

IN GENERAL

Published by the Washington-Lee Alumni Association
Issue 6 — Fall/Winter 2014

Remembering Robert McAtee W-L's Oldest Known Graduate

Editor's Note: Robert McAtee, W-L Class of 1932, passed away at the age of 100 on August 10, 2014. I was privileged to speak with him shortly after his 100th birthday last November about his memories of W-L.



Robert McAtee wearing his Cadet Corps uniform for his Senior class portrait. Photo courtesy of the W-L Blue & Gray Internet Archive.

On the last Sunday in October 2013, residents of Arlington's Maywood neighborhood gathered to celebrate the birthday of someone who had lived in Maywood longer than anyone else: Robert McAtee. Born in Washington, DC on October 28, 1913, his family moved to a newly-built wooden house across the Potomac River two years later – the house where he and his neighbors were now marking his first century. McAtee often celebrated previous birthdays sporting a tam and kilt to honor his Scottish heritage; last October, a long-sleeved shirt and baseball cap kept him warm as visitors shook his hand and wished him a very happy 100th birthday.

McAtee and his older sister Alice (W-L Class of 1928) grew up in a very different Arlington from that of today's Washington-Lee students. He attended kindergarten in a neighbor's home before enrolling in Cherrydale Elementary, a few blocks walk away on Lee Highway at the edge of the Maywood neighborhood. The new Washington-Lee Senior and Junior High School opened

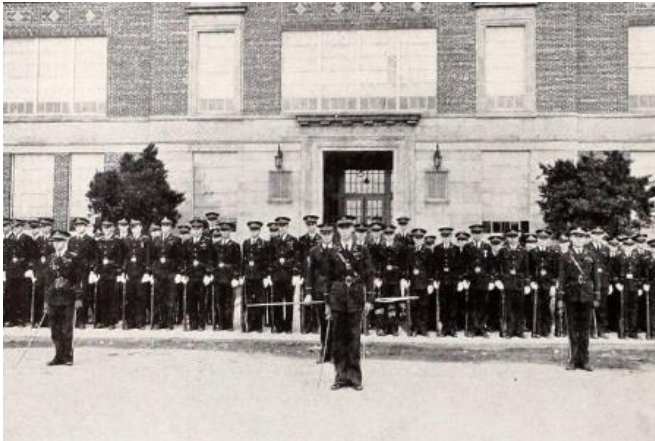
on October 6, 1925, and he likely started attending junior high school there the following year.

McAtee recalled walking to Washington-Lee "through the woods" as part of a group that included older and younger neighborhood boys – William "Billy" Wright, Morton Cook and Hugh Reed (all W-L Class of 1930), as well as with Philip Shreve, Wilson Ellis and Paul Brown (all Class of 1934), who all also served in the W-L Cadet Corps. Sometimes they walked to school along the railroad tracks, crossing a railroad bridge. (**Editor's Note:** I-66 follows a former line of the Washington & Old Dominion Railway from the present-day Lyon Village shopping center to Bluemont.) When a train came, the boys climbed down under the bridge, waiting while it passed overhead. McAtee and his classmates carried packed lunches with them, although car traffic occasionally caused a problem: "We walked down Ballston Road [now N. Quincy St.] carrying a sandwich." Schoolmate Wilson Ellis was carrying "his sandwich in [his] hand and the automobiles [came] by and banged it out of his hand."

The school day started around 9:00 a.m. McAtee claimed his best subject was Spanish, asserting that he had "the best in pronunciation in the whole d--n school." Friend Robert Beck revealed the reason for McAtee's success: W-L foreign language teacher Frances Bell lived a few doors away. Her children and young McAtee played together growing up and she tutored him in Spanish before he attended Washington-Lee. Other subjects he studied included drafting and business. When asked if he got along with his teachers, McAtee quipped, "Well, we didn't have any choice in that." He remembered many of his teachers fondly, with Spanish teacher Mary Moore Aldhizer as perhaps his favorite. Students generally behaved themselves, although he recalled a few instances of mischief. In one class with a female teacher, male students sat in the front "and everybody was dropping their pencils so they could see the lady's legs." When a fellow cadet hazed McAtee and friend Donald Barker (W-L Class of 1931), they went to Principal Samuel P. Vanderslice, whom McAtee recalled as an excellent principal who took no nonsense from his students: "anybody got out of line he took it for himself."

(continued on next page)

McAtee enjoyed a number of school activities including Spanish Club and Commercial Club. He also served as an usher and was in charge of the footlights for school plays. But among his favorite memories were the ones he made while serving in the Washington-Lee Cadet Corps. *"It was the best outfit there ever was,"* he claimed.



Company "A" of the Cadet Corps photographed for *Blue & Gray* 1932. Robert McAtee (likely the officer at left) was a Second Lieutenant his senior year. Photo courtesy of the *Blue & Gray* Internet Archive.

Organized in 1927 through the efforts of Principal Vanderslice and teacher Robert Ludwig, the Cadet Corps was a popular extracurricular W-L activity. McAtee was one of 110 cadets listed in W-L's first yearbook "*The Virginian*," joining when he was one of W-L's Junior High School students. As participation grew, the corps divided into three companies – A and B (uniformed) and C. From the start, McAtee participated in Company A.

