



### **Charles Allen – Class of 1939**

Charles gave the Alumni Association his football and golf letters. The football letter has a blue star indicating that he was the captain of the first football team. He also presented a photo of the class of 1939 from the May 14, 1939 Kansas City Star. Charles also loaned us his reunion booklet from 1990 for the classes of '39,'40,'41, and '42. A copy was made for the Alumni Association, and the original was returned to Charles.

### **The Early Years**

I went to Thatcher Elementary School on Independence Avenue. We lived in the northeast area then, but I was out the first year because of pneumonia. I started over at Lykin, then I went to E. C. White School at 47th and Main until 5th grade.

I lived with my aunt in St. Louis for 2 ½ years. St. Louis had eight grades in elementary school; Kansas City only had seven. When I returned to Kansas City for high school at Paseo in 1935, I was a year older than my classmates because of that extra year in elementary school. (When explaining the multiple moves and schools, Charles mentions that his mother was married 4 times.)

### **High School Years**

I was at Paseo for 3 years. I went to Southeast for my senior year and we lived at 6718 Bellefontaine. Changing schools was okay with me. I was too small to play football at Paseo, but I did get to play at Southeast. In fact, one of my most vivid memories was being chosen as captain of the football team. I had two other siblings who graduated from Southeast - they were my stepbrothers, Larry and Kenneth Campbell.

I was the football center, #75. The coach tossed me the ball one day in practice and told me to play center. I only weighed 126 pounds. A sports reporter said I was the best player pound for pound. I was also the oldest player on the team. The football field and stadium were not finished that first year. We practiced behind the school close to the classrooms. We did not have separate offense and defense teams; everyone played both ways.

We were not in the Interscholastic League that first year. We got organized too late, so we played whatever teams were available. I remember playing St. Joe Benton, Washington Rural, Smithville, Central, Rockhurst, and Southwest. 1954 was the first year Southeast had a championship football team.

I spent my time away from school playing pickup football games where the fountain is now in front of Swope Park, and we hit golf balls down the middle of Meyer Boulevard. There was a sand green golf course where the school was built, and the football field was the sixth hole.

I was a caddie at Hillcrest Golf Club at 83rd and Hillcrest Road. That was 83rd and Topping back then. I still maintain contact with my classmate John Hughes.

Mr. Laury taught Chemistry, but he had been the football coach at Manual. I was a "mid-year senior." I took a full schedule the first semester of my senior year, but I only had to take one class my second semester to graduate. I had Mr. Peterson for Economics, a study hall, and two gym classes. Once it got warm in the spring, I only went to Mr. Peterson's class and then spent my time caddying at the golf course.

### **After Graduation**

I tried to get in the Navy after high school. I took the exam. They told me I would have to serve for six years. They upped the time from four years, since so many young men wanted to go into the Navy. They wanted to discourage some from joining. That worked for me.

Instead of going into the Navy, I answered an ad in the paper for the Fire Department.

The first draft was in 1940. I waited until I was drafted into the Army in 1943. With my Fire Department experience, I was assigned to run the fire department in Iran/Iraq. We were stationed there to provide supplies to Russia. Once we got there, we discovered there were no fire trucks or equipment, so they gave me a special service position at headquarters. I remember that we were next to a Polish refuge camp. Some of the women from the camp worked in our kitchen. I also remember trading cigarettes for whiskey.

My life's work has been fire protection – six years as a Kansas City Fireman and 31 years as Sgt. of Fire Protection with Bendix Corp. (now Honeywell).

I was working for the KC Fire Department in 1950, and I was still single. I decided to go to Oklahoma A & M for a 2-year fire school. When I asked what kind of job I would be qualified for after graduation, I was told fire inspections, working for insurance companies, and probably traveling. I was not interested in traveling, so I quit the school after one semester.

I went back to the KC Fire Department for about 6 months. Then I visited Bendix and decided to turn in a job application. I knew the guard at the gate and he got me in with the right contact. I left the KC Fire Department and started at Bendix where I made more money. They had a golf tournament at Bendix and I won.

One day after playing golf, some of us went to have a beer at Half a Hill (now Lafferty's on Blue Parkway). I had had a few and I asked the bartender if he knew a gal with a house, a car, and some money. He said his wife Rose had a sister I should meet. Fern was a widow. Her husband had been killed in the war. She had two sons – eight and eleven years old. We married when I was 31.