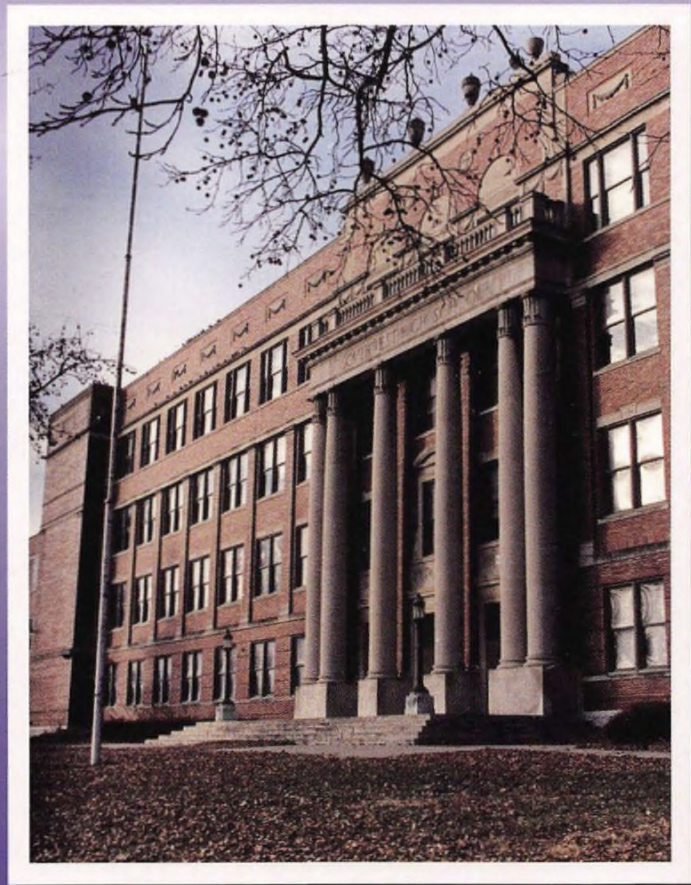


SECOND EDITION

THE RISE AND FALL OF EXCELLENCE

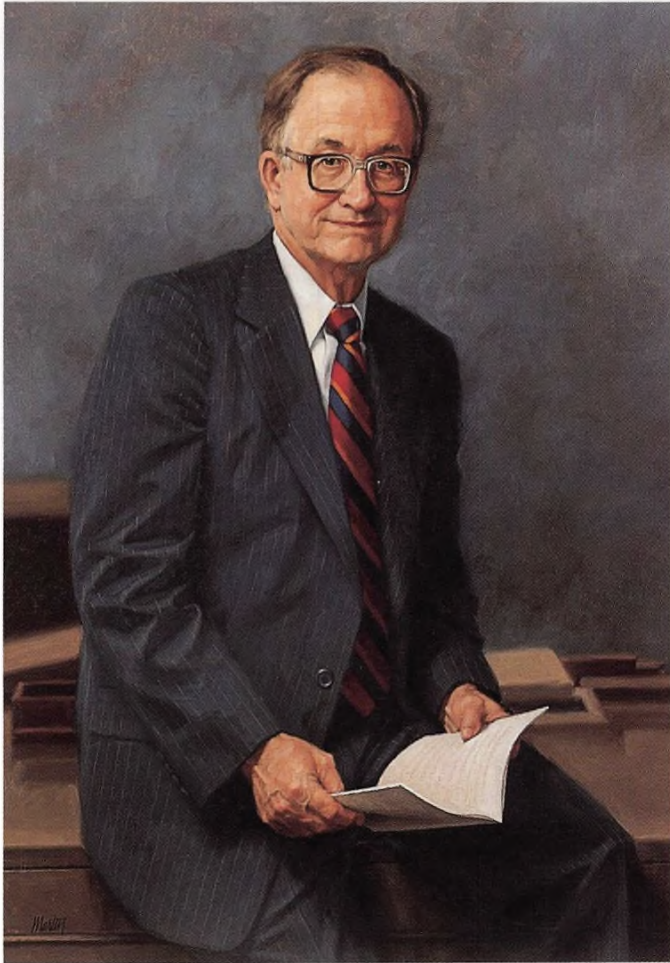
THE
STORY OF
SOUTHWEST
HIGH SCHOOL

R.I.P.



EDWARD T. MATHENY, JR.

FROM EXCELLENCE TO NOW



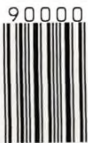
The passing of Kansas City, Missouri's Southwest High School warranted an obituary. Hence this book. It is the history of a school that was committed to excellence, achieved national preeminence, yet at this moment, is no more.

Edward T. Matheny, Jr., class of '40, was a history major in college, a cum laude graduate of Harvard Law School, and a managing partner of Blackwell Sanders, Matheny, Weary & Lombardi. He served as president of Saint Luke's Hospital of Kansas City and chairman of its Foundation, chancellor of

the episcopal Diocese of West Missouri, and first president of Kansas City's public television station, KCPT 19. He is currently of counsel with Blackwell Sanders Peper Martin and a director of H. & R. Block Foundation, Dunn Industries, Inc., Tnemec Company, Inc., Jacob and Ella Loose Trusts, and the Eye Foundation of Kansas City.

The portrait of the author is by John Boyd Martin.

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THE RISE AND FALL OF EXCELLENCE

The Story of Southwest High School — R.I.P.

Kansas City, Missouri

By

EDWARD T. MATHENY, JR.

Leathers Publishing
4500 College Blvd.
Leawood, KS 66211
1/888/888-7696

Special note from The Southwest Class of 1963

In 2014 the Class of 1963 was given the privilege by author Ed Matheny of clearing the way to having his two books, *Rise and Fall of Excellence* and its follow-up companion *Once More with Feeling!*, preserved for the first time on the Internet. These searchable PDF versions can now be shared and enjoyed - free of charge - by all Southwest graduates, their families, former faculty, and the public worldwide.

We encourage all Southwest reunion groups, or other interested organizations or persons, to re-post these versions or links to them, and done so with Ed Matheny's full approval, but restricted to non-commercial or non-profit use. Both hard-copy editions of the books are now permanently out of print.

On the technical side, this project was headed by Vic Damon, Class of '63 website archivist, and with special inspiration from '63 classmates Ron Bodinson, Cam Schutte, Howard Brown, and Jim McFerrin.

Cover photograph by West-Hall

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prologue

Foreword

Southwest High School: R.I.P.

Chapter One: The First Decade; A Commitment to Excellence.

1925-1935 Page 1

Chapter Two: The Challenge is Accepted; “Southwest Will Carry On.”

1935-1941 Page 21

Chapter Three: The War Years; “There’ll Always Be an England.”

1941-1945 Page 33

Chapter Four: The Third Decade; “A District of Comfortable Homes and Genial Living.”

1945-1955 Page 39

Chapter Five: Camelot; “Insist on the Highest Standards.”

1955-1971 Page 51

Chapter Six: Winds of Change; The “Glory Years” End.

1971-1977 Page 71

Chapter Seven: Instability; Musical Chairs in the Principal’s Office.

1977-1985 Page 85

Chapter Eight: The Struggle Continues; “Build It and They Will Come.”

1985-1988 Page 97

Chapter Nine: Magnet School; “A Bad Wizard.”

1988-1997 Page 105

Chapter Ten: Euthanasia.

