

CRESCENT HEIGHTS HIGH CELEBRATES

School marks major milestone with 100th birthday weekend festivities



VALERIE FORTNEY

It's not every day a high school dropout posts a YouTube video crediting that institution for his ultimate success.

"What I learned at Crescent Heights helped get me to where I am today," says a smiling Tommy Chong, looking way too comfortable on an outdoor lounge. "Which is by my pool in Pacific Palisades, California, trying to figure out the next Cheech and Chong movie."

Sadly, the famed funnyman won't be in Calgary this weekend for his former school's marking of a major milestone. But a lot of people will — nearly 900 are expected to come out to the 100th anniversary celebrations for Crescent Heights High School (www.crescentheightsalumni.ca).

Over the past several years, a determined band of Crescent Heights alumni have been planning and preparing for a weekend of reflection, reunion and making new memories.

"It'll be a walk down memory lane and a chance to see people you haven't seen in 10 or even 40 years," says Stewart Hambly (class of 1962) of a weekend long program that includes a Saturday night banquet as the main event.

I meet with Hambly, the president of the Alumni and Friends of Crescent Heights High School and co-chair of the 100th celebrations, just a few hours before

registration began (walk-ins, he says, are also welcome). We're in the school's basement, where a multimedia exhibit complements its impressive, permanent archives room.

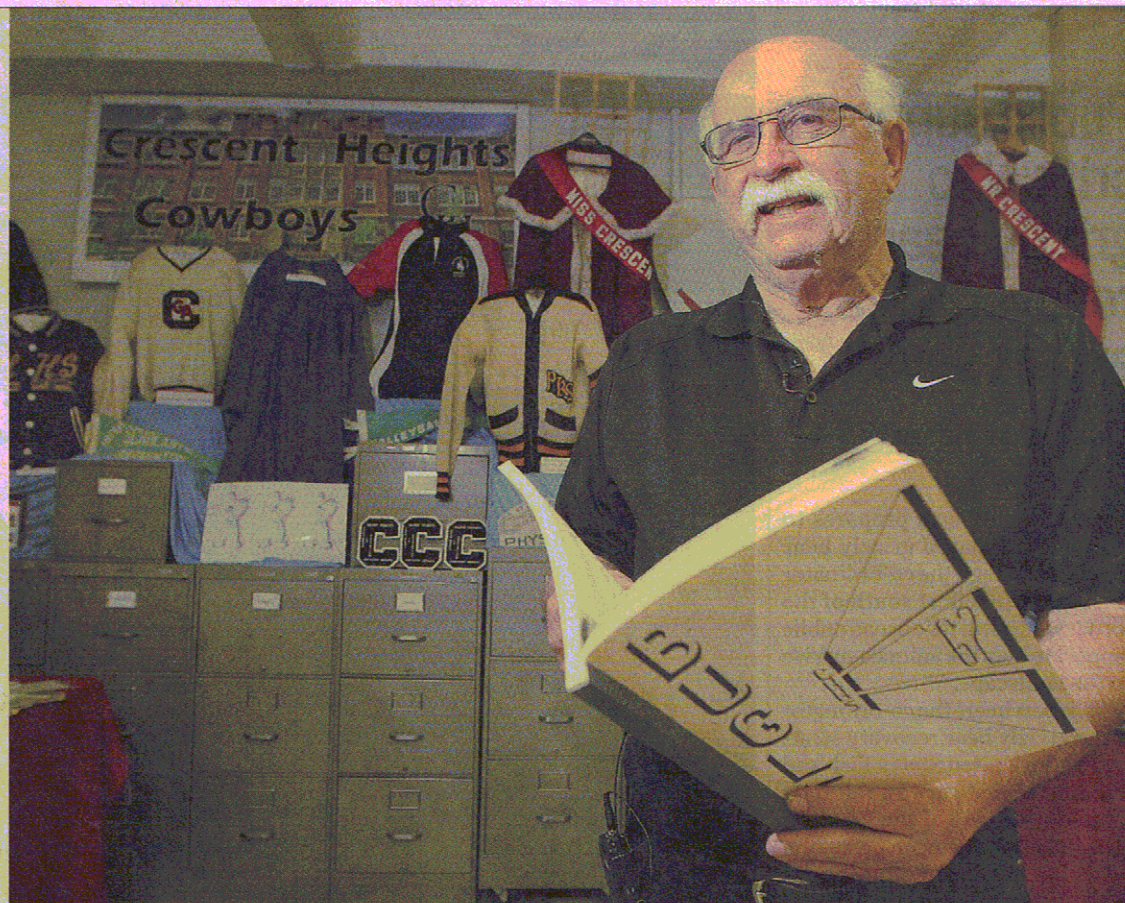
Alongside old school uniforms, sweaters and a poster marking baseball great Jackie Robinson's riveting anti-racism speech given to 1,500 Crescent Height kids back in 1955, are several exhibits featuring notable grads: country star Paul Brandt, then known as Paul Belobersycky (1990); pop duo Tegan and Sara (1998); and Violet King (1948), Canada's first black female lawyer, to name but a few.

