



West Virginia Historical Society

Volume XXIX, No. 1, SPRING 2015

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When Sadie Went to College: Morris Harvey College and Sadie Hawkins Day

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In November 1937, *Li'l Abner*, the popular comic strip by Al Capp, presented an unusual twist on the pursuit of matrimony—Sadie Hawkins Day. According to the storyline, Hekzebiah Hawkins, an early settler of Dogpatch, had a daughter named Sadie who was “the homeliest gal in all them hills.” After fifteen years of waiting in vain for some man to propose to Sadie, her father decided to take matters into his own hands. Declaring Sadie Hawkins Day, Hekzebiah Hawkins held a foot race by firing a shot to start the men running and a second shot to start Sadie chasing after them. If Sadie could catch a man, he would become her husband. Sadie succeeded. Thus inspired, the other unmarried women decided the day should become an annual event.

Al Capp had created Sadie Hawkins Day as part of his *Li'l Abner* Yokum/Daisy Mae Scragg romance story and *Li'l Abner's* fear of marriage, not foreseeing how the event would be played out on college campuses around the United States and Canada. A year after Capp introduced Sadie Hawkins Day in his comic strip, a few colleges turned the fictional event into a campus activity; in 1939, *Life* Magazine reported that more than 200

colleges were holding events that year. Al Capp and United Feature Syndicate, which distributed *Li'l Abner*, quickly realized the potential benefits of this occurrence and began offering Sadie Hawkins materials to assist colleges in planning their events. By the early 1950s, Al Capp received “tens of thousands of letters” each year from colleges and other groups wanting to know the date for Sadie Hawkins Day so that they could make their plans. He also received invitations to attend events at colleges and made a number of appearances over the years.¹

A fraternity at the University of Arkansas led off the Sadie Hawkins college phenomenon with a Sadie Hawkins dance on October 22, 1938. The Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy of the University of Texas held a Sadie Hawkins Day race as part of its carnival on November 5, while Sadie Hawkins Week was observed at the University of Tennessee during the first week of the month. Several other institutions of higher learning also held Sadie Hawkins activities that first year, among them Morris Harvey College in Charleston.²

On November 3, Morris Harvey announced plans for Sadie Hawkins Day to be held on November 11. Unmarried college women were given ribbons, which they could pin on the bachelor of their choice that day. As Helen Bibby, chair of the women's group, stated,

Three hundred and sixty four days of each year we girls must take what comes our way. Often the boys with whom we really would like to become chummy avoid us. Next Friday it will not be such.

Any man caught must be his captor's companion until midnight.

The woman had to pay for her date's dinner, transportation, dancing, admission to Morris Harvey's football game with New River State College (later West Virginia Tech), and other date expenses.³

In addition, a foot race was scheduled for halftime with the women chasing the men. The men who were caught had to go through a mock wedding performed by Marryin' Sam, played by Carl Judy. Other characters in Morris Harvey's first celebration were Li'l Abner (Richard Lowry), Daisy Mae (Margaret Elizabeth Carney), Mammy and Pappy Yokum (Betty Munroe and Charles Elkins), and Black Rufe (Kyle King). Also included in the cast were Marryin' Sam's donkey and the Yokum's pet pig Salomey.

On November 11, Frank Knight of the *Charleston Gazette*, which co-sponsored the event with *The Comet*, the college newspaper, served as announcer for the halftime activities. Fifty students participated in the foot race, and Daisy Mae caught her man, but the marriage ceremony was interrupted by Black Rufe and his shotgun.⁴

For Morris Harvey, a private college then affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, an event such as Sadie Hawkins Day likely would not have happened just a few years earlier. The 50-year-old institution had been in Charleston only three years, having moved from Barboursville in 1935. In Charleston, the student body no longer was made up primarily of Southern Methodist youth. Rather, in 1937, it consisted of both rural and urban individuals, youths and adults who came primarily from West Virginia but also included people from fourteen other states, and students from nineteen religious denominations in addition to Methodist, although Methodism ranked first among them.

By the early 1930s, campus social life revolved around several fraternities and sororities, religious organizations, and interests such as debate, drama, and music. The college also had football, basketball, baseball, tennis, and field sports. As a Methodist school (until 1941), Morris Harvey could not sponsor dancing, but attendance at chapel was no longer mandatory as it had been a few years earlier. Signaling the change underway at the college,

<i>Year</i>	<i>Li'l Abner</i>	<i>Daisy Mae</i>
1938	Richard Lowry	Margaret Elizabeth Carney
1939	Melvin Keen	Jean Hefferman
1940	Rudolph Cavender	Helen Hall
1941	John Stec	Peggy Cooper
1942	George Hart	Martha Raines
1946	Russ Adams	Bette Pierce
1947	Carl Boles	Carol Pilcher
1948	Virgil Carr	Virginia Dumont
1949	George King	Ramona Shipley
1950	Marshall Miller	Irene Szelonski
1951 movie	Leon McCoy	Nancy Dixon
1951	Bob Dunn	Jean Ann Rule
1952	Clark Campbell	Nancy Dixon
1953	Jack Lawhorn	Pat Kelly
1955	Ted Boehm	Eloise Crickard
1956	Paul Swartz	Pat Kelly

