

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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Alumni 2020: No story? No picture? Think Again!

By Darlene Rimpel

The 2020 Arnold High Alumni Banquet and Program that wasn't. That's right - it didn't happen!

Every year I have been honored to write the report on the annual A.H.S. Alumni Banquet for *The Arnold Sentinel*, which is then printed in *The Alumni News* (the annual publication of the Alumni Association) the following year. But due to the pandemic, Alumni board members made the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 gathering.

So you had it figured that there would be no story or pictures. Right? No! I could not give up that easily. I am going to write a report, and since there was no banquet and program, this will be a story on A.H.S. Alumni history. Unfortunately, there are not many pictures to show what a great time we had each year. The information - or most of it - is taken from issues of *The Alumni News*, checked out from Finch Memorial Library.

An article in a 1914 issue of *The Arnold Sentinel* began, "At the beautiful home of Mr. and Mrs. G.O. Perkins occurred an event not soon to be forgotten by those present, nor was it one of unimportance in the history of the town. It was the first annual banquet of the Arnold

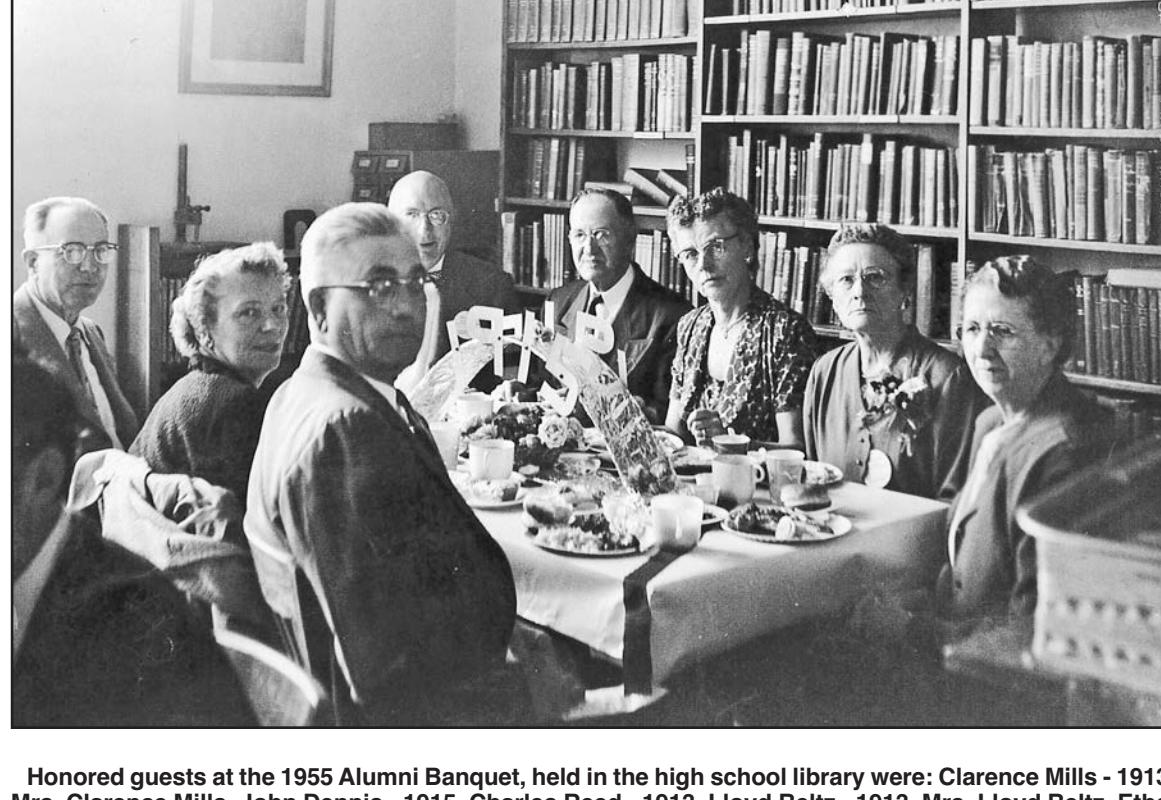
High School Alumni..." It was decided that the meeting date would be the first Thursday after Christmas. And so the history of this great organization began.

