



Elbert Minor – Class of 1943

“I remember the first year of high school being confusing. We were not used to changing classes or living out of a locker.

Our days in high school were very different than today. There were no discipline problems. There was respect. Dr. Spock was not on the scene yet. I am not sure about high school, but I remember that in grade school they would not hire a female teacher if she was married. She would have taken the job from a man when she really did not need it. Of course, during the war, they had to hire women teachers. Southeast had all white students. It was against the law to integrate back then. The black students had their own schools. Lincoln was the black high school. “

High School Memories

I lived at 5826 Brooklyn. I was only 12 when I started at Southeast as a freshman in 1939. We had 7 grades in elementary school and 4 grades in high school. I graduated in 1943 when I was 16. I was in the first class to attend all 4 years at Southeast. Paseo and Central High Schools were crowded when Southeast was built. (My wife, Mary, went to Paseo.) They were pretty flexible about which school you attended. I went to Southeast because I had a ride with a neighbor. Most everyone walked or rode bicycles to school. There was a bus for the disabled students.

I remember that Southwest was our rival school. We called them the “silk stockings.”

December 1941, World War II affected the entire world. Many older students enlisted in the service. The war eliminated a lot of activities, planning and choices. Everything was on hold until the war was over. Parents worried that their boys would go to war. They worried that their daughters would go with a boy who was going to war. Before World War II, people graduated and started their lives in the same area. After the war, people scattered more. Like today, when children go away to college, they often will not come home to settle down. Also, growing up in the depression taught us lessons. Unemployment in the 1930s was 25%.

Away from school, I worked at Gateway Sporting Goods. We got our Social Security cards at 16 and went to work. I started in the mail order department

stocking shelves. The PlaMor had ice skating, roller skating and big bands. We would go downtown for dinner and a show. You would meet friends at Emery Birds or Jones.

Memorable Classes and Teachers:

Jess Cross – Track coach. I learned more about life from him than anyone.

Ed Thelen – Football coach. He taught civics.

Laury – Basketball coach.

Miss Grimes – English teacher.

Berle Adams – Math teacher. He went into World War II.

Harry McMillan would stand at a second floor window and watch to see which students lit cigarettes.

After Graduation

I had a full-time job waiting for me at Gateway Sporting Goods. I moved from the mail order department to the sales floor.

You could join the service at 17 with your parent's permission. I had rheumatic fever my senior year, so my parents did not think they would take me. When I enlisted in the Marines, I did not tell them I had had rheumatic fever. I think there was a plaque at Southeast with the names of all former students who served in the war.

I still follow up on clients from my career as an insurance broker. Mary and I will have been married 60 years in January 2009.

I maintain contact with other Southeast classmates:

- Vince Smiley died recently. When he was in the Navy, he was a torpedo bomber and sank a Japanese cruiser. He received the Navy Cross. That is only one step below the Medal of Honor.
- Bill McGee was the star of Kansas City Kiddies at Jenkins Music. Now, he is the president and owner of Allied Theater Crafts. He must be about 83 years old.
- Bill Harry graduated in one of the first classes.
- Lorraine McClure and Bob Pearson were both Southeast graduates. Bob has died; Lorraine is his widow.
- Ken Welch went to Pershing grade school and was a real child prodigy. He played the accordion and wrote songs. He produced Knighlites at Southeast. He wrote the song that Carol Burnett sang in 1956 that made her famous, "I Made a Fool of Myself Over John Foster Dulles." He and his wife, Mitzi, were writers for Carol Burnett.