Morris Harvey held its first homecoming celebration in 1937, only one year before it began to celebrate Sadie Hawkins Day.⁵

Sadie Hawkins Day at Morris Harvey in 1939 originally was scheduled for October 14. The date was changed to November 4, however, when the latter date was chosen by Al Capp, and colleges around the country scheduled their activities for that date. For Morris Harvey, that meant that Sadie Hawkins Day was held in conjunction with homecoming. In addition to repeating the activities of the previous year, the day included the homecoming float parade through downtown Charleston, awarding of a trophy to the best float, and selection of Miss Morris Harvey. Sponsored by the Phi Kappa Sigma sorority, an informal Sadie Hawkins dance with "hill-billy music" was held the night before at the YWCA.

The same characters as the previous year were cast: Li'l Abner (Melvin Keen), Daisy Mae (Jean Hefferman), Mammy and Pappy Yokum (Ruth Cunningham and Charles Elkins), Marryin' Sam (Joe Farris), and Black Rufe (Charles Whited).⁶

The cast of characters expanded in 1940 with the addition of Adam Lazonga (Charles Gregg), Earthquake McGoon (Louie Miller), Strange Gal (Electa Ranson) and Hannibal Hoops (Bob Gibson). Scheduled as a feature of the halftime program of the Morris Harvey-Davis and Elkins football game on October 26, Lazonga, M.D.S. (Master Dogpatch

Style), touted as the world’s greatest lover, was to demonstrate his seventh lesson on “pitching woo, Dogpatch style.” For the third year in a row, Charles Elkins played Pappy Yokum, while Rudolph Cavender was cast as Li’l Abner and Helen Hall as Daisy Mae. Other roles were Mammy Yokum (Betty Murray) and Marryin’ Sam (Jim Ballengee).⁷

Ribbons were once again issued to all women, and freshmen girls were required to ask boys and to attend the Sadie Hawkins Day events. The Phi Kappa Sigma sorority and student council co-sponsored the party at the YWCA on the night before the game. The floor show included a Dogpatch skit and a reading by Francis Thomas; songs by Nick Ciccarello (who performed “The Ballad of Sadie Hawkins”), Ruth Dunbar, and Miriam Thomas; and music by the hillbilly trio of Ciccarello, Sam Richards, and Lawson Hamilton.⁸

Several changes were made for the fourth annual Sadie Hawkins Day at Morris Harvey on November 15, 1941. Traditional elements that were kept were

the distribution of ribbons to the women to pin on men and the mock wedding ceremony. Reportedly, no foot race was held, however. Competition for the various Dogpatch character roles was open, with nominations made by the student body. The roles of Mammy and Pappy Yokum, Sadie Hawkins th’ Fifth (a new Al Capp character, not Hekzebiah Hawkins’ daughter Sadie), Marryin’ Sam, and Barney Barnsmell were filled before game day.

Candidates for

Daisy Mae and Li’l Abner were to parade around Laidley Field at halftime of the Morris Harvey-

Carson Newman football game, with the final selections to be made at the dance in the evening. Courtesy of The Diamond Department Store, the winning Daisy Mae would receive perfume and bath powder, while Li’l Abner would get a “Golden Eagle” jacket. The finalists for Daisy Mae were Martha Raines, Peggy Cooper, and 1940 Daisy Mae Helen Hall. For the part of Li’l Abner, candidates were John Stec, Gordon Brown, Bill Wood, and Lawson Hamilton.

On November 15, Charleston’s mayor D. Boone Dawson proclaimed the day “Sadie Hawkins Day.” That evening, John Stec and Peggy Cooper emerged as winners at the dance held at the Casa Loma and were “married” by Marryin’ Sam (Jim Ballengee).⁹

While Sadie Hawkins Day in 1941 had some differences from its predecessors, Sadie Hawkins Day on November 6, 1942, was unique among Morris Harvey’s Sadie Hawkins events. The college was faced with the loss of a number of male students because of the United States’ entry into the Second World War the previous December. Although the Dogpatch characters were selected from the student body, the college enlisted eligible bachelors from Charleston to fill out the ranks. President Leonard Riggelman chose the coeds who were to escort these bachelors on November 6. In addition, the college announced that a prominent citizen who was born in Kentucky would be chosen to serve as the honorary mayor of Dogpatch.

