

ROOSEVELT HIGH AND TEDDY BEARS

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This year is the 100th anniversary of the "birth" of the teddy bear, and when we asked you for any memories or special stories spotlighting teddy bears, the graduates of old Roosevelt High School at 2013 W. Third St. were among the first to respond.

When the historic school building was completed in 1923, it was the largest high school east of the Mississippi. Some of the most successful citizens produced in our city were educated there until the facility was phased out as a public high school in 1975. The school was named for President Theodore Roosevelt and the school mascot was the teddy bear, which was inspired by the president.

Many graduates of the school began collecting teddy bears after graduating and still hold on to them today.

"I have always collected teddy bears and bear objects," said Janice O. McDaniel, a 1957 graduate. "I have a wide variety in my collection, from a snowman bear to a talking Smokey Bear. My favorite is a dark brown bear with fur of mink, the cutest pug nose and brightest eyes."

Betty Phelps Terhune, who with her husband, Lew, graduated from Roosevelt with the class of 1946, said the teddy bear is an important part of the school history. "Our athletic teams were known as the Teddies and all that inspired our hobby of collecting teddy bears."

The complex that once was the high school is still in use by the city of Dayton and has been used for various reasons through the years, including a district police station, offices for the parks and recreation department and for special training and education classes.

Members of the Roosevelt Class of 1952 will meet Saturday for a 50th reunion at the Miami Valley Country Club and, according to Donna Brannock Bromley, a member of the class, a special consideration will be brought to the table during the business meeting.

"The many graduates of Roosevelt have saved mementos, yearbooks, teddy bears - all kinds of things," Bromley said. "We are going to talk about setting aside a room in the old Roosevelt school as a sort of minimuseum. Too many of the trophies, and yearbooks and other memories have already been destroyed or lost."

Bromley said she and others in her class have visited Roosevelt Center and have been shown a room by city officials that would be allocated for a special display of school memorabilia.

"If we are able to do it, we will dedicate the room to Evangeline Lindsley," Bromley said. "Miss Lindsley has advocated this project for many years. She doesn't want the history of our grand old school to just dissipate."

Lindsley, 105, is the oldest living teacher from Roosevelt days. She is an author, a lecturer and a social activist and still maintains an active schedule, as her health permits.

"We hope the graduates of all the classes from our great school will take part in this project and help us mount a wonderful room," Bromley said. "We want to make it a hands-on collection, where folks can come and browse and sort through memories of how it used to be."

If you have kept items from your Roosevelt days that you want to donate, or if you would like to serve on the committee that will be beginning to plan for the Roosevelt collection, you can contact Donna Bromley at 253-8404.

In the meantime, we have received a lot of wonderful anecdotes and stories about favorite teddy bears, and if you have a contribution, we are still accepting. We will try to share as many stories as possible before the teddy bear birthday in November.