

What's Inside MCHS Museum and Who's Behind Startup

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(Midwest City, OK - April 18, 2014) — One of the highlights of the Class of 1964 reunion on May 3 will be a 10 a.m. tour of the Midwest City High School Museum and adjoining graduates' Wall of Fame, followed at 11 a.m. by a wreath-laying and veterans' recognition ceremony at the Vietnam Casualty Memorial on the west side of the museum.

Midwest City High School Museum, Inc., at 213 Elm St., displays anything that will bring back a memory: paper ephemera, such as programs, certificates, invitations, letter jackets, sports uniforms, photos of clubs and performances, jewelry, or item with MCHS or Bombers on it.

Visitors frequently ask to be shown old *Bomber* yearbooks and *Bomber Beam* newspapers, according to Shirley Nicholson (Class of 1953), curator.

Teachers like to send their students on “scavenger hunt” searches for particular items in the museum to better learn about and appreciate MCHS history, said principal Chris Reynolds (Class of 1991).

The holdings are particularly deep with memorabilia through the 1970s.

Nicholson has a message for Bombers from the classes of 1980 forward: “Don’t let your mother clear out the attic. Bring your high school mementos to us.”

Reynolds said he has been working with the student Leadership Class on ways to attract

memorabilia of more recent vintage.

One of the most delightful exhibits, a black and gold block quilt hanging on the east wall, reveals how narrow can be the margin between saved and lost.

The 1951 home economics class made the quilt, inscribed in its center, “Midwest City Football Team 1951.” Each square contains the name and position of a different team member.

Two of the players, Joe Phillips and Carrol McDermott, later taught at MCHS.

Miss Delena Melton, MCHS English teacher from 1946-1973, won the quilt in a raffle later in the 1951-1952 school year and stored it in a trunk at her home.

In the early 1990’s, when she emptied her house to move to a nursing home, Miss Melton took the quilt down the street to a neighbor, Buddy Uselton, one of the 1951 players.

“When the museum opened in 2001, Buddy left the quilt on my front porch,” Nicholson said. “It’s extra special, in perfect condition.”

Other of Nicholson’s favorite exhibits:

- A display case containing pep rally mementos for players.



Shirley Shipley Nicholson, MCHS Museum curator, looks over 1945 band photo and (background) 1951 MCHS Football Team quilt.



Pat Stephens Antaya (Class of 1982), an industrial engineer in Woodbridge, VA, dropped into the MCHS Museum in March 2014, while on a road trip with her husband and four children. Daughter Grace peers at her mom’s photo in the 1982 *Bomber* yearbook. Margaret Stephens, Pat’s mother, taught at Del Elementary.

- Energizer Bunny – Brad McMurray (Class of 1947) designed and created the ubiquitous advertising mascot for the battery company.
- Bass drum and band photo from 1945.
- Skytrain movie seats and a photo of manager Ethel Coxey, along with a replica of the police flashlight she used to roust rowdies out of the theater.
- Red signal lights rescued from atop the historic 1947 Midwest City water tower when it was dismantled in 2012.



Miss MCHS robe is on display at the Midwest City High School Museum.

- Class AA 1960 football, a replica of the actual state championship trophy (the original disappeared from the Field House). The trophy was recreated by Midwest Trophy for the 2010 team reunion at Cattlemen’s Steakhouse, where the original championship dinner had taken place 50 years earlier.



Safety lights taken from atop the historic 1947 Midwest City water tower when the structure was dismantled in 2012.

- Miss MCHS gold robe and tiara. Brenda Turner was first to wear the items, in 1959.
- First diploma, issued to Van Baren Appelman, Jr. in 1944. Appelman had given the diploma to J.E. Sutton, Jr., first principal. Sutton gifted it to the museum.
- Midwest City Junior High letter jackets. Few people recall there was a school by that name. It occupied the 213 Elm St. site for four years. In 1955, Midwest City Senior High School moved in and Midwest City Junior High School split into two new schools, Jarman Junior High (at the MacArthur St. site of the original MCHS) and Monroney Junior High on Reno St.

A special bond existed among the MCHS classes from 1944-1955 that had graduated from the school’s

original site (now the home of Jarman Middle School) before the move to Elm St.

They had a loosely formed Alumni Association that met socially from time to time and, in the early years, raised scholarship money.