A complete list of the eligible bachelors pinned by coeds is not known, but, according to the *Gazette*, the “marked men” included Bert Buster, James Nash, Edward Carver, Edward Spilman, John W. Carver, William Thomas, Judge Henry Cato, Graham Painter, J. F. “Bo” Stafford, C. Robert Jarrett, Baker Hall, Wehrle B. Geary, Henderson L. Peebles, Thomas Dabney, Mont J. Carmack, Harvey G. Davis Jr., and Dick Gage. Chosen to pursue them were Shirley Spradlin, Betty Hallanan, Mary Haber, Jeanne Giesey, June McCandless, Gloria Reed, Betty Jo Winesett, Gloria Peak, Betty Jones, June Stone, June Robson, Dorothy Atwood, and Betty Collier. Of the bachelors, Spilman and Peebles successfully evaded the coeds, while Davis and Carmack were pinned—with a *Gazette* photographer present to capture the pinning.¹⁰

Walter Motley of the National Bank of Commerce was named honorary mayor of Dogpatch



Sections of ad in *Charleston Gazette*, November 12, 1941.

during halftime ceremonies of the Morris Harvey-Glenville State game and was sworn in by Judge Ira Partlow, West Virginia's assistant attorney general. Motley read the Sadie Hawkins Day proclamation, while Daisy Mae (Martha Raines), Li'l Abner (George Hart), Mammy and Pappy Yokum (Faye Williams and Homer Jimison), Marryin' Sam (Jim Ballengee), Available Jones (Dowell Riley), and several of Charleston's eligible bachelors looked on.¹¹

Morris Harvey's 1942 Sadie Hawkins celebration proved to be its last until 1946. Football was the vehicle around which Sadie Hawkins activities took place at the college, and the war inevitably affected the sports program, bringing the departure of players and coaches for military service. For the 1942 season, the college had managed to field a football team with an infusion of several players and the coach from West Virginia Wesleyan College, which had already discontinued the sport. After the 1942 season, however, the coach departed for navy duty. The college suspended intercollegiate athletics for the duration of the war, and student activities became largely coed driven. Morris Harvey was able to resume basketball in the 1945-46 year and football in the fall of 1946.¹²

That fall, the college resurrected Sadie Hawkins Day in grand style for its homecoming game festivities on November 2 against Marshall College. A host of Li'l Abner characters were included in the festivities. In addition to the traditional selection of students to play Li'l Abner, Daisy Mae, Mammy and Pappy Yokum, and Marryin' Sam, students portrayed Wolf Gal, Moonbeam McSwine, Hairless Joe, Lonesome Polecat, Available Jones, Earthquake McGoon, Weak Eyes Yokum, and Lena the Hyena, among other comic strip characters. Former GIs recently returned from the war were cast for several parts. *The Comet* concluded that "the committee responsible for the festival, successfully enlisted near perfect proto-types of every character in the 'Lil' Abner' strip."¹³

Adding to the excitement were a parade through downtown Charleston, a street carnival, and a visit from *Li'l Abner* cartoonist Al Capp. A crowd estimated at more than 16,000 watched the early afternoon parade, which included Al Capp riding with Daisy Mae and Li'l Abner in a convertible, floats created by college fraternities and sororities,

and Morris Harvey's new band as well as those of Marshall and Charleston High. The Scragg boys led Lena the Hyena, the girl from Lower Slobbovia whose hideously ugly face drove people mad, by rope and 10-foot poles through the streets. On the Phi Kappa Sigma float, which took second prize, Mammy Yokum washed the ever lazy Pappy's back while Moonbeam McSwine, also lazy and unwashed, stood at the outhouse door ready to hide. The first place Phi Sigma Phi float featured Lonesome Polecat and Hairless Joe brewing Kickapoo Joy Juice (moonshine). At 1:00 p.m., coeds auctioned off male students on the steps of the federal building (present-day Kanawha County Public Library).

During halftime of the football game, Al Capp named "Miss Morris Harvey," picking Betty Repass, ("Miss Sophomore") from the four class representatives selected by popular vote. Capp also attended the Hawkins' Hop that evening at which students competed for best jitterbug.¹⁴ Morris Harvey's Sadie Hawkins Day activities met with the approval of Al Capp, who, according to *The Comet*, remarked, "Of the thousands of schools and colleges that annually prepare a Sadie Hawkins's [*sic*] Day festival, this is the best representation of the characters I have seen."¹⁵

Over the next few years, Sadie Hawkins Day festivities at the college were elaborate events. For the November 15, 1947, event, the student council sought to replicate the successful casting of the previous year. Since the event did not coincide with homecoming, the parade floats presented only a Dogpatch theme, unlike the previous year when it had been a mix of Sadie Hawkins and homecoming floats.

Invitations were sent to prominent residents of Charleston who were from Kentucky to be part of the city council of Dogpatch at the football game against Glenville State College. Among those invited were W. W. Allen and Ray Allen of the National Bank of South Charleston, J. E. McDavid and Walter Motley of the National Bank of Commerce, Hays Picklesimer of Kanawha Valley Bank, C. A. McCarty of the Bank of Dunbar, E. A. McCandless of Hanna Insurance Agency, and T. C. Adams, Walton W. Reynolds, and Emily Olmstead of Morris Harvey's faculty. The student council chose Charleston advertising executive Charles A.

Williamson as the honorary mayor of Dogpatch. (Motley had been the honorary mayor for the 1942 event.)