1997-1998 Page 123

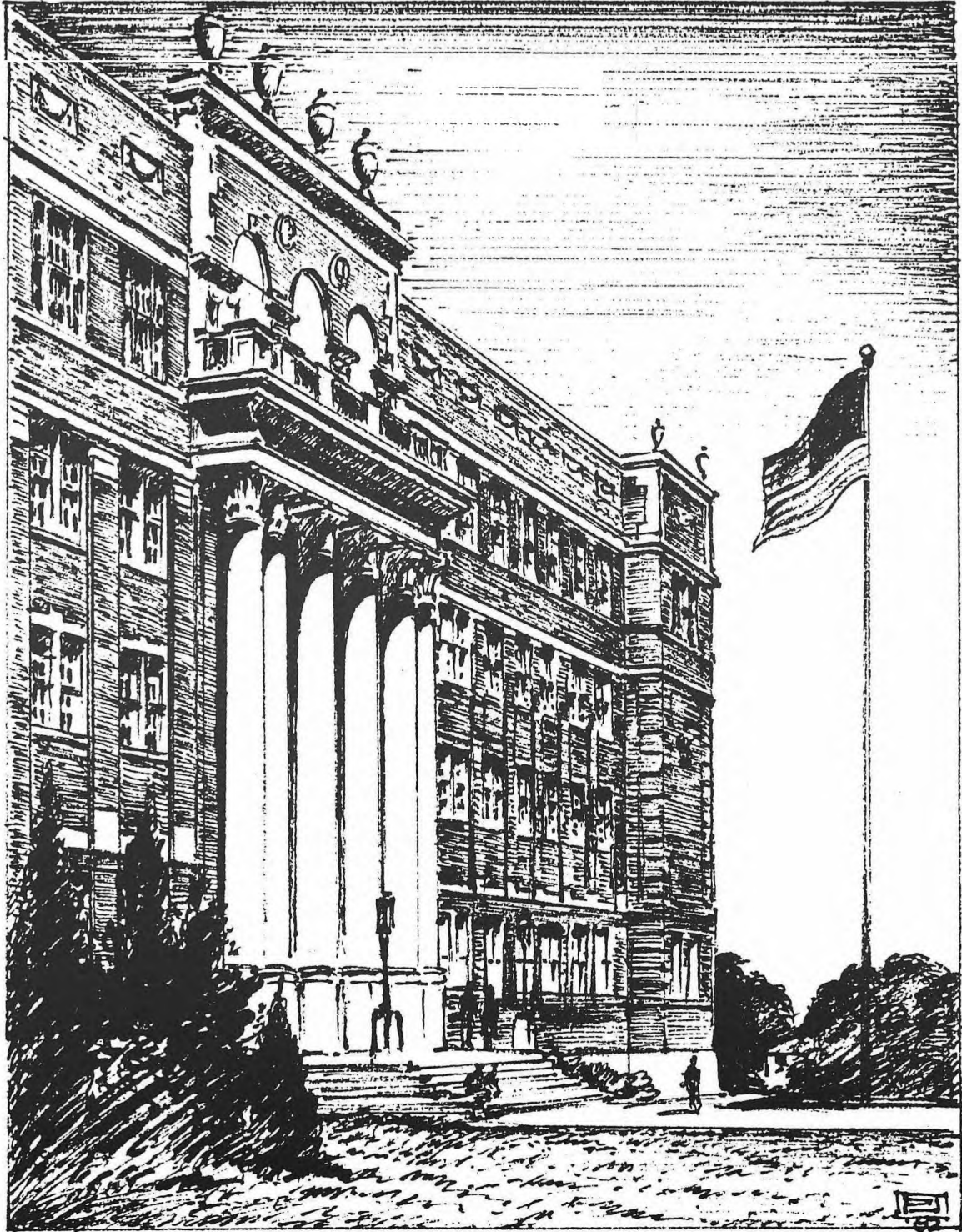
Chapter Eleven: Post Mortem. Page 125

Postscript Page 127

Acknowledgements Page 129

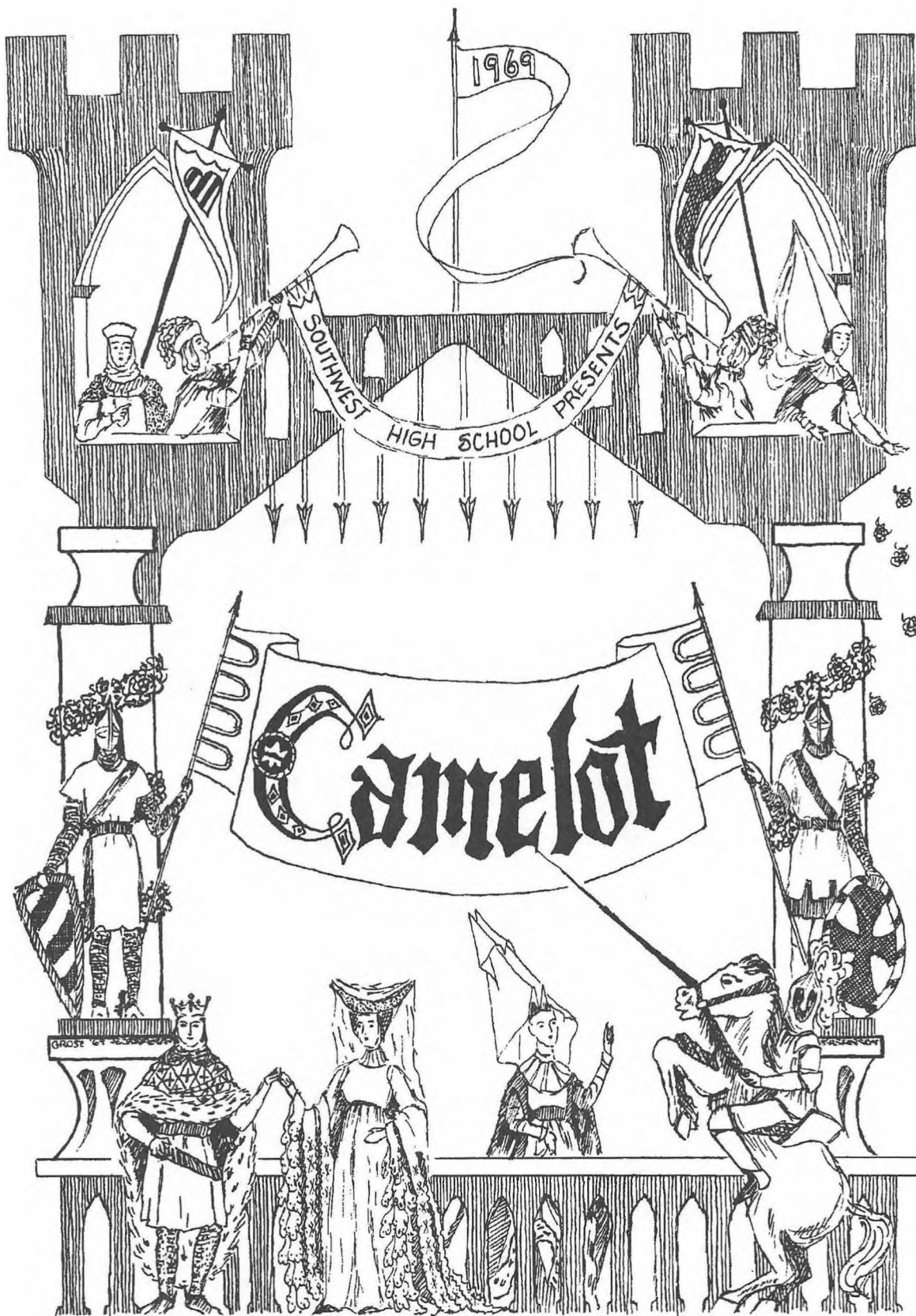
Remarks by Ed Matheny in 2009 following Acknowledgements

Index final 9 pages of book



Frederic James

Sketch of Southwest High School
Frederic James '32



"Camelot" program
1969 Southwest High School production

PROLOGUE

“Everyone remembers high school. And most people ruefully admit that they would give anything for a chance to go back and do it again, but knowing what they do now — .”

Dust jacket, *High School*, David Owen, The Viking Press, N.Y., 1981

“If I could make my life retroactive I would be 16 and reading “The Canterbury Tales” with you, Miss Van Metre; thanks to you I still love them.”

Gertrude Field Oliver, Southwest 1933

Kansas City Town Squire, June 1976

“High school is closer to the American experience than anything else I can think of.”

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., from his introduction to *Our Time is Now: Notes From the High School Underground*, edited by John Birmingham (1970)

DEDICATION

To Hortense Schaller, Teacher

FOREWORD

Constitution of 1875, State of Missouri

“Section 1(a). Free public schools — age limit — separate schools. A general diffusion of knowledge and intelligence being essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people, the general assembly shall establish and maintain free public schools for the gratuitous instruction of all persons in this state within ages not in excess of 21 years as prescribed by law. Separate schools shall be provided for white and colored children, except in cases otherwise provided for by law.”

Plessy v. Ferguson

Supreme Court of the United States, May 18, 1896

“The object of the (14th) amendment was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but, in the nature of things, it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political, equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either. Laws permitting, and even requiring, their separation, in places where they are liable to be brought into contact, do not necessarily imply the inferiority of either race to the other, and have been generally, if not universally, recognized as within the competency of the state legislatures in the exercise of their police power. The most common instance of this is connected with the establishment of separate schools for white and colored children, which have been held to be a valid exercise of the legislative power even by courts of states where the political rights of the colored race have been longest and most earnestly enforced ...

“We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff’s argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority ... The argument also assumes that social prejudices may be overcome by legislation, and that equal rights cannot be secured by the negro except by an enforced commingling of the two races. We cannot accept this proposition. If the two races are to meet upon terms of social equality, it must be the result of natural affinities, a mutual appreciation of each other’s merits, and a voluntary consent of individuals ... ”

Brown v. Board of Education

Supreme Court of the United States, May 17, 1954

“In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

“We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other ‘tangible’ factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does ...

“We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought, are by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the 14th Amendment.”

SOUTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL : R.I.P.

THE CINDER TRACK around the Louis A. House Memorial Field is dotted with weeds now, seats are broken on a small wooden grandstand, and the goal posts at the ends of the field sag in the middle. But athletic triumphs and school pride live on there in memory, ever young and strong.

The class of 1955 erected the brick gateway to the field, and installed there a plaque dedicated to the legendary Coach House. Inside the seven-foot-high chain link fence surrounding the field stands an inoperative concrete drinking fountain, a gift of the class of 1930. Outside the fence is a flagpole, with these words at its base:

"In grateful memory of Louis A. House, who coached football, basketball and track at Southwest High School, 1925-1955. His teams were perennial city champions. Thanks to President Truman, the stones in this monument were from the original White House prior to 1812 and were recovered in the course of extensive reconstruction during President Truman's administration."

"Inscribed by the Class of 1935"

The high school building, source of countless other achievements, lies to the east of the field. It is shut and empty now. The rooms are still there ... rooms where dedicated teachers once presided over attentive classes gather dust, and where a plaque was installed on the wall of room 205 that read:

"Pictures in this room were contributed by the pupils of Miss Sara Van Metre whose inspirational interpretation of English Literature in this school during the years 1925-1942 greatly enriched their lives."

Halls are no longer noisy, but silent. Southwest High School is closed. The sign in front of the empty building, a gift of the class of 1975, proclaims it to be "Southwest High School — Home of the Indians."

