

THESE SEVIER COUNTY WOMEN. . .

Miss Pearl Williamson

Miss Pearl Williamson was born in Lockesburg, Arkansas, on October 14, 1884 to Edwin Young Williamson and Laura Hudson Williamson. She died in De Queen, Arkansas on October 6, 1968.

Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.

Isaiah 54:1

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MISS PEARL WILLIAMSON

This story of Miss Pearl Williamson will begin on "Her Day" designated by the City of De Queen on April 29, 1949, ¹ and will continue on in warm loving hearts as long as there is memory of her. Mayor James T. Manning proclaimed a Pearl Williamson Day when she tendered her resignation as superintendent of De Queen Public Schools. In that year of 1949, Carl Hubbard was City Recorder, Craig Williams was Treasurer, Winfred Lake was City Attorney and Dee Shilloto was Chief of Police. City Aldermen were Louis Bandy, A. O. Williams, I. G. Jones, Jr., Floyd Gardner, A. C. Smalley and Dean Newberry. All these city officials paid tribute to Miss Williamson's faithful service by setting their hand to the official document of "Pearl Williamson Day," bearing the seal of the City of De Queen. All business firms in the city closed from two to four p.m. in honor of this day.

Proclamation:

City of De Queen
De Queen, Arkansas

WHEREAS, Pearl Williamson, respected and well loved superintendent of the De Queen Public Schools, has tendered her resignation effective at the close of the current school year, and,

WHEREAS, her pupils, teachers, patrons and friends, in gratitude for the long years of valued and devoted service to the training of the youth of our community and in appreciation of the many benefits which they have gained from the influence of her splendid character, do desire to pay honor to her and to the High Ideals for which her years of faithful service have stood, and

WHEREAS, we, her townspeople, would also recognize and proclaim her untiring works in the church, as a member of the Board of Stewards and a teacher of long standing; in the community, through her membership in various social organizations and her service as a member and chairman of the Arkansas Library Commission; in the teaching

WELCOME VISITORS!

PEARL WILLIAMSON DAY CELEBRATION



profession, by having actively participated in the programs of both the Arkansas Education Association and the National Education Association; in the home, through her efforts to encourage closer harmony between the school and the home in connection with the Parent Teacher movement.

NOW THEREFORE, I, James T. Manning, Mayor of the City of De Queen do hereby proclaim April 29, 1949, to be Pearl Williamson Day and I call upon all citizens of the City of De Queen to be mindful of the fact that her years of service and inspiration have greatly benefited this community and I urge all to celebrate with us in paying tribute to this worthy citizen on this "Her Day."

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the city of De Queen to be affixed this 11th day of April, 1949. ²

James T. Manning, Mayor

"Miss Williamson became principal of the De Queen High School in 1914 and inspired countless young people to greater heights and ambitions; at the same time she has been their loyal friend and counsellor. This close relationship in the schools has not ended at graduation, as she has maintained a deep interest in and understanding of the lives of her boys and girls in the outside world, sharing with them their disappointments and successes alike. These same students, becoming the citizens and parents of tomorrow, in turn hand down the high ideals they have gathered from her. And so she lives on and on. ³ (Excerpt from a letter from Abe Collins, Jr, 1942.)

Mrs E. Melbert Knod (Frances Protho) and Mrs. Eugene Hall (Louise Beekman) were co-chairmen for the festivities for the Pearl Williamson Day. What scheduling it took! And what a day it was! Planned carefully in tribute to Miss Williamson's thirty-five years of serving in De Queen public schools without missing a single day from her duties, the big day began under the direction of the Student Council at ten a.m. in the high school auditorium. It was the students own tribute to their beloved superintendent. The auditorium was packed to capacity with students from high

school, junior high, East side elementary, Central elementary and the black school of the city. Clarence Wilson, president of the Student Council, presided over the program. The De Queen School Band provided music for the occasion and Miss Williamson's role in the program was that of May Day Queen. She was escorted to the stage by Doyle Williams and Floyd Cantlon and was crowned by Clarence Wilson, assisted by Jerry King.⁵

Next on the day's agenda was a luncheon at Hill's Cafe. There was hardly standing room as two hundred fifty two persons crowded into the restaurant to hear more tributes to the leadership and fine

Mrs. E. M. Knod

Mrs. Eugene Hall



Pearl Williamson Day Assembly

Presented by the Students of De Queen Schools
High School Auditorium, Friday, April 29, 10 a. m.

