

Memories of state's birthday party

By Jo McCormick

Madrid Resident

The memories button has been pushed and here we are back in March 1992.

We're here at GOCH in Grant where we're throwing a birthday party for our state of Nebraska. She turned 125 years old this month.

Shirley Knudsen is directing the choir made up of residents at GOCH, Linda Graybill is at the piano, I am activity director and my son Bryan has graciously offered to (or perhaps was told he must) operate the video camera to record our proceedings in the chapel as our party got underway.

At the conclusion of the concert we adjourned to the dining room where more interesting resident interviews were recorded.

Back to the chapel—lights were off at the beginning of the program. I read a narrative of Nebraska history. Lights come on low. Indian drums (taped) heard in the background as narrative continues.

The choir sings: Buffalo Gals, Old Gray Mare, Oh, Susanna, Polly Wolly Doodle, Skip To My Lou, I've Been Working On The Railroad, Home On The Range and Down In The Valley.

The lights come on full-bright and a large three-tier cake decorated by residents was carried into the chapel by Angie McCormick and her friend Joni Kohmetscher.

The cake started out as a stack of multi-sized cardboard boxes which became an elaborately decorated "cake." The topper was a '125' candle. Decor was carried out in our chosen color of aqua. It had also been our color for our "friendship tree" which had earlier been placed in the chapel.

This tree was for anyone who visited GOCH to tie an aqua ribbon on the treebranches. Our theme song, up until the birthday bash, had been "Tie An Aqua Ribbon On The Friendship Tree." Visitors were asked to go to the chapel and "Tie one on," meaning of course, an aqua ribbon. When fall came our tree was loaded.

When the cake was safely in place before the altar everyone in attendance sang "Happy Birthday" to Nebraska. The narrative continued by noting changes that came with settlement, among them schools and churches. Resident Jean Onken sang "School Days."

Times were "good" the narrative said. Resident Edna Eckberg sang "Follow The Gleam." Narrator related that "bad" times did come, but Nebraskans held on to their faith.

Lights were turned off and candles on the altar were lit. Choir sang "Nearer My God To Thee." Lights back on—narrator continues—the fate of Nebraska is now in the hands of the generations to come while remembering those who so diligently and ardently paved the way. Adjourned to dining room for refreshments and conversation.

See ya next month.

