

Family celebrates anniversary of long deceased elders

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Virlen and Dora Ann Jessup were gazing down lovingly from heaven a few weekends ago as their kin came from near and far to downtown Winston-Salem to take part in what has become a Jessup family tradition.

For more than half a century, the vast Jessup clan has come together to celebrate Virlen and Dora Ann's wedding anniversary. The couple was married on March 4, 1911 in Surry County and for decades, they

basked in the glow of love as their children – they had 14 of them – grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grands honored their blessed union.

Momma and Poppa Jessup – as they were affectionately known – lived long enough to celebrate their 75th wedding anniversary with their vast family. Momma Jessup died a few months after that memorable 1986 celebration; Poppa Jessup joined her in the hereafter two years later. But the huge family anniversary celebrations live on.

"It is just something that we



Momma and Poppa Jessup

have continued to do, even though they have passed," said Winston-Salem resident Joanne J. Falls, one of the Jessups' 44 grandchildren.

This year's celebration was especially poignant for it marked the couple's 100th wedding anniversary. Three days – March 4-6 – of celebrations were held at the Marriott Hotel, attracting hundreds of Jessups from four generations.

Of course, many of the youngest members of the family never knew Momma and Poppa Jessup. The most senior members of the family hope the annual celebration will



Ellsworth Jessup, third from left, with daughters (from left): Karen, Renee, Tonya, Lynda and Lydia.

help the younger folks connect with their roots and get to know the family's patriarch and matriarch.

"They were so firm, yet so loving," Ellsworth Jessup, who also lives in Winston-Salem, said of his grandparents.

Ellsworth Jessup says his grandparents' style of parenting has been passed down through the generations. The Rev. Tonya Jessup Wilson, one of Ellsworth Jessup's children, says her parents, grandparents and great-grandparents provide lots of love and understanding, yet they "didn't believe in sparring the rod" when discipline was needed.

One of Jessup Wilson's fondest

memories of her great-grandparents – Momma and Poppa Jessup – is of the time they got to spend with her son, who was just an infant at the time. She has pictures of her son sitting on Poppa Jessup's lap.

"It was just amazing," said Jessup Wilson, who lives in Atlanta. "They got to see the fifth generation."

Momma and Poppa Jessup moved from Surry to Forsyth County in 1933. They also lived in Rockingham County and finally Guilford County, where Poppa Jessup, a self-taught engineer, designed the nine-room Jessup Family "homeplace" that for decades became the hub for family



Rev. Belvin Jessup and Delane Jessup Johnson are the eldest of the Jessup grandchildren.

celebrations and Sunday dinners.

The Rev. Belvin Jessup said Momma and Poppa Jessup's children – 11 boys and three girls – always seemed to trail their parents, moving from county to county with their own families in tow. Though his grandparents were afforded few opportunities because of racial segregation, they always believed in better tomorrows.

"They strongly believed in education," said Rev. Jessup, the eldest of the Jessup grandchildren. "Even with segregation, they thought that education would be the deliverance from 'Separate but Equal.'"

Rev. Jessup takes great pride in the fact that Momma and Poppa Jessup were indeed correct about that.

**If your jaw hurts,
your heart
may be trying
to tell you something.**

Many women don't know that jaw pain can be a symptom of heart and coronary artery disease. CAD can be caused by a fatty deposit in the heart's arteries blocking blood flow. Other symptoms of heart disease can include burning, squeezing or tightness in the chest; arm pain; shortness of breath; irregular heartbeat; dizziness; nausea and sweating. When diagnosed early, certain forms of CAD can often be treated with a minimally invasive procedure through an artery in your wrist. Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center has more experience performing this advanced outpatient heart procedure than any other hospital in the region. For your free heart information kit or to make an appointment with a cardiologist at any of our clinics in Winston-Salem, Lexington and North Wilkesboro, call 336-716-WAKE or 888-716-WAKE today or visit our web site at wfubmc.edu/heart.

HEART & VASCULAR | Call 336-716-WAKE for an appointment.



**Wake Forest University Baptist
MEDICAL CENTER®**
A Mission to Care. A Mission to Cure.

