

Memories

(continued from page 1)

1936, he graduated from the building then known as Kingston Township School, and then at that same building in 1957, he became the Head Teacher at Westmoreland Elementary School.

Prokopchak used to joke that he was so stupid he couldn't get out of school. But his history reveals an uncommon dedication to teaching and a connection to a building.

"I knew the building so well," says Prokopchak, a lifelong Orange resident.

As Head Teacher, Prokopchak brought an egg incubator to school to show how chicks were born, and brought in a newborn calf. "One teacher even bought a baby bottle for it," recalls Prokopchak with a chuckle. He ran trips to the New York World's Fair, Philadelphia, and New York City. "I had the best parents on trips," he adds.

"I loved the kids," says Prokopchak. "The kids were good and the parents were appreciative."

As a high school student, Prokopchak graduated in 1936 with the first class of students to attend all four years at the building on Lehigh Street. "I helped carry bricks on that building," he recounts. "James Martin was my teacher in 1933."

James Alexander Martin is credited with the creation of the building currently called Westmoreland Elementary School. Many students remember James Martin as an influential teacher and leader. Charlotte D. Martin, his daughter, still lives near the school and recalls her father's days at the Kingston Township School.

"He was the one responsible for getting the property," says Martin. "There should be a picture of him at the school."

"He enjoyed teaching," she notes, "and he liked the schools." James Martin devoted his career to the schools of the Back Mountain. "In those days, remembers Charlotte Martin, "if a student was having problems, he would go to the family and ask if there was anything they could do." Charlotte Martin herself taught, although later she became a dietitian.

"It was a good school," remembers Al Brown of Trucksville. He graduated in 1936, and fondly recalls the football games coached by Walter Hicks. "At that time, we played the city schools," says Brown. "We won a few, but not many."

At the 60th anniversary of the Class of 1936, all 16 surviving alumni attended the reunion at the Irem Temple. The camaraderie of the original class of 52 students lives on. Graduates still remember their graduation trip to Washington, D.C.

Days at Kingston Township High School come to mind easily

ALMA MATER

Alma Mater, hill surrounded
Set in beauty and in grace,
Worthy of our admiration
And of you exalted place.
Year by year we raise a chorus
And the hills send echoes back;
Hail the school of our allegiance
And the colors, Orange and Black!

||
Hail our school, we salute you!
Forth we go, each on his way.
The lessons we have learned together
Never leave us come what may.
Happy memories we will cherish
In the years we journey through
K.T.H.S., true forever,
We will live to honor you!

Norma Walter, '25

Building

(continued from page 1)

"The kids were good and the parents were appreciative."

Walter Prokopchak
Class of 1936, then Head Teacher in 1957

for Bernie Novicki. He graduated in 1943, and recalls that proms were always held in the auditorium. As a class project, students reforested the steep hill down to Toby's Creek. During World War II, the Kingston Township School arranged scrap metal drives for the war effort.

"We had a more personal connection," says Novicki. "We all felt a part of it." He remembers James Martin and Miss Hightsman as influential teachers, and especially geography teacher Pearl Avertt. "I was her 'teacher's pet,'" he says with a laugh.

Novicki later served on the school board in the 1960s. "I felt excited and proud to go back there. I was honored."

A building does not make a school, of course. Teachers, students, families, and other school employees create the environment that fosters learning. For many people in the Back Mountain, however, a drive up Lehigh Street in Trucksville will trigger thoughts of more than reading, writing, and arithmetic.

"We had a more personal connection. We all felt a part of it."

Bernie Novicki
Class of 1943

On August 28 the school board announced that it had selected Mack and Scham to be the architects for the building. The architects submitted a set of plans for an eight room school house with an auditorium, and gymnasium.

On October 2, the school board passed a resolution to increase their indebtedness to purchase a site and grounds for a new high school, and to construct the new high school building. The resolution increased the debt from \$23,800 to \$108,000 and required a vote on it in the following November election.

On November 3, 1931, the electorate approved the increase, in indebtedness by a 701-152 vote. The building cost \$98,000 and opened up in November 1932. The building was described as a monument to American education and a symbol of the high ideals of this country. Warren Taylor held the principal's post, at a salary of \$1,950.

Al Brown is one graduate who has fond memories of the school. He was a freshman in 1932 and graduated in 1936. Brown said

he had a lot of "good times, enjoyed the basketball team and had a lot of friends." He said the senior class took a trip to Washington D.C. when they graduated.

Brown said the school "had a pretty good football team but could not compete with the three bigger schools from Wilkes-Barre." He said the "good games were between Dallas Township, Lake-Lehman and Kingston Township."

Back in the '30s, bad weather was not a good excuse to take a day off from school. Brown remembers going to school in bad weather and said "many students walked a half mile to a mile in inclement weather." He said they "seldom got a day off for bad weather."

Al enjoyed his proms, but said he "wasn't much for dancing."

Friendships that have lasted a lifetime were formed in the school. The class of 1936 held its 60th class reunion at the Irem Temple Country Club in August 1996. Al Brown still keeps in touch with some of his classmates and has lunch with four or five of them every year.

Recess

(continued from page 1)

Griffiths also noted that supervision is being increased for the grade 4-5 recesses, and the classes have had separate recess periods since November.

The board held an executive session from 5:30 p.m. until 8:10 p.m. before the public meeting.

After the executive session adjourned, Dr. Speziale, assistant superintendent of schools, and Jack Wega, technology coordina-

tor, briefed the board on their final draft of a technology plan for the district. Speziale and Wega worked on the plan for about a year and produced an 85 page document.

The plan includes budget structuring, staffing, classes, milestones, plans for recycling technologies between the schools, and expected student and teacher outcomes.



HL Lions welcome new member

At a recent meeting of the Harveys Lake Lions Club a new member was inducted into the service club. Charter member Richard "Dick" Williams gave the oath to Gert Evans. The club has served the community for almost 50 years having been chartered in 1950. Left to right, President Arthur Rhone; Dick Williams, new member Gert Evans; and sponsor Omar Hallsson.

Exhibit highlights Red Cross chapter

During the month of March, the Wyoming Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross will hold, in conjunction with the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, an exhibit on both the history and development of the local Chapter and the American Red Cross.

This celebration of Red Cross heritage will be one of the activities planned to observe the month of March as Red Cross Month. A special reception at the Historical Society's Museum at 69 S. Franklin Street will be held on

Sunday, March 14 from 2 to 4 p.m.

A special feature of the afternoon, will be the opportunity to hear from "Clara Barton" as interpreted by Judy Schwambach of Berks County. The public is welcome to attend the session.

Anyone who has any Red Cross materials-pictures, publications, uniforms, etc.-would be willing to loan them to the chapter for use in this exhibit is asked to contact Estella Parker-Killian at the Chapter, 823-7161.

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