

Generations expected for Williams H.S. Reunion



By Brock Weir

What do Newmarket-Aurora MP Lois Brown and Lulu Lemon have in common?

One wouldn't think very much on the surface ? aside from a possible penchant for yoga ? but both ladies are alumni of Dr. G W. Williams Secondary School.

It doesn't matter that this Miss Lemon, a graduate in the 1940s, is not the yoga wear impresario that organizers had hoped, but few things can dampen their excitement as they put the finishing touches on the school's 125th anniversary reunion this weekend.

Although Aurora's Lulu Lemon is unlikely to put in an appearance, Ms. Brown will be there ? as will an estimated 1,000+ graduates, family, and faculty past and present at the series of events, kick-starting Friday with registration at the school.

Billed as ?Reunion 125?, the three days of festivities ? including the Aurora Tattoo on Sunday ? hope to gather as many people as possible who filled its halls from its early days as Aurora High School from 1888 to 1952, Aurora District High School from 1952 to 1961, and its present-day incarnation as Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School, which was dedicated in 1961.

Registration opens at 3.30 p.m. and visitors to the school can roam ?decade classrooms?, organized by volunteers to be a slice of life from the 1940s to the 2000s, take part in a silent auction which includes, among other items, art produced by notable alumni and people related to the school, including the late Dorothy Clark McClure, whose son Andy is head of Williams' art department.



Dr. G.W. Williams H.S.'s Lynn Weller models turn-of-the-century "basketball bloomers" lent back to the school for this week's Reunion 125.

Old rivalries could come to light as alumni face off in pickup basketball in the gymnasium until 9 p.m., followed by a nighttime get together at Graystones Restaurant through 1 a.m.

Saturday is really the showpiece of the reunion, with registration, decade rooms, and the silent auction continuing, but also a Meet the Staff event, bringing together educators and administrators from throughout the school's history, a luncheon., followed by the official opening ceremonies, led by Ms. Brown and MPP Frank Klees at 2 p.m.

After a cocktail party, again at Graystones at 4 p.m., the reunion culminates in a dance at the Aurora Community Centre featuring the talents of the Thursday Night Jam Band.

As organizers spent last week making final preparations, handling last minute registrations, and making sure there would be enough to feed everyone, they were also preparing for some last minute stragglers.

Although the latecomers can be a challenge, volunteers provide assurance everyone will be welcome ? and those already registered have more than stepped up to the plate offering their services, memories, and even artefacts to make it an event to remember.

?We have enrollment from 1888 and books listing the math books and their costs, old pictures and artefacts and people bringing them in, dropping them off, and sharing has been really cool,? said Lynn Weller, now an administrator at the school, and herself a 1970s alumnus.

One thing that was a surprise was a loan from the Van Nosterand family. Betty, herself a graduated from the 1940s, comes from a line of Williams graduates, her mother having graduate before the outbreak of the First World War. Her contribution? Her mother's basketball bloomers.

?Betty called me two or three weeks ago wanting to arrange a drop-off of more things and the bloomers were a part of that,? said fellow volunteer Bob McRoberts. ?She gave us a bit of a story that they belonged to her mother and were close to 100 years old. She was a student here and they were worn for five months of basketball here once upon a time. They're in great shape!?

Mr. McRoberts is keen to highlight the history of the school and connect the people that shaped its past and present to the people bound to shape its future in the years to come. One example, he said, pointing to the teen's photo, is Norm Johnson. Johnson, pictured in a Grade 11 class photo from the 1910s. Mr. Johnson, the husband Aurora's late eldest resident Ada Johnson, later rose through the ranks to become a teacher, vice principal, and later influential principal at a time of great transition for the school. His great-grandson is currently a student at Williams.

Above and beyond their potential links to the school's history, today's students will also play a role in the festivities, leaving a

tangible legacy that will be a part of the school's history in the next 125 years. In addition to hosting an art show, some of the more artistic students are putting their heads ? and brushes ? together to leave a legacy in larger than life canvas.

Destined for permanent display in the library, guests at Reunion 125 will be invited to leave their hand prints on the canvas, together with today's Williams Wildcats.

?We're involving the kids who are here now so they become a part of the history of our school,? said Ms. Weller. ?We have some very, very talented artists here and these 4x8 panels will be painted in the double blue and eventually they will have the crests on them and will marry the past and the present. They will be part our permanent history.?

For more on the Williams Reunion 125 ? including, yes, last minute registrations -- visit www.reunion125.ca or call 905-727-3131.