Around 1998, one of those grads, Damon Wingfield (Class of 1947), became concerned that, as he put it at the time, “former teachers and classmates were passing away and certain items of historical value were being lost.”

He added that the Alumni Association would be willing to organize and operate a museum if a facility could be made available.

Wingfield visited with Dr. Cheryl Steele, superintendent, and was “amazed” at her reaction. The lack of a museum had been a topic of deep concern to both her and the high school principal Rick Bachman (Class of 1969).

“They endorsed the need for preserving school history and involving those people who lived it and made it, the alumni,” a report of the meeting states.

The former south entrance of the school was scheduled for renovation and Dr. Steele suggested this would be an ideal site for a museum.

Midwest City High School Museum, Inc. was organized on April 13, 1999.

Original Board members were Wingfield, Bachman, Robert Croak (Class of 1959), David N. Fox (Class of 1949), Jennie Lee Maynard (Class of 1950), J.E. Sutton (retired superintendent and first MCHS principal), and Paul W. Nicholson (Shirley’s husband).

Shirley Nicholson managed the secretarial and administrative duties of the Board.

At Steele’s request, the Board of Education allotted \$100,000 for the south lobby renovation to create the museum.

Jeff Wegener (Class of 1972) was architect for the renovation.

David Fox and Paul Nicholson, a CPA, structured the organization as a tax-exempt charity under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Mr. Nicholson and Chester Weems, the district's director of state and federal programs, successfully obtained facilities grants from The Kirkpatrick Family Fund (\$5,000) and the Midwest City Memorial Hospital Foundation Authority (\$10,000).

Mr. Sutton made the first contribution toward the balance of \$30,000 needed to purchase display cases and furnish the interior.

Another 66 individual alumni or family contributions came from classes ranging from 1949 to 1980 to finish the project.

Ribbon-cutting occurred on Homecoming weekend, September 29, 2001.

Memorabilia began to flow in before the opening.

First to contribute from the Class of 1964 were Jack Schriewer (an array of sporting items, among them two Bomber sweat shirts, a stocking cap, a collection of Bomber season tickets, and a Bomber cow bell), and Judy Mikeska (a wrestling princess trophy).

Shirley Nicholson (Class of 1953) took her place as volunteer curator to operate the museum every Wednesday, along with her longtime friend Faye Jones (Class of 1954), an early secretary of the Alumni Association.

Rip Van Winkle (Class of 1965), stopped frequently to assist with sports displays. Winkle's



Museum volunteers George "Dewey" Burk (Class of 1956), Faye Jones (Class of 1954), and Shirley Nicholson (Class of 1953).



Bomber letter jackets and sweaters line a wall of MCHS Museum. In the early days of the school, they had genuine leather sleeves. Very nice! In today's MCHS, an A school academically in recent state rankings, the letter jackets go to honor roll students.

class brought home the first boys state track championship. One of his 1965 state records still stands -- a time of 10.3 seconds in the 100-meter run. (Rip's time was converted from the 100-yard dash, and he now shares the record with three other runners).

In 2006, George "Dewey" Burk joined as volunteer handyman after visiting the museum for the first time during the 50th reunion of his Class of 1956.

The Board of Directors for MCHSM, Inc. since 2003 has been Bachman (chairman), Croak, Maynard, Shirley Nicholson, Kemp Cole, Dale Fredericksen, and Jim Young. The Board is drawn from graduating classes or the community.

Nicholson is president of the Board of Museum Delegates.

They are representatives from MCHS graduating classes. Delegates furnish succession for directors. The delegates of record as of 2003 are listed below (some have since passed away):

- 1944, Bill Price
- 1945, Betty Jones
- 1946, Willadean Hargrove
- 1947, Christine Savage
- 1948, Betty Atchley
- 1949, Annie Hill
- 1950, Jennie Maynard
- 1951, Lois Batey
- 1952, Bill Phillips

1953, Shirley Nicholson
 1954, Ken de Cordova
 1955, Gayle Cochran
 1956, Dewey Burk
 1957, Sue Bruce
 1958, Barbara Saylor
 1959, Dona Harwell
 1960, Shirley Ferguson
 1961, George Cannon
 1962, Sue Harris
 1963, Dale & Claudia Fredericksen
 1964, Kay Hughes
 1965, Larry Tawwater
 1966, Jim Young
 1967, Becky Long
 1968, Lonnie Wilson
 1969, Rick Bachman-Patty Barker
 1970, Scott McClure
 1971, Jeanette Clemons
 1972, Celeste Scott
 1973, Ann Bain
 1974, Terri Derrick
 1975, Kathy Reese
 1976 Tom Carpenter
 1977, Jamie Butler
 1978, Terry Suellentrop
 1979, Leigh Smith
 1980, Kemp Cole
 1981, Leslie Oliver
 1982, Bill Croak
 1983, Bonnie Boone Roach
 1984, Don Johnson