The Dogpatch council was sworn in during halftime. Also taking place during halftime were judging of the floats and a tug-of-war between the male and female students.¹⁶

In 1948, the first Sadie Hawkins Day dance took place two weeks before other Sadie Hawkins Day activities because of a scheduling conflict. November 12 was the date of the national observance, but Morris Harvey originally scheduled



Pulling a mule down Kanawha Boulevard for the Sadie Hawkins Day parade in 1948. Alonzo Johnson Jr. Scrapbook in possession of the author.

its celebration for October 30 as part of the Morris Harvey-Otterbein game. A change by the athletic department forced postponement of festivities to November 12 as part of the Morris Harvey-Georgetown (KY) game. The dance, sponsored by the Kappa Sigma Kappa fraternity, could not be rescheduled, however, because neither the Casa Loma nor Cam Lavelle and his orchestra were available on the latter date.¹⁷ A second dance was added for the night of November 12. Phi Lambda Tau planned the dance described as a “turnabout affair” (women asking the men—i.e., a Sadie Hawkins dance) for the South Charleston recreation center, Don Osborne and his orchestra to provide music.¹⁸

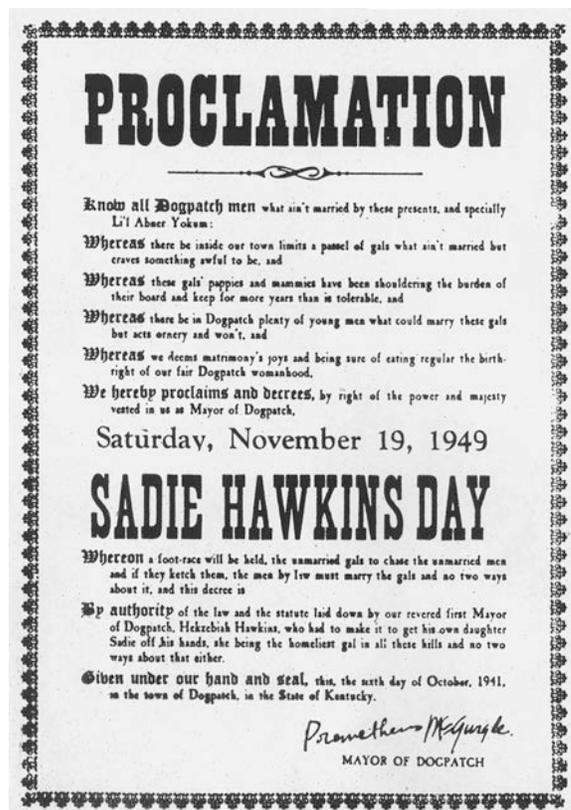
The Shmoo, the generous, lovable creature that Al Capp had only recently introduced in *Li'l Abner*, was part of the halftime activities, with a girl Shmoo chasing a boy Shmoo. “The \$64 question” asked by *The Comet* reporter Pat Collins, “Will the little girl shmoo catch the little boy shmoo?,” remained unanswered by post-event accounts.¹⁹

Sadie Hawkins Day 1949 was scheduled for November 19 to coincide with Morris Harvey’s

football match against Appalachian State. Nearly three dozen Dogpatch characters were involved in the celebration. Al Capp’s new creation—the Kigmies—were part of the festivities, too, dressed as game referees. In addition, one Kigmy represented an Appalachian State Mountaineer. In keeping with the Kigmy desire to be kicked, the Kigmies were to be kicked by Dogpatchers and other students displeased with referee decisions during the game.²⁰

A 52-unit parade through downtown Charleston that included around twenty floats and the college band “dressed in true Dogpatch style” preceded the game. During halftime, judges Mayor D. Boone Dawson, Marcelle Ward of the *Charleston Gazette*, and E. J. “Gene” McDonough selected the winning floats. The first place float, recipient of the *Gazette* trophy, was the “Dogpatch Skunk and Glue Works” float of the Zeta Kappa fraternity. Receiving second and third place were Zeta Mu sorority for its “Modernizing Lower Slobovia” [*sic*] float and the Blackfriars group (drama), “whose float brought forth the largest amount of laughter for its originality.”²¹

Representatives of each class vied for the roles



Charleston Gazette, November 19, 1949

of Daisy Mae and Li'l Abner: Marilyn Ketchum and Roy Harris, freshmen; Ramona Shipley and Harold Elmore, sophomores; Shirley Bowman and Bob Robinson, juniors; and Archie Dunlap and George King, seniors. During halftime, Ramona Shipley and George King, the college's outstanding basketball player, were chosen as Daisy Mae and Li'l Abner. Hekzebiah Hawkins fired the shot to start the chase of the men by the women, but daughter Sadie (played by George Casey in which may have been the first time the Sadie Hawkins character actually appeared in Morris Harvey's celebration) failed to catch her man. The day's festivities concluded with Phi Lambda Tau's Dogpatch Drag in the Student Activities Building.²²

As Morris Harvey began the 1950s, the Sadie Hawkins Day festivities were at their peak. Scheduled for November 18, the day of the Morris Harvey football game against Davis and Elkins, Sadie Hawkins Day in 1950 featured the typical parade, halftime activities, and dance.

The parade was one of the more memorable because of the mishaps along the route. Part of what would prove the winning float fell off midway through the parade, causing a "riot of laughter." A more serious mishap took place at the intersection of Kanawha Boulevard and Ruffner Avenue. As another float turned the corner, a small house fell from it, which stopped the parade while it was restored to its proper position.