Clarence Wilson, President of the De Queen High School
Student Council presiding.

Prelude	Band
Invocation	Derrell Lemley
The Lord's Prayer (Malotte)	Quartet: Lue Hitchcock, Olena Eubanks, Arthurine Cox, Dorothea Teasley
Introduction	Clarence Wilson
Announcement of the May Day Queen	Joseph Glasgow
(Miss Williamson escorted to the stage by Doyle Williams and Floyd Cantlon)	
Welcome to the Queen	Master of Ceremonies
Why She Is Queen	James Hubbard, President of the Junior High School Student Council
Spiritual Development	Anne Anderson
Scripture	Emma Rater
Prayer	Clarence Lovell
Hymns	Junior and Senior High Glee Clubs
Moral Development	Margaret Ann Locke
Dance	Pupils of East Side Schools
Music	Band
Physical Development	Louise Bales
May Pole Dance	Pupils of Central School
Mental Development	Sue Garrison
Music	Elementary Glee Club
Number	Colored School
Coronation	Clarence Wilson assisted by Jerry King
Presentation of Gift	Linda Durham assisted by Barbara Presson
Dedication of Pictures	Billy Trower, President of Senior Class
Presentation of FTA Charter	Mary Gray
Alma Mater	Audience

character of this extraordinary woman. Gunter England was master of ceremonies and one of the highlights was the presentation of the key to the city by Mayor Manning. Miss Pearl confessed that she had never been crowned Queen before much less given orchids and a key to the city.

There were many distinguished out of town guests, among them A. B. Bonds of Little Rock, state commissioner of education; Associate Justice Minor Millwee of the state supreme court; and officials of the state Parent Teacher and Arkansas Education Association circles. Guest speaker was Hardy ("Spider") Rowland, Arkansas Gazette columnist and once a student in De Queen schools under Miss Williamson.⁷

After the luncheon, plans had been made for an afternoon program in the school auditorium and was open to the public. More tributes and accolades were made to Miss Pearl Williamson and outpourings of love from those teachers who had worked with her for many years. Presentations were made by Mrs. Word Brookes, Mrs. Byron Goodson and Mrs. E. M. Knod. A reception was held at the Home Economic cottage immediately after the program in the auditorium.

A Starlight Concert by the De Queen School Band under the direction of Gene Witherspoon took place in Leopard Stadium in the evening. The open house in the Home Ec Building ended the day's celebration.

AFTERNOON PROGRAM

Invocation	Rev. Leason Hatfield
Welcome	Mrs. Eugene Hall
Reminiscing	Jim Moore
Recognitions	Mrs. Eugene Hall
Galop Chromatique	Franz Liszt
	Piano Duet--Mildred Ann Smith Betty Spicer
The Silver Anniversary of a Board Member	Abe Collins
Presentation	Mrs. Ford Brackes
I Love A Cottage	Constance O'Hara
All the World Is Waiting For the Sunrise	Ernest Seitz
	Vocal Duet--Miss Carlisle Ellis Miss Roland Nicher
Tribute to Miss Williamson	Mrs. Melbert Knod
Presentation	Mrs. Byron Goodson
Benediction	Rev. E. P. Long

Perhaps the greatest and most gratifying to Miss Williamson was the establishment of the Pearl Williamson Loan Fund for students. Through the giving of her hundreds of friends and former students the fund had reached \$3,000 and was still growing.

The funds for this gift were presented as a love gift by Miss Williamson's friends and was administered by Miss Williamson throughout her lifetime and, at her death, became a living memorial to her. Miss Ilene Smith was the first recipient of a loan from the student loan fund.⁹

Congratulatory telegrams arrived by the dozens from well wishers in Washington, D.C., Kansas City, Missouri, Gary, Indiana, Shreveport, Louisiana, Dallas, Texas, San Diego, California, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, San Francisco, California, Enid, Oklahoma, Evanton, Illinois, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Rodessa, Louisiana, Saginaw, Michigan, Greenwood, South Carolina, Abernathy, Texas, St. Louis, Missouri, San Angelo, Texas as well as all points in Arkansas.¹⁰

Her special day seemed to say it all, to reflect every aspect of her life. But, wait, the sorrows, the secret ambitions, or perhaps a secret love. After all, Miss Williamson never married. Or would life be boring without the rigorous routine of school? One memorable day cannot reflect light on many unanswered questions. However, the dominant spirit of this unusual woman seemed to send answers echoing down the years in her own unique style:

"Yes, of course, there's been sorrows in my life. Sorrow can be

come strength. And secrets should remain just that, especially a secret love. I don't believe, my dear, that my personal life is any of your business."