Hambly, whose planning committee made extensive use of social media to get the word out — "I had to do some quick learning," he says with a chuckle — says that participants stretch all the way back to the 1938 graduating class and go up into the 2000s.

While the red brick and sandstone building that overlooks the city core from the north was built in 1928, Crescent Heights School indeed goes back a full century.

First housed in 1915 at the site of Balmoral School on 16th Avenue N.W., the new \$275,000 structure a few blocks south in the community of Crescent Heights, made in the Collegiate Gothic style, was officially opened in 1929.

Described at the time by the Calgary Herald as the city's "most up-to-date school building," the grand structure featured separate entrances for girls and boys and 21 classrooms for more than 800 students; 100 years later, it would house more than 2,000,



Crescent Heights High School Alumni Association president Stewart Hambly is busy helping with the final preparations for the 100th Anniversary events this weekend. Some of Canada's most illustrious citizens, such as the late Alberta premier Ralph Klein, were students at the school. COLLEEN DE NEVE/CALGARY HERALD

The Crescent Heights High story reflects that of the province itself: the school's principal from 1915 to 1935 was William Aberhart, who would go on to become premier of the province; while teacher John Laurie was named Calgary's Citizen of the Year and became nationally known for his work on behalf of Alberta's First Nations communities.

Over those 100 years, the school has also seen many of its young charges go on to illustrious careers here in Calgary. Some of the more prominent include Ron and Marg Southern (1949) and Doug Mitchell (1956).

The Southerns, successful in business, sport and philanthropy, are celebrating the 40th anniversary this year of Spruce Meadows, their equestrian facility that many call the best in the world.

With his wife Lois, former CFL commissioner Doug Mitchell has also received national recognition in business, sport and philanthropy.

Mitchell, the 100th anniversary's honorary chairman, is one of the featured speakers at the Saturday banquet, while fellow alumnus Ken Taylor (1954) — the former Canadian ambassador to Iran who in 1979 helped six

Americans flee that troubled country — will also address the crowd.

Sadly, two of the school's best-known former students won't be there. Ralph Klein, who died in 2013, attended Crescent Heights for a time before heading to Viscount Bennett. He dropped out, but bounced back by becoming one of Canada's most memorable premiers.

As for Tommy Chong, Stewart Hambly says the school came close to welcoming the former student this weekend. "He was going to come, but they're filming a Cheech and Chong documentary, so he couldn't make it." That, or the pool lounge in Pacific Palisades was just a little too comfy. valfortney@calgaryherald.com or twitter.com/valfortney

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Century of Celebration for Crescent Heights High School

Schedule of Events

Friday, May 15, 2015

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| 5:00 pm | Registration Opens – Crescent Heights High School, North Entrance |
| 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm | Archives Room Open |
| 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm | Photos in the Main (New) Gym – class groups announced at registration |
| 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm | Fine Arts Presentation – Theatre, Student Centre, and Centennial Room |
| 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm | Coffee and Dessert Reception – Student Centre |
| 9:00 pm to 1:00 am | Cabaret – North Hill Curling Club |

Saturday, May 16, 2015

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| 9:00 am to 11:00 am | Cowboy Breakfast and Entertainment - North Hill Curling Club |
| 11:00 am to 5:30 pm | School Open – meet and greet |
| 11:00 am to 5:30 pm | Archives Room Open |
| 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm | School Tours – Meet in Student Centre |
| 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm | Barbeque Lunch and Entertainment – North Hill Curling Club |
| 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm | Entertainment: Barry Luft – Upstairs Lounge, North Hill Curling Club |
| 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm | North Hill Curling Club CLOSED for set-up |
| 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm | Banquet and Reception <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction of Honored Guests• Dinner• The Centennial Choir with Guest Soloists• Honorary Chairman: Doug Mitchell• Keynote Speaker: Ken Taylor |
| 9:00 pm to 1:00 am | Cabaret with “Stratus” and Other Special Guest Bands – North Hill Curling Club |

Sunday, May 17, 2015

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| 10:00 am to 2:00 pm | Coffee and Doughnuts – North Hill Curling Club |
| | Pictures, Memory Book, and Mementos available for pick-up or purchase |

DRESS: Dress for the weekend is casual or business casual. Retro clothing or Crescent clothing from the past is most welcome (sweaters, jackets, or anything Crescent) for the Saturday Barbeque, Dinner, & Dance. If you have a cowboy hat, boots, shirt, and or vest, that would be great for the Saturday Breakfast.