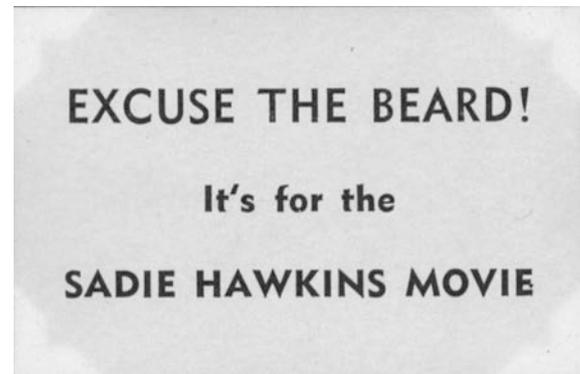
During halftime, the Zeta Kappa fraternity float received the *Gazette* trophy for the second year for its depiction of the Kickapoo Joy Juice plant "Dun Convorted to Ha D & E Col." Alpha Mu sorority received second place for its float featuring a cage of animals. Although sophomore Irene Szelonski was named Daisy Mae, freshman contender Nancy Dixon kept "real Dogpatch tradition" by going barefoot in spite of the cold and muddy field. Phi Lambda Tau once again sponsored the Dogpatch Drag, held at the Christopher Columbus Lodge near the Daniel Boone Hotel.²³

Morris Harvey students did not have to wait a whole year to celebrate Sadie Hawkins Day again. In early April 1951, the college received a letter from Al Capp's brother Jerome informing Morris Harvey that the college had been selected to appear in Paramount Pictures short film on Sadie Hawkins Day.

I know that you share my excitement and pleasure. Besides being pleased about the whole program I take personal pleasure and I'm sure Al does too, in having Morris Harvey chosen because we recall with warmth the friendship of the student body, the regular kind of a person your president Dr. Leonard Riggleman is, and the zip and dash of the last Sadie Day that Al and I witnessed in 1946.

...

All of you are taking on a Herculean task in so short a time. I assure you, however, that the fun and the value to the college, to the community, and to Sadie Hawkins Day will be worth immeasurably more than the sweat and the fret that will go into it.²⁴



Badge worn by male students preparing for the Sadie Hawkins Day film. Alonzo Johnson Jr. Scrapbook

With filming scheduled for May 9-11, work began with the organization of several committees comprised of students, administration, and faculty. Student Council President Jim McIntyre called for male students to grow beards and asked, for those with jobs, that their employers not penalize them for being unshaven. As the beards of about 125 males students grew, they began wearing badges stating, "Excuse the beard! It's for the Sadie Hawkins Movie."²⁵

A student assembly held on April 27 elected 32 supporting name characters. A separate assembly held on May 1 chose six candidates each for Li'l Abner (Robert Robinson, Robert Titcher, Leon McCoy, Tom Tabor, Preston King, and James Karr) and Daisy Mae (Mary Lou Pauley, Jo Ann Pauley, Jo Ann Dodd, Irene Szelonski, Nancy Dixon, and Betty McGrew Surette), with Leon McCoy and Nancy Dixon being elected two days later.²⁶

Justin Herman, who had produced movie shorts for Paramount for several years and would direct this

film, arrived the Sunday before filming. Working with production manager Edgar Fay and local individuals, he finalized details on locations and script.

On Wednesday, May 9, filming took place at the recently opened Coonskin Park. With the Dogpatch Square Dance the first scene to be shot, students spent four hours and ten retakes dancing at the park

pavilion to the music of Sleepy Jeffers and the Dogpatch Mountaineers.²⁷ The dance was followed by the race, for which Jim McIntyre had asked fellow students to bring “a grotesque mountain costume.” The final scene at Cookskin was the marriage of Li'l Abner and Daisy Mae.²⁸

Sadie Hawkins Day Film

<i>Dogpatch Character</i>	<i>Student Actor</i>
Li'l Abner	Leon McCoy
Daisy Mae	Nancy Dixon
Hairless Joe	Karl Dunlap
Earthquake McGoon	Basil Assaley
Smilin' Zack	Dave Cleland
Lonesome Polecat	Bill Goodwin
Available Jones	John Bowyer
Marryin' Sam	Frank Di Turo
Big Barnsmell	Jack Herrington
Joe Btsfplk	Ronald Johnson
Sadie Hawkins	Libby Cook
Scragg girls	Julie Bouldin, Mary Ann Bordas, Irene Szelonski, and Mary M. Blackwood
Scragg boys	Jack Burlingame, Bud Burka, John Burton, and Marcel Lazare
Hekzebiah Hawkins	Alonzo Johnson Jr.
Moonbeam McSwine	Betty Plybon
Wolf Gal	Jo Ann Pauley
Mammy Yokum	Lois Eppes
Pappy Yokum	Charles Coleman
Fearless Fosdick	Luke Pappas
Ol' Man Mose	D. L. Petry
Global McBlimp	James McCormick
Senator Phogbound	Dave Samms
Adam Lazonga	Panco Cantley
Black Rufe	Nathan Yerrid
Evil Eye Fleagle	Ernest Snyder
Weak Eyes Yokum	Dan Lowder
Nancy O.	Doris Smith
Mail Man	Dick Hill
Stringbean McPole	Denver Garrett
Widow Brown	Erma Brook
Daisy Mae's Grandmother	Jean Maloney
Tobacco Rhodey	Lula Ann Nutter
Yancey Sweetpants	Andy Domitrovich
Lena the Hyena	Robert (Diz) Titcher



