

# Plaque Unveiled To Honor Cypress Grove High School

It took twelve years, but the day that hundreds of former Cypress Grove High School students and faculty had envisioned has finally come to fruition.

It all began twelve years ago when more than 500 Cypress Grove former students and faculty, who came from 20 states and 75 cities, attended a Cypress Grove High School reunion held in Lutcher, and out of that reunion came the idea of doing something to forever honor and remember the school for African-Americans in Lutcher.

Well, a smaller group of former students reunited roughly two years ago and pledged to make placing a plaque at the site of the former school a reality; and last Friday, December 23rd, several students and teachers gathered once again at Lutcher Elementary, the site of the former Cypress Grove High School, to reunite and to finally unveil a beautiful plaque.

Cypress Grove opened in 1947 and remained open until 1969, and during a brief reception held in the Lutcher Elementary School gym, sev-



eral former students said if not for Cypress Grove, they would not have attended high school nor would they have had the opportunity to achieve success.

"This is a historic day here in Lutcher," said Truman Jacques, a former student and one of the event's organizers. "This school was an economic force. It prepared hundreds to go out into the workforce. Of the 19 classes at

Cypress Grove, you find people that went into the medical field, music industry, the media, became teachers, and so on. We are spread out all over the United States."

"When I turned 14-years old and graduated from 8th grade, that would have been it for me 'Up the road (in Convent)," Jacques continued. "I owe a lot to Mrs.

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Winbush (first principal) at this school."

Jacques then introduced the event's guest speaker Leroy Poydras, who was Mrs. Winbush's right hand man—assistant principal-biology teacher-coach—and a little of everything.

Poydras, who is 96-years old, reminisced about the early days at Cypress Grove and how he and his students would just walk into the nearby swamp to catch snakes and other animals to study, how they started the first football team during the school's second year, and how they won the championship (the first football championship in St. James Parish) in year three.

Poydras also said Mrs. Winbush demanded the best out of all her teachers and she

always found a way to get him anything and everything he needed to succeed.

Following Poydras' speech, the crowd walked to the front of the school to unveil the permanent plaque that was erected and landscaped by James Mitchell with the St. James Parish School Board.

Class pictures were taken and more stories were told in front of the plaque, which is located at the corner of King Avenue and Rear Street.

Finally, Byron Fields, a relative of Mrs. Winbush who lives in New Orleans but used to spend his childhood summers in Lusher, said he and his family are grateful and honored to be a part of the history of Cypress Grove.



The committee responsible for making the Cypress Grove plaque a reality takes a photo with the plaque in the background.