



### **Dean Sparks - Class of 1960**

“I recall that one Saturday during my junior year the entire football team got together and decided to vandalize Paseo High School by painting the steps and walkways. We arrived in several cars and ran up the steps about 50 strong, yelling and laughing and generally having a wild time in anticipation of this great trick we were playing on the students of Paseo, many of whom were friends. Suddenly, we were confronted by the school janitor who told us to go home. We did!

That's what it was like to be a juvenile delinquent in those days. Actually, I suspect most of us were relieved that we didn't have to face our parents or our conscience when we were caught!

As a senior, I remember the first, and only, time I drank a beer and played poker, at a friend's house. I didn't like the beer and didn't win at poker. That all changed a few months later in college, but I still really deep down don't like beer. But I tolerate it.”

### **High School Memories**

I lived at 6648 South Benton. My brother Gary Sparks graduated from Southeast in 1956.

At Southeast, I thought the Vice-Principal, Mr. George Powell, was a very interesting guy. It was clear to me even then that he tried hard to appear to be a severe disciplinarian, which he succeeded in doing, while underneath that gruff exterior was a really compassionate and caring man.

Of course I will never forget Mr. McMillan, our revered Principal. I am still impressed that he sang "The Lord's Prayer" at some school sponsored events. Adults weren't afraid that religion would somehow warp our minds. It is also clear to me now, as it wasn't then, that they and all the staff cared deeply that their investments of their lives in us would bear good fruit. I think they would be pleased with the results.

Mr. Martin (Chemistry) taught me that preparation and effort were required to be successful. Mr. Carpenter (History) confirmed that that was true. I also learned that the amount of effort one puts into something correlates directly with how interesting it is.

I know that many of our teachers had served in WWII. I was told that Mr. Hanan was a survivor of the Bataan Death March. That knowledge began my appreciation for the sacrifices made by so many for our freedom.

I was involved in so many school and outside activities and sports that I don't remember how we had time for education. The strangest activity was my membership on the golf team. We got our pictures taken for the yearbook, but I swear we never swung a golf club. Perhaps my memory is fuzzy, but my current ability on the golf course would seem to confirm that I didn't play in high school, or any other time for that matter.

I don't remember any current events having a noticeable impact on our school life, although I'm sure they did. In hindsight though, it is clear that the education and experiences of our teachers and parents, and the values they learned and tried to instill in us, made a profound and positive difference in our lives, both during school and afterward.

I spent most of my time with my girlfriend, playing sports and working part-time in my dad's Town Topic restaurant business, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year (2012).

### **After High School**

I attended Kansas State University, intending to be a nuclear engineer. It didn't take me long to realize that those lessons I should have learned in high school (preparation and hard work) were necessary to be successful. I switched to business administration my sophomore year and I gradually learned that lesson and took it to heart. I went on to get an MBA from Columbia University Graduate School of Business and began a life-long career in accounting and finance.

I passed the CPA exam in 1966 and in 1968 began a dream job with Trans World Airlines in internal audit management, traveling the world, and then was assigned as finance manager for the UK and was transferred to London for almost three years. I met my wife Christine there, and we moved to Kansas City in 1974. The dream job continued in various

accounting positions and when I left TWA in 1985, I directed the sales of used aircraft and purchasing and sale of maintenance and airport services from/to other airlines all over the world. After a brief sojourn in the restaurant industry, I started my own accounting and consulting practice from which I retired completely in 2010.

I have been active in planning and participating in our Class of 1960 reunions, which occur at least every five years. They are well attended and lots of fun. I am also on the board of the Southeast High School Alumni Association, Inc., a terrific group of graduates who hold their memories of Southeast High School as dear to their hearts as I do.

For younger graduates, learn that preparation and hard work are essential for success in anything. For the older alumni, teach these lessons to those that follow, and pray for them.

That's enough. I can't spend all my retirement writing this. I have to get to the beach!