Note: As far as records show, Anna Fritsche Hunter and Russell L. Pierson, MHS Grads Class of 1929, are the two oldest MHS Alumni living today. They are both 99-years-young!! Anna is a September birthday and Russell is a December birthday……they’ll both turn 100 this year!!

The MHS Class of 1929 has a PAIR of MHS living members. How often will you find TWO living alumni from the same class celebrating their 82$^{\text{nd}}$ school reunion? Well, this year it is happening as we write this article. Anna Fritsche Hunter and Russell Pierson both are amazing in the memory department and both prolific writers either by U.S. mail or by e-mail. Both will answer their phones and both are very gracious to answer continuous questions from callers.

During these classmates’ senior year, the Class Parents were Homer V. Heatly (1909) and Katherine Heatly. Ms. Virginia Hamilton-Boyle was serving as President of the Alumni Association.

These two National Treasures from Mangum High actually attended school in the first 1905 high school as it became their Junior High in 1923. They saw the second high school completed in 1920 and witnessed the old gym being built and opening in 1929, the year they were seniors. They knew about North Ward and South Ward and the Mangum Junior College also known as South Ward Elementary, then Hawthorne and then the college.

In high school, Anna was working for the Mangum Daily Star. She was also an active member of the High School basketball team and has donated her Basketball Letter Sweater to this writer for safe keeping. It will be on display during Alumni Week. After graduation, she stayed busy serving as Secretary and Assistant Secretary on the Alumni Board for several years. In 1930, Anna also won a Doubles Match in the Washita Tennis Tournament at Clinton, Oklahoma, and still has her trophy to prove it.

Eventually Anna moved to Elk City working for Pulliam Publishers in the Elk City Daily News office. There she met her future spouse, Cecil Hunter. Most of their married life was spent in Texas and Oklahoma before they retired to Arizona in 1973. Cecil was a speaker and entertainer having been trained in broadcasting. Mr. Hunter died in 1986. Anna enjoys the company of her two children: Jeanne Hunter-Green and Bill Hunter; six grandchildren and eleven great grandchildren, all under eight years old.

Anna has family who are also MHS Grads: Siblings: Clara, 1916; Elsie, 1919, and Bill, 1927. According to reports from older MHS grads, Anna’s father, Mr. William Fritsche, was the best shoemaker in Greer County and put cleats on many boys’ football shoes because they couldn’t afford new shoes. Annette Powers Meader says that Mr. Fritsche half-soled many pairs of shoes for Greer County residents as people just didn’t buy new shoes very often in those days.
In April, 2011, this writer and husband visited Ms. Hunter in Richardson, Texas, where she moved last Fall to be near her daughter and extended family. Anna’s family history is fascinating. Her father and mother immigrated from Germany in the late 1800’s when a person had to be sponsored in order to come to the United States. Her father, William Fritsche, came to America first, sponsored by a cousin. He then told his fiancee, Marie Czichos, living in Germany, he would sponsor her, and he did. After she arrived she insisted on earning enough money to make her ‘dowry’ before he would marry William. They began life in Schertz, Texas, in 1896, before migrating to Mangum in 1907 where Mr. Fritsche set up his Shoe Shop business. He was a master boot maker having done his apprenticeship in Germany. During World War I, he was stationed in Arkansas where he was a boot maker for the military.

Russell Pierson, was born on a farm North of Mangum to Arthur and Edna (Weber) Pierson. He was a Cross Country and Track star in high school, earning pockets full of medals. In 1929, THE TIGER was an interscholastic news paper founded in 1916 by Oklahoma University. Mr. Pierson was the Assistant Business Manager. The primary purpose of the paper was to remind the graduates of the MHS annual Alumni Day. All Alumni members received a copy of the paper.

Everyone knew Russell’s sister, Dorothy Pierson Lessor, who was the Head Cook for the Mangum Schools. Russell says he and his sister bonded immediately and it lasted for life.

After graduating from high school, Russell’s life began at Stillwater’s A&M college where he met his future wife, Bernice Strom. They enjoyed 67 years of marriage before her death. They have two daughters and those wonderful grand children.

Russell’s life work was as a County Extension Agent and eventually he became Director of Marketing for the Oklahoma State Board of Agriculture. During this time, he was the Radio and TV Farm Broadcasting director for WKY Radio and Television in Oklahoma City.

This writer and husband had the privilege of visiting with Russell at the Oklahoma State Fair in September 2010. He maintains an office there and shows up for work on a regular basis. Workers there know him by his first name and they told us he was also a great “poet”. His daughter, LaNese Croft, is the current Ms. Senior Oklahoma 2010 and he accompanied her to the National Competition in New Jersey. LaNese will relinquish her crown June 2011 during the competition for Ms. Senior Oklahoma, 2011. The event will be held at the South Oklahoma City Community College Performing Arts Theater.

One thing you can count on, Russell will be the number one ‘cheerleader’ wherever his family is involved.

Russell served as the MHS Alumni Parade Marshal in 2009 during a rain down pour. But he was safe and dry inside an antique car driven by Joe Sullivan. He thoroughly enjoys all the hoopla connected with celebrations in Mangum. He’s already bought his banquet ticket and made reservations at Quartz Lodge for the 2011 celebrations.

Note: Russell L. Pierson passed away April 2015 at age 103.