

‘Benedict’ deserves to be music tent’s name

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Editor:

So. The Benedict Music Tent is being renamed The Michael Klein Music Tent. Whoop de whoop. Not.

The U.S. has \$34 trillion of debt. Solution! Sell naming rights of everything that’s ever been meaningful to the highest bidder: Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, The Smithsonian, others. Fiscal irresponsibility solved. Easy peasy, Aren’t we a brilliant board!

Once upon a time, a prominent wannabe Aspen real estate developer from Los Angeles seeking favorable city treatment offered up a skating rink for the center of town. The city said “no thank you” in the spirit of “we won’t be bought off,” recognizing — even then — that any number of prospective wealthy donors would welcome the opportunity to buy themselves into Aspen.

Michael Klein has a resume to shake the timbers off any music tent roof, and I don’t disparage his achievements and contributions to the Aspen Music Festival and School. Thank you. This is a genuine, respectful “thank you.”

But surely sir, there are other naming opportunities.

Fritz Benedict was the music man. In the 1950s, the earliest tent was named Benedict-Bayer Tent (Herbert Bayer was his brother-in-law); in the '80s, with Fritz's appointment as Aspen Music Associates board chairman, his gentle art of persuasion and creative solutions, he saved our town from the AMA leaving Aspen.

The AMA had purchased land near Santa Fe and was ominously threatening to exit town due to Aspen's high costs, its own fiscal irresponsibility and Aspen's strict land-use code, with no room or budget to expand the music-school campus for housing needs. Fritz and Fabi Benedict offered up a land swap idea, a portion of their Hunter Creek land to the city in trade for the south edge of Marolt Open Space for music festival student housing and winter employee housing. They turned a dire situation around.

There is no price for selling out the spirit, soul and memory of the Aspen Music Festival and a housing hero.

Tim Estin

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