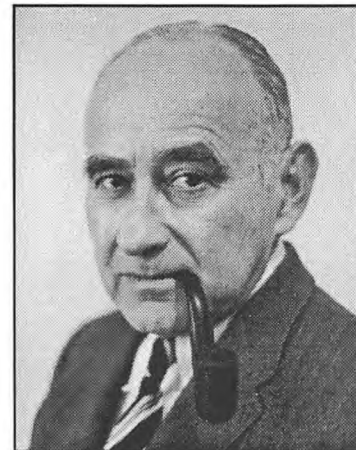
Rest in peace.



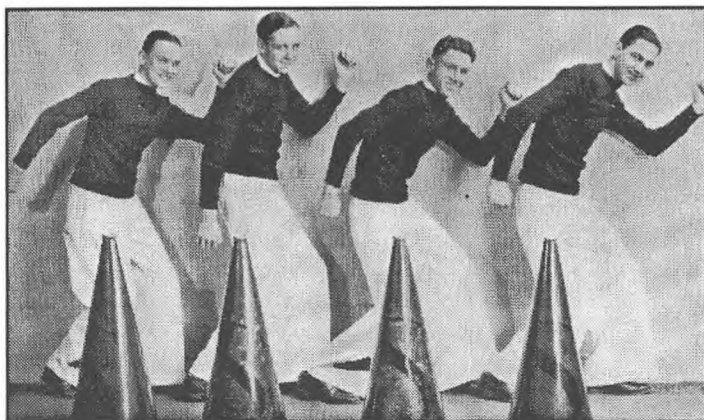
Fowler Hamilton '27
Rhodes Scholar



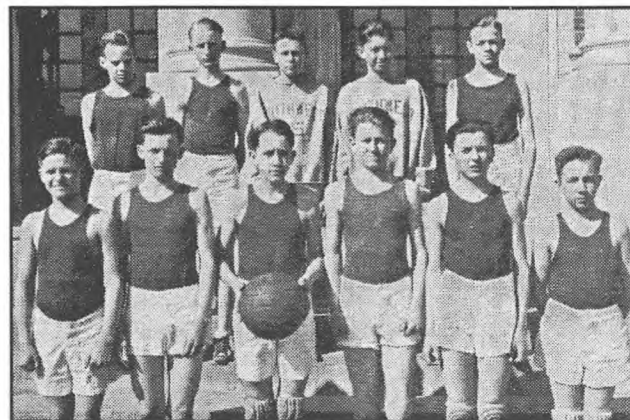
Lawrence Kimpton '27
Chancellor University of Chicago



Meyer Friedman '27
Director
Brunn Cardiovascular Institute



Southwest cheerleaders, 1925-1926.



Southwest Midgets, 1926



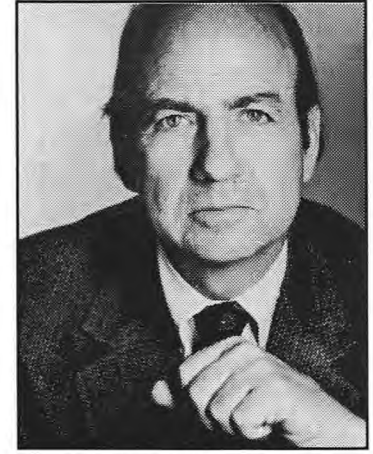
Country Club Field Day, 1930. *Photo courtesy of Wilborn & Associates Photographers*



Sara Van Metre
English Literature
1925-1943



Louis A. House
Coach 1925-1954



Calvin Trillin '53
Author and Columnist

Southwest's first girlcheerleaders were on the 1946-1947 squad. Left to right: Ray Rieling, Mary Gillham, Davis Roach, Louise Changnon, Bob Quaintance and Barbara Tindall Weary.

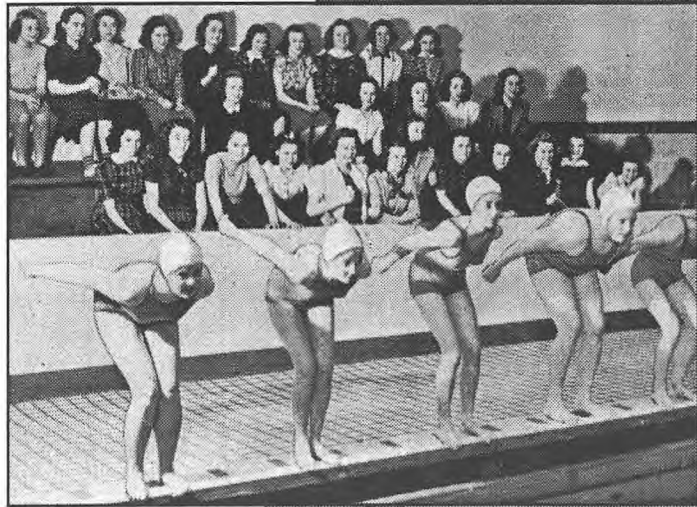
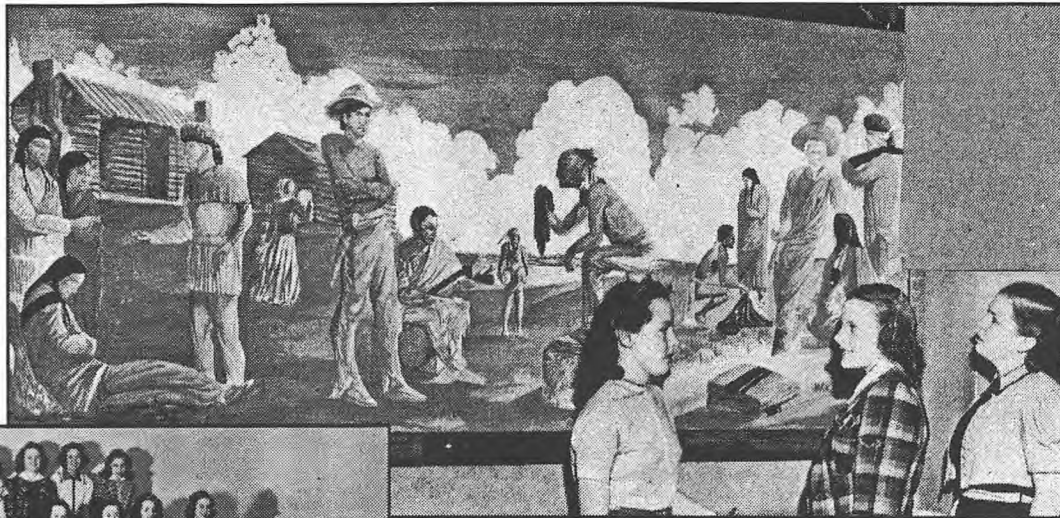


Emil Schutel and Bob Danneberg finish one-two in 100-yard dash.
Interscholastic League meet, 1947.



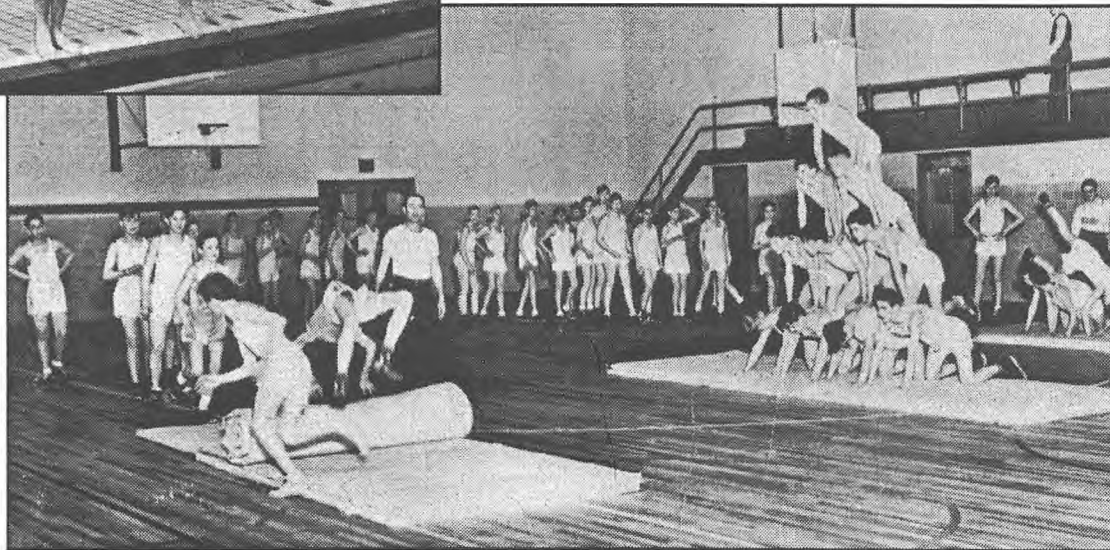
W. Lawrence Cannon '71
Principal 1950-1971

Drinking fountain mural by Jack O'Hara '38, admired by Patricia Patzer, Frances Jones, Betty Munson.
Kansas City Star, May 7, 1939.



One of the principal features of the new annex was a tile swimming pool. A class of girl gym students watched while experienced student swimmers poised for a dive.
Kansas City Star, May 9, 1939.

Boys' gym class
*Kansas City Star
 May 7, 1939*



Through the windows in the background of the cafeteria can be seen some of the Southwest faculty members, privileged to eat in a glassed-in room. As shown by the girls facing the camera, students could talk and laugh uninhibited. At the table in the foreground (left to right) Stella Azar, Harriet Sharp, Marie Bono, Dorothy Burke, Shirley Evans and Bonnie Ann McDonnell. Standing in right rear background is little Alice Bryan.

Kansas City Star, May 9, 1939.