"Will I be bored? How ridiculous! Only stupid, unimaginative people experience boredom!"

In any case, Abe Collins, Jr, (1942 letter)¹¹ was truly a prophet when he predicted that the effect for good that Miss Pearl Williamson had on her students would live on and on. The following comments from those who visit the Sevier County Historical Society and spend time in the school memories corner are recorded below and the ex-students' memories are just as fresh and enthusiastic as those written on the day of Miss Pearl Williamson's retirement.¹²

1. "Pearl Williamson, or as we lovingly called her 'Miss Pearl,' was a jewel to everyone. Parents as well as students admired and respected Miss Pearl. She always strove to instill good character, good health and manners to the students, but, above all, she felt a good, well-rounded education was first and foremost.

'Miss Pearl' is a person none of us will forget. She was a jewel. "

Bettie King Slayton
Lockesburg, Arkansas

2. "I will never forget going to Miss Pearl to 'demand' that we continue at De Queen High School to have a girls basketball team. She was very polite when she said it was not 'lady like' and that we would not have a girl's team."

Myrtle Sims
De Queen, Arkansas

3. "I can remember her coming into the classroom and telling how eating raw vegetables made your gums healthy and your jaws strong. (Especially cabbage!)"

Billye Leeper Prince

4. "I remember 'Miss Pearl Williamson' as we called her so very well. She had a very profound influence upon most of the students of the early '40s. I remember her especially in grade school. She walked the hall from room to room, a very imposing person, always seeming to be in a good mood. She didn't appear to have time for nonsense of any kind. She would step inside the room, greet the teacher and the 'boys and girls' as she called us and have a little chat. Whatever she had to say to us on her brief little visits always made you stop and think and, in most cases, remember it as a good rule to live by. World War II was in progress at the time and she often told us how very fortunate we were to live in a free country, what a sacrifice our men and women in uniform were making, and to spend our dimes on defense stamps and help any way we could. You always thought about the things she said each morning as we pledged allegiance to the flag. So the pledge wasn't just a routine bunch of words, you were proud to be an American! Besides patriotism, Miss Pearl was determined to bring a little culture our way. It was a big day when each class room's walls were adorned with prints by the 'Old Masters.' I was in first grade, I think, when that happened and our room got Blue Boy and Pinky.

As we moved to the next grade and a new class room and different pictures, Miss Pearl, on one of her visits, would tell us who the artist had been and give us a brief lesson in art. She assured us that we were very fortunate to have these works of art to enjoy every day. I've always enjoyed and appreciated the 'Old Masters' probably because of Miss Pearl and how important she made us feel that art should be in our lives. It was really wonderful when I was in Europe to see some of the original paintings and remember having seen prints of them in grade school and hearing Miss Pearl tell us all about them.

Miss Pearl kept her priorities in order. She put cleanliness right next to godliness. Often her little visits would admonish us to brush those teeth, after all, we did need them and everyone saw them. And if you couldn't afford tooth paste, and in those days not everyone could, you could always use soda and salt for a pretty smile. She talked to us about the importance of being clean and well groomed. She said it would show the world that you had respect for yourself and the world in return would respect you. Good manners and good posture was also on her list. She told us one day after noticing that some restroom doors were decorated with student's names and initials that it made our school building look tacky. Then with a twinkle in her eye she said 'Remember this, fools names and fools faces always appear in public places.' I'm not sure we completely appreciated what she was saying, but nobody seemed to want to write their names on walls anymore.

Along with all of the above, Miss Pearl even thought it important that we be entertained. Being a rural area and transportation either scarce or non-existent, Miss Pearl created 'Benefit Shows.' A 'Benefit Show' was some movie that she felt had a moral and that we would enjoy. I recall Lassie, Black Velvet, Smokey and a few others were shown. On the appointed day, each student who wished to go brought a dime for admission. After lunch, we boarded school buses and went down town to see the movie. She knew how to make kids happy. We all looked forward to Benefit Show day. Later on she presented our school with a projector and screen and we were treated to shows such as 'Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm' and 'Young Abe Lincoln' in our auditorium.

