

The Story of the T

By Timo Stay

We began planning for the T in October of 1978 as the early plans for the Star Assembly were coming into place. Our idea was to have a T on the mountain during the entire Timpview Star week. As I thought back at what went into these projects, I wonder how anyone involved had time for school and homework.

Even before we had a detailed plan, we started collecting bed sheets. A group of us took a day off of school and spent the day in Salt Lake going around to hotels and motels asking for their used sheets. We came home with a ton. But we still didn't have enough, so we had a campaign at school for each student to bring in old sheets.

As we were still gathering in bed sheets, we started our detailed calculation of the number of sheets we would need. Our first design was a flat block T, but as we thought about it being on a steep slope, we realized that from a distance, our regularly proportioned block T would look short and stumpy. We talked to the Calculus teacher (what was his name?) and drew some more elongated designs. We were still unsure about it, so a few of us hiked up to the Y in mid-December with a ton of snow and measured the Y dimensions. It was surprising how skinny the Y was and how long it was. The stem of the Y is only 25 feet across and it is 380 feet long. We came back and designed our T to be 50 feet wide on the stem and about 500 feet long, almost twice as big as the Y! When we blocked out the size of each sheet, we realized that we needed over 800 sheets.

We next needed a place to display the T. We identified 3 or 4 locations on the mountains above Timpview, ranging from the mouth of Rock Canyon all the way over to the other side of little Rock Canyon. We went to the US Forest Service and looked at land records. We learned that the Forest Service would not be very flexible in allowing us to put anything on their land without jumping through hoops and hearings. We were quite discouraged until one of the last property maps that we looked at showed a large piece of private property at the top of Indian Hills. We asked how far up the mountain that property extended and we found that it went three-quarters up the mountain directly in line with the school. We found out who the property owner was, went and met with him and convinced him to let us put a T on the mountain! Now we were in business!

To make sure our T would fit alright, Sue Roberts hiked up the mountain one night to check it out. When she told me the next day, I didn't believe her until I went outside and could see a faint trail going straight up the mountain in the deep snow. She convinced me that we needed to measure it off and make sure it would fit without running into any cliffs or other obstacles. So a few days later, I convinced my cousin who was in college to hike up there with me and we measured it off in thigh high snow. It would fit perfectly where we placed it and we would still stay on the right side of the property boundaries.

We continued to collect sheets and I think everyone was sick of the daily announcements to bring in their spare sheets. We next had to dye the sheets. We scoured the school for a place to dye 800 sheets. We finally found a place down in the basement with all the heating / AC and plumbing. We got 55 gallon drums, filled them with water and with colored dye and began a mass production of sheet dyeing

that lasted several weeks. If you remember, the T had a blue border and an orange center. We bought every package of dye in Utah Valley and actually caused a shortage. We had to go to Salt Lake and still had a hard time getting enough blue and orange dye.



Dyeing the sheets for the block T - Diane Barnes, Brad Nielsen, Melanie McKay? and others

We would often begin production at 8 or 9 in the evening, after other activities were completed and would often go until 2 or 3 in the morning. Several times my dad came looking for me wondering exactly I was up to. We would dye sheets, run them through a wringer, and then lay them out to dry. I have very fond memories of that time, where there was a lot of friends together, listening to the Doobie Brothers latest album and exploring the catacombs underneath Timpview. We found all sorts of passages, big equipment rooms and interesting tunnels.

Finally we had all the sheets dyed. Now we had to piece the sheets together. We were also getting down to crunch time. We had dozens of sewing machines brought in and moms and students all pitched in. We broke it into sections and gave a pattern for each sewing machine to complete.



Better look at how the sheets were sewn together. Devri's little sister and ???

Once we got each pattern completed, we would sew the patterns together. Finally, we had to take the bigger sections to the Gym to complete the final assembly. People stayed up all night long sewing it. We finished it the morning we had planned to put it up on the mountain on a cold February day in 1979.



Assembling sheets (sewing them together) in the commons. Jenny Hatch, Debi Dunford, Robyn Benedict, Annette Stevenson, Dave Babb, Lori Pinder and Steve Strong.

