



Members of the MHS Class of 1924 gather in front of the old Central High building. "Bub" McKnight is third from left on the front row. D.E. Turner Jr. is on the far right of the third row. (Photo courtesy of O.C. Stonestreet)

Revisiting hopes and dreams

Class of 1924 remembered

By O.C. STONESTREET III
Special to the Tribune

The new school year has nestled in. But a fading photograph turns thoughts back many years to a group of 56 young men and women who were on the brink of finding out about life beyond the classroom. Their images, if not their hopes and dreams, have been preserved for us to ponder.

A lot of water, as they say, has flowed under the bridge since Mooreville High School's Class of 1924 concluded their formal education and began attending what most people call The School of Hard Knocks.

Just before their May commencement ceremonies the young ladies and gentlemen were guests of the Mooreville Rotary Club, then under

President Ernest Miller, owner of Miller Drug Company.

As part of the evening's entertainment, Class President Edgar McNeely presented some "facts" about the class. Some of what young Mr. McNeely said to the Rotarians as reported in the Mooreville Enterprise, follows:

"We have 21 boys and 35 girls, 41 are from town and 15 are from the country. We find that the country boys and girls get along well with town people and both of us are benefited by the intermingling.

The average age of the class is 17 years for the boys and 17 years for the girls. The youngest of the girls is 15 years and the youngest of the boys is 16 years. The oldest of the girls is 20 years and the oldest of the boys is 20 years.

"The average weight for the girls is 116 pounds; for the boys 139 pounds. The heaviest of the girls is 161 pounds. The lightest boy is 76 pounds. Perhaps you would like to see this kid. He is M.O. Stiles. M.O.

is 56 inches long, pigeon-toed and knock-kneed, but M.O. is O.K. above the eyes.

"The lightest for the girls is 90 pounds.

"Average height is 5 feet, eight inches for the boys; five feet four inches for the girls. The tallest for the boys is 5 feet 11 inches; for the girls 5 feet 10 inches. The lowest for the boys is 4 feet 8 inches; for the girls 5 feet.

"As to occupation of future work: 18 boys are going to college, 1 to railroad work, 2 undecided.

"11 different colleges will be represented by this class next September.

"Robbed hair: Eight of the 35 girls have refused to bob their hair. There are four blondes and 31 brunettes."

Continuing with the account of the meeting, the Mooreville Enterprise informed its readers that "One

young man, Gray Brawley, is to enter the ministry. He was given an ovation by the Rotarians and also the class.

"President Miller asked all those who contemplated getting married soon after finishing high school to please stand up. There was only one response. James E. 'Bub' McKnight stood like a lone sentinel and a real hero, creating quite a bit of levity. Bub is going to study law and says he will either be a corporation lawyer or go to Congress."

Well, Bub didn't become a lawyer or go to Congress, but he did go to Raleigh and represent Iredell County in the State House. And he sold a lot of people cars at his Pontiac-Buick dealership on South Broad Street.

By the way, it is interesting to note that Caroline Ashley McKnight, granddaughter of the above-mentioned "Bub" McKnight, is a member of this year's MHS senior class.

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Rights activist returns home

William Coley, who grew up in Davidson and has since traveled much of the world to assist political refugees, will bring his concern for that issue back home on Monday, Sept. 24.

Coley, director of the Jesuit Refugee Service's New Jersey Detention Project, will speak about "Are Refugees No Longer Welcome? Immigration Detention in the United States," at 7:30 p.m. in the C. Shaw Smith 900 Room of Davidson College's Alvarez College Union. His talk is sponsored by the college's Dean Rusk Program in International Studies. Admission is free.

Coley, a 1988 graduate of North Mecklenburg High School, was one of four people worldwide to receive the 2001 Reebok Human Rights Award. Reebok praised his dedication, saying his work "has brought hope, inspiration, and strength to the lives of others."

Coley's attention to the plight of refugees

began during his junior year at Wake Forest University when he began volunteering to assist political refugees, will bring his concern for that issue back home on Monday, Sept. 24.