In addition to regular drills, the Cadet Corps represented Washington-Lee in local parades, McAtee's favorite cadet activity. In March 1929, all of the corps companies, uniforms sharp, and accompanied by their recently-formed band, marched past newly-elected President Hoover's viewing stand in the inaugural parade. McAtee enjoyed the experience although he recalled it was *"a hell of a walk"* to get to the parade from W-L. *"Then I had to walk all the way up to 17th Street carrying a saber. And if you don't think I wasn't tired – oh boy!"*

McAtee also recalled participating in Franklin Roosevelt's first inaugural parade in 1933: *"Oh, you betcha. I was right out there carrying a saber trying to get a chance look at Roosevelt."* The Cadet Corps regularly marched in Winchester's Apple Blossom Parades and Alexandria's George Washington's Birthday Parade. *"We were almost always number one,"* he stated. *"Alexandria, Arlington, Winchester, you [name] it."* By McAtee's senior year, he had become one of two Second Lieutenants for Company

A and the Corps included a band, a rifle team and a Girls' Auxiliary.

He stayed an extra year at W-L, graduating in 1932; he was in no hurry to leave because of the Great Depression. According to Beck, McAtee's father asked his sister not to work because she might be taking a job that someone else needed in order to feed their family. McAtee worked at the Government Printing Office until he received a draft notice in 1941, prior to the U.S. entering World War II. Upon fulfilling his draft commitment, he volunteered for maritime service in New England. Returning home at the war's end, he began working for a trailer rental business in Maywood. In 1955, he purchased his own trailer rental company in Seven Corners. McAtee loved the business, working long hours often seven days a week. He loved it so much that he continued working even after his long-time employee retired in 1995, asking Mr. Beck to help him in the business. McAtee finally retired in 2001 at the age of 88.



Robert McAtee at 100 in November 2013.

As one of W-L's earliest graduates and not one to slow down, he generously shared his memories of Arlington's past with neighbors, friends and anyone who asked including through participation in forums like the W-L Alumni Association's *"W-L through the Decades"*.

We are grateful for the time he took to share his personal memories of Arlington's history with us. Much of what he shared with us lives on – in the records of our County library's Local History archives, in the collections of the Arlington Historical Society, and in our own memories.

-- Submitted by Jennifer M. Lane '95. Many thanks to Robert McAtee '32 for sharing his story with our alumni and to longtime friend Robert Beck for his additions. Any mistakes or omissions are my own. Do you have an alumni story or W-L memories to share in our newsletter? E-mail the newsletter editor Jennifer Lane '95 at wlaa.newsletter@yahoo.com.

Old Oaken Bucket Celebration!

The Alexandria Sportsman's Club celebrated "Old Oaken Bucket" Alumni Night on November 18 at Alexandria's Old Dominion Boat Club. Organizers encouraged former players, coaches, cheerleaders, and supporters from both Alexandria's George Washington High School [now GW Middle School] and Arlington's Washington-Lee High School to help commemorate this historic event which occurred annually from 1935 to 1968 on Thanksgiving morning and drew crowds in the thousands. Due to changes in the playoff schedules throughout the area school systems, the game was moved from Thanksgiving Day and the two schools continued to play until October 1970.



The Generals celebrate their 3-0 victory over G.W. on Thanksgiving Day 1956. Thanks to a game winning 40-yard kick by Wayne Ballard, the Generals won the Old Oaken Bucket back from G.W. after a 10-year drought as well as the State Title. Photo courtesy of the Blue & Gray Internet Archive.

Set to represent W-L at the gathering were former football players Al Richmond, Gene Sherman, Dave Mitchell, Murphy "Bud" Barnes, and Wayne Ballard, all of whom were on the first Virginia High School State Football Championship team of 1956. Former cheerleader Kitty Sherwood Richmond also attended.

W-L won the game a total of 21 times throughout the rivalry and tied three times while GW won a total of 12 games. W-L produced a number of pro football players during the 60s and 70s including Safety Jake Scott (Miami Dolphins and Washington Redskins), Placekicker John Leyboldt (Buffalo Bills, Seattle Seahawks and New Orleans Saints), and Running Back Reggie Harrison (Pittsburgh Steelers). In addition, actors Warren Beatty and Forrest Tucker played on W-L's winning football teams.

NOTE: The Old Oaken Bucket, complete with scores, is on display at W-L in a trophy case.

■ Submitted by Mila Albertson '66

55th W-L Holiday Bazaar Set for December 6th

Over 70 local artisans will be selling quality handcrafted and other gift items – jewelry, ceramics, glassware, pet items, artwork, clothing, accessories, and more – during **W-L's 55th Annual Winter Bazaar**, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM on Saturday, December 6, 2014 in The Commons (aka W-L cafeteria). Your Alumni Association will be offering a variety of merchandise including monogrammed blankets & scarfs, school replicas and watercolors, picture frames, thermal mugs, coozies, magnets, as well as the perfect gift – membership in the Alumni Association!

