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The annual meeting also features door prizes for EMC members attending the meeting, who have registered for those prizes prior to the meeting.

Registration for those prizes begins at 8 a.m. Saturday, for those who haven't already registered online.

The event, which is well attended, also features a question and answer session by members of the audience with Akins, and the cooperative's legal counsel, Larry Sorgen.

The biggest questions likely will be about the new headquarters, which is slated to open in late September or

early October.

Akins said there were several reasons why the cooperative realized the need for a new headquarters facility back in 2006.

"These same reasons are valid today," he said.

The cooperative, Akins said, had outgrown the facilities that it occupies today.

The main administrative building was built in 1955 when the EMC had 7,800 members and only 32 employees.

Fast forward to today and the EMC has more than 48,000 members and 195 employees.

"We also have over 120 operations and engineering employees doing their best to efficiently work out of an old sewing plant building that was originally constructed back in the 1930s," Akins said. "Our office employees are doubling up in cubicles designed for a single employee. And we have exceeded our capacity to efficiently store equipment, inventory and customer files."

"Our current facility also lacks adequate parking for our employees," he said.

Akins added that contractors of the new facility were given incentives to hire local sub-contractors to generate jobs

for local construction crews in times of economic duress.

"Contractors have purchased materials and supplies locally and construction personnel have been eating and shopping locally," Akins said. "The project was divided into three phases in an effort to promote local participation."

Language was included in those contracts to encourage bidders to use local sub-contractors, laborers and suppliers.

"We also required the bidders to include a list of local sub-contractors and suppliers that they intended to contract with," Akins said.

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Blairsville.

"It doesn't seem like that many years ago that we heard Coach Hardin hollering at us," Mayor Conley said. "He had his own way of letting you know when you weren't getting the job done."

"Just being back with all of my teammates and classmates, some I see everyday, and some I don't, I just want to say that it's good to see you all. I hope that someday you



The 55th-year Reunion of the 1957 Union County Panthers Football team brought many members of the Panthers' first team back together on Friday. Coach Dave Hardin was there and he remembered his boys well. He quipped that they had put on some weight since 1957, something that could have padded the win total for the Panthers in 1957. Coach Hardin, (r), wearing the white shirt and suspenders, is greeted by D.L. Martin as the coach and his team head toward the 50-yard line at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium on Friday. In true Panther fashion, the 2012 Panthers won one for the 1957 Panthers with a 23-7 romp over the Fannin County Rebels. Photos/Todd Forrest

each have the chance to come back and live in this blessed area known as Blairsville and Union County," Mayor Conley said. It has blessed me and it has blessed all of us who are still living here."

As the former players started swapping stories, McGlamery spoke of how there were no face masks in those days and one afternoon he was struck in the face by a punt, because the sun was in his eyes. From that day forward, he had earned the nickname, "McGlamorous," by Coach Hardin.

While most reflected on their own nicknames, moments from game day or the practice field, other moments took place away from the team, off campus, or even in another county.

Jim McAfee spoke of the time that he, Roy Dyer, and Herbert Dyer were each given a whipping across their backsides from Coach Hardin's belt after being caught getting into mischief after school.

"I probably still have a mark back there, but I can't get around there to look," Herbert Dyer joked.

Wendall Patterson brought up the moment that he was over in Morganton one weekend and Coach Hardin happened to be in the area and drove by and caught him smoking.

"He ran our tails off on Monday," Patterson said.

Others like Alvin Dyer spoke of the values of sports and how he wouldn't have graduated if not for football.

Some had no idea what position they wanted to play because at that time, they didn't even know what the positions were on a football team.

McGlamery said that playing for Coach Hardin prepared him for boot camp when he joined the Navy after graduation.

After all the stories were

shared, it was time for Coach Hardin to address his former players.

The coach, who previously coached at Buchanan High for five years prior to Union County, was met with a standing ovation as he slowly stood from behind the head table with the aid of his cane.

"I didn't know if I was going to make it, but I got this stick here," Coach Hardin said, showing everyone his cane. "And I said that I will use it if it helps me get up there to Blairsville."

"There's some of you in here that I might want to use it on," he said. "It's good to be here and I recognize most all of you. Some of you guys have put on some weight. All these extra pounds could have helped us win a few more ball games," Coach Hardin joked.

After introducing his wife and friends in attendance, Coach Hardin began telling his side of the 1957 Union County football story.

"They were a good bunch of players who did a good job," Coach Hardin said. "As far as memorable plays? I would have to say the Hayesville game."

"Their back broke loose and it didn't look like nobody was going to catch him, and Royce Hughes caught him before he scored and we won the game."

Coach Hardin also knew that on the rare occasion that he couldn't get their attention, he knew that in a small closely-knit community that he could tell the players' fathers.

"I just lived right across the road from Tommy (Swartz) and if he wouldn't do what I told him, then I would just tell his dad," Coach Hardin said.

Afterwards, Coach Hardin spoke of his near half-century of working in education, and being a pioneer in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s.

