realized how many lives were changed by him."

Kerrie Wilson, of Cornerstones, called Friday night's vigil the first celebration of Bob Simon's life.

"Thank you, Bob, for Reston," she said.

Tim Ward, pastor of Restoration Church, said Simon would have enjoyed this time together. "Bob enjoyed people getting together on the plaza," he said. "So many people have been deeply, deeply impacted by his life."

Casey Veatch called himself and Leslie Kane the original Kids of Reston.

Kane, who still lives in Reston, says she



Candlelight in memory of Robert Simon filled the plaza.

always saw Simon walking around Lake Anne Plaza. "It was fun to watch him pat himself on the head," of the statue built in honor of Simon and his vision of the plazas. "Thank you, Bob Simon, for an amazing childhood," she said.

"That guy never stopped and we loved him for sure," said Veatch. "Two weeks ago, I sat up with him in his room and I can assure you that his mind was as sharp as it ever was."

Veatch told the well known story of Simon confronting a mob boss who then called Simon, "one tough son of a"

Veatch and Kane gave voice to the social experiment of a planned community that welcomed all people of all backgrounds and all economic situations.



Every day, Simon's statue is adorned with gratitude and flowers.

"I didn't know racism or discrimination existed until I went to college," said Kane.

"None of us understood what racism was," said Veatch.

Amanda Indri, also of Cornerstones, warned the crowd.

"Don't tell anyone, but I grew up in Herndon," she said. "But that's what Reston does to you. It invites you in."

The Reston Museum is going to give additional chances for Restonians and others to share stories of Reston's founder.

"I can not tell you what a gift this is that the community can come together," said pastor Tim Ward.

Mosaic Harmony and Reston Chorale teamed together to sing, "This Little Light of Mine, We're Going to Let it Shine."

THE CROWD surrounded Lake Anne Plaza, candles shining along the water by Simon's condo building. Hundreds filled the plaza with light and sounds of appreciation for Bob.

"We will light the candles to remind of Bob's bright light, to remind us of the impact he had had on us," said Ward.

Ward could be heard singing among the crowd, "This little light of mine, we're going to let it shine."

And with that in mind, Kerrie Wilson said there is still more work to do.

"Bob lay the perfect foundation," she said, "but not everything was perfectly implemented the way he wanted."

"He leaves it in our hands to make it happen," she said.



Dedicated to Bob Simon

A year in planning, Simon will not be in front row for concert, but will be in hearts.

Saturday, Oct. 10, 4:30 p.m.
Reston Community Center
Hunter Woods
2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston

Robert E. Simon was a founding member of The Reston Chorale in 1967. “Bob’s commitment to establishing Reston as an integrated community in the early 1960s — a time when segregation and racial deed restrictions were prevalent — was the inspiration behind the concert when we began planning it last season,” said Ruth Overton, president of The Reston Chorale. “We wanted to honor Bob’s vision and integrity, and Reston’s pivotal role as Virginia’s first integrated community.”

More than 165 singers and musicians from The Reston Chorale, Mosaic Harmony and D.C.’s historic Shiloh Baptist Church will sing in a concert dedicated to Simon on Oct. 10. The concert is called, “Wade in the Water: Songs of Freedom, Faith and Friendship.”

The three choirs will sing African American inspirational music from songs that brought hope and sustenance to slaves as they longed for and made their way to freedom to songs that inspired freedom fighters of the Civil Rights movement, Overton



The Mosaic Harmony Gospel Choir performs during the Reston Multicultural Festival last Saturday.

PHOTO BY
STEVE HIBBARD/
THE CONNECTION

said.

As plans for the concert progressed, tragic events in the news—from Ferguson, Baltimore and Charleston—also influenced its shape. “That’s when it expanded to include songs of friendship,” said Rev. David North, director of Mosaic Harmony, “because we wanted this concert to be an expression of unity in the midst of diversity, with each ensemble bringing something special to the mix.”

Mosaic Harmony is a multi-faith, multicultural community choir based in Fairfax

County that sings inspirational music based on the gospel tradition.

David Lang leads The Reston Chorale, an auditioned, mixed-voice chorus known to perform a wide range of musical genres.

Dr. Thomas Dixon Tyler leads The Senior Choir of historic Shiloh Baptist Church of Washington, D.C.

“When we began planning this concert a year ago, we were inspired by Bob Simon’s commitment to creating Reston as an integrated community, so we reached out to several other groups to produce a concert

of inspirational African American music,” said Susan Meeks-Versteeg, managing director of The Chorale.

Rev. LaVerne M. Gill, host of Reston’s African American Legacy series, will serve as the narrator for the concert.

“The first half will open with the combined choirs — 165 voices strong — singing a piece based on the spiritual Walk Together Children, followed by each choir performing several selections on their own,” said David Lang, artistic director of The Reston Chorale. “In the second half, we’ll mix it up—literally—with the choirs uniting and merging into one massive chorus. Then we’ll get the audience involved, with Rev. North leading us all in a few old—and perhaps even new—songs.”

Said Lang: “There’s a movement in The Essential Life—a work by Donald McCullough that the Chorale commissioned and sang for Reston’s 50th anniversary and Bob Simon’s 100th birthday—based on Amy Lowell’s poem Market Day. It describes the doors of a church opening wide and the sound of this magnificent music spilling out and filling the square with ‘vibrant harmony.’” “Bob would have loved this concert. He won’t be in his usual place in the front row, but he’ll be in our hearts,” said Ruth Overton, president of the Reston Chorale.

Celebrating the life of a visionary leader,
business pioneer, and friend.

Robert E. Simon Jr.
1914 - 2015



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