School clubs and sports teams will be selling poinsettias, holiday greens, citrus, nuts, and other holiday items to raise funds for their activities. There will be home-made ethnic foods and baked holiday treats to enjoy while shopping for friends and family. Entertainment will be provided by the Madrigals and other school musical groups.

Free parking and easy access to the Bazaar is available from the I-66 parking garage located between N. Stafford and Quincy Streets. A fundraiser for the W-L Class of 2015, this is a great opportunity for alumni to support the W-L community and demonstrate your Generals spirit, as well as meet and greet fellow alums and members of your Alumni Association.

■ Submitted by Mila Albertson '66 and Jennifer Lane '95



A display of memorabilia donated by the Class of 1944.

Honoring the Class of 1944 at the Arlington County Fair

The Alumni Association's booth at the Arlington County Fair this past August highlighted memorabilia donated to us by the Class of 1944, marking the 70th anniversary of their graduation. Special artifacts included a letter jacket worn by Gene Ping, who took classes at night and in summer school to advance his graduation date so he

could support the war effort. He joined the U.S. Navy and witnessed the raising of the American flag on Mount Suribachi at Iwo Jima. A cadet cape and hat worn by Marion Wormald Grabowski as a member of the Girls' Auxiliary of the popular Cadet Corps were also displayed. Alumni were also able to access digital copies of all W-L yearbooks on a laptop computer.

We are grateful to our wonderful alumni volunteers who once again greeted fellow alums, curious fairgoers, future Generals, and even folks from rival high schools who stopped by. Among those who helped with the W-L booth before, during and after the Fair were: Pete High ('53), Ed Peetz ('70), Al Richmond ('57), John Lumsden ('51), Nancy Peterson Scudder ('59), Phil Sheridan ('57), Tom Holland ('66), Susan Clay ('62), Betsy Zimmerman Lockman ('60), Mary Thomasson Yuhas ('82), Gail Kean Chisholm ('74), Pat Hood Barham ('67), Betsy Hart Burton ('74), Jennifer Lane ('95), Samantha Dorsey ('02), and Mila Albertson ('66).

Thank you to those who purchased W-L memorabilia or became active members. A portion of the funds raised from sales and memberships helps underwrite activities the Alumni Association uses to support current W-L students, including the **Blue & Gray**, Senior Boat Party, Foundation Scholarship, and more.

■ Submitted by Mila Albertson '66 and Jennifer Lane '95

From the Archives

Florence George, W-L Class of 1932, wrote this tribute to her fellow seniors in the 1932 **Blue & Gray**. Ms. George's poem is republished here in memory of Robert McAtee and other members of his graduating class now deceased.

THE SPIRIT OF '32

Add the spirit of the gray
And the spirit of the blue
The answer is the spirit
Of the class of '32.

This spirit has led us to victory
Sent us seeking for higher ideals
And will always act as our signpost
Leading to bigger and better fields.

We've carved a niche in your memories
We've left a record worth while
We've accomplished our goal and in parting
We look upon life with a smile.

We'll leave you soon, in body
But our spirit will always remain
And we'll greet you in the future
From the noted hall of fame.

Girls of W-L Class of '60 Host Lunch

The location is perfect, the ambiance is fabulous, the food divine, and the company delightful! December 2013 was the third year that "girls" of the class of 1960 have met for lunch to enjoy the holiday season and catch up on what's been happening the previous year. Last year's attendees were Kay Gertz Zugby, Barb Gregg Morris, Lucy Hummer Richards, Reba Murray Burns, Connie Phillips Sorrentino, Mary Ann Winter, and Betsy Zimmerman Lockman.

While open to any "girl" in the Class of 1960, the 2014 luncheon is sold out. If you want to be part of the 2015 luncheon, email Betsy (wlaa.vicepres@yahoo.com). The group looks forward to seeing more of the ladies at the table next December!

■ Submitted by Betsy Lockman '60

Alumni Association Updates & Upcoming Meetings

At its November 13th meeting, officers elected for the coming year include:

President: Mila Albertson [Class of '66]

wlaa.president@yahoo.com

Vice-President: Betsy Lockman [Class of '60]

wlaa.veep@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Ed Peetz [Class of '70]

wlaa.treasurer@yahoo.com

Secretary: Susan Clay [Class of '62]

wlaa.secretary@yahoo.com

Outgoing President Pete High ('53) was recognized for his years of service and for bringing the digital yearbook project to fruition.

The next Association meeting will be held on Wednesday, **January 14, 2015** at 7:30 p.m. in the Alumni Conference Room located on the first floor on the Main Concourse at Washington-Lee High School (1301 N. Stafford Street). Meetings take place on the second Wednesday of each month (except August and December) and all alumni are welcome to attend. Meeting dates for 2015 are:

February 11	March 11	April 8
May 13	June 10	July 8

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

IN GENERAL is being edited by Jennifer M. Lane [Class of '95]. Questions, comments, ideas, and newsworthy information may be sent to wlaa.newsletter@yahoo.com.

The W-L Alumni Association website, including the Alumni Database and reunion information, is available at www.apsva.us/washingtonlee then click on the **Alumni** link at the top.