

1930's

By KATHY GUYER

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A double 60th anniversary was celebrated Thursday at St. Charles Place on East Main Street. Twenty-eight members of the St. Charles Community High School class of 1939 and their guests traveled from as near as a few blocks to as far as California for their 60th reunion. To top off the celebration, two of their teachers, Wirth and Frances Gustafson, joined them as they approach their 60th wedding anniversary in July.

"They graduated, and we got married," said Frances Gustafson, the physical-education teacher for the girls in the class. "He was the math and chemistry teacher," she said of her husband. Wirth Gustafson chimed in he also was the coach - football and basketball. He later became the principal of the school and started the guidance department.

Also attending was Jim Newell, the high school janitor. "They used to call them janitors, now they call them custodial engineers," said class member Melvin Peterson of the man the students viewed as their friend.

The class had 96 graduates who were taught by 17 teachers - one of whom was the principal. There was a superintendent, a librarian and an office secretary, and all the teachers and staff members names were listed on the graduation program some of the classmates brought with them Thursday.

Peterson, a member of the committee that organizes the reunions, said he was happy with the turnout. "After 60 years, and you've still got almost one-third, I think you're doing pretty good," he said. They were a tight bunch and have continued their friendships with a reunion every five years. They added one for 58 years "because we were losing too many members," Peterson said. Of the original 96, 43 have died. The former students remembered these classmates with a moment of silence during the luncheon celebration.

The reunions always have been in St. Charles, making it easy for those who made their homes permanently in the city. Karl Madsen is one of the permanent residents, known to many as the St. Charles Fire Department chief. He retired 18 years ago, Madsen said.

Another well-known St. Charles resident also graduated from the class on '39. But James Kacheres, an organizer of the reunion, could not attend because of illness. However, he did donate the wine for the party.

Jane Johnson, author of the class poem, penned another for the reunion. She began her reunion poem with the last verse of the original: "When the past is but an ember and the

days have left their sign, we'll look back and remember the class of '39." Johnson looked at a picture of the cast of their class play, "Moon Over Mulberry Street." She recalled the costume she got to wear. "That was a gorgeous dress," she said.

Several prizes were awarded to those with special accomplishments, including a special honor for the most unusual to Jim Olsen, who claimed to have jumped out of an airplane. "You and George Bush," said Ruth Peterson, who married into the class when she became Melvin Peterson's wife.

Natalie Couch won for being the class member who was married the longest - 58 years. "I did pretty good because I was the youngest one in the class, and I managed to hook him," Couch said of her husband, Charlie.

Jim Gaffney won for the shortest marriage - a year and a half; Angeline Krepel was the oldest classmate in attendance - 79; Harry Sorensen traveled the farthest - from California; and Edna Morise has the most great-grandchildren - 16.

Bob Bell accepted the prize but thought someone else was more qualified to earn the title of the classmate with the least hair.