

Personal Remembrances from Ted Johnson



I entered high school fifty years ago, full of apprehension and expectations. The apprehension was overcome and the expectations exceeded; I reflect with fondness. Some reflective moments are here presented:

My first day at Heights, was one of hide and seek. "Freshmen" were being initiated by the "Lipstick Brigade". What a day avoiding the perpetrators while trying to find various classes in "strange waters". I was successful.

Academic classes were challenging and informative. I can recall one class that was embarrassing and a waste of time; the teacher disappeared in the spring of our "freshmen" year. Yes, I remember his name.

Thanks to Miss Bork, many of us were able to meet the standards of College English. My first two years of College Prep English were (?). Predicated on Miss Bork's instructions in grammar, literature, outlining, essay writing, research paper production, etc., Temple University's expectations for success in English were achieved (with God's help). My greatest regret was that Miss Bork asked me to read my research paper on stamp collecting to the class and I declined because I didn't have the nerve to present before my classmates. (I have changed.)

Spanish was my foreign language. I enjoyed the subject because Ms. Bennett, our teacher, was so likable. One of the first major tragedies in my early life was the murder of Ms. Bennett as she was conducting missionary work in India during the summer. Her camp was attacked by robbers; all were murdered. God and I had a ling feud over that act; his missionary being murdered.

By the way, I still utilize some of that Spanish today.

Algebra was my greatest academic challenge. Mr. Bordner was a great teacher; but my brother Morris Smith was my math mentor and teacher. A "C" pulled me through. I became a teacher of math, algebra included, when I taught in Camden City 43 years ago.

One of my favorite activities was Biology Club under the tutelage of Ms. Barnes. I loved biology and the club was an exciting extension. The club took several field trips, which enlivened my appreciation of my community environment. The great payoff was a recent photo safari trip to Kenya and Tanzquin to see God's many animals in their natural habitat.

Audiovisual Club under the guidance of Ms. Bennett was a great experience and a challenge. To qualify, one had to obtain and set up the movie equipment in no more than five minutes. I met the challenge and hopefully provided a service to the teachers and students.

Athletics and God enhanced my life greatly. In our high school days, African American young men could not participate in baseball, basketball, or swimming. Track and football were our options. There were some outstanding boys from Lawnside that could have contributed to Heights' teams, but the opportunity did not avail itself.

Track was good to me. Because of the very slow boys in '51, I was blessed with enough victories to earn a scholarship to Temple University where I earned a degree in elementary education and a Master's in administration, both of which I used to give value to my life – working with and for our young.

What a difference in the track surface; cinders vs. "hard" top. Every step that we took left a one inch hole in the track vs. a resilient surface that propels the runner forward on today's tracks – Lucky!

Heights was good to and for me. I thank God for the opportunity to give back to this great institution some portions of what I received.

Theodore Johnson

2001 Co-Alumnus of the Year, Dr. THEODORE JOHNSON, Class of 1951.

Ted Johnson has dedicated his entire life to educating and helping the young people of southern New Jersey. You may remember the outstanding review we published in last years newsletter by the Courier Post praising Ted's leadership as interim Superintendent of Schools in Camden in 1999.

Ted was inducted into the HHHS Athletic Hall of Fame in 1997 due to his accomplishments on the running track. Ted was the 1951 NJ State Champion in the 120 high hurdles.

Ted graduated HHHS in 1951 and went to Temple where he received his BS and MA degrees in Education. In 1976, he earned his Ph.D. in Administration and Supervision from Rutgers. He has served as a teacher, principal and administrator for 45 years including 12 years as the Superintendent of the Middle Township School System.

Below are just some of the organizations Ted has worked with over the years. Even today you cannot reach Ted at home ANY night before 10 p.m. Monday to Friday. And when you leave a message you can expect a call back within 24 hours, usually after 10 p.m.!

He was the past President of the following organizations. Kiwanis Club, Cape May County Human Services, Cape May County Mental Health Services, Family Part Services Commission and the Vice President of the Wetlands Institute. He has taught Sunday school continually from 1948 to the present, and most recently he has worked at Rowan University serving as a Professor and as either Chair, Director or Advisor for fourteen different organizations dealing with everything from curriculum to athletics.

Most importantly is Ted's service to HHHS. Ted along with his fellow life-long friend, Morris Smith, founded the mentoring program at HHHS. They are in the school weekly providing guidance and leadership to students who are confronted with the challenges of today's world.