

Brereton Way

The other day I happened to go by Brereton Way. There's a fellow I know whose name is Jack Brereton. The small street is named after his grandfather. Often people say, "I don't know Jack." But I do know Jack. I know Jack Brereton.

Whenever I think of Jack I think of one of my favorite stories, and that story is about the bike trail. At one time Jack worked for the District after having retired as a teamster, truck driver, and man who had helped build the dam. I would often send him down with the District backhoe to help Richard Harvey install all of the rocks next to the road at the Nature Center. What you see there is the result of Jack and Richard's hard work. It looks incredible.

When I think of Jack I also think of 1997. It was that year that on a Memorial Day I decided to take the backhoe down to Riverbend Park and just push piles around. There were a tremendous amount of piles and yellow star thistle all over the park. But periodically people would come down and walk the trail, but not many. On that day while I was pushing soil around into the large scour holes that were there, I saw Jack Brereton drive up. I stopped the backhoe tractor, turned it off and Jack came over to ask me a question.

"What are you doing on your day off?" he asked.

"Jack," I said. "I'm having fun with the tractor. I've been wanting to fill these holes for some time."

"Well, that's just not right," responded Jack. "I want to be on the tractor and help you out."

I told Jack I would go back to the shop to get the other tractor so that we could help each other. From that day on I would have Jack continually move soil around Riverbend Park.

One day I came to the park and told Jack that I wanted him to remove a great deal of material that was on the abandoned part of the bike trail. In 1986 with the high inundation of the river and the flooding that went on for several weeks a large portion of the trail on the bend at Riverbend was washed out and buried. So I had Jack start to uncover the overburden on the trail. It was tedious and difficult work. I had been having Jack do this work for some time, but the District supervisor was not aware that we were uncovering the overburden from the 1986 flooding. One day I went down to go see Jack when he was doing this work. The next thing I knew the supervisor drove into the park. He stopped his truck, approached both Jack and myself, and asked us what we were doing. I told him that I had given direction to Jack for quite some time now to remove the material that prevented anyone from traversing that area since 1986.

He said, "Oh my God. Now people are going to use it."

I said, "Precisely."

Jack was scared to death. He thought he would be fired. I told him not to worry. The supervisor turned around and got in his truck and drove away. He was not a happy camper. I told Jack to continue his work until all the material was finally removed, months later it was.

I often think about that section of trail along the bend and down to the beach as Jack's Trail. Most recently with the funding from Prop 50 we were able to finally redo the trail as well as re-vegetate the adjacent landscape around it.

The supervisor was right. People were going to use it riding bikes, walking dogs, running, and they are. When I go to Riverbend Park I see families walking their dog or people running on the trail.

There's another story about Jack Brereton that is even more impressive. In late 1966, a fire occurred at the residence of Robert Bird. Acting in a heroic and expeditious manner, Jack rescued the Bird's three children from the burning building. On August 16, 1966, the Butte County Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution #66-127, commending Jack for his heroic actions and quick thinking that saved the lives of the Bird children.

Jack Brereton is one of the true treasures of Oroville. I am proud to know him. Jack is continuing to be a part of Oroville helping along with others to build the Veterans' Memorial Park next to the Veterans' Memorial Hall.

Quote

"The fact is that you deserve all the good things in life that you can possibly imagine as long as you achieve them by doing or contributing something of value to other people and to your world." ~ Brian Tracy

Question

What project was built by the Red Cross for swimming lessons at Bedrock Park? E-mail your answer to bob@frrpd.com. The first person to respond with the correct answer will win \$30!

Fun Facts

February 2, Groundhog Day – The largest Groundhog Day celebration is held in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, where crowds as high as 40,000 have gathered to celebrate the holiday since at least 1886. Punxsutawney Phil comes out of his burrow on Gobbler's Knob - in front of thousands of followers from all over the world - to predict the weather for the rest of winter. According to legend, if Punxsutawney Phil sees his shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter weather. If he does not see his shadow, there will be an early spring. This year, Phil saw his shadow.

Upcoming Events

Booth space is still available for the 3rd annual Wildflower and Nature Festival on April 4th and 5th. Call FRRPD at 533-2011 for more info.

FRRPD is now offering Hip Hop, Yoga and Self Defense classes. Call 533-2011 for more info.

See you in the parks!