

TIDBITS

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The History of NSDAA Picnics

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As far as we can remember, there have always been picnics in relation to NSD or to the NSD Alumni Association. We can remember while growing up at NSD, we would look forward to annual school picnic in the spring at Elmwood Park then later at Benson Park, both in Omaha. The NSDAA is no different and in the minutes of our association, picnics were the staple of the reunions for many years.

In the recorded memory of the NSDAA, the first outdoor activity at the first reunion held in September 4, 5 and 6, 1901 occurred in the afternoon on the second day of the reunion when the alumni were divided into teams and played baseball. "The old diamond stars were given a chance to prove that they still retained their efficiency in that line." Superintendent Stewart played on a team and surprised everybody when he made a home run. NSDAA secretary, Ota Crawford (later Blankenship, NSD '92), who recorded the game in the minutes might have been a poet because she ended the episode with; "Regan and others played as well as of yore. Both sides made errors galore."

On the third day of the first reunion, the attendees had an early supper and met at the porch of the old Main Building in preparation to ride to Lake Manawa, apparently to celebrate the closing of the reunion with yet another outdoor activities, "when the sad news of the assassination of President McKinley was announced." Crawford continued, "It seemed as tho' a black cloud had fallen over the erstwhile happy throng."

Even though Crawford never used the word "picnic" in the minutes, there were outdoor activities; however, in the fourth reunion in the evening on Saturday, June the 14th, 1913, the National Fraternal Society for the Deaf (The Frat

chapter held a picnic at Lake Manawa for the NSD alumni and guests. A secretary recorded in the minutes about that picnic, "...And a splendid time was had by all who went." Apparently, the 1913 reunion picnic was a success that the members wanted a repeat. In the 1923 reunion the Frat hosted a picnic at Elmwood Park on Saturday afternoon June 16th. Nothing more was said about that picnic.

At the NSD's 75th years anniversary in 1944, an all-day picnic was held at NSD on Sunday, June 3rd. "There were several excellent games and many prizes were given," the minutes said. "More reminiscing (*sic*) was in evidence." Fortunately for them, when the picnic ended and they went back inside, a downpour of rain came down.

At the NSD's Centennial reunion in 1969, a picnic was held outside behind the school gymnasium and the members participated in the costume contest where they dressed up in Victorian's finest. Baseball game was played and the group picture was taken. Chris P. Jensen, NSDAA's first vice-president from the 1901 reunion was in attendance and in the subsequent reunions, picnics were held at the same place.

The last time the NSDAA hosted the picnic at that same place outside behind the gym was the NSDAA Farewell Picnic a week before the closure of NSD in 1998. It was the largest attended by the members and guests ever.

The latest NSDAA picnic was held in 2007 at the Fontenelle Park on Ames Street and Fontenelle Blvd in Omaha. It was well attended and the usual games were played. A catered lunch of fried chicken and baked beans was served. Some of the members were astonished to see retirees Juanita Knobbe and Mary Miller (NSD '52 and '53 respectively), who worked at the dining room for many years, took over the setting up lunch and served the members as if they had never stopped working!

The NSDAA picnics were always a good place for the members and guests to relax and talk about their days at NSD. As long as there's an alumnus alive, there will always be a NSDAA picnic where warm greetings and bittersweet good-byes are exchanged. No presidential assassination, the downpour of rain, nor the closure of NSD is going to stop the alumni from attending future picnics.

NSDAA Mini-Reunion Picnic: June 28th, 2014

10:00am: Meet at the Turning Point campus, 3223 N 45th St, Omaha, NE (former NSD campus) for the NSD Historical Marker unveiling.

10:30am to 4:00pm: Go to the shady and historical Benson Park at the Pavilion, 7002 Military Ave., Omaha, NE for NSDAA mini- reunion picnic, games, activities and social. Bring your own chair(s) to sit outside.

Cost: \$10.00 per person

Lunch Menu: subs of ham, turkey, and roast beef, various bags of chips, water bottles, and fruit trays.

Everyone are welcome. You don't have to be a member of the NSDAA to attend. Bring your families and friends!!

Jonathan Scherling was given Nebraska's highest honorary title and award certificate, Nebraska Admiralship.

Approved by Governor Heineman, the certificate recognizes outstanding and prominent citizenship of Nebraska and contributing to promote the Good Life in Nebraska. Congratulations, Jonathan!

145 years ago, NSD was opened on April 1, 1869 by a Deaf man named William DeCoursey French on 23 acres in North Omaha. Kate Callahan was a first NSD student in a small house on 22nd St. and St. Mary Ave.

Gallaudet University marks 150 years since Lincoln signed a bill for deaf higher education on April 8, 1864.

100 Years Ago...



Class of 1914, Nebraska School for the Deaf, Omaha
Pictured standing: Elsie M. Kinnier, Joseph Kyncl, Alta J. Neal, August J. Mueller, Hattie I. Kindred, Christian B. Christiansen, and sitting: C. Gerald Brant, Johanna M. Tikalsky, Superintendent F.W. Booth, Regina M. Olson, Instructor J.W. Sowell, Jeanne Newell.