L-R: Production manager Edgar Fay, Morris Harvey student Mary Ann Bordas (one of the Scragg girls), unidentified Paramount man, cameraman William J. Miller, and unidentified Paramount man at Coonskin Park during filming of the Sadie Hawkins movie, May 1951. All images from Alonzo Johnson Jr. Scrapbook

Once again the student actors learned about movie making as “the girls chased the boys, Sadie Hawkins fashion, up brambled hills only to drag them back through the nettles for the camera’s pleasure.” *Gazette* staff writer Marcelle Ward used student Bud Burka, who played one of the Scragg boys, as an example of the work involved in the process.

Cast as an unwilling Dogpatch bridegroom, Burka gets himself chased into the lake by Dolores Braham.

This must be realistic. He has to look and act wet; he has to submerge to the proper level below the surface with a breathing tube; and he has to rise with unpremeditated surprise when his captor fills the tube with water.

Getting this scene ready for critical American theater audiences means that Burka must re-submerge everytime director Justin Herman,

production man Ed Fay and electrician Paul Weber say it is necessary.

It is necessary everytime the sun moves, the water ripples or the breathing tube disappears.²⁹

The parade along Kanawha Boulevard was filmed the next day, and campus scenes were shot on Friday with Sunrise serving as a stand-in for the college campus because the campus was under construction.³⁰

Considering the amount of time they spent on preparations and retakes, some students who participated in the movie may have been a little disappointed with the amount of screen time received in the final cut.



Scenes from *Sadie Hawkins Day*, May 1951. Above: Morris Harvey College President Leonard Riggleman with Al Capp. Below: One of the parade floats.



Although the film was shorter than the 20 minutes originally stated, it was largely as advertised, however. Narrated by Al Capp, the short began in his studio and included aspects of the comic strip production before moving to the college scenes. Justin Herman was quoted in the *Charleston Gazette* as having said, "I can assure you that every student will be seen in the movie, . . . but of course, some of them will have to appear in the background."³¹ Presumably that was the case. In addition, the short was to be shown in movie theaters around the country and abroad, which brought attention to the college. Years later, Leon McCoy,

who was cast as Li'l Abner in the production, recalled that his brother saw the film while stationed in the Philippines.³²

Sadie Hawkins Day had its world premiere at the Kearsse Theater in Charleston on November 17, a week after Morris Harvey held its annual *Sadie Hawkins Day* festivities. An overflow crowd that included students in Dogpatch attire came to the Kearsse that evening. Before *Sadie Hawkins Day* was shown, Leonard Riggleman addressed the audience and some of the students who had taken part in the May filming presented a brief stage show.³³

One week earlier, on Friday, November 9, 1951, Morris Harvey held its annual *Sadie Hawkins Day* festivities, again as part of a Morris Harvey-Davis and Elkins match up. Perhaps hoping to out-do previous celebrations, 45 roles were filled. "The entire population of Dogpatch, U.S.A., with shot-guns and jugs," according to the *Gazette*, paraded through the streets of downtown Charleston. Daisy Mae (Jean Ann Rule) chased Li'l Abner (Bob Dunn), with Marryin' Sam (George Spruce) following, but did not catch her man during the parade. She was more successful during the halftime activities that evening, and the two were married, with the P.U. Band³⁴ playing the Wedding March "funeral style." The day concluded with the Phi Lambda Tau Dogpatch Drag at the Christopher Columbus Lodge.³⁵

Sadie Hawkins Day on November 6, 1952,



Scenes from *Sadie Hawkins Day*, May 1951. Top: Nancy Dixon (Daisy Mae) riding in car. Bottom: Parade along Kanawha Boulevard.

followed much the same formula as its recent predecessors, complete with a return performance as Daisy Mae by Nancy Dixon, who had been cast in the role for the 1951 film. Interestingly, a few floats presented non-Dogpatch themes, although ones that captivated the judges. The winning float, entered by the Zeta Kappa fraternity and titled “Television Comes to Dogpatch,” displayed a television camera and crew. Coming in second was Kappa Sigma Kappa’s “Reckin’ Salem Sawsirs,” with male students onboard throwing paper plates (flying saucers) at the crowd during the parade. (The football game was against Salem College.) “Lending a new light upon educational values in regard to the dogpatch curricul[um],” halftime activities included two new features—tobacco-spitting and pie-eating contests—with Jack Casdorff and Tom Miller winning. Miller also won the best beard title.³⁶

Although festivities continued in 1953, set as part of the Morris Harvey-Appalachian State game on November 13, clearly something had changed. The *Charleston Gazette* had been a co-sponsor of Morris Harvey’s Sadie Hawkins Day event since it began in 1938, but whether that relationship remained in 1953 is not known. One thing is clear: The *Charleston Daily Mail* gave as much print space to the event in 1953 as did the *Gazette*, and the latter gave less space than it had historically. For many years, the *Daily Mail* rarely acknowledged the event, no doubt recognizing the connection between its competitor and both Morris Harvey’s festivities and publication of the *Li’l Abner* comic strip. In recent years, however, the evening paper had provided more coverage, albeit less than its morning rival until 1953.

