



## 'What ever happened to...?'

Esther Montgomery, 1929 Motley High School co-valedictorian

By Dawn Schimpp Timbs, World reporter

*Reporter's note: This is the third in a series entitled, "What ever happened to...?" a periodic column which will highlight stories from graduates in the Motley and Pillager areas.*

She hasn't been back to Motley since the town's Centennial Celebration in 1987; but 100-year-old Esther (Montgomery) Johnson says she's hoping to take a trip back to her hometown sometime this spring.

"I don't suppose there will be anyone left that I remember," she said in a recent phone conversation from her home in Seattle. "But it sure would be nice to see Motley again."

Esther's voice is bright and full of enthusiasm as she recalls the midwestern town she called home for the first 18 years of her life.

"I was born in Broken Bow, Nebraska... my family had a cattle ranch there," Esther said. "But we moved to Motley when I was just five weeks old. We had a big house down by the Mill Pond. I heard that it's not there anymore."

Born Sept. 21, 1909, Esther recently celebrated her 100th birthday.

"They had a party for me at my church...350 people came to help celebrate. It was wonderful," Esther shared.

She still plays piano (by ear) at her church in Seattle; performing many of the old hymns she first learned at the Free Methodist Church in Motley.

"That was a big part of my life growing up," Esther said, recalling the church and some of the clergy who helped lead the congregation in its earlier years...Pastor Winn, Pastor Miller and Pastor Elliot. "Oh, there were several," she added.

Esther's parents were Charles A. Montgomery and Lula (Skelton) Montgomery. She had three brothers and two sisters. "I'm the only one left in my family," she said.



### Motley grad

Esther (Montgomery) Johnson graduated as co-valedictorian of her Motley High School Class of 1929. Now 100 years old, she hopes to travel back to Motley from her home in Seattle sometime this spring.

Charles traveled quite a bit, Esther recalled. "He was the state inspector of weights and measures. I suppose he wasn't real popular in some towns." Her father was also the mayor of Motley in 1929.

She had a happy childhood. "The Montgomery kids never lacked for entertainment," Esther said; adding that they had a lot of fun playing on the banks of the Mill Pond.

"We didn't seem to have a lot of luck with pets," she laughed. "We were always having funerals for our cats. One of my sisters would sing, someone else preached; and I always prayed. There were six crosses down by the Mill Pond at one point."

Esther said she can picture her hometown like it was yesterday.

She's fairly certain there were three grocery stores back then. "Ben Kale had one; Broom and Johnson had the others."

If they needed to buy clothes, however, the Montgomerys traveled to a neighboring town. "We'd take the train to Staples or Brainerd...that's where you could get clothing."

"Oh, I have a lot of memories..." Esther says over the phone.

School was an important part of her childhood, too.

The old brick schoolhouse she attended for 12 years is no longer standing; but Esther said she has very vivid memories of the building and all that transpired within its walls.

"We had good teachers at Motley. I can't remember all of the names; but I remember a Miss Springer and Miss McGandy. Mr. (George) Haun was my favorite principal. He was also our basketball coach," Esther said.

Esther's voice lights up again as she recalls the thrill of playing on the Motley High School basketball team. "We were state champs for two years; and I was also one of the captains. It was all very exciting."

Arthur Hogland was her boyfriend at the time, Esther confides, a slight smile evident even over the phone. "He



### Newlyweds

Esther (Montgomery) and George Johnson of Seattle, have been married since 1993. Esther (a Motley native) turned 100 years old Sept. 21; and George, just 97 years, still works at his real estate office every day. (Submitted photo)

was the captain of the boy's basketball team; and he had bought himself a Ford, which means I didn't have to ride the bus to ball games."

Another highlight for Esther was being named co-valedictorian of the MHS Class of 1929, along with her friend Mary (Parker) Morey.

Through a set of circumstances, Esther was recently introduced to Mary's son, Eldon Morey, of Motley.

"He has been just wonderful," Esther said of Eldon. "I had been very worried about the condition of my brother

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### Crow Wing Calendar

#### October 20, 21

**BLOOD PRESSURE CLINIC**, sponsored by Cass County Health, Human & Veterans Services, Tuesday, Oct. 20, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., Leader Community Hall. For info., 218-547-1340.

**CHILDHOOD IMMUNIZATION CLINIC**, sponsored by Cass County Health, Human & Veterans Services, Tuesday, Oct. 20, 10 a.m. - noon and 1 - 2:30 p.m., Family Resource Center, Pillager. For info., 218-547-1340.