A program from the 1917 4th annual banquet on June 1 at the M.E. Church Parlor, listed just the speeches by participants on the topics of Americans, Helpers of Humanity, and Such Friends.

A program from 1923 was more extensive, as it listed the titles of the speeches, but also listed a menu, which included grapefruit cocktail, creamed chicken in patties, mashed potatoes, ice cream and cake.

The next references to Alumni gatherings come from the December 27, 1938, December 28, 1939, and December 26, 1940, editions of *The Arnold Sentinel*, stating that a good time was held by nearly 200 persons in attendance, followed by dances.

There were no copies of *The Alumni News* and no mention of any Alumni gatherings during the war years, of course, nor did I find any in the years right after the ending of World War II. An article I found in an edition of *The Alumni News* told how the Alumni Association was again reorganized in 1953, with the meeting date to be made the night before Memorial Day. In 1971, when it was made law that Memorial Day would be observed the last



Honored guests at the 1955 Alumni Banquet, held in the high school library were: Clarence Mills - 1913, Mrs. Clarence Mills, John Dennis - 1915, Charles Reed - 1913, Lloyd Beltz - 1913, Mrs. Lloyd Beltz, Ethel Collins Perkins - 1913, and Anita Bonta - 1915. Lloyd Beltz and Ethel Perkins both had two children graduate from A.H.S. John Dennis had five children and four grandchildren who are Alumni.

Monday in May, Alumni was set for the Saturday before Memorial Day.

The celebrations started off well with around 400 people in attendance for the meals, programs and dances following, and grew to as many as 700 joining in for the reunions. Before long, the honored classes were holding get-togethers preceding the evening's events. With the smaller sized graduating classes, that attendance has now fallen to between 200 and 300.

The first meetings were held in the Methodist and Baptist churches, with the women of that church preparing the meals. The meetings then went back to the high school, where the 1955 banquet was held. Some 456 people showed up that year. The next year, the reunion was moved back to the Baptist Church to provide more room, with visiting and the pro-

gram held at the high school. The Association did go back to the high school, but in 1962 the banquet and program were held in the auditorium of the new grade school which joined the high school to the east.

The cost of the first meals was \$1.00, but over the years it increased by as much as 25 cents per meal, up to \$7.00 in 2005 and is now \$13.00.

The programs - ah! The programs! They were something to store in our memory banks! Janet and I were hoping we could have some pictures of the programs to go with this story, but unfortunately, we only have one of the program: Doug Cole dressed as "Cowboy Jack" playing the piano on stage.

Doug was a favorite go-to guy for the vice-president in charge of the program. He could act the silliest, be made fun of, and come out smiling. One year (this is a typical Doug story), he

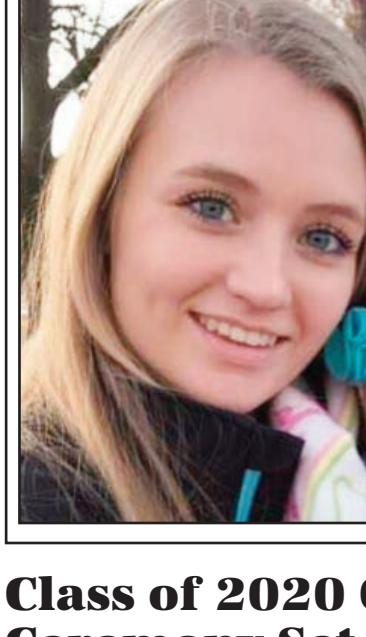
was the winner of a door prize. He was pretty excited, until they presented him with an actual full size, weatherbeaten, ugly green door.

