

Statue's new look on its way

by David Baker
Co-editor in Chief

It's been bouncing in and out of the news so much, you'd need a scorecard to keep up with the story of the St. Ambrose statue.

The 91-year-old statue was damaged in an accident last November. College officials thought it was damaged beyond repair.

A \$30,000 contribution fund goal was set to purchase a new symbolic statue. The college administration decided a new bronze statue would be purchased and a park-like setting be created in front of Ambrose Hall. An improved security system in front of Ambrose Hall was also in the works.

But local architects soon approached the college about restoring the damaged statue and returning it to its base by May commencement activities.

Dr. Edward Rogalski, executive vice president and chairman of the Statue Committee, says, "I was delighted when we learned it could be repaired."

Sculptor James Anderson, part-time St. Ambrose art instructor, Bettendorf, was hired to restore St. Ambrose to its original state.

Anderson's job was to return the shattered pieces of the statue's neck, head and face together. The head was also pinned back on the body.

The rest of the sandstone statue was also restored and returned to its base for graduation. The statue was not officially presented because ceremonies were in Lee Lohman Arena due to bad weather.

Anderson says while he enjoyed sculpting the statue's head and body, it wasn't easy cleaning off 91 years of paint.

"That was the toughest part — taking off all the layers of old paint. I couldn't use a cleanser. I had to chip it off. It was time-consuming."



Mike Renkes

The St. Ambrose statue gets a lift, as it is transported from its pedestal to the basement of the Galvin Fine Arts Center in preparation for its renovation.

St. Ambrose stood in front of Ambrose Hall this summer until Aug. 22. It was then returned to the maintenance area of the Calvin Fine Arts Center for more restoration.

"Even now, it doesn't look all that bad," says Rogalski. "But with wet weather, the paints and epoxies used can cause a little staining."

Rogalski says about \$5,000 has been raised to repair the statue. He says more funds may come in the form of an insurance claim from the unidentified person who damaged the statue.

Rogalski says, "We have had good response from alumni who were happy to see it back. Many 1986 graduates had their pictures taken by it."

Anderson will cover the statue with a special sizing liquid, an antique bronze-colored patina and a seal coat of urethane.

The statue's base will be decorated with scenes from the religious and academic life of St. Ambrose. A commemorative plaque will be designed for the statue's base.

Anderson will also replace the statue's hand, which has been missing since an accident in 1936.

The statue's sentimental value has drawn alumni back to St. Ambrose to see it again.

"I've gotten a lot of good comments about how it looks now," he says, "But it's not even done yet."

Anderson hopes the experience of repairing St. Ambrose College's statue will help his sculpting career.

"I am appreciative to the college for giving me this chance," he says.

Rogalski says the restored St. Ambrose statue is scheduled to be dedicated by homecoming, the weekend of Oct. 17-19.