



HALLOWEEN PARTIES have brought lots of fun and laughter as members dressed up for the occasion. Shown (from left) are Marylu Brown, Detta Anderson holding Summer Bryan, and Joyce Raulston.

Calico Gals remember last 60 years

Many things have changed for farm wives and mothers over the past 60 years, but members of the Calico Gals Club still are enjoying the fun and fellowship which began when the club was organized in the fall of 1944.

Club members will observe their 60th anniversary with a luncheon next Wednesday at the LandMark Inn.

The idea for the club began during World War II, when there was little entertainment for homemakers in rural communities. Marie (Chilson) Brown telephoned neighboring women southwest of Oberlin in the Sappa and Bassettville townships and invited them to her home. It was during that social afternoon that she suggested starting a neighborhood club.

The women chose the name "Calico Gals" and decided to meet the third Wednesday of each month, which has continued over the years. Dues were originally 50 cents a year, but are now \$5. At first, each hostess chose a project, usually mending, quilting, patching or embroidery. In later years, the women took their own work or enjoyed outings around the area which even included a swimming party in Atwood.

Children who accompanied their mothers looked forward to getting together to play and members agree that the club has done much to hold the community together.

Over the years, they have enjoyed working together at farm sales, holding Halloween masquerade parties, as well as making streudel, carving pumpkins, making beaded Christmas ornaments, and decorating Easter eggs. They have toured the greenhouses and Frank Lloyd Wright house in McCook and quilt displays at the Dane Hansen Museum in Logan.

Charter members included Hattie Hodges, Lela Rezner, Lydia Wurm, Elizabeth Resch, Marie Chilson Brown, Dora Chilson, Maude Brown, Adena Walinder, Francis Nelson, Margaret Morton, Opal L. (Swisher) Bryan, Agnes Thoren, Mary Counter, Lora Zwickle, Betty Hackney Grout, Opal I. (Castle)

Bryan and Goldie Anderson. Opal I. Bryan, Mrs. Zwickle, Mrs. Grout and Mrs. Anderson are still living.

Three members make up the second generation: Detta Anderson and Donna Kelley are daughters of the late Opal L. Bryan; and Margaret McEvoy is the daughter of the late Agnes Thoren.

The three charter members, who are still active in the club, summed up what membership has meant to them.

Opal Bryan said, "The Calico Gals Club has been part of my life for 60 years. The very thought of these neighbors and friends gives me the warm feeling of love and laughter. What fun we've had! There's always been lots of sharing and working together."

Mrs. Zwickle added, "I've enjoyed being a club member for the past 60 years. We've had parties, served food at farm sales, celebrated special anniversaries, helped our neighbors in time of need, as well as going out of town to see special things."

"We, as a club, have had many projects and goals," said Mrs. Grout. "We have donated to different organizations in the county and community, and served food at farm sales. We are always ready to help in time of disaster or need."

Detta Anderson and Donna Kelley, daughters of the late Opal L. (Swisher) Bryan, remember times when their mother had club at their home.

"We had our own club while the women had their meeting," Mrs. Anderson said. "We became members after we were married and have always enjoyed getting together with members and becoming acquainted with new women in the community."

"When I moved to the country, I really didn't know all of the neighbors," said Mary Waldo. "Calico Gals was a great way to remedy that. Our family gatherings are really great, and we make ourselves available to each other in times of stress. Calico Gals is a good club with thoughtful, fun members of all ages."



CALICO GALS CLUB members shown in the mid-1960s include (from left) front row: Joyce Raulston, Elaine Morton, Margaret McEvoy. Third row: Detta Anderson, Opal L. (Swisher) Bryan, Opal I. (Castle) Bryan, Verna Mae Bryan and son Sheldon. Middle row: Bette Hackney Grout, Barbara Young, Margaret Morton, Lora Zwickle, Agnes Thoren and Margaret McEvoy.

Marylu Brown said she joined the club in the late 1960s, partly because she felt her youngest son needed to be with other kids. She said the benefits grew over the years as she made new friends and spent more time with longtime friends.

"I appreciate the fact that there is no gossiping in the club," she said, "and I have enjoyed the sewing, trips, family meetings and many good times together. We no longer elect officers, but instead members volunteer. We can always count on members to be there in good times, as well as in times of trouble."

Present members also include Alice Bobbitt, Lois Carlson, Sandy Counter, Millie Lippelmann, Phyllis Screen, Shirley Shields, Bonnie Wurm and Barbara Young. Associate members are Zola Brown, Kem Bryan, and Connie Noren.

Mrs. Young is president, Mrs. Shields vice president, Marylu Brown secretary, Mrs. Carlson and Detta Anderson treasurers, and Mrs. Waldo heads the courtesy committee.



QUILTING TOGETHER, club members (from left) Millie Lippelmann, Lois Carlson and Opal I. (Castle) Bryan worked on a project for one of the hostesses.

Story by Mary Lou Olson