

Salisbury Press 6-1-1989

Clifton Hill graduates hold reunion

The sixth annual Clifton Hill School reunion was attended by nearly 150 persons on Sunday and was proclaimed to be another successful event. Present officers were re-elected: President, Mary Evelyn Minor; vice president, Barbara Noel, both of Moberly; and secretary-treasurer, Betty Mayo, Huntsville. Leading the invocation for the meal was one of the originators of the reunion, Buddy Morrissy, Omaha, Nebraska. A number of states were recognized in the group present.

Speaker for the afternoon program was Virginia Johnson, for whom the Westran Middle School has been named. Mrs. Johnson retired in 1988 after 46 years of teaching, and 36 of those years at Clifton Hill. She said

coming to speak to the reunion group "felt like home." Mrs. Johnson included several humorous recollections of her challenges with discipline, school routine, cramped teaching spaces, and encounters with parents over nearly five decades.

She said that after graduating from Thomas Hill High School in 1935 she began working toward her ambition to be a teacher. During those depression years, she said the goal seemed impossible at times. As a means of achieving her goal, she taught piano lessons at Prairie Hill for 25 cents per student and made the trek from her home on horseback.

One of those students, Doris Harlan, helped to open college doors for Mrs.

Johnson and through Doris' parents, the Jesse Harlans, she had a means of going to Brownsville, Texas for a year of college, on \$200 loaned to her by the Clifton Hill Bank.

The former Virginia Bowen had her first school in Chariton County where she taught at Cockrell for \$32.50 per month. Ten dollars of that amount was appropriated for her room and board. In addition to teaching all the subjects to all grades, she also served as the school's janitor, and cooked a daily hot meal for her pupils. She taught there for two terms, then was married to Bob Johnson in 1940.

The following year she began teaching at Darksville for a salary of \$45.00 a month, also continuing the same custodial and cooking routine. She laughed as she described frying cornbread over an old-fashioned range as she taught English classes.

During the time her husband was serving in the armed forces during World War II, Mrs. Johnson was teaching at Vaughan School south of Clifton Hill and dealt with tire and gasoline rationing by walking the distance from Friday's Garage in Clifton Hill, or riding her horse during the winter. Her next and last rural school was Smith, also in Randolph County.

Mrs. Johnson began teaching the seventh and eighth grades at Clifton Hill for her next assignment, and with the exception of the years of 1963-64 when she taught at Salisbury R-4, she was on the staff at Clifton Hill, later Westran, for the next 36 years. She said the reality of teaching without the added cleaning and cooking duties was a dream come true. She put her spare time to good use by attending summer school, and taking advanced courses. She received her degree from Northeast Missouri State University, Kirksville, in 1963, with a former student in the same graduating class.

She said her teaching career included social studies, math, English, band, and coaching girls basketball. "You name it, I taught it", she said with a smile, and added "I enjoyed every minute, too."

Mrs. Johnson's address was followed by recognition of former pupils; the span of years represented in the graduates; reading of letters from persons unable to attend; and the establishing of a Clifton Hill School scholarship committee with members, Danita Eagan and Forrest Brown.

Mrs. Mayo read a poem to honor the deceased alumni since last year, Roberta Holman Edwards, Golda Rodgers Garner, Viola Rodgers, Erma Willisie Grout, and Frank McLean. Those attending the reunion were registered by Helen Mayo and Oreta Clemens.



OLDEST GRADUATE recognized at the annual gathering of Clifton Hill alumni and friends was bestowed on a class of 1908 member, Mayme Harris (right) who enjoyed reminiscing with Ola Alexander, class of 1917. Both are now of Moberly.



VISITING WITH FORMER STUDENTS was an enjoyable part of the Clifton Hill School reunion as Virginia Johnson spoke to the group and later caught up on happenings in the lives of her students. She is shown standing with pupils (from left) Larry Moore, Coal Valley, Illinois; Betty McAdams Mayo, Huntsville; Katie Brown Preston, Rolla; Carolyn Baker Hairston, Columbia; and Jon Moore of Clark. Lucy Vaughn, who took the pictures for the Press-Spectator, is also a former student.

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GRADUATES OF CLIFTON HILL HIGH SCHOOL for 50 or more years was an honor shared by these alumni on hand for the sixth annual reunion. Seated from left are Virginia Thompson Lotspelch, Warrensburg, 1937; Vera Mae Fidler Forbes, Belton, 1939; Ola McLean Alexander, Moberly, 1917; Sarah Frances Skillen Ryle, Fayette, 1922; and Edna Mae McCollum Vaughn, Salisbury, 1932.

Second row - Oreta Christy Clemens, Clifton Hill, 1928; Margaret Stenton Patton, Higginsville, 1928; Ruth Stenton Wilson, Mission Villejo, California, 1929; Mary Christy Minor, Moberly, 1939; Josephine Fidler Baker, Clifton Hill, 1934; Jane Kistler Enderle, Dalton, 1934; Nada Bradsher Lynch, Vandalla, 1934; Mary Ann Potter Shores, Moberly, 1930; Jessie Maureen Twyman Smith, Columbia, 1932; and Charles Baker, Huntsville, 1933;

Back row - George K. Hill, Clifton Hill, 1933; Rose Naylor McLean, Columbia, 1927; Buddy Morrissy, Omaha, Nebraska, 1936; and Frank (Bud) Palmer, Independence, 1934.



AUCTIONING OFF FOOD ITEMS was an enjoyable task for Jesse Schupback of Hannibal who sold the remaining items purchased for the Clifton Hill School reunion.



MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT for Sunday's Clifton Hill School reunion was by a family trio, Katie Preston, Mary Lee Cochran and Jim Preston. The Prestons are from Rolla and Mrs. Cochran is from Cairo. The ladies are members of the Brown family and said they enjoy singing together whenever they get a chance. The audience joined in on some of the familiar numbers. At right is Mary Minor of Moberly, who was re-elected to her second term as president of the reunion group.