

One hundred reasons to have a party

By Linda Vance Gordon
Feature Writer

Ruth McAnally had a very special reason to celebrate on August 3, 2011 – it was her 100th birthday. Family and friends gathered at Appalachian Christian Village to congratulate her and mark the occasion. Asked if she had any advice for anyone who aspired to live 100 years, she quipped, “Don’t do it.” Amidst the laughter that followed her answer, she adds, “I’ve been very fortunate.”

“As far as we know, she’s the first in the family to make it to 100,” says her first cousin Evelyn Colley. “There’s nobody

that I know that’s come anywhere close,” Mrs. McAnally concurs. “My mother was about 82. My father died in his 60s.” “I don’t know why I’m left here, but I’ll find out one day.”

She grew up on Maple Street and remembers walking to Science Hill where she graduated in 1929. The retired elementary school teacher and principal continued her education at East Tennessee State’s “teacher college” graduating in 1932. She later earned a master’s degree there as well.

She met her late husband Hartsell while they were in high school. “We started dating and didn’t have much money,” she recalls. “Well, this is sort of silly,” she says remembering one of their favorite early pastimes, “but it’s parking your car, when you had a car, downtown and watching the people go by. There wasn’t much money to spend and not much to do.”

Another cousin, Geraldine Dugger, remembers



McAnally with her cousins, Geraldine Dugger, left, and Evelyn Colley, who traveled from Hickory, NC to share in her birthday celebration.

when all three were young and growing up on Maple Street, they liked to walk downtown to go to the movies and get a hamburger from a “hole in the wall” place near the square.

“We’d go to the Liberty at 11 and get in for a dime to see the western,” says Mrs. Colley. Afterwards, they’d go either to “the Majestic or Sevier to watch a musical. And, that was a quarter.”

Mrs. McAnally began teaching at Keystone Elementary when she was 21

years old. Later she would become principal at Annie Wilder Stratton School from where she retired in 1973.

While at Stratton, she met a young first grade teacher who would become a lifelong friend. “We’ve been friends for a long time now and it’s just been a wonderful experience. She’s a beautiful lady,” says Clarinda Jeanes, who along with her husband, Don, hosted Mrs. McAnally’s birthday celebration.



Ruth McAnally and Clarinda Jeanes (Photos by Linda Vance Gordon)

An avid golfer, Mrs. McAnally enjoyed reading and travelling once she retired. She is the oldest member of First Christian Church, which she joined when she was eight years old.

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