

## **BRONZE BOB GOES UPSTREAM**

By William Nicoson

It was as if the bench-seated statue of Reston's founder, Robert E. Simon, Jr., decided to explore the source of water flowing into Lake Anne behind him. On Saturday morning, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, Bronze Bob, as we call him, was found relaxing against the steep bank of the stream, feet in the water, not far from the bench swing on the concrete bridge over the stream.

Close by, in the water, was a deserted hand cart. Obviously, Bronze Bob's trip upstream had been assisted by two or three stalwart friends. Not by a single stalwart? No, the hand cart carried no rope or other means of lashing Bronze Bob to the cart. The statue had to be held in place by at least two and perhaps four hands as the cart was moved forward by two other hands.

John Lovaas, whose townhouse faces the stream not far from the Van Gogh Bridge, was apparently the first person to notice that Bronze Bob had taken a new seat during the night. He has expressed confidence that Bronze Bob suffered from a tasteless prank. Many others share that view, including perhaps the police. Reston Historic Trust, which owns Bronze Bob, filed a police report immediately, but there has been no investigation I'm aware of.

We would all prefer to consider this incident as prank rather than theft, but there are troublesome questions. If pranksters lowered Bronze Bob down the steep incline to the stream, they chose a dangerous place where their own footing in the dark would be risky. And why would pranksters then have thrown their hand cart into the stream?

Another possible hypothesis is bungled theft. Moving in the dark while struggling to keep cumbersome Bronze Bob balanced in the cart could not have been easy. Perhaps the cart ran off the path, depositing Bronze Bob on the stream bank breaking to the right where he was found, then plunging into the stream where the cart was found.

Bronze Bob is the brainchild of Chuck Veatch, Vice President of Reston Historic Trust, who created a coalition of more than 40 contributors to finance acquisition by the Trust of the Simon statue crafted by sculptor, Zach Oxman. The statue was unveiled on April 17 this year at the Founders Night Celebration of Simon's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. It is a work of inspired art embodying inspirational history.

It's possible that a connoisseur of sculpture or community history or both would prize Bronze Bob sitting in his or her study. Oxman enjoys a growing reputation. Art thieves sometimes have a buyer in mind before the theft; others act on speculation.

Whatever the nature of Bronze Bob's wandering, he has announced his intention to return to his bench beside Lake Anne. Or maybe to another near-by bench. He's concluded that wandering about upstream is stressful and, like his modest hero, Bob Simon, he takes no pleasure from the

intense publicity his journey occasioned.

He also has kind words for Bryan Murphy and his men from Reston Association who came immediately that fateful Saturday morning to his rescue.

*William Nicoson is president of Reston Historic Trust.*