CHAPTER ONE

The First Decade — A Commitment to Excellence

SOUTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL was built on 15 acres of farmland, a former corn field, purchased from Charles W. Armour in 1922 for \$75,000. To the south there was no 67th Street ... only a long lane leading from Wornall Road to the farmhouse of the Elbert H. Peabody family, still standing at 6740 Pennsylvania.

The new school was originally to be called “Armour High School” (for many years a boiler in the power plant bore that inscription), but the name “Southwest” was finally chosen, not only because of its location in the city, but also because it lay on the Santa Fe Trail along which had traveled prairie schooners, Indian tribes and herds of cattle en route to the great Southwest.

Construction began in November 1924 ... an institution of learning to accommodate the many southside students graduating from neighboring elementary schools.

Real estate developer J.C. Nichols laid the cornerstone on June 11, 1925; its contents included a list of the members of the board of education (Nichols was one of them), officers of the new Southwest Parent Teachers Association, a Bible, the Missouri Constitution, a United States coin, and copies of the *Kansas City Star*.

On that occasion, Nichols compared the modern Southwest High School with a rustic Shawnee Mission Rural High School in nearby Johnson County, Kansas, equipped with only the most elementary facilities for teaching.

The school’s site was in Nichols’ new Country Club District, and a 1925 aerial photograph showed the Country Club Congregational Church, beyond the tracks of the Country Club streetcar line east of Wornall Road. The Sixth Christian Science Church purchased land for its sanctuary that year, just across 66th Street Terrace to the south. Saint Andrews Episcopal Church, at Wornall Road and Meyer Boulevard, is out of camera range a block to the north.

1925-1926

In the fall of 1925, 951 boys and girls entered an unfinished building (700 had been expected) ... it would be five weeks before the structure was completed. Mary White Scott recalled how bare the classrooms looked without blackboards. There were no window shades either; the only windows were on the east side of the building, and the temperature topped 100 degrees the first two weeks. However, a school emblem of tile was inlaid on the front hall floor ... an enduring feature.

A.H. Monsees, the first principal, earlier had been principal of the William Cullen Bryant

elementary school, a few blocks north on Wornall Road, and many of the entering classes that year had attended Bryant.

There would be stability among the original faculty. Most of the first teachers remained at Southwest until retirement many years later, and they included such fixtures as Sara Van Metre, English; Katherine Morgan, Latin; Louis House, Physical Training; S.C. See, Chemistry and General Science; Naomi Simpson, English and History; Sanford Snell, Mathematics; Esther Schroer, English; James S. McKee, Mathematics and History; Carolyn Atwood, Algebra; and Cora Buxton, Study Hall. Joseph G. Bryan was listed as a Science teacher the first year.

Anna Larson taught Southwest typing classes without typewriters, much like River City's "Music Man" and his fictitious band instruments. She later recalled that "we talked about typing for three weeks." When the typewriters finally arrived, "The students were so thrilled to be actually typing that they didn't notice how high were the cafeteria tables on which some of the machines had been placed."

The students named the school newspaper *The Southwest Trail*. Future Rhodes Scholar Fowler Hamilton, a junior, was the first editor-in-chief, and future University of Chicago chancellor and chief administrative officer for the atom bomb project, Lawrence Kimpton, another junior, was a reporter. An editorial in the first issue (priced at 5 cents) urged students to take care of their brand new desks and behave themselves on the streetcar. The first year of its existence, the *Trail* was awarded first place in the Missouri Interscholastic Press Association contest in Columbia, Missouri.

The name *Sachem* was chosen for the yearbook. It was proposed by E. Stanley Field, Jr., senior class secretary, who explained:

"I submitted the name because it embodies three qualities, dignity, fitness and distinction. It seemed to preserve the pioneer tang suggested by The Southwest Trail ... The literal dictionary definition is 'A North American Indian Chieftain.' "

The freshman class of 327 was Southwest's largest class. The freshman class president was Fowler Hamilton's cousin, Thomas R. Hamilton ... later Dr. Hamilton.

* * * * *

There were no school traditions ... the student body all came from other schools, but they adopted their new alma mater with enthusiasm and established their own traditions. One was a commitment to excellence.

* * * * *

A school library was started: a 25-volume set of the International Encyclopedia and two International Webster's Dictionaries, on the shelves of the study hall where they were "easily accessible to all students."

Girls' gym "costumes" were chosen: black flannel knickers, black flannel sleeveless jacket, white sport blouse, black Windsor tie, three-quarter black stockings, and black and white tennis shoes.

Girls played baseball, basketball, tennis and volley ball, and ran the track, but there was no interscholastic competition in girls' sports in Kansas City schools.

The Parent Teachers Association, destined to be a staunch supporter, got underway at once. The PTA Executive Board held its first regular meeting on October 9.

An ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) battalion was immediately established at Southwest. The Kansas City ROTC regiment was formed in January 1917, by the United States War Department, with units at Westport, Manual and Lincoln high schools. Northeast and Lathrop high school battalions were added in 1924, and East and Paseo would join in 1927. Initially, cadets wore gray

uniforms modeled after those at West Point. Students who could not afford the \$16.25 purchase price could rent uniforms for \$1.50. After 1927, all cadet uniforms were furnished free of charge.

* * * * *

Louis A. House, who had coached the Tigers of Westport High School, was reassigned to Southwest. When uniforms failed to arrive in time for the first football game, House called a sporting goods store to outfit the team. Only orange jerseys were available in sufficient quantity, so that was what he ordered. It was decided that black went well with orange, and Southwest High School had its “Halloween” school colors.

The *Trail* later explained the significance, attributed after the fact, of the colors:

“The orange of our school colors stands for a torch — an everlasting fire to burn forever, the black for its foundation.”

The name “Yellowjackets” was adopted for the school teams, a color-blind choice for orange and black clad players.

The new coach took charge of an inexperienced football team, strangers to each other, who played teams from Liberty, Excelsior Springs, De La Salle, Carrolton, Rockhurst and Smithville.

After the Liberty game the *Trail* reported:

“Southwest Yellowjackets playing their maiden football game were defeated 32 to 0 by Liberty High School Thursday. Southwest should not be discouraged because of the defeat when we consider that our team has played together only three times and most of the men are new in the game.”

There were no Kansas City public school teams on the new school’s schedules.

S.C. See, a chemistry teacher who resembled folksy movie star Will Rogers, lived directly across 65th street to the north of the football field. He served as athletic manager and presided over ticket sales and other financial aspects of Southwest athletics. He also oversaw the vending of eskimo pies in September and hot dogs in November, at the games. He would maintain an active interest in school athletics throughout his long tenure at Southwest.

* * * * *

A Student Council was formed, as the “connecting link” between faculty and student body. They passed a resolution against smoking within two blocks of the school and, although Prohibition was the law of the land, condemned student consumption of liquor. They also instituted one-way traffic on the stairs to relieve congestion in the halls: “up on the left, down on the right.”

From the start, students were urged to enter the annual essay contest of the Sons of the American Revolution. Students from all of the high schools competed for gold, silver and bronze medals. The subject that first year: “The Part Women Played in the Establishment of American Independence.” Entries were to be no less than 1776 words and no more than 1925.

The Women’s Christian Temperance Union also solicited entries for its annual contest. The subject for juniors and seniors was “Preparation for Life Work and Tobacco Smoking”; freshmen and sophomores were to discuss “What My Father (or Mother or Older Friend) Has Told Me About the Harm Done by Alcoholic Drinks Before Prohibition.”

The Red Cross fund drive went “over the top;” pledges of \$489 exceeded the goal of \$460.

A Boys’ High School Club, later the Hi-Y, was organized, as well as a Girls’ High School Club,

which became the Tri-Hi-Y. There was also a science and engineering club which became the Engineers' Club. "The Masqueraders" was a dramatic club, and a Senior Play was presented in the auditorium of Westport Junior High School ... the Southwest auditorium was not yet built.

Students sat on the floor of a make-shift gym for assemblies.

The heating system was finally in place in November. French teacher Dorothy McLeod remembered that "in October we nearly froze." Speech was "visible" in the cold building.

A *Trail* editorial campaigned for a shelter house at the streetcar stop across from the school, a recurring theme. Another editorial warned of the danger of accidents from improperly installed radio antennas ... radio was in its infancy.

In an article entitled "Is Chaperonage Vital?" the *Trail* questioned the need for such supervision. The principal of the Barstow School for Girls had declared:

"There are two things which may be the ruination of the modern girl — the telephone and the automobile."

The editorial writer commented:

"A chaperone would certainly protect a girl from any automobile dangers; as for the telephone, that is up to the girl herself and to her parents."

* * * * *

To promote literature and the classics, literary societies were organized in December 1925: Sappho, Sesame and Veda for the girls, and Ruskin, Baconian and Zend-Avesta (named after the ancient, sacred scriptures of the Persians) for the boys. The societies would be an important part of the culture of Southwest for the next 50 years.

* * * * *

J.C. Nichols was a visitor at Southwest from time to time, displaying a paternal interest. A seasonal tradition had its beginning in December when Christmas lights were strung along the roof lines of Nichols' emerging Country Club Plaza a few blocks to the north.

Also in December, the basketball season got underway with the arrival of two basketballs. House coached 12 varsity basketball games.

In addition to the varsity team, there were the "Southwest Midgets" composed mainly of freshmen and sophomore boys who played in the newly formed Pembroke-Country Day (Pem Day) Midget League.

Country Day School, organized as a private school for boys, was originally housed in the old Wornall mansion on Wornall Road but moved to a campus next to the Kansas line on Ward Parkway and merged with the Pembroke School to become Pembroke-Country Day.

The Midget League was divided into 85-, 100- and 125-pound divisions with age limits for each. The Southwest Midgets acquitted themselves well in the 125-pound division that year but lost the championship game.