1985, John Croak
 1986, Randy Ison
 1987, Tom Henderson
 1988, Meredith Foster
 1989, Stephanie Weese
 1990, Rodney Foster
 1991, Gina Landers
 1992, Carrie Friesen
 1993, Amy Breeden Russell

 1998, Jared Smith

The complete records of Midwest City High School Museum, Inc. are on file at the museum.

Nicholson Seeking Successor

Nicholson, 78, first and only museum curator since 2001, would like to identify a successor, “someone really interested in MCHS,” and train that person in the museum holdings and cataloging before she feels she must retire.

Her telephone number, which is also the contact number for museum hours and special openings, is (405) 732-7161.

Class of ‘64 Projects Are Eye-Opening!

The Class of 1964 donated funds this spring for a "50-year" gift to the museum. Acting on their behalf, "class architect" Tony Callaway purchased new exhibit



“Every time we get a box of memorabilia, it’s like Christmas. We can’t wait to see what’s inside,” said Mrs. Nicholson. Above, she opens a gift binder of Bomber Beams from the 1960s. Shown is Miss MCHS 1962, Karen Winn.



MCHS Museum occupies the former main lobby of Midwest City High School. The MCHS Key Club placed the plaque at the base of the front porch in memory of Kathy Davis Seidl (Class of 1974) and Paul Ice (Class of 1970), who died as a result of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995.

stands for the museum's collection of MCHS football and basketball programs. "Class librarian" Marty Thompson enclosed the increasingly fragile paper items in protective wraps.

Based on extensive career experience in their respective fields, they also voluntarily drew up ideas for additional exhibit and preservation projects.

Their drawings and concepts will be on display May 3 for the museum's Board and future reunion classes to consider.

Wall of Fame

The second stop on the tour is the Midwest City High School Wall of Fame in the auditorium. Honorees' plaques are on display.

Mrs. Nicholson was among 21 honored in the first induction year, 1992.

From the Class of 1964, five graduates, Barbara Winn Sessions, Jim Willis, David Guthery, Larry Burchart, and Tony Callaway have been inducted since 1994.

Vietnam Remembrance To Be Respectful and Inclusive

At 11 a.m. the Class of 1964 will pay tribute to its war dead and other veterans with a ceremony at the Vietnam Casualty Memorial west of the museum.

The memorial was established in 2002 to honor

the 21 former MCHS students who died in Vietnam.

Five of the fallen were 1964 alumni: Sgt. Edward Baker, PFC James Eatmon, PFC John Kirby Johnson, Cpl. James Moffett, and Sgt. Sammy Smith. All were killed between 1966-1968; all were under age 22.

Speaker for the event will be Steve Coleman, Midwest City attorney, founding member and past president of the Board of Trustees of the Mid-Del Public Schools Foundation, and Chairman of the Board of the Oklahoma Honor Flights Program.

The MCHS Junior ROTC will present the colors. From sister school Del City High, the Alumni Band will perform the national anthem.

The roll of all Class of 1964 veterans, living and dead, will be read. Two of the veterans will place a floral wreath with the wording, "Never Forgotten," on the memorial. The trumpeter will play "Taps."

"We endeavored to learn the veteran status of all of our classmates, and we will call the name of each person who served in the military regardless of whether they are able to attend

the reunion, said Dr. Alexandria Rose Miller, chair of the Reunion Committee.

"The Reunion Committee felt strongly that the veterans from the Vietnam era should receive their delayed recognition."



Class of 1964 alumni will honor the memory of Edward Baker, James Eatmon, John Kirby Johnson, James "Delton" Moffett, and Sammy Smith at a wreath laying ceremony at the MCHS Vietnam Casualty Memorial on campus at 11 a.m. on May 3. The roll of all classmates who served in the military will be read. (above) A 1973 Bomber Beam in the MCHS Museum has pictures and a story about some of the former students who died in the Vietnam conflict.