

1237 Trail Ridge Road, Emporia, KS 66801-6139, 5 June, 2111

Dear Mrs. Hope-Howard Green,

Got your note about the James Monroe High Class of 61's 50 reunion and I've already had a request for some information that I think I have responded to.

I will be unable to make the trip for the program. At 81 I am just basically home-bound except for car drives to Topeka, Lawrence, Wichita and Eureka, Kansas, all less than 100 miles one way and the limit of my present ability.

In town (Emporia) I walk—a minimum of 4 miles a day if my weight when I arise is below 155; if above, I have three different 10-miles I can choose from for the daily walk.

These activities keep me where Dr. told me I must be since my heart attack in 1998.

I feel good, but realize I am getting older. Unfortunately, it is my memories that are getting older and lost and I hate that.

Lois life-long deaf but learned to lip read, now has limited vision to the size of a salad plate (circular pattern only) and limited in length to several feet. She continues to adjust and adapt to all house hold work, cleaning, meal preparation, clothing care, but now spends a lot of time reading Braille printed works which she learned 10 years ago to do. We both jig-saw puzzles once in awhile. She cannot walk very far out side, stumbles on sidewalks, curb-crossings, etc. but we do go two blocks to the mall (which is not vary active) and she walks the smooth halls, 3 times around + 1 mile while I go on over to Wall-Mart to get materials she needs at home.

I still weave the afghans, making one every two-three weeks which are given to wheelchair patients in nursing homes. I weave them while watch TV. at night, usually from about 7 to 10.

Our lives are simple, we manage, but no longer long trips.

Have had a number of people in Virginia send us a copy of the newspaper article (enclosed for your information). I've not been forgotten there ! ha.

I am still indexing old newspapers (have completed 416 reels of microfilm of newspapers from three counties (Greenwood, Lyon and Chase) and still at it daily for two to three hours a day, reading and making notes of all births, marriages, deaths, and items of historical or genealogical value to researchers. Free Copies of each index are given to Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka, to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah and to the local libraries. Masters are kept and copies are furnished, at cost of printing, to requestors.

We stay busy, but just our usual messing around.

Thanks for your letter.



HODGE: BELOVED TEACHER AS BUSY AS EVER

BY JENNIFER MILLER STROBEL
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Robert Hodge has long had a fascination with the nuggets of history in local newspapers.

He volunteered thousands of hours cataloging microfilmed newspaper pages for Fredericksburg's Central Rappahannock Regional Library.

After moving to Kansas in 1992, he transferred his energies to indexing newspapers there.

The news clippings documenting his own life could fill a book. Indeed, they have. Hodge's wife, Lois,



Robert Hodge has lived in Kansas since 1992, after decades of teaching here.

Veteran teacher walking, indexing up a storm

When Kenneth "Chuckle" Sullivan, one of his students from 1960, wrote him last fall, Hodge replied with a warm newsy letter, and a copy of the book his wife had put together.

Hodge, now in his 80s, wrote that he walks a minimum of 4 miles a day on errands. If his weight creeps up, he tackles any of the three 10-mile routes he's mapped out.

He continues indexing old newspaper articles, spending two or three hours a day reading microfilms of newspapers loaned to him for home use from libraries and museums in Emporia and surrounding areas. He scans them for items of particular interest to genealogical or local history researchers.

After typing and alphabetizing the information in his computer, he prints the final index to the reel of film, and gives copies to the loaning library, the Kansas State Historical Society Library and the family history library in Salt Lake City, Utah.

He's immersed himself in local organizations—a museum, a teacher group, a genealogical society.

He's teaching too—visiting schools to show students how to make plaster casts of dinosaur footprints from molds he made in the Culpeper Quarry in Virginia. The students are welcome to his house Saturdays or Sundays if they want to make their own.

As he reported, "There must be 30 or 40 footprint castings scattered over town!"

compiled scrapbooks of newspaper articles about his work and interests—a total of 169 pages covering his years—1956 to 1987—teaching biology at James Monroe High School and Germanna Community College.

Professional accomplishments included the 1964 award of Outstanding Biology Teacher in Virginia, and Regional Top Biology Teacher for an eight-state area.

The beloved teacher's influence reached beyond the classroom. He played a central role in saving Fredericksburg's Alum Spring area from destruction in the late 1960s.

With his characteristic energetic enthusiasm, Hodge led hikes through the wooded site, sharing his knowledge of its natural and local history.

His research and advocacy led to the city's purchase of the property, saving it from possible townhouse development.