He returned stateside to work for the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). The U.S. government's 1996 Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act mandates that asylum seekers to the U.S. must be detained until they can establish a "credible fear of persecution."

Coley worked with JRS to establish services for the 300 or so detainees at the government's Elizabeth, N.J., detention center.

Those services included classes in English and religion. Coley also recruited hundreds of volunteers for a visitor program to support them during their detention.

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Expert: Fall color show just average

J. Dan Pittillo, the Western Carolina University biology professor who has been tagged as "the Alan Greenspan of fall foliage forecasting," is predicting an average display of autumn colors for this year's annual onslaught of leaf-lookers flocking to Western North Carolina's mountains.

"In short, this will not be an outstanding year—average, but not outstanding. This is because our plants generally have had good moisture and growing conditions for the past couple of months," said Pittillo, a specialist in Appalachian plant ecology who has become a sought-after expert for his yearly predictions of the quality and intensity of the fall color season in WNC.

Pittillo is quick to point out that even during years with "average" fall color, leaf-lookers will be treated to stunning views at some locations across the mountain region. "It is possible that we will have some places with very good fall color, especially those areas having a light frost late in September," he said. "But a freeze much below 28 degrees will likely give us a very dull landscape."

Pittillo bases his prediction on a variety of factors, including the amount of rainfall received during vegetation's prime growing season of the warm-weather months. It's his theory that the best fall color is seen after summers with below-average rainfall, when plant growth is stunted by a lack of sufficient water. Although WNC remains under drought conditions in terms of the water table, the area has received adequate amounts of precipitation to facilitate plant growth, he said.

"Stress on trees and other woody plants is usually the

cause of color change. Normally, a stressed plant will develop a yellowing and then browning. In some cases, a stress may produce a red color," Pittillo said. "Drought stress we have had in recent years led to some outstanding color in some locales, especially where a light frost preceded the color development. On the other hand, too much stress is deadly."

The biological process that results in the brightly colored foliage of fall is already under way. Cooler temperatures at night and the change in the intensity of sunlight as summer gives way to autumn contribute to the environmental stresses that induce the decomposition of chlorophyll, the chemical that gives leaves their green color in spring and summer. As chlorophyll breaks down, other pigments—always present in the leaves, but masked by the green of chlorophyll—are revealed.

Some vegetation is already changing color, sometimes brown, in areas with shallow soils, Pittillo said. "And trees and shrubs along the highways are often stressed by applications of herbicides," he said. "Perhaps you have noticed sumac or other plants turning color along our highways, where herbicides have been applied."

Colors will begin first in the higher elevations of the northwestern sections of North Carolina, probably in early October, and progress southward and down slopes through mid-October and early November.

Yellow birches, red sourwoods, red and yellow maples, yellow pin cherries and yellow poplars will be the first colors to show, Pittillo said. They will be followed by the yellow and red of oaks and sweet gums, yellow of hickories, yellow

and brown of beeches, and a myriad of other colors in the vines, shrubs and understory trees.

Wildflowers will add to the color mix, Pittillo said, with white and blue asters, yellow goldenrods and royal purple ironweeds among the most prominent blooms.

Scenic drives and suggested sites to view the changing leaves in the N.C. mountains are posted on the Web each week at www.exploresouthcarolina.com/leaf.htm. These regional reports are gathered from tips from Blue Ridge Parkway and U.S. Forest Service officials about the best fall color from week to week.

The Western North Carolina mountains boast a range of elevations and corresponding climates that create one of the most extended fall foliage seasons

in the East. Mountains surrounding the Asheville area range from 2,200 feet to 6,684 feet at Mount Mitchell, the highest peak east of the Mississippi.

Murrell points out the progression of color among different species and flowers: "Early in the season, sourwoods with their maroon leaves and tulip poplars with their yellow leaves are brilliant. Mid-season marks the change of maples to red or yellow, and late season is time for oaks to change. Besides the leaf changes, you'll see wildflowers like goldenrod with bright yellow, and the bluish-purple of chicory. Later, you'll see orchids."

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