Our final T was massive. With over 800 bed sheets, it weighed over 1000 pounds. It took dozens of people to move it. We went several months without realizing exactly how we would get it up on the mountain. One day it dawned on us the total weight of the thing and we panicked. We just couldn't come up with a way to lug 1000 pounds up the mountain. We thought on the problem for a number of days. Someone finally came up with the idea of getting a helicopter to pick it up and drop it off on the mountain. We found out the owner of Rocky Mountain Helicopter was the father of one of the students at Timpview (Brett Burr). We approached him and he said he would be glad to donate a helicopter and a pilot to help out.

We had to think very carefully how we rolled the T up and in what order each arm of the T was folded in. We knew we wouldn't have much room to unravel a mess up on the mountain. We rolled it up and put it into a sling provided by Rocky Mountain Helicopter. It took dozens of people to move it anywhere. We lugged the T out of the gym, onto a truck and drove the truck out to the center of the football team.



Waiting on the mountain for the arrival of the "T" - Pictured here: Ed Kocherhans, Sam Fletcher, Guy Mildenhall, Brad Morley, Steve Ellsworth, Timo Stay, Russell Hopkinson, Sue Roberts (SBO advisor), Bryant Christensen (green sweat shirt). (Photo taken by Bryan Chapman)

One group stayed down at the field to help with the pickup, while another group of us went up the mountain. We got to the landing zone and had a great view of the pickup of the T at Timpview and of the helicopter bringing the T up to us.



Helicopter getting ready to drop the rolled-up "T" on the mountain. (Photo taken by Bryan Chapman)



Preparing to land the "T" - nice view of Timp in the back ground (Photo taken by Bryan Chapman)

We carefully had the T lowered, making sure we had it facing the right way. We pulled it out of the sling and sent the helicopter on its way. We had a whole line of students to carefully unroll the T. The top part of the T was the trickiest, as we had to unfold out and then roll down.



Rolling out the "T" with very planned execution. Many of you never saw the T from this angle. We literally had to take it up and over trees, rocks and bushes (and the thing was very heavy - not as easy as it looks). (Photo taken by Bryan Chapman)



Close up of rolling out the "T" - class members Steve Strong, Scott Hymas, Sam Fletcher. (Photo taken by Bryan Chapman)



That was one steep slope. Hard to tell how steep it was from ground level. (Photo taken by Bryan Chapman)

Once we had the top bar of the T rolled out, the rest of the T went quickly. For the most part, we avoided any trees and we rolled it out over small bushes and weeds. We put some rocks on the edges to secure it.

Finally we were done. I remember Robert Redford's helicopter coming in close to see exactly what we were doing and I know we got a call from Sundance asking for an explanation. They were concerned that there would be another permanent letter on another mountain and were voicing their concern. We assured them that it was temporary and would only be up for a week.



"T" on the mountain. It was said to be $\frac{1}{3}$ larger than BYU's "Y". I believe it! What a fun project. (Photo taken by Nathan Anderson)

We were able to get some press coverage in local newspapers and on the news. I remember driving back from Orem a few days later and being amazed at how big it was and how prominent it was from far away.



The famous "T" that taught us all to work together.

Besides the T on the mountain, and the Star Assembly at the end of the next week, we also had "I'm a Timpview Star" bumper stickers, we got merchants all over Provo and Orem to put "{Student Name} is a Timpview Star" up on their marquee. I remember there were a number of marquees around Provo High that had Timpview students' names on them during that week. We also had every student in the high school put a star up on the commons with their name on it. The Star Assembly is another story of another remarkable event. Thinking back on it, I can't believe we packed all of that into that one week.

Having seen several of my kids go through high school, I have seen them involved in some big projects. Yet I have never seen anything done by any high school that matches the scale of doing the T or putting on the Star Assembly. Sue Roberts was instrumental in allowing us to dream, make outlandish requests of adults to facilitate those dreams, figure out on our own how to pull it off and show us how to get a conservative administration to give us permission to do unbelievable things. Added on top of that was an incredible group of very talented students who were willing to be involved in something special.

This is my memory of putting together the T. I know many of you were many involved. I would love to hear your memories so we have a more complete (and probably accurate!) account of this event.