Southwest's athletic programs benefited for years from the well-organized Midget League, where youngsters learned the fundamentals of football and basketball. The League's teams — Falcons, Cubs, Bearcats, Ravens — were farm clubs for Louis House.

After the first semester, Southwest's initial Honor Roll was announced.

The *Kansas City Star* joined other major metropolitan newspapers in sponsoring a national oratorical contest. A Southwest junior, Webb Witmer, coached by J.G. Bryan, won the local competition

(the *Star's* Oratorical Contest) and the next (territorial) level of the national contest but lost in the semifinals to a student from Georgia. The subject was "John Marshall and the Constitution."

Irwin Hirwitt displayed keyboard virtuosity by winning the Missouri State Piano Championship and second place in a state typewriting contest.

In the spring, Sappho held the first club dance at Southwest, followed later by Sesame and then Veda. The three boys' societies pooled their resources for a single boys' club dance.

* * * * *

Junior Coen (W.F.Coen, Jr.), a sophomore, was already bringing home trophies from city and state tennis tournaments, and when the Missouri Valley tennis champion failed to show up for an exhibition match, the great William Tilden III chose Coen for his partner.

The athletic and debate teams, their coaches, and the Southwest cheerleaders met to choose a new name for the school's teams. The cheerleaders appeared in Indian regalia, and the name "Indians" was chosen. *The Trail* proclaimed:

"Henceforth any member of one of Southwest's teams, athletic or otherwise, or any person who represents Southwest in competition will be known as an Indian."

The school teams had a dismal first year, but there was hope for the future:

"The foundations for an athletic tradition are being laid at 65th and Wornall Road for a school that should endure, will endure a century."

* * * * *

There were already fraternities and sororities ... 42 members among the 84 seniors responding to a questionnaire. The Pan-Hellenic Council imposed a ban on drinking and rowdiness at their dances and agreed to have chaperones at all parties, moves that had the approval of the principals of Westport and Southwest high schools.

A Junior-Senior Prom (the *Trail* called it a "Promenade") was held in April.

The PTA sponsored a garden party for seniors in May on the Southwest lawn. All traffic on Wornall Road was halted for the occasion, there was a pavilion for dancing, and refreshments included 50 gallons of sherbet and 6,000 cakes.

Westport High School was the site of the first commencement exercises. White was the color chosen for the girls' graduation dresses, and there were 128 graduates ... 65 girls and 63 boys.

Senior college preferences were Harvard for the boys, Vassar for the girls, and M.U. for coeducation.

The senior class gift, an etching entitled "Pont Neuf Paris," was hung in a first floor corridor.

* * * * *

The 1926 *Sachem* chronicled the 1925-1926 school year ... the first year of Southwest's history. Expectations were great, and the annual was dedicated to "a glorious future." It differed from other high school yearbooks in that it encompassed the entire student body rather than just the seniors.

A large number of advertisers supported the first *Sachem* financially; many of them have since gone out of business. The Country Club Plaza was under development at the time, but Waldo was thriving; the Waldo Merchants' Association boasted more than 70 members ... "the largest and most comprehensive business and shopping center south of Westport."

1926-1927

By the fall of 1926, J.G. Bryan had become the school's vice principal and chief disciplinarian. A comment in the first *Sachem* had noted: "Mr. Bryan missed his calling — should have been a policeman." An ex-Marine who didn't countenance any foolishness, Bryan dealt with emergencies while A.H. Monsees calmly ran the front office. Bryan and Monsees formed a team that functioned effectively at Southwest for many years.

The total enrollment was 1,047 the second year. There was a smaller freshman class of 239 ... 78 from Bryant, 31 from Hale H. Cook, 47 from Troost, 28 from Border Star, 24 from Westport Junior, and the remainder from other elementary schools.

The Indian athletic teams were cheered with "Razzamaroo":

*"Razzamaroo! Razzamarack!
What's the matter with Orange and Black!
Rippity! Zippity! Zis Boom Bah!
Southwest High School! Rah! Rah! Rah!"*

On the 1926 football schedule of nine games were three other Kansas City high schools, and the 15-game basketball schedule included Manual, Northeast, Paseo, Central, Westport and East.

The girls added field hockey to their other sports, and were awarded school letters based on a point system. They formed an athletic club, the "Amazons," named after a mythical race of women warriors.

Junior Coen won national boys' tennis championships in both indoor and outdoor singles.

Mary Greef, class of '27, teamed with Marjorie Hires Gage, whose husband John B. Gage later was elected Kansas City's "reform" mayor, to win runner-up honors in doubles in the city women's tennis tournament. Greef was chosen for the Wightman Cup Team, and for several years afterward was ranked among the country's top ten women tennis players.

The students voted overwhelmingly (823 to 2) in favor of an Indian head as the official all-school emblem.

* * * * *

The Liberty Memorial was dedicated on Armistice Day, November 11, 1926, and Southwest students were urged to attend the ceremony. The Southwest ROTC Battalion was part of the guard of honor for President Calvin Coolidge.

A *Trail* editorial called for inter-club literary competition, and in March a plan was adopted for a contest with six events, three written and three spoken ... the latter to be judged before the public in May. There would be gold, silver and bronze medals awarded in each event and the winning written entries would be published in the *Sachem*.

In the course of the year, 16 more classrooms were added, along with a gym, and a 2200-seat auditorium was dedicated in an all-school assembly in March.

Webb Witmer again was the Kansas City winner in the *Star's* Oratorical Contest, and repeated at the state level as well, but lost the territorial competition. He also won the gold medal in the Sons of the American Revolution Essay Contest.

In the spring of 1927, the Missouri Interscholastic Press Association named the 1926 *Sachem* the best annual among Missouri high schools with an enrollment of 500 to 1,000 students.

All of the school's track meets were held at Southwest because its track was one of the longest and

best conditioned in the city. The 200-yard straightaway ended at the street, and decelerating sprinters often finished their race in Mr. See's driveway.

The Public Library Southwest Branch opened in May 1927 ... a wonderful resource for the entire community. During the school year, its doors opened at 8:15 a.m. for students only and at 9 a.m. for the general public.

Zend-Avesta won the first Inter-Society Literary Contest. It would win many more.

A *Trail* column listed the seniors' college choices; they included several Ivy League schools, Stanford, Washington University in St. Louis, and a number of state universities.

The senior class gift was scenery for the auditorium stage.

The seniors voted English Literature, as taught by Miss Van Metre, their most valuable subject.

Llewellyn Elliott, class of '27, was Southwest's first Annapolis appointee. James A. Moore, another 1927 graduate, would be the first of several Southwest alumni to distinguish themselves as members of the state judiciary. The Lawyers Association of Kansas City established the Judge James A Moore Award to honor him for his dedicated and selfless service to the Bar, the community, and the Association.

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The United States War Department conducted national Citizens Military Training Camps (CMTC) during summer vacation. They were one-month camps, and free of charge. Several Southwest boys attended the camps. One of them was Sam Otto, later a West Point cadet and editor of the military academy's yearbook. He qualified as a sharpshooter the summer of 1927.

1927-1928

Enrollment in the fall of 1927 was 1,131.

Among the new Southwest Indians were several authentic Native Americans — girls from the Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas, representing the Cherokee, Chickasaw and Sioux tribes. One of them, Lucy Spottedcrow, was the daughter of the Sioux chief of Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Haskell, founded in 1884 as a boarding school for American Indian children, now offered secondary education. The girls formed a short-lived organization at Southwest, the Sacajawea Club, for students of Native American ancestry.

Southwest, Paseo and East high schools joined Westport, Northeast, Manual and Central (the "Big Four") to form the Interscholastic Athletic Association (Interscholastic League). Instead of continuing to play their games at 17,000-seat Muehlbach Field, built five years before at 22nd and Brooklyn and home of the Kansas City Blues baseball club, the League teams would play on high school fields. Segregated Lincoln High School was not on the teams' schedules.

The Southwest athletic field was officially dedicated in October. New bleachers on the west side seated 2,400, with ample room at both ends for standees. To limit admission to ticket-holders, the field was surrounded by an "impregnable fence."

Indian athletic performances were mediocre, but according to the *Sachem*, the cheerleaders were splendidly dressed and "set the style for cheerleader apparel throughout the city — black sweaters trimmed in orange at the bottom, around the neck and on the cuffs. Trousers were dark blue sailor pants with an orange stripe and a small Indian head at the bottom of one leg."

George Clay, later president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, was captain of the resplendent all-male cheerleaders' squad.

The Southwest PTA gave the school a grand piano.

John Phillip Sousa, the "March King," visited Southwest and conducted the school band in one of his compositions.

No bell rang at 8:30 to signal the start of the school day on October 27 ... an early Halloween prankster had tampered with the mechanism.

The Pla-Mor Ballroom, its flexible wooden dance floor supported by thousands of springs, opened the latter part of November for whites only.

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A *Kansas City Star* article identified Southwest, in only its third year, as one of eight schools ranking highest in the state in scholarship.

A tea for seniors was well attended by mothers, teachers and senior girls, but just five boys appeared.

The basketball team played its games in Convention Hall, a building that would house the Republican National Convention a few months later. (Herbert Hoover was nominated for president of the United States at that convention.)

A new student handbook sold for 10 cents a copy ... it was a 64-page volume of information.

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Junior Coen won the 1928 Missouri singles title and was selected for the United States Davis Cup Team, the first high school boy ever to make the team. Mary Offut, a Southwest junior, was the Kansas City Public Courts girls' champion.

