

Welfare Reunion 2012 Story

It was a hot Saturday afternoon at the Flowers' residence in early July. In fact, the temperature was 101 degrees, the highest recorded temperature of any July 7 in Morgantown.

It also happened to be the perfect day to hold a welfare reunion.

Sixteen members of the team that served under Ed Flowers at the state department of welfare between 1969 and 1975 and spouses met to catch up and share old war tales from their welfare years.

Since last working together almost 40 years ago, the group has met eight times. Many of the members say they often have to explain to family and friends why they stay connected with people they haven't worked with in decades. A special bond has brought the team members back to the Mountain State from locations as far as Las Vegas, South Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia.

This year, attendees were invited to give their personal recollections after lunch, in addition to the usual sharing of tales. These stories were recorded and will be a part of an oral history and heritage piece Ed is compiling for his grandchildren. The memoir will be titled To Adam and Katie: Things Grandpa Didn't Get to Tell You.

Ed's helpers, Colleen and Sudiksha, also made CD recordings and written transcripts of the speeches for each participant so that all may remember the stories they told that day.

Despite the heat, the group saw a good turnout - with allowance for a few "excused" absences. Virgil Conrad and his wife, Wilma, as well as Roger and Sonya Price were unable to attend, as they were both celebrating their 50th wedding anniversaries while Barry Locke was deterred by a health problem and Paige Skaggs had storm recovery duties from having been without electricity for two weeks. Attendees also signed get-well cards for two regulars, Ward Nicklin and Jimmy Luster, who could not make it due to illness.

After the traditional group photo, the team quickly retreated inside from the heat for air-conditioning and dessert. Photo albums and a guestbook were also available to look over in the Flowers' living room.

What started as a dedicated public service team 43 years ago has now become a family. As each reunion comes and goes, the old friends reconnect and look forward to meeting again next year. – *Cori Lucotch, Intern*