Another big day for Miss Pearl was in later years after we had moved on to Junior high. She had encouraged us for a couple of years to keep our grades up and work toward some rating she had her heart set on for our school system. I can't be sure but it seems it was a 7-A rating. It must have been quite an achievement and carried a lot of weight because I'd never seen her so proud and happy. Not for herself or her efforts, but for us and our school. And perhaps that's why after all these years I remember Miss Pearl Williamson. Every thing she said and did made it apparent that she worked daily to give the school and each student in it every opportunity for a good education and never for praise or glory for herself. I expect every child who ever sat in a class room when Miss Pearl stopped in for a chat can remember at least one bit of wisdom she imparted to us or some way she made us feel like very special people. "

Dorothy Hendrix
De Queen, Arkansas'

"Do you have the audacity to doubt my veracity or to even insinuate that I prevaricate?" Quote of Miss Pearl Williamson remembered by Gene Manning at the De Queen High School Reunion (1946). June, 1992.

"Miss Pearl was the finest and fairest lady I have ever known. "
James Howell - June, 1992.

"Miss Pearl always had sayings that provided a challenge. (See Gene's comment). "
Bob Gammett - June, 1992

"You can fool some of the people some of the time, all of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time."
Quote of Miss Pearl's from Weldon Reid - June, 1992.

"I remember Miss Pearl telling us to brush our teeth with baking soda."
Bernice Reid - June, 1992

"Miss Pearl was a fine lady who had all children's and young people's welfare at heart. Tried her best to give us rules to live by throughout our lifetime."
Lillian Baldwin - June, 1992.

"Pearl Williamson. . .oh, yes. . . a stickler for grammar and good English. Also in discussing with us fifth graders one time the word 'aint.' It's not in the dictionary and it certainly is not good English! Leaning closer towards the front row seats, she whispered, 'There just aint no sich!'"

Nel Leeper
De Queen, AR 71832 - June, 1992

"Don't live your life from the sidelines." Quote remembered by Ruth Hime Payne - June, 1992

"I remember Miss Pearl saying: 'You came her^e to learn, now apply yourself!'"
Imogene Orr Phillips - June, 1992

"Miss Pearl could always recite sea shells she sells by the sea shore better than I ever will be able to."

Leroy Mullins - June, 1992
De Queen, Arkansas

"Miss Pearl, a stern imposing figure to a small child, yet was a warm caring person."
Wayne Dingler - June, 1992

"Miss Pearl - loving imposing person with interest toward the person/student. The first of each month Miss Pearl would appear at each classroom door with the admonition of paying dues. 'Some pay when due, some pay when overdue, some never do.'"

Lake Carlton - June, 1992

"Miss Pearl Williamson was De Queen's 'Grand Lady.' She influenced more lives through her connection with church, public and civic affairs and certainly with thousands of young people through the public schools."

Barbara Robbins - June, 1992

"Miss Pearl was so special to many, many students. I remember well her coming to the door of my classroom and saying 'Boys and Girls,

what would this school be if everyone in this school was just like me?' Think on this, students."

Betty Jo Penney Janes
De Queen, Arkansas

"I always felt Miss Pearl knew everything about all of us. She remembered our grades and looked at all of our report cards before we did. Then she would make apt comments to let us know she was very interested in our progress. She, I felt, gave us the opportunity to have many extras (such as public school art and music) for a well-rounded education."

Mary Dale Glasgow Coulter
Lockesburg, Arkansas

"I moved away from De Queen in 1942, when I was in the eleventh grade at De Queen High School. My school-day memories always include 'Miss Pearl.' I always thought of her as such a sweet Christian lady and someone as an example to pattern my life by. Many warm memories."

Evelyn Bonds Hendricks
Springfield, Missouri

"If you ever do another mean thing on this bus, you will not ride this Gardner's Chapel Bus again!"

Alta Hendricks
De Queen, Arkansas

(Alto told us that George Collins drove the bus and his wife, Ozzie Collins, worked at Eastside school (now Park Hill). She remembers that Miss Pearl was punctual and took no nonsense from children.

"Miss Pearl told the story of the school boy who on Friday said to his teacher, 'My week end is coming up and I don't know what to do with it. . .I'm so bored.' His teacher said, 'Put your cap on it.'" (Kinda suttile).

Dale Floyd Janes

"What kind of world would this world be if everyone init were just like me?" Quote remembered by

Irma Walters
County Treasurer
De Queen, Arkansas 1993.

"Her favorite scripture which she quoted almost every time she visited our classroom:

'Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.'

Psalm 19:14."

Remembered by Betty R. Cox of De Queen, Arkansas.

"She hated chewing gum worse than sin!"

Kathryn Smith Wilson
De Queen, Arkansas