Elliot Norquist, senior class president, won the Sons of the American Revolution essay contest and brought distinction to Southwest as a semifinalist in the National Oratorical Contest after winning the *Star's* local competition. Norquist was prepped by Southwest teacher Bessie Gay Secrest in voice projection and enunciation.

A silver medal and a trip to London with rewards. While in London, Norquist watched classmate Junior Coen play tennis at Wimbledon. Royal Box was not occupied that day, and Coen arranged for Elliot to be seated there.

At the second Inter-Society Literary Contest, already an annual event of great interest at Southwest, there was intense competition in oration, extemporaneous speech, declamation, essay, short story and poetry.

The faculty voted to establish a chapter of the National Honor Society at Southwest. The Southwest branch of the Society was granted a charter in the spring of 1928 and installed its first members. Membership was determined by faculty representatives on the basis of character, scholarship and extracurricular honors.

Senior class scholastic honors were won by James Frederick Green, later a Yale Ph.D. He became associated with a foreign policy institute in New York, after first serving as the student representative at the Geneva Disarmament Conference where he addressed the conferees.

Senior Beron Rousche became a fiction author of note and a *New Yorker* writer.

In an invitation-only affair at the school auditorium, 179 seniors graduated from Southwest. For

their graduation exercises, the senior girls chose pastel dresses and the boys white linen suits. The senior class gift was a flag pole for the new athletic field; each senior contributed 50 cents for the pole's base.

1928-1929

New clubs in the fall of 1928 included Girl Reserves, French, Spanish and Classical (Latin), and a Pep Club organized by 56 students to root for Indian athletic teams.

The school fielded a football team worthy of its natty cheerleaders — the *Trail* heralded the new black uniforms with orange trim: “The Indians will probably have the best appearance of any high school team in this section.” The black-clad team was second in the Interscholastic League, and two Indians made the all-star team.

A guard on the football team was described in the *Sachem* as “a fighter from the bottom of his big feet to the top of his hard head.”

In a 1928 *Trail* picture of the Midget League's 1924 Bearcats were several boys who were now playing on the Southwest varsity football team.

The Waldo Chevrolet Co. took a full page ad in the *Trail* to tout its coach automobile:

“Today's Chevrolet coach, the largest and most luxurious automobile ever offered, for \$585.00”

However, ignition was a problem — a Southwest senior broke his arm cranking a Chevrolet car at a Waldo filling station.

Behavior in the cafeteria was improved by seating girls and boys at alternate tables.

Students attended concerts by the Marine Band at Convention Hall and the Russian Choir at Ivanhoe Temple.

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Ben W. Swofford won the sixth annual *Star* Oratorical contest and then went on to win territorial and semifinal honors and, to the great pride of all of Southwest, was victorious in the National Oratorical Contest in Washington. Southwest students had won the city contest, sponsored by the *Star*, for the past four years but this marked the first time its representative had triumphed in the finals . . . and Southwest's first success on the national stage.

Sophomore Helen DeLano Sutherland won a gold medal in the Inter-Society Literary contest for her elegant poem “Water Lily,” which began:

*“Likened to a maiden's hand,
Pure white —
Pink tipped —
Stretching forth long fingers.”*

The 296 graduates in 1929 were the first to go all four years to Southwest. The senior class gift was a scoreboard for the athletic field.

The *Sachem* was dedicated to A.H. Monsees. “Girls' Athletic Editor” was a new position on the yearbook staff, and the girls' coach/gym teacher was pictured in the annual.

Track was a featured sport for the first time.

1929-1930

Yoyos were popular in the fall of 1929 ... it seemed that everyone spun one; and Cab Calloway's rendition of Minnie the Moocher was a musical favorite.

Six Native American girls from Haskell Institute were now seniors. There were also two freshmen from the Institute.

The Southwest *Trail* presented three special Literary Supplements during the year, contributed by the English department.

"Home rooms" were introduced, and the first 15 minutes of the home room class period were devoted to school business: elections, athletic ticket sales, charity campaigns and other matters of general interest.

Student savings accounts were encouraged. Each home room had a cashier and a banking officer, and *Trail* articles reported on the percent of the student body participating, the amount on deposit, and compared Southwest's thriftiness with other city schools'. The minimum deposit was 25 cents.

The *Trail* published a list of the college scholarships available to deserving Southwest students, and recent winners. The November 14, 1929 issue announced that Paul Sturm of the class of '29 was now a scholarship student at Yale. He later was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

The 1929 football team was, according to the *Sachem*, "the scrappiest and best so far," and placed two on the all-star team. It was awarded the Dartmouth Cup, offered by local Dartmouth alumni for the team with the best combined football and scholastic record.

J.C. Nichols proudly showed members of the school's Spanish, Art and History classes through his new Plaza Theater, opened the previous October. A dog named Rin Tin Tin was Hollywood's biggest box office draw in 1926, but Al Jolson and "The Jazz Singer" had introduced sound to motion pictures in 1927, and much was expected of Nichols' "talkie" movie palace.

Seventy-five American History students agreed to contribute 75 cents each to buy a set of the "American Chronicle Series." And study hall pupils took up a collection to buy a pencil sharpener.

Students were urged to purchase basketball season tickets for \$1.25. The games were low-scoring affairs; the Southwest-Paseo score was 11 to 10. The basketball team was co-champion of the League, the first Southwest championship in a major sport. The boys went on to the state tournament in Columbia where they lost in the finals.

The *Trail* noted the need for a new school song:

"For the last several years Southwest has had the same school song. This song has constantly been the source of sarcastic remarks and whenever it is mentioned a chorus of groans is immediately heard."

Readers were invited to write a better song or quit complaining.

* * * * *

Southwest students entered the Thomas Jefferson essay contest and placed second and third. A black girl from segregated Lincoln High School won the contest, and Sarah Van Metre said that if Southwest couldn't have the winner she was glad that the gold medal went to Lincoln.

At the annual Interscholastic meeting in Columbia, the *Trail* was awarded second place in the special edition category, and Southwest students won the gold medal for overall best in the French contest.

The literary societies paired up for dances; each girls' society joined with a boys' society to sponsor a dance.

There had been annual field day competitions among Country Club District school children since 1921. In 1930, the Country Club Field Day was held on the Southwest athletic field. The schools presented a pageant, and 500 girls took part in a New England Folk Dance. The program concluded with an exhibition match by the Southwest girls' hockey team.

Seniors were assessed \$1 each for the class gift, the drinking fountain that still stands beside the athletic field.

Francis (Sis) Arnold was president of the Student Council and ROTC Sponsor-Major, the forerunner of the ROTC ball queen. Her parents donated a trophy to Southwest, to commemorate the senior who had done the most for the school. And each year after that, the name of the senior chosen by the faculty for the honor was engraved on the Sis Arnold Award ... a silver cup.

The first Sis Arnold recipient, Kelly Woods, '30, became a doctor of chemical engineering. While teaching at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he collaborated with another M.I.T. instructor on a chemical engineering textbook.

The 1930 graduates won scholarships to Stanford, Harvard, and Washington University in St. Louis. A college education was a prize to be treasured; that year, only six percent of American adults over 25 years of age had college degrees.

1930-1931

The enrollment was 1450 in the fall of 1930. The student body included those who would become leaders in business, professional, civic and cultural affairs. This was a characteristic of Southwest, making it impossible for any history of the school to do more than mention a representative few.

Melvin P. Bishop left Westport High School to join the Southwest faculty that fall. He initially coached second-team sports, and later served as the varsity basketball coach.

Also joining the faculty was Marjorie Patterson, an education counselor, who would guide aspiring students for many years.

Coach House had predicted "a snappy season" for the 1930 football team, and indeed it was ... with losses only to East (a defeat that cost Southwest the League championship) and to Rockhurst. Team captain John Miller was also elected president of the senior class.

A 1930 Southwest *Trail* ad by the Elliott Sporting Goods Company depicted a girl in a "modern" gym suit ... there was no longer a Windsor tie, and voluminous knee-length shorts had replaced the black flannel knickers.

A mixed concert choir of 50 was organized. Membership was limited to upper classmen because of "the maturity in their emotional ideas and their greater vocal abilities."

The subject was "Hedonism" for a Hi-Y speaker in October. According to a *Trail* reporter, he "urged the boys to use their common sense and have pleasure in their youth, since they cannot have so much in their old age."

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The stock market "crash" in October ushered in a Great Depression that would endure for the next decade. Money was tight, but the Southwest of the '30s would not be affected in any fundamental way.

Most students might be short on spending money but the education available to all was the best.

A Gold Star Scholarship Fund offered financial aid to needy high school students. The Association of High School Women sponsored a pageant to raise money for the Fund.

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A new “tardy code” was announced. It enforced punctuality: late arrivals were to collect a tardy notice at the office before reporting to class, attend a conference in the study hall at the end of the school day, and obtain a parental signature on the notice before returning the following morning.

A student’s hair caught fire in Mr. See’s chemistry class; the fire was extinguished by another student.

An annual Theoretical Examination was given the eight Kansas City high school ROTC units. The Southwest Battalion was first in the test for the third successive year and also placed first in the annual ROTC inspection with the highest score ever made in the Army’s Seventh Corps area.

Induction into the National Honor Society was the most impressive ceremony of the entire school year, with speeches by prominent graduates from a stage decked with flowers and sparkling candles.

William N. Deramus III won a gold medal in the Inter-Society Literary Contest for his oration on Benjamin Franklin. He later portrayed Union General Frank P. Blair in the Civil War pageant enacted at the annual Field Day.

