

Students sod football field on last day

By **MARY LOU OLSON**
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The Class of 1949 of Decatur Community High School boasted 100 members when they enrolled as freshmen, according to Violet (Spiers) Shaw.

"Country kids made friends with city kids and we began our four-year journey through high school. Along the way, several dropped out and only 77 of us graduated," she said.

Mrs. Shaw was named football queen with classmate Lillian May as one of the attendants. There was no afternoon ceremony, just a very short one on the football field at halftime. The football team chose the candidates but they did not get to see the half time ceremony. The queen and her court rode out onto the field in borrowed convertibles and wore borrowed fur coats! The queen gave a short speech of thanks and appreciation.

"We had a sponsored sneak day. Yes, sponsored at Fort Hays Kansas State College, but we had fun. The sponsor was Jess Woodruff and the school furnished our lunch, which we ate at the park in Hays.

"Seven class members, Romajeau (Unger) Hahn, Mrs. Shaw, Fern (Diehl) Moore, Marie (Tally) Aschwege, Lillian (May) Rutsch, Juanita (Tally) Relph and Maxine (Smalberger) Walker, still enjoy "Round Robin" letters after 60 years.

"On the last day of school, our senior year, the 'powers that be' decided that all the high school students would sod the football field. Today that would be classified as child labor and surely a lawsuit would be filed. Back then, some of us worked and some watched and grumped! That same day was graduation. That night, we were a group of tired, sunburned kids sitting on the stage."

Gaylord Shields added, "The class of '49 had its share of



TWO 1949 CLASSMATES, Gary Metcalf, left, and Merlin Anderson, with snowball, have a little fun behind the school after a winter snow.

athletic laurels. The football team had a good year and Oberlin was considered one of the better teams in the state for the smaller schools and Garden City was considered one of the best for the larger schools.

"A game between them was scheduled to be played in Oberlin. A huge crowd attended the event that ended in the score of 0 to 0. Both teams were happy to come away undefeated.

"The class also had a number of wrestlers, including Merlin Anderson, Neal "Tiny" Chambers, Harold Richardson, Gary Metcalf, Ivan Lemman, Jack Hines, Delbert Roe, Lee Walinder and me.

"The basketball team in '49 won the regional and went to state. The track squad had a good year with several school and league records set, so all and all it was a good year. There were lessons learned and we had a lot of fun doing it.

"Jess Woodruff was the football and track coach. That being his responsibility he decided the football field needed to be re-sodded with buffalo grass, which was done with a great amount of hard work and gnashing of teeth.

"Upon the completion of this task a committee of talented vocal artists was chosen to show our appreciation to Jess. The hour of 2 a.m. was chosen for the reason that it was thought it would be more impressive for Jess and his family. It did impress Jess and to show his appreciation every one was given the chance to do numerous laps around the track."

The class also had numerous awards in the music, drama and scholarship departments.

Howard Banta presented diplomas to the class at commencement exercises in the auditorium on May 18, 1949. Deane Malott, Chancellor at the University of Kansas, gave the address. Valedictorian was Fern (Diehl) Moore and salutatorian, Romajeau (Unger) Hahn. Don Waldo was an honor student.

Class officers were Gaylord Shields, president; Leo "Junior" Van Vleet, vice president; Peggy McConnell, secretary-treasurer; and Don Locy, prom marshal.



THE DCHS FOOTBALL QUEEN (above) Violet Spiers, center, was escorted by Don Campbell during halftime in the fall of 1948. Her attendants, from left, were Joyce McLaughlin, Jeannine Pollnow, Jeanette Pollnow and Lillian May. High School friends (below) enjoy visiting behind the school. From left, Fern (Diehl) Moore, Marilou (Berndt) Long, Romajeau (Unger) Hahn, Lillian (May) Rutsch, Juanita (Tally) Relph, Maxine (Smalberger) Walker.



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