Now a park, Alum Spring has become a favorite natural oasis in the city, its 100-million-year-old sandstone cliff as the centerpiece.

Copies of Hodge's book, "Alum Spring Park: A History," are available at the Central Rappahannock Regional Library.

After teaching 2,120 students at James Monroe High School—yes, he kept count—Hodge took the job of assistant professor of biology at the newly opened Germanna Community College just west of Fredericksburg.

There, he shared his enthusiasm for his field with another 2,030 students, and in 1985, received the college's first award as outstanding faculty member.

Clippings of those years take up Pages 60 to 169 in his wife's collection.

Upon his retirement, a 1987 article told how

Hodge, "a tireless worker," planned to devote himself to his many other interests, including archaeology, anthropology and local history.

A decade later, Hodge and his wife returned to their native state of Kansas, citing Fredericksburg's real estate tax rate as the reason. Emporia, a town of about 25,000, is now home base for Hodge, who continues to pursue his work in his favorite fields.

Not that he has forgotten his Fredericksburg ties.

FLASHBACK: Students rolled up sleeves to reassemble dog skeleton for school project

BY JENNIFER MILLER STROBEL
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Robert A. Hodge wasn't about to let memorized texts count as standards of learning.

The James Monroe High School biology teacher's standards required personal exploration, hands-on learning, getting to the meat of the matter.

Kenneth Sullivan—a member of the Class of 1960 and known to all by the childhood nickname “Chuckie”—was among the students whose personal hands-on experience did indeed get to the meat of the matter, literally.

Fifty-one years later, he still has the snapshot to prove it.

“It was the only ‘A’ I’d ever gotten outside of P.E.,” Sullivan recalled, when he recently submitted the photo to the Flashback column.

Every spring, Hodge, his teacher, took his students on hikes to explore the life forms of Fredericksburg—the parts of an iris, a budding oak tree, for instance. They would choose projects for in-depth study.

Sullivan chose the dog. Or, more specifically, his girlfriend of the time chose the dog skeleton as their shared project.

Tender-hearted pet owners may cringe, but biology isn't always pretty; indeed, their project was pretty messy.

First stop, the dog pound, where the aspiring biologists picked up a euthanized hound dog, then brought it to

the high school lab. There, they skinned and gutted the dog, cutting off as much meat as possible.

“It was pretty smelly, too, as I remember,” Sullivan recounted.

Still, they had work to do just to get to the bare bones. This required cooking.

Lucky for them, the girl's mother was a home-economics teacher who happened to have a second stove in the family basement. The family's main kitchen was

spared. For a night or two, the poor dog was boiled in a big pot, turning to mush as the bones separated.

The intrepid biology students finally had to reach into the pot to pick the bones totally clean, then put them in the oven to dry.

Next came the job of putting the puzzle of the bones back together again. It wasn't easy either, with all those tiny toe bones.

Hodge kept the school lab open and allowed the students as much time as they needed.

They wired together as many bones as possible, glued the rest, then placed it all on a flat board for display at the biology class open house.

Sullivan didn't come up with any novel discoveries of physiological processes, but he learned something about himself.

“It was kind of a breakthrough,” he recalled. “It showed me I could do a little more than I'd been doing. It showed me that if I put my mind to it, I could do anything I wanted.”

He'd been rather casual about academics in high school, though he has fun memories.

He grew up on Progress Street just across from James Monroe High, but that proximity didn't stop him from driving his blue 1949 Ford to school every day, picking up friends in the neighborhood.

He loved athletics, and was featured in *The Free Lance-Star*. A column by Bill Buttram referred to the “carrot-topped Ken Sullivan as the hustlingest basketball player anyone can hope to find.”

The *Washington Post* named him football player of the week for Virginia.

In the article, JM coach Jake Maynard called Sullivan “one of the best that I've ever coached. He's so dependable that sometimes I don't realize how important he was until I've seen the movies of the game.” Sullivan played center on the undefeated Yellow Jackets team.

The article stated Sullivan probably didn't plan to go on to college, but he did go on to Chowan College on a football scholarship, then transferred to Richmond Polytechnic Institute (now Virginia Commonwealth University), graduating in 1964.

In his college years, he transferred his interests from sports to catching up on academics, and earned a general business degree.

He ran his own business, Kenneth W. Sullivan Real Estate Appraisal Inc. He and his wife, Janice, married in 1967. A Longwood College graduate, she moved to Fredericksburg to teach elementary school in Stafford County. Both are retired now.

Last September, Sullivan and his classmates celebrated their 50th reunion. Looking through his old photos, he came across the snapshot of that long-ago biology project and decided to send his teacher a note.