As students in Dogpatch dress paraded down Kanawha Boulevard on the night of November 13, they did not know that it would be the last Sadie Hawkins Day parade. Phi Sigma Phi fraternity took first place in the float judging with “Trap Appalachian State,” featuring a man-trap. Also picking up on the combination of a football opponent/Dogpatch theme was the second place entry by Sigma Iota Chi sorority, “Skunk Appalachian.”³⁷

As part of the halftime activities at the football game, Daisy Mae and Li’l Abner (Pat Kelly and Jack Lawhorn) drew the ticket for the winner of a 1953 Ford automobile donated by local dealer Roger

Dean. The automobile giveaway was a gimmick to sell tickets to the Morris Harvey football game, but only 2,000 people came to the game in spite of a goal of having at least 10,000 in attendance. In general, the Sadie Hawkins Day and homecoming football games were the best attended games, but they could not attract enough people to keep the football program from being a financial drain on the college.³⁸

The extent of the yearly loss in the athletic program, about \$25,000, had become public knowledge during the summer. Several newspaper articles in subsequent months considered the reasons for the lack of interest in Morris Harvey football in spite of a winning record. The school’s unappealing football schedule was an important factor but it was, in part, the result of the school’s difficulty in scheduling home games because of Charleston and Stonewall Jackson high schools having priority use of Laidley Field. In addition to the problem with athletics, the college had experienced a temporary loss of fulltime enrollment in the early 1950s. With the 1954 United States Supreme Court decision declaring segregated facilities unconstitutional, and the resultant opening of nearby West Virginia State College to white students, the push for accreditation became more urgent at Morris Harvey.³⁹

North Central Association examiners who visited the campus in 1953 had identified the subsidization of athletics as a weakness. Although supporters attempted to raise financial support in the community for the athletic program, it was not enough to save the football program, which was terminated at the end of the 1956-57 academic year as not “economically feasible.”⁴⁰

During the last few years of Morris Harvey football, Sadie Hawkins Day declined to its own end. There was no Sadie Hawkins celebration at Morris Harvey in 1954, although the reason is unknown. When the event returned in 1955 and 1956 under the sponsorship of the student council, activities were more limited. Fewer characters were cast for the halftime program, no parade was included, and the dance was held on campus. Although the college reportedly held Sadie Hawkins events from time to time in subsequent years, termination of the football program had brought the end of the Sadie Hawkins Day activities that both the 1949-50 and 1950-51 yearbooks had characterized