We had some great programs! "The Marriage Game," "A Night in Las Vegas" (with stars such as Liberace, Clem Kadiddlehopper, George Burns and Foster Brooks), "Arnold Centennial Program," "Arnold's Grand Ol' Opry," "Laugh-In," "The Gong Show," "Arnold's Tonight Show" (featuring Tiny Tim, Laughing Leon and Bobbie

"Johnny Carson" Smith, who went into the audience to see if they could Stump the Band. If the person could do it, they won a great prize like a donkey ride down in the deep, dark Devil's Den canyon).

Names that came up more often in the entertainment list were: Doug Cole, Deb Bean Bro-

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Congressional Art Competition Winner

Congressman Adrian Smith (R-NE) announced on May 12 the winners of the 2020 Congressional Art Competition for the Third District of Nebraska.

Faith Bierman (left) of Arnold Public Schools placed 2nd in the competition with her photograph titled "Utopia." Her work will be displayed in Smith's Washington, D.C. office. The winning photograph appears on page 8 of this issue.

She is the daughter of Liz Mills and Wayne Bierman.

Class of 2020 Graduation Ceremony Set for June 1

Details announced.

Commencement exercises for the Arnold High School Class of 2020 will be held Monday, June 1, at 7:00 p.m., in the school auditorium. Each graduate will be limited to 15 guests and will provide a list which will be checked off at the door. Guests

will be spaced out to comply with DHMs.

Directive Health Measures that will be relaxed on June 1st allowed the school to make some very important decisions in how many people could attend and where the ceremony would take place.

Memorial Day Services Held Due to a Change of Heart

COVID-19 did not stop the American Legion and V.F.W. from holding Memorial Day services at the Arnold Cemetery. Although members sadly announced that services would not be held, Legion Commander John Phillips was getting feedback from people on Facebook asking, "Why?"

Phillips, along with other Legion members changed their minds, planning for a private service. But feedback continued.

Phillips then made the announcement and why the decision was made to hold a service on Facebook: "As my family helped decorate the crosses with poppies (on Thursday night, Jessica's words kept going through my mind, 'Dad,

there's really no reason you can't do it! I thought about her Grandpa Scott and all the hard work he and his generation had done to inculcate patriotism and appreciation for the sacrifices for our freedom. I thought about it all night and as I carried mail today. As I prepared to put up individual crosses and flags on the poles. The other veterans gathered to help along with family and I asked each if they would join me and honor our fallen and those who served and are now gone. Every man said, 'Yes!'".

The service was brief, as there was no speaker, but all other protocols, were followed, along with congregational singing of the National Anthem.



Photo/Debbie Connelly

Honoring the Fallen

American Legion member and veteran Ed Tullis instructs his grandchildren, Luke and Adalei Tullis, on the proper way to set crosses and flags at the headstone of Dean Kent Leach, who was killed while serving in Vietnam on May 19, 1972, at the age of 20.

Dean is honored on Panel 1W, Line 28 of the Vietnam Memorial Wall. His final mission (taken from vhpa.org) reads: At 1630 WO1 Leach departed Lassiter Field to perform a last light visual reconnaissance of the Bien Hoa area. His gunner on the mission was SP4 Anderson. The mission continued to a visual recon of the Dong Nai River. As the mission progressed the aircraft commander of the AH-1G cover ship WO1 Adams observed the skids of the LOH touch the water. At about this time the gunner felt a spray of water and was knocked out of the LOH into the water. The AH-1G pilots then observed the LOH in a left hand, nose high turn. The LOH then went nose low into the water and sank. The gunner was rescued after swimming to the bank, and pilot WO1 Leach was found dead three days later.

On the Vietnam Memorial Wall of Faces website, Dean is still remembered. A recent post by a caring individual dated 3-21-20, reads: Dear WO Dean Leach: Thank you for your service as an Utility/Observation Helicopter Pilot with the 1st Cavalry. I researched you on the 48th anniversary of the start of your tour. Saying thank you isn't enough, but it is from the heart. Please watch over America, it still needs your strength, courage, guidance and faithfulness. Rest in peace with the angels.