

WARD-BELMONT REUNION---1986

How many schools that have not existed for 35 years can boast of holding a reunion to which more than 650 former students came from all over the United States with a waiting list of well over 100? Such was the case when a Ward-Belmont reunion was held in Nashville, Tennessee, the weekend of April 18, 19, and 20, 1986.

It all began when a group got together more than a year before to wonder if such an occasion would be feasible. It was agreed that a letter should be sent out as a "feeler" to try and determine just how many would be interested if such a reunion were held. The response was overwhelming and it was decided immediately that it had to be done.

At the first committee meeting in April of 1985, someone asked how many we thought we could expect to attend. Minnie Pearl, who was co-chairman along with Ellen Hofstead, thought we probably should count on around 400. She was almost laughed out of the room! After all, members of the committee said, the school had not existed since 1951 and so many had died during that time; it was finally decided that we would do well to expect 250. The results prove that Minnie was nearer correct than the majority but even she missed it by a goodly number.

Registration for the occasion began on Friday afternoon in the lobby of the Vanderbilt Plaza Hotel which was headquarters for the reunion. Ward-Belmont "girls" began descending on the place in large numbers and all afternoon the lobby was filled with screams, hugs, and a few tears. There were old friends and classmates who had not seen one another for more than 50 years! A good many lies were told that afternoon when old friends remarked, "You haven't changed a bit!" I could not help being reminded of one of my close Ward-Belmont friends who, when told she hadn't changed "a bit," replied, "I'd hate like hell to think I looked like this 50 years ago!"

Registration continued throughout the late afternoon until it was time to get dressed for the cocktail supper which was held there at the hotel and so generously hosted by Aylene and Jack Massey. Once again there were screams, hugs, and tears when many who had not seen each other during the afternoon met for the first time that evening. Drinks were obtained at a cash bar and a buffet supper served afterward. A Combo was provided for the evening by Dorothy and Tom Frist who also furnished the lovely flower arrangements for the occasion.

Minnie Pearl, acting as Master of Ceremonies for the evening's event, tried in vain to get the attention of the "girls in order to make a number of remarks. Later, on a TV program, she mentioned that her throat was sore from trying to talk above almost 700 women! Some of our old school songs were sung by the entire group (though few could remember the words).