



John Patrick Hughes – Class of 1939

“Even though our family was Catholic, my father was practical. Southeast was closer than the Catholic school, and he said that he had already paid plenty in taxes so he was going to take advantage of the public schools. I do not remember discussing where I would go to school. Parents made the decisions back then. Kids did not have that much say in what happened. We walked to school – on the “ankle express.”

The Early Years

I lived at 7414 Walrond. I attended William A Knotts Elementary School at 70th and Cleveland.

- Myrtle Young was the principal.
- Women teachers could not be married. Married women teachers could only substitute.
- There was an “opportunity room” at Knotts. It was really just the opposite. It was for slow learners. Once you got in, you never got out.
- We had 7 grades at Knotts. I skipped $\frac{1}{2}$ a grade, and I went from Knotts to Paseo when I was 12 years old. I turned 13 within the first month. I was at Paseo $3\frac{1}{2}$ years and at Southeast 1 year.
- Some districts had junior high schools. They were Westport, Northeast and Central. Those kids did not go to the high school building until their sophomore year.
- They called the area around Knotts, Foxtown. I am not sure why.
- East of Prospect was the wrong side of the tracks. That is where we lived.
- West of Prospect was more affluent.

High School Memories

The year I was a senior at Southeast, the city limit was 79th Street. If you lived south of 79th, you went to Center High School.

I remember the Interdenominational Home for Girls in the building on Swope Parkway. It was for girls from broken homes or from out of town. It was not necessarily for girls with discipline problems.

I was halfback on the football team. We didn't make very many touchdowns. The coaches did not have assistants back then. The coaches for the other sports all helped out.

I couldn't play at Paseo. Most of the players who transferred from Paseo had not played football there. If you were on the team at Paseo, you figured out a way to stay there. Southwest was the best team. They had 7 of 11 players on the All Star Team in 1938.

I remember we had the prom in the gym. I took La Verne Campbell. She was a great bridge player.

Not much was going on in the way of current events, because the war was not an issue yet.

Memorable Classes and Teachers

Mr. Carmichael – Study Hall

Ms. Latshaw

Mr. Ed Thelen – Football Coach

Mr. Laury – Chemistry; Basketball Coach; he was a nice guy. I was not tall enough to play basketball.

Mr. Cross – Track Coach; he was at Central Junior before Southeast.

Outside of school, I worked around the house. We all did. My dad ran a tight ship. We did not run around a lot. We did not have a car or money. I played American Legion baseball. Pepsi Cola sponsored our team. We had boys from Southeast and Pembroke Country Day on the same team. Most of the teams were made up of boys from the different high schools. The American Legion teams were for boys 14 to 17. Ban Johnson teams were for the 17 to 21-year olds.

I had three sisters who were also Southeast graduates

Mary – Class of 1940

Grace – Class of 1941

Virginia – Class of 1943

After Graduation

I attended Manual Training School. My father thought I should learn something useful. I studied electricity, but I did not learn much. Then I went to Junior College (in the old Central High School building) at 11th and Locust. I studied a general curriculum for about a year.

I was working nights at 15th and Lydia making dress shields for women's dresses. It was piece work. I made \$0.30 an hour plus production. That worked out to be about \$0.33 an hour.

I started working at Lake City Ammunition Plant on December 6, 1941 – one day before Pearl Harbor. We made 30 and 50 caliber machine gun bullets for \$0.65 an hour. I was there over a year.

I enlisted in the B5 program and was called up for active duty in the Navy. I was a pilot.

After the war, I went to MU on the GI Bill. I studied business and graduated in 1948. Then I went to law school. I took the bar exam one time and did not pass. I did not have any connections to a law firm, and I did not want to be an ambulance chaser, so I did not take the bar exam again. However, it was a great education.

I was a general contractor and built houses for 50 years. My family had been in finance and real estate since the turn of the century. They took a bath during the depression. I continued to be in that business somewhat. I also owned a cocktail lounge called the Pioneer Room at Armour and Broadway from 1960 until 1964.

My mother sold the house during the war, and I lost track of my high school things. (My father had died in July, 1942. In fact, I received a deferment from the draft during that time.)