

# Murphysboro Minute

Bi-Monthly Newsletter

January /February 2015

## From the Mayor's Desk,

Murphysboro's oldest resident, Myrtle McKinnie past away on January 5th at the age of 108 years old. I remember when I was campaigning I knocked on Myrtle's door and she told me to "come on in." I was amazed at how sharp her mind was and at the number of great questions she asked me about why I was running for Mayor. 108 years is an incredible life. Myrtle was a great lady, and her absence from our community will be greatly missed. Therefore, in honor of her, I felt compelled to share the obituary that was written by her family with the entire community via the monthly city newsletter.

Myrtle Allen McKinnie passed away peacefully on Monday, January 5, 2015, surrounded by family. She was born June 26, 1906, in Carrier Mills, Illinois, the daughter of Zephaniah and Sallie (Garnett) Allen.

She was a devoted Christian and was a member of the United Methodist Church of Murphysboro. She also taught Sunday School for many years. Myrtle was very modest and humble and always tried to live a religious life.

She was an exemplary member of her community; her kindness, her love for children, and her thirst for knowledge were always evident. She graduated from University High School in Carbondale and from Southern Illinois Normal College in 1927. Her lifelong goal was to become a teacher; teaching with certificate in hand she began her teaching career in Alton, Illinois in 1927. After marrying Cato McKinnie on July 25, 1929, she was asked to resign from teaching in Alton, because at that time, there was a law stating that married women teachers were not allowed to teach in public education.

After rearing five children, she returned to teaching in 1952; became a student again at Southern Illinois University; and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education. At her retirement, it was noted that she had taught in Murphysboro elementary and junior high schools. After retirement, she tutored children and taught adult education. Myrtle was a mentor to many of her students and made a difference in their lives. She dedicated most of her life to helping others to receive an education and to value the importance of learning.

She was honored by the Illinois Hospital Association with a Leadership Award, given as the highest award in community service for state volunteers; was a member of the St. Joseph's Memorial Hospital Auxiliary for 33 years and also served as president; and received the Illinois State Council's DIANA Award (Distinguished International Academy of Noble Achievement) presented by Beta Psi Chapter 4062 of Epsilon Sigma Alpha in 1989 to women who demonstrated remarkable service to others.

She was active in numerous professional and community organizations: President of the Jackson County Unit of the Illinois Retired Teachers Association as well as a member of the Board of Directors, President of the Jackson County Nursing Home Auxiliary; she was a member of the National Education Association (NEA), SIU Alumni Association, and Triad-Jackson County Home Extension. She was a tireless volunteer and had given countless hours to the Murphysboro Food Bank, the Murphysboro Senior Citizens, the Helping Hands Club, the Murphysboro Rehab and Care Center and the Red Cross Bloodmobile. At 100 years old, she was honored to be Grand Marshal of the Apple Festival Parade.

Her hobbies included arts and crafts, crocheting, quilting and her lifelong love of collecting poetry. She was an avid reader and loved to write in her many journals.

She is survived by her daughters, Dr. Christine Dunham, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Blondel (Dr. Gerald I.) West, Novato, California; LaLeeta (Donald) Wilson, Carterville, Illinois; and son, Robert McKinnie, Murphysboro, Illinois; eight grandchildren, Karen McKinnie, Mark Dunham, Nan Trahair, Dr. Gerald West, Jr., Nicole Wilson, Maria Patterson, USAF Maj. Brian Wilson, and Kathleen Pont; ten great-grandchildren; a sister, Lenita Morris, Southfield, Michigan; and a host of relatives and friends.

She was preceded in death by her parents, husband, son, six brothers and two sisters.

Funeral services were held Saturday, January 10, 2015 at the Murphysboro United Methodist Church with the Rev. Larry A. Gilbert and Rev. Earl Renshaw officiating. Internment was at Tower Grove Cemetery in Murphysboro.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Minnesota Multiple Sclerosis Society, 200 12th Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55415.

Until next time,  
Mayor Will Stephens