



Sarah Jane Wray Schmalz – Class of 1942

“I remember when we started at Southeast the first year, we had to decide on the names of things at school. We chose the Knights and the Round Table. There was a round table in the front hall the first year or so.

I have all good memories of Southeast. We were good students and got along with everyone. There was so much respect. And the parents supported the teachers. If you got in trouble at school, you would be in double trouble at home.”

The Early Years

I lived at 3702 East 56th Street during high school. My father, Bob Wray, was a barber for 39 years at Jack’s Barbershop at 59th and Swope Parkway.

Years later in 1962, my husband and I moved to 67th and College. I remember looking out at Southeast and remembering what a wonderful school it was and being so glad our children would also go there.

When I was in grade school, I had a home-made violin that a neighbor had given me, and I had taken lessons. Mr. Markley visited Mark Twain once a week and conducted a music class. He asked if I would play the viola; he had one for me to play. I played the viola four years in the orchestra. I think he wanted me in the orchestra, but not playing a home-made violin.

I attended Mark Twain Elementary School through 7th grade. We did not have 8th grade. I started at Southeast as a freshman.

High School Memories

I was in the first graduating class that attended all four years at Southeast. I was young when I graduated – just a few days over 17 – since we did not go to 8th grade.

I especially remember Cecil Patterson. We had to walk quite a long way to school. Mr. Patterson would stop and give my girl friend and me a ride if the weather was bad. I asked him what kind of pie he liked, and he said chocolate. One day mother baked him a chocolate pie to thank him for his kindness, and I met him at the top of the hill to give it to him. One summer, Mr. Patterson went away for some type of schooling, and he came back married. When he was away for a weekend while his wife was expecting, he asked me to stay with her. Later, when he was called into the service, he gave me streetcar money to go to his apartment after school and look in on his wife.

I participated in girls' chorus and a cappella choir, and I was always in Knightlites. I was also in the Girl Reserves. It was connected with the YWCA. I was always very proud to be a Southeast graduate. It was a snazzy school. I am sorry I did not pay more attention to current events and the war. I do remember that all the young men were gone during that time, even when I was about 19.

My children had several of the same teachers that I had.

I had Berle Adams for math – algebra or geometry.

I had Rose McMaster for history.

I remember Mr. Cross.

I had siblings and other relatives who also graduated from Southeast.

My sister Betty Wray attended Southeast.

My brother Robert Wray graduated in 1948.

My children all graduated from Southeast.

- Jan Schmalz 1965

- Olivia Schmalz 1966 (Olivia received the Betty Crocker Award for outstanding homemaking student and also won the DAR senior girl with best character award.)

- David Schmalz 1971

Outside of school, I was busy with music activities. I sang a lot – for weddings and funerals.

I baby sat for money. My mother did not expect us to do a lot around the house. It was small, with 2 bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen. There was not a lot to do around the house. Our family was poor compared to some others at Southeast. Some students' fathers were doctors, and some of the houses along Meyer Boulevard were elegant. I remember one girl mentioning a dishwasher in her kitchen. I couldn't imagine!

I did not have the money to participate in a lot of activities like the socials.

After Graduation

It was hard finding a job since I was so young. You had to be 18 for most jobs, and I was only 17. Saint Luke's Hospital on the Plaza did hire me as a delivery room aide in the OB department. I remember seeing a baby born for the first time. It was amazing. I worked there about 1 ½ years. I also took sociology classes at the Kansas City University at night. Once I turned 18, I went to work for the telephone company and stayed there about 3 years.

I was married 58 years and was a homemaker. When my husband had a heart attack, I decided I needed financial backup. I went to work as a school secretary and did that about 20 years. I started at Ruhl (it no longer exists) working 3 days a week. After 2 years, I went to the main office for about a year. Next, I was at East for 5 years and Nelson Elementary for 4 years. My last assignment was working at Center Elementary in the Center School District.