**WIC NUTRITION PROGRAM**, sponsored by Cass County Health, Human & Veterans Services, Tuesday, Oct. 20 and Wednesday, Oct. 21, 10 a.m. - noon and 1 - 2:30 p.m., Family Resource Center, Pillager. For info., 218-547-1340.

**WOMEN IN RECOVERY AA MEETING**, Wednesdays, 11 a.m., Motley Free Methodist Church located behind Mr. Ed's. For more info., call JoAnn at 218-575-2611.

#### October 23

**FOOT CARE CLINIC**, sponsored by Lakewood Health System, Friday, Oct. 23, 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m., LHS Motley Clinic. For info., appts., 218-894-8080.



### Answering questions

Members of the Motley Fire Department and Motley Fire and Rescue Team spoke with students from Motley Elementary School Oct. 8, part of Fire Prevention Week. Pictured above, speaking with kindergarten

students about safety precautions pertaining to fire, are (from left) Kyle Frisk, Jason Olson, Jace Carlson (wearing oxygen mask) and Jim Uhlman. (Staples World photo by Dawn Schimpp Timbs)

### Leader Lions host special event tonight

The Leader Lions welcome guest speaker Lily Atwel, Rehab Counselor for the MN State Services for the Blind, to the Leader Hall on Thursday, Oct. 15, 7 p.m.

Atwel will speak about what help is available and answer questions. Refreshments will be provided.

### Buoy removal safety info

The Cass County Sheriff's Office will begin removal of buoy markers from area lakes starting the week of October 12. Some area lake associations in Cass County have already started this process.

"Boaters, please watch where you are at as hazard buoy markers may have been removed from the lake you are on," says Sgt. Erick Hoglund, with the Cass Co. Sheriff's Office Boat & Water Safety Division.

## Beaulieu Street project generates questions

By Brenda Halvorson  
General Manager

The Motley City Council heard a variety of reactions from an audience of over 20 people to the proposed Beaulieu Street area improvements at a preliminary public hearing Monday night.

Comments ran the gamut from adamantly against to solidly in favor with suggestions for funding compromises in between.

Most of the questions concerned how the project will be funded and what the assessments will be to the residential and commercial property owners in the project area.

Aric Welch, an engineer with Wiseth Smith Nolting, started the meeting by reviewing the project and highlighting the changes since an informational meeting July 23.

The total project is expected to cost \$706,000, up slightly from the previous estimate because of the block added on the west end to the County Line Rd.

The cost breakdown between the parts of the project are: residential water - \$165,000; residential roadway - \$314,000; commercial water - \$62,000; commercial

roadway - \$165,000.

The city is proposing to pay for 70 percent of the project and they expect to sell bonds. The bond would be \$494,200.

Property owners in the residential area will be assessed 30 percent of the project cost on a per lot basis. Property owners in the commercial area will be as-

essed 30 percent on a front footage basis.

The total assessed cost is estimated at \$211,800.

The residential water is expected to cost \$1,500 per assessment.

The residential roadway is expected to cost \$2,100 if they are in the area that gets a rural roadway, defined as a 24 ft. wide bituminous roadway with ditches.

If they are in the urban roadway section, the assessment is expected to be \$4,200. Urban is defined as a 36 ft. wide bituminous roadway with curb and gutter.

The commercial assessment for water is estimated at \$14.53 per assessable foot and the roadway is estimated at \$26.33 per assessable foot for a total of \$40.86 per assessable foot.

Initial assessments will be based on current land use and on the underling zoning.

If property owners didn't want to pay the assessments in total at the end of the project, the

amount could be added to their property taxes. For residential property the term was for 15 years. For commercial property the term was for eight years. The interest rate would be two percent over the bond rate.

Motley City Clerk Terri Smith explained that there is a procedure for residents to defer the payment of the assessment if they met certain criteria, such as being over a certain age or disabled. The council would review the applications for deferment.

Welch added that the assessment doesn't go away, it is just deferred for a period of time. A member of the audience noted that assessments have to be paid at the time of sale of the property in order to get a clear title.

Erv Bjerga asked for the rationale for the difference in time, 15 years for residential versus eight years for commercial property.

Welch said the decision was up to the council but

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### Preliminary public hearing

Aric Welch, reviewed the Beaulieu Street area improvements at a preliminary public hearing at Motley City Hall Monday night. Nearly 30 residents and property owners attended to get de-

tails of the project. City council members Rob Sampson and Bruce Mills can be seen in the background. (Staples World photo by Brenda Halvorson)