After graduating from the University of Michigan and Harvard Law School, Bill Deramus began a railroad career. The second World War interrupted, and he served for three years in the Army Transportation Corps, most of it overseas. Following his discharge he returned to railroading, becoming board chairman of Kansas City Southern Industries and a civic leader.

At the annual Missouri Interscholastic contest, several triumphs were announced: a *Trail* reporter won the gold medal for best news story, Southwest girls placed first in elementary French and third in advanced French, a Southwest boy won fourth in the elementary speech contest and another took third place in interpretive reading. A Southwest student was elected president of the Missouri Interscholastic Press Association.

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By this time Southwest High School was among the most admired college-preparatory institutions in the United States. *J.C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City*, (page 274), by William S. Worley.

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There were pictures in the 1931 *Sachem* of classes, teams, clubs and other organizations ... earnest young faces staring into the camera. They were all white faces; the Missouri Constitution mandated segregated education in the public schools, and Southwest High School was forbidden to admit black children by the supreme law of the state. The closest school for black children, the small Penn School, had opened in 1868 ... the first school west of the Mississippi River dedicated to educating black children. The 1925-26 *Manual & Directory of the Public Schools of Kansas City, Mo.* listed “Penn School (Negro), East Side of Penn between 42d and 43d,” with a faculty of two: A.M. Wilson, “Teaching Principal” for grades 4, 5, 6 and 7, and Mamie Bailey for grades 1, 2 and 3.

The *Sachem* also pictured the six current members of the board of education, all elected at large. Over the years, the school board had been comprised of successful and respected community leaders. They were “people of education, community service, used to money and some idea of what constitutes a well-rounded education for citizenship.” (Eminent educator and former Parks and Recreation

Commissioner Jeremiah Cameron, Ph.D., Penn School class of 1933, *Kansas City Star*, December 14, 1994.) Board members were asked to accept the job as a civic responsibility and nominated by the cross-endorsements of both major political parties, in a process more appointive than elective ... agreeing to accept nomination was tantamount to election. The arrangement, while undemocratic, avoided the expense, effort and potential embarrassment that the current system entails.

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Despite the national economic depression, businesses continued to support the yearbook with their advertising. One ad, by the Siegrist Engraving Co., offered party invitations and dance programs "for fraternities, sororities and clubs." Although as an economy measure the J.C. Nichols Company had ceased publication of the *Country Club District Bulletin*, it took a full page in the *Sachem*, praising the Country Club District where Southwest High School was a significant lure for home-buyers.

The annual Field Day featured a pageant honoring George Washington, a track meet, and 400 gym class girls dancing a minuet.

Dr. Katherine B. Richardson of Mercy Hospital thanked the school for its financial help ... students had saved the tin foil from candy, sold it, and contributed the proceeds to the hospital.

Graduates numbered 323 in 1931, almost evenly divided between boys (161) and girls (162). The girls wore pastel dresses and carried arm bouquets. One of them won the Vassar Scholarship offered annually to a Kansas City high school senior girl. Other college scholarships enabled graduates from the fledgling high school to attend Yale, Harvard, Wellesley, and Washington University in St. Louis.

Johnny Coon, '31, later formed a successful dance band using the name Carleton Coon, Jr. Johnny came by his vocation honestly; his father's Coon-Sanders "Nighthawks," broadcasting from the Muehlebach Hotel, entertained an earlier generation with late-night dance music picked up on their crystal radio sets.

Warren Price, '31, received royalty offers for two inventions ... his combination electric clock and calendar, and a washerless faucet.

1931-1932

One hundred boys attended a football tryout in the fall of 1931, more than at any other school in the city. The team captain had been a halfback on the Midget League's Bearcats. Future lawyer Albert Thomson made the all-star team as a tackle.

A stable had operated on the Country Club Plaza since 1919, and girls' athletics now added horseback riding as well as swimming classes.

A new student handbook recounted the brief history of Southwest and published a schedule of hours, an explanation of grades and grade cards, a discussion of school activities, and helpful hints on how to win college scholarships.

Seniors Aaron Levitt and Wayne Wiley published *Country Club News* bi-weekly for residents of the Country Club District. The boys contributed their \$20 profit from the October 26 issue to the Kansas City Charities Campaign.

Thirty-eight freshmen boys formed the "Anti-Cigarette League" and signed a pledge to refrain from smoking.

The *Trail* warned of a new driver's license law imposing a minimum driving age of 16.

The auditorium had a new balcony and improved acoustics. A dedication program was combined with a PTA meeting.

To cut costs, use of the school elevator was discontinued except for carrying supplies for the cafeteria. The elevator operator was assigned other duties.

An ambiguous item in the *Trail*'s "Personals" column:

"Mary Jane Lunsford won second place in her class at the American Royal Live Stock Show."

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Frederic James entered his penciled landscape sketch in a national art contest. Years afterward, he would present a one-man show in New York, sponsored by the Associated American Artists. And a half century later, he sketched Southwest's front entrance for the 50th reunion of his class of 1932.

An article in the *Trail* by the Superintendent of Schools warned that if a pending levy election should fail, the school system would be "practically wrecked." Of the 12 U.S. cities in the 300,000 to 500,000 population category, nine spent more per pupil than Kansas City. The levy carried ten to one, with a large affirmative vote in the Southwest district.

February 15, 1932 was Inter-racial Sunday for the Girls' High School Clubs of the city. At a vesper service planned by a committee of delegates "from each of the colored and white high schools of the city," a speaker offered solutions for breaking down racial barriers.

The 1932 class gift was the "George Washington Elm," an American elm tree. A bicentennial commemoration of George Washington's birth, it was planted on the north side of the building next to a granite block containing a copy of the senior section of the *Sachem*.

The 356 graduates won a total of nine college scholarships, to schools including Vassar, Wellesley, Northwestern and Harvard.

Five thousand children participated in another Field Day on May 13. The May 26 issue of the *Trail* carried a picture of Beverly Ann Medaris presiding over a pageant in which she portrayed History. Grouped around her were Mary Roth Baxter as Courage, Betty Belle Estes as Truth, Fredericka Boone as Purity, and vice principal J.G. Bryan's little girl, Alice, as Posterity .

1932-1933

Enrollment for the 1932-1933 school year was 1510.

Trail ads in October included one for "Nannette's," a dress shop in the Hotel President where the most expensive dresses were \$16.75, and for the Kansas City Public Service Company ... its streetcar passengers were "Free from danger, liability, traffic worry. Free to study, talk, enjoy yourself."

The Missouri University football coach arrived too late to speak at an assembly, so had to be content with a tour of the school and the library.

Southwest won its first football championship. The team was undefeated and unscored upon. Six thousand people attended the East game, watching the heroics of Captain Dick "Truck" Miller (later an M.U. Phi Beta Kappa) at fullback, and Coach House's son Jack at quarterback. The *Trail* commented: "While Jack is only an average student, he is a peach of a fellow ... " The victory was celebrated with a huge bonfire on the practice field south of the school.

It was the depths of the Depression and times were tough; the minimum deposit for Southwest banking customers was reduced to 10 cents. A sewing class made clothes for needy children. But a March 1933 issue of the *Trail* stated:

“Depression need not be a barrier to a college education for the good student this year. There are many fine scholarships offered by our best American schools and universities.”

At an Engineers’ Club meeting there was a demonstration of a new phenomenon, television.

The ROTC rifle team were the city’s champion marksmen for the third successive year and retired the silver loving cup awarded annually.

When Southwest students won the Jefferson Essay contest and the Sons of the American Revolution contest, Miss Van Metre pronounced the essayists to be “satisfactory students in all respects.”

Southwest was the first Kansas City high school to have a golf team. The four-man team, Interscholastic League champions, played some matches at St. Andrews golf course where the students’ green fees were 25 cents. Ralph Wilkerson, a senior, would be replaced the next year on the team by his younger brother James.

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The senior play was “Tons of Money” and Redman Callaway had the male lead ... portraying “a gay, lovable husband and man-about-town” according to a *Trail* review.

Sometimes news was scarce. An item in the “Personal” column of the *Trail* informed the readers:

“Nancy Uebelmesser, a senior, spent the week end of March 25 and 26 in Atchison, Kansas.”

That spring the entire faculty posed for a *Kansas City Star* group picture. In the middle of the front row was Principal A.H. Monsees, and near him sat a youthful W. Lawrence Cannon who had joined the faculty in January 1931. Twenty years later, Cannon would succeed Monsees as Southwest’s second principal.

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A May 25 article in the *Trail* proudly proclaimed that John Phillips was now “the champion high school orator of the United States.” Southwest had another National Oratorical Contest winner! Phillips also won first place in a violin contest at the Missouri state fair in Sedalia.

The girls among the 289 graduates in the Southwest auditorium carried bouquets of tea roses and blue delphiniums.

The class of 1933 reaped a number of college scholarships, among them three to Wellesley and one to Radcliffe.

Gertrude Field Oliver, class giftorian, presented the class gift at a school assembly: a painting, “Taos Pueblo.”

One member of the class, Avis Green Tucker, went on to become a newspaper publisher and a member of the Board of Curators of the University of Missouri.

David Douglas Duncan of the class of 1933 served with the Marine Corps in World War II and then became a free-lance journalist who roamed the world, his life a photographic odyssey. He was aboard the USS Missouri when Japan surrendered, covered the war in Korea, was photo-correspondent for *LIFE Magazine* and ABC-TV during the Vietnam War, and was given the Robert Capa Award for valor as a photojournalist. He was twice named Photographer of the Year by the American Society of Magazine Photographers, photographed Presidential Conventions for NBC-TV, exhibited his work in art museums (the Whitney Museum honored him by hanging his prints as their first one-man photographic exhibit), and wrote several books. An archive of his work has been established at the

Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin.