as “one of the best celebrations sponsored by Morris Harvey during the year.”⁴¹

1. Michael Schumacher and Denis Kitchen, *Al Capp: A Life to the Contrary* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 89; Al Capp, “It’s Hideously True,” *Life* (31 March 1952): 108.
2. *Lawrence (Kansas) Daily Journal-World*, October 22, 1938; *Middlesboro (Tennessee) Daily News*, November 5, 1938; *The Prospector* (Texas College paper), November 12, 1938; *Milwaukee Journal Green Sheet*, October 6, 1939.
3. *Charleston Gazette*, November 6, 1938 (hereafter *Gazette*).
4. *Gazette*, November 4 and 10, 1938; *The Morris Harvey Comet*, November 18, 1938 (hereafter *The Comet*).
5. Frank J. Krebs, *Where There is Faith: The Morris Harvey College Story, 1888-1970* (Charleston: M. H. C. Publications, 1974), 149, 165-67; *The Comet*, October 15, 1937. Unification of three branches of Methodism in 1939 set in motion a process that eventually led to Morris Harvey’s disaffiliation from the Methodist denomination in 1941. This came after the West Virginia Conference United Methodist Church’s Board of Christian Education presented a recommendation to the conference that Morris Harvey and West Virginia Wesleyan be merged at Buckhannon. Krebs, 183-85.
6. *The Comet*, September 29, October 13 and 27, 1939; *Gazette*, November 4, 1939.
7. *Gazette*, October 13 and 22, 1940; *The Comet*, October 25, 1940.
8. *The Comet*, October 25, 1940, College Archives, University of Charleston; *Charleston Daily Mail*, October 27, 1940 (hereafter *Daily Mail*).
9. *Gazette*, November 2, 9, 15, and 18, 1941.
10. *Gazette*, October 30, November 1, 5, 6, 1942; *The Comet*, November 6, 1942.
11. *Gazette*, November 6, 7, and 8, 1942.
12. Krebs, *Where There is Faith*, 170-71, 196-97, 208-209.
13. *The Comet*, November 8, 1946.
14. *Gazette*, October 27, November 1 and 3, 1946; *The Comet*, October 25 and November 8, 1946.
15. *The Comet*, November 8, 1946.
16. *The Comet*, November 14, 1947; *Gazette*, November 13, 1947.
17. *The Comet*, October 29, 1948.
18. *The Comet*, November 12, 1948.
19. *Gazette*, November 12, 1948; *The Comet*, November 12, 1948.
20. *Gazette*, November 6, 17, and 19, 1949; *Daily Mail*, November 6, 1949.
21. *Gazette*, November 6, 19, and 20, 1949.
22. *Gazette*, November 20, 1949; *Daily Mail*, November 13 and 20, 1949.
23. *The Comet*, November 22, 1950; *Daily Mail*, November 19, 1950; *Gazette*, November 19, 1950.
24. *Gazette*, April 6, 1951.
25. *The Comet*, April 27, 1951; *Gazette*, April 19 and May 6, 1951.
26. *Gazette*, April 28, May 2 and 4, 1951.
27. The Dogpatch Mountaineers may have been members of the Pioneer Pals, the group with which Sleepy Jeffers played at the time.
28. *Gazette*, May 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, 1951.
29. *Gazette*, May 10, 1951.
30. *Gazette*, May 10 and 11, 1951. Since its move to Charleston in 1935, Morris Harvey College functioned without a permanent home until 1947. Even then, the college operated out of temporary buildings for several years. Few permanent buildings existed on the campus in the spring of 1951, and work on the main building was underway when the film was made. Krebs, *Where There is Faith*, 212-13, 224-25, 228.
31. *Gazette*, May 6, 1951. The University of Charleston has a copy of the film *Sadie Hawkins Day* in its archives.
32. *Gazette*, September 3, 2011.
33. *Gazette*, November 4, 16, 17, and 18, 1951.
34. P.U. was Phogbound University in Dogpatch, named for the corrupt politician Senator Jack S. Phogbound.
35. *Gazette*, November 5 and 10, 1951; *The Comet*, November 20, 1951.
36. *The Comet*, November 21, 1952; *Daily Mail*, November 7, 1952.
37. *The Comet*, November 24, 1953.
38. *The Comet*, November 24, 1953; *Gazette*, October 24 and November 8, 1953; Krebs, *Where There is Faith*, 242.
39. *Daily Mail*, June 13, 1953; *Gazette*, July 2, 1954; Krebs, *Where There is Faith*, 242, 246.
40. *Daily Mail*, June 13, 1953; *Gazette*, July 2, 1954; Krebs, *Where There is Faith*, 252; *Gazette*, April 26, 1957.
41. *The Comet*, October 28, November 4 and 11, 1955, and November 2 and 9, 1956; “Sadie Hawkins Day,” University of Charleston, <http://www.ucwv.edu/content.aspx?id=864&terms=sadie>, accessed August 28, 2014; *The Harveyan* 1950 and 1951.

Historical Society to Turn 75

The West Virginia Historical Society will celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2015. The society was organized by a group of nearly 100 individuals—school teachers, college professors,

members of county historical societies and patriotic groups, newspapermen, and professional and avocational historians—who gathered at the Daniel Boone Hotel in Charleston on October 5, 1940. Speakers included Gov. Homer Holt, Phil Conley, Dr. Thomas P. Abernathy, Eva Margaret Carnes, Dr. Leonard Riggleman, Dr. James F. Allen, A. B. Brooks, Dr. Charles Ambler, and Dr. Roy Bird Cook. Charles McCamic, a lawyer from Wheeling, was elected president; college professor Festus Summers of Morgantown, first vice president; Innis Davis, director of West Virginia Archives and History, secretary; and J. C. Sanders of Keyser, treasurer.

News of Upcoming Events

West Virginia History Day will be held at the Capitol Complex in Charleston on Thursday, February 19. West Virginia historical, museum, preservation, and similar organizations have nominated 33 individuals to receive History Hero recognition. The awards ceremony will be held in the Culture Center in the morning. More than five dozen groups are expected to have displays in the capitol, including the West Virginia Historical Society, one of the sponsors of the event. If you are in the Charleston area that day, stop by the upper rotunda at the capitol and see what groups from around the state are doing.

Mining Your History Foundation and West Virginia Archives and History are once again sponsoring Hoot Owl, this year scheduled for March 27-28. The all-night event, which runs from 6:00 p.m. on Friday the 27th to 8:00 a.m. on Saturday the 28th, takes place in the West Virginia Archives and History Library in Charleston. The registration form is available on the Archives and History Web site at <http://www.wvculture.org/history>.

Submissions

The West Virginia Historical Society magazine welcomes manuscript submissions for publication consideration that deal with state or local history-related

topics. Submissions, which should be of a length suitable for publication in the magazine and include footnote/endnote citations of referenced materials, should be sent to the editor, West Virginia Historical Society, P.O. Box 5220, Charleston, WV 25361.

Membership is available at the cost of \$10 per year for individuals and \$15 for institutions. Members receive the society magazine, which is published two times a year. Dues should be sent to West Virginia Historical Society, P.O. Box 5220, Charleston, WV 25361.

If you are moving, please send us your new address so that we can update our records.

West Virginia Historical Society

P.O. Box 5220

Charleston, WV 25361-0220

