

# Community Focus

**"This is a Community School effort. It is time to get back together, visit family and friends ... we love each other."** — *George Johnson*



The Planning committee for the 2nd annual Big Four included (front) Caroline Shelton, Ronald "Chip" Grace, Elaine Brown and Sheila Astrop; back row, Danny Solomon, Mamie Douglas, Norma Brown, Arnetta Perry, Myra Shore, Mabel Perry and George Johnson.



The Anderson High School class of '67 initiated the reunion dance last year. The planning committee included Warren Livingston, Jacqueline Harris, Barbara Hughes, William H. McDonald and Theodis Foster.

## Atkins High School Hosts 2nd Annual Big Four Alumni Reunion

### ▲ The Old Guard: The Way We Were

By FELECIA P. MCMILLAN  
Special to the Chronicle

They were huggin', laughin', eatin', dancin', mixin', stylin', profilin' and generally "throwin' down" at the 2nd Annual Big Four Alumni Reunion Dance Oct. 19, at the M.C. Benton Convention Center. Over 1,200 Atkins Camels, Carver Yellow Jackets, Anderson Bulldogs and Paisley Panthers packed the house. Most of them were from Winston-Salem, but they returned from as far away as California, Texas, Oregon, Maryland, Michigan, Virginia, and Georgia. The purpose of the dance was "to network with active alumni from all of the Big Four schools so as to jointly plan an agenda to make this dance an annual event."

Atkins High School hosted this year's event, but members of the Anderson Class of '67 initiated the celebration last year on Oct. 28. The leaders included Warren Livingston, Jacqueline Harris, Barbara Hughes, William H. McDonald and Theodis Foster, all of Winston-Salem. Last year 700 people came.

Livingston said, "We had been trying to get this together for a long time. It is always fun to get together with our classmates. We have had other groups express the difficulty with trying to find each other, so we figured that a dance like this would offer them a better chance to get together."

Foster said this event was a type of fund raiser to enable them to give back to the community. They plan to adopt Jefferson Davis Diggs Elementary School and offer their services at the Sims Center in Happy Hill Gardens. Some of them grew up in this area. He said he knew that after the program was so well received last year that it was "going to explode" this year.

Ronald "Chip" Grace offered introductory greetings, and welcoming remarks came from

George "Choppy" Johnson from Atkins, Hobart Jones from Carver, Theresa Foster from Anderson and Doretha Crosby from Paisley.

Last year, they offered a memorial to the deceased members of the schools at midnight, and they continued this tradition this year. In memory of the deceased, the song "Broken Pieces" by the Temptations played during the lighting of the candles.

They also sang the Negro national anthem, "Lift Every Voice," as they did each morning at their respective high schools, followed by a prayer by Mr. Astrop.

The Atkins organizing committee included President Ronald "Chip" Grace, Vice President George Johnson, Secretary Elaine Brown, and Financial Secretary Caroline Shelton, Danny Solomon, Mamie Douglas, Norma Brown, Arnetta Perry, Myra Shore, Mabel Perry, and Sheila Astrop.

Grace said, "This reunion has been a great success. It has doubled in size since last year. We were not able to accommodate all of those who wanted tickets."

Johnson said this is "a community school effort." It is a time to "get back together, renew old acquaintances, visit family and friends and look forward to next year." He said he is excited about the camaraderie that came out of his relationships with friends from high school. "We went to school together from the first to the 12th grade," he said. "We love each other. We all grew up together. Kids in Winston-Salem now will never know this kind of camaraderie."

Jimmy Boyd, Anderson, '67, said "At this time, the black community was centralized. Integration dropped a bomb in the middle of our neighborhoods and scattered our kids. We also have fewer black teachers to pass on the culture."

The students paused to recognize the teachers from the schools who were present.

Dr. Manderline Scales, who taught at Atkins, was available for comment. She taught at Atkins from 1950 to 1968. She taught math one year, physical education the next, and then social studies. Finally, because her degree included Spanish, she established a full-time Spanish cur-



Friends together again are, front row, Caroline Shelton, Annette Wilson, Donald Ray Brown, Mary Gore Thompson; back row: Norma Brown, Danny

riculum at Atkins, then Paisley and then Anderson. She was the first black Spanish teacher in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools.

She pointed out that Atkins was the first African-American high school in Winston-Salem, opening in 1931. Carver was next, opening in 1936, but it housed students from first through 12th grade. For this reason, Carver only had approximately 300 high school students, but Atkins had approximately 2,000. Her students presented an hour-long program each year in Spanish. They did plays by Cervantes, Dali and Wertz. Because they could not afford to purchase flowers from the florist, they went into the woods and gathered flowers and leaves and filled the stage with them. They also designed props from cardboard boxes they painted.

She said teachers could not teach the subject matter without also conveying to students a value system to guide them for life. She recalled Principal John Carter, who was a very strict disciplinarian. He had a discipline room, and if students misbehaved and were sent to the principal's office, they did not want to hear his famous words, "Two weeks!" This meant two weeks in the discipline room after school with nothing to do but sit for an hour a day. "He was 30 years ahead of his time," said Scales.

He established that only seniors were to enter the school through the front door. The underclassmen would enter from the back. This was his way of encouraging students to achieve in order to get this privilege.

The schools have always been very competitive against one another. According to Scales, Carver had "a doggone good band." They could compete with the Winston-Salem State Band. Sometimes after games, the students would have conflicts, but Carter seemed to have it under control.

Some of the other teachers Scales recalled were Betty Lee Vaughn, Francis Baird, Clara Games, Delray Hartsfield, William Earl, Clarisse Parker, the late Fred Parker, Velma Friende, Lois

Brake, Marcelene Rogers Scales and William Vestal Wade.

Scales pointed out that the students have done quite well in various fields, such as in media, politics, religion and education. She mentioned Togo West, Secretary of the U.S. Army, and Emery Ellington, who is one of the first Tuskegee airmen. She also mentioned the brother of Nel Britt who is now a high-ranking official in the U.S. Navy.

The students continue to keep in touch with other through their directory. Scales said she feels proud that through the hard work of the teachers, their students are able to organize and implement the vision that makes such as this reunion. "It was so important for local people who pulled the other members of the school to get the job done."

Next year's host will be Carver. Hobart Jones from Carver said he would like to start planning for next year's program. He will meet on a regular basis, and they will get to see each other more often.

There were no boundaries between the four schools in the audience. Even the mascots were used all four mascots. The Camels, Yellow Jackets, Bulldogs and Panthers were together again.



Melvin Williams and his sister Marilyn Williams went to Atkins. People always thought they were twins.



Carver Yellow Jackets shared a special sting. Left to right front are Jackie Greene, Hobart Jones, and Evelyn E. Shouse; back row, Dr. William Goode from Austin, Texas, Edna Clifton, and "Bowie and the Mystery Couple," who ran to the dance floor to do the twist.