Hodge, who now lives in Emporia, Kan., wrote in reply: “How well I remember your ‘dog cooking.’”

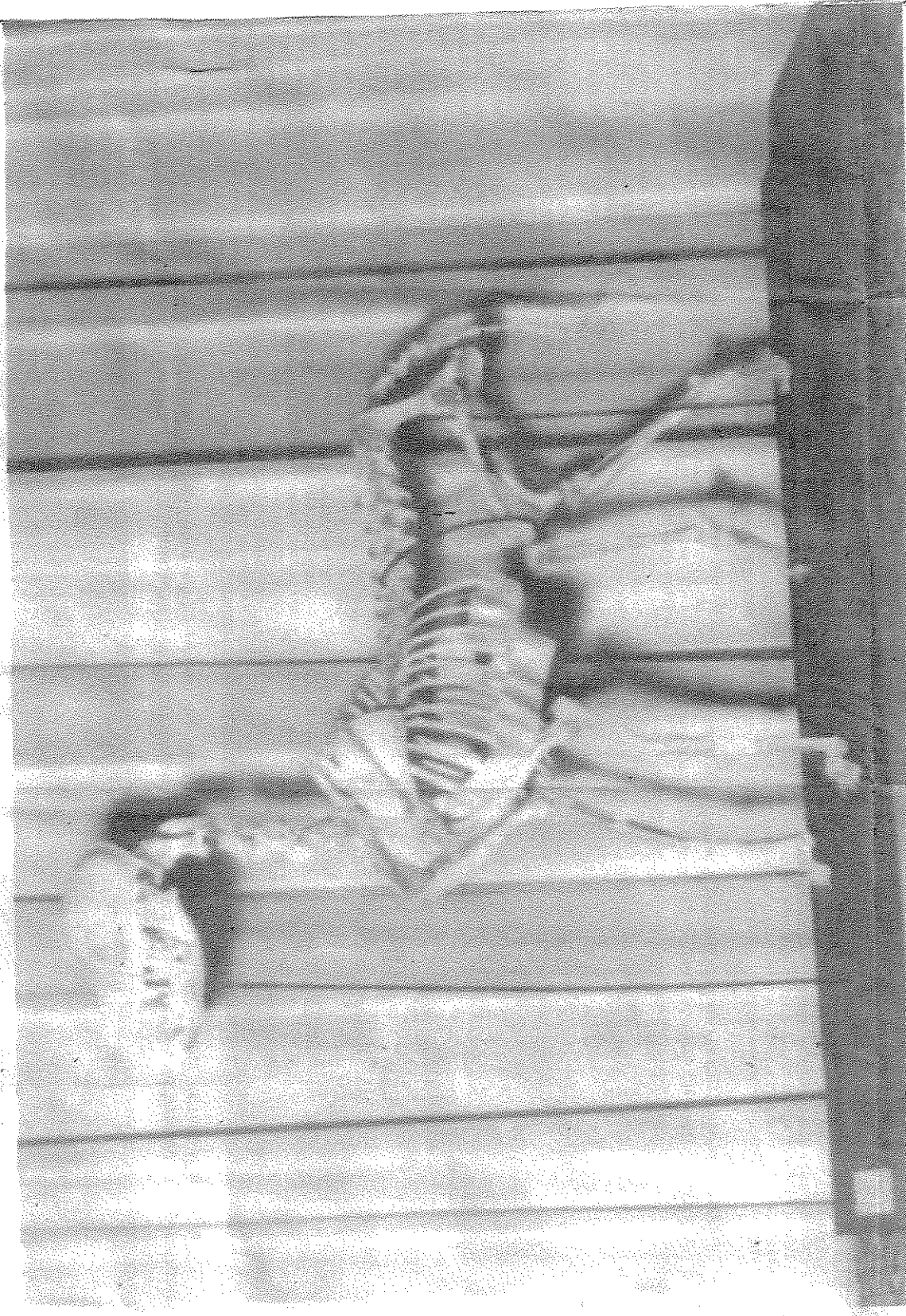
“I'm still sorta active but am now 81 (retired in 1987) after teaching 4,150 students (2,120 at JM).”

Neither teacher nor student knows where the dog project ended up.

The Free Lance-Star, 616 Amelia St., Fredericksburg, Va. 22401; to t&c@freelancestar.com.

May 17, 2011

FLASHBACK >> TALK ABOUT A PAINSTAKING PUZZLE!



The dog met its end in a Frederickburg-area pound in 1960, and its body was, as it turned out, donated to science—high school science.