In a visit to Southwest, Duncan told students:

"I got my first inkling of what I wanted to do in science classes here at Southwest."

Company "A" of the Southwest ROTC Battalion was commanded by Cadet Captain William K. Jones, also class of '33. Bill Jones later pursued a distinguished career in the United States Marine Corps, winning the Navy Cross, Silver and Bronze Stars and other decorations in World War II. After two more wars, Korea and Vietnam, and advancing through grades to Lieutenant General, he became commanding general of Fleet Marine Force Pacific. He retired in 1972 after 33 years of continuous service.

1933-1934

The new University of Kansas City, a small, liberal arts institution, opened its doors in the fall of 1933, and 50 Southwest alumni joined the student body, largely from the class of '33. UKC would later become UMKC, a part of the University of Missouri system.

Fifteen hundred students reported to Southwest for the 1933-1934 school year. Perhaps due to the economy or maybe because of the quality of education available at Southwest, a number of these were transfers from private schools. And many of the students had Kansas addresses. The reputation of Southwest was too good to ignore. *J.C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City*, p.274.

They were a homogenous student body with similar values and aspirations, preparing for college or a job. They knew that college tuition and jobs were going to be hard to find in the Depression years of the thirties. On the other hand, they could buy a sirloin steak for 29 cents, and a loaf of bread or a pint of milk, or an ice cream sandwich in the Southwest cafeteria, for a nickel.

Dorothy McLeod bequeathed her collection of French books, almost 100 of them, to the school.

George Paris was elected basketball captain, and vice president of the senior class. He would be lost in World War II, when his destroyer was sunk by the Japanese in the Pacific.

Articles frequently appeared in the *Trail* informing students of new books to be found in the library.

The Art Honor Society was formed in 1933. It would become the mother chapter of a national organization, the National Art Honor Society, that established branches in high schools all across the country. According to the *Trail*:

"Organized for the development of a higher appreciation of art and for the investigation of methods of producing better art works, a new art club hopes to become an essential part of Southwest. The name of the club, whose sponsor is Miss Flora Wright, is the Art Honor Society."

Sergeant William Story was the new ROTC instructor; under his tutelage, the Southwest Battalion would reach the pinnacle in city and national rankings.

Because the Southwest Battalion had the best record the previous year, a Southwest cadet was the city's cadet colonel for the 1933-1934 school year.

The girls' literary societies gave teas where officers wore formals and members played the harp, the violin and the piano. And the usual prominence was given to the annual literary society contest.

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Two new girls' literary societies were formed, Ayita and Laurean. Their members were invited to

tea by the members of Veda, Sappho and Sesame societies. Entertainment was supplied by a vocal trio that included Ruth Warrick, a recent transfer from St. Joseph, Missouri.

Ruth Warrick played the role of Julia Cavendish in the Senior Play, "Royal Family of Broadway." The performance was applauded by a *Trail* writer:

"Julia Cavendish, beautiful, enchanting and sincere First Lady of the Stage, was interpreted with deep feeling and stately grace by Ruth Warrick."

Ruth was applauded later for her performances on Broadway and in Hollywood. She made her movie debut in a starring role in the classic "Citizen Kane," followed by a number of principal film appearances. Her career continued in television roles, most recently as Phoebe Tyler Wallingford in ABC's "All My Children" and "As the World Turns."

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After ten years, financial constraints forced the *Star* and the other newspapers to cease sponsoring the National Oratorical Contest. The American Legion announced that it would continue the competition, but the contest lost some of its luster.

For the first time there were "mid-year" freshmen, who entered high school in January.

The Southwest basketball team won the League championship, playing the climactic game before a crowd of 8500 at Convention Hall. The team went on to take second place in the state tournament in Columbia.

Southwest held its first all-school "mixer" in the gym. More than 600 dancers removed their shoes for the "sock hop," to protect the polished, hardwood floor. The "Night Owls," an orchestra led by student Lester Milgram, provided the music ... Only a Paper Moon, The Touch of Your Hand, Sophisticated Lady. The Student Council realized a profit of \$50.

There were honors and awards in literature, art, music and dancing. Three Southwest students were among 25 winners in a national art contest in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

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The *Trail* reported that Rhodes Scholar Carl Allendoerfer, Southwest '29, discovered a picture of English poet Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims "on one of his rambles through England." Sara Van Metre's English classes regularly celebrated Chaucer's birthday, and Allendoerfer sent the picture to Miss Van Metre who installed it on the south wall of Room 205. (Carl was the first American student at Oxford to earn a First in mathematics.)

The band, under Logan Zahn, was the biggest and best ever at Southwest.

The April 26, 1934 issue of the *Trail* included a ballot form, for choosing the most popular senior girl and boy. The ballot box was placed in a first floor corridor, and students were invited to vote as often as they wished, to "stuff the ballot box." But voters had to use the *Trail*'s ballot, a sales promotion.

Wentworth Griffin of the class of '34 was later elected a member of the school board, and Frank C. Lynch, Jr., would become regimental commander and president of the senior class at Annapolis.

Alumni from the early classes distinguished themselves in various fields of endeavor. Meyer W. Friedman, '27, became Director of the Brunn Institute of Cardiovascular Research. A member of the 1929 class was elected to Phi Beta Kappa at Yale, and two of his classmates were K.U. Phi Beta Kappas (Junior Coen was one of them.) There were two Yale Phi Beta Kappas from the class of 1930. And there were other college honors in poetry, advertising, editorial writing, and drama.

A crowded trophy case in the front corridor evidenced undergraduate achievements to date.

1934-1935

The September 20, 1934 issue of the *Trail*, noting that it was Southwest's tenth year, anticipated a bright future:

"May the next year bring greater glories and may the growth of Southwest never cease."

The student body included seven sets of twins. Education was a bargain for taxpayers in those Depression years: the annual cost per pupil at Southwest was \$79.07, the lowest in the city.

The *Trail* described that year's first all-school mixer:

"To start the ball rolling, the girls were lined up against the north and east walls, while the boys stood against the south and west walls. As the orchestra struck up a march, the boys and girls walked toward one another, the lines passed, and at a signal stopped and faced each other. The boy danced with the girl in front of him."

The mixer later concluded with the singing of the school song.

The 1934 football team was a surprising second in the Interscholastic League. Raymond McCanse, later Dr. McCanse, made the all-star team at tackle.

The school day was seven hours long, but students whose conduct did not measure up to expectations were assigned extra study periods ... "eighth hours." Margaret Stansell Hunnaccutt received an eighth hour from J.G.Bryan for throwing confetti at a football game.

The Powwow Club was organized. The name of this successor to the Pep Club represented "a further development of the Indian theme."

One of Sara Van Metre's senior English Literature students was a second generation Van Metre pupil — John J. Foster's mother had been in Sara's class at Manual Training High School. John recalls: "Miss Van Metre let me know in no uncertain terms that my Mother was a far better student than I was." John went on to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania's demanding Wharton School.

The *Sachem* won first place in a National Scholastic Press Association contest, with skills honed by Quill and Scroll writing contests. There were entries from 30 states, including all of the Kansas City high schools. And future architect Ralph Myers was awarded second place in drafting for his entry in an International Scholastic Art Exhibit.

An Aeronautical Club and a Science Club were established. The Science Club was the first of its kind in a Kansas City public high school and the first to hold an annual science fair.

Fairyland Park was an amusement park at 75th and Prospect Avenue, opened in 1923. The PTA sponsored a picnic at the park, as a fund-raiser. Southwest closed at 2 p.m., and students either went to Fairyland or went home.

Southwest's Ray Watson repeated as the Interscholastic League golf champion, edging out teammate Bob Willits. Ray later encouraged his son, Tom Watson, to take up the game.

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A Tenth Anniversary issue of the *Trail* noted that the enrollment of the school was 1,840, and that 20 of the original 34 teachers were still at Southwest. Enrollment had grown with the population of the Country Club District.

Several *Trail* advertisers had faithfully supported the paper the entire time: Kansas City Power and Light Company, Old Colony Book Store, Brookside Hardware, H.F. Meinert Dry Goods, Waldo Theatre, Midwest Typewriter Co., and Burger-Baird Engraving Company.

The 1935 edition of the *Sachem* also published a Tenth Anniversary issue, carrying the same picture of an ageless A.H. Monsees for the tenth year. It was the first *Sachem* without advertising ... the senior class helped finance the annual with proceeds from its class play. The class also contributed funds for a badly needed public address system, piped into the halls and classrooms.

One graduating senior in 1935, Frederick H. Michaelis, received an Annapolis appointment and later commanded the first nuclear aircraft carrier, the Enterprise. He rose to the rank of vice admiral.

Another senior, Charles E. Curry, would be elected presiding judge of the Jackson County Court, an administrative position once occupied by Harry S Truman. Doyle Patterson became a successful businessman and was appointed by the governor of Missouri to the University of Missouri's Board of Curators.

The *Sachem's* anniversary issue concluded with a challenge to those who would follow:

"Thus ends Southwest's first decade. The name of our school is known throughout the nation; our reputation is one of distinction and high honor. It is with pride that our Alumni say 'I graduated from Southwest.' With the present students rests the responsibility of perpetuating these fine ideals, of carrying aloft to new heights of triumph the Southwest torch of victory."

CHAPTER TWO

The Challenge is Accepted; “Southwest will carry on.”

1935-1936

IN SEPTEMBER 1935, a corridor patrol of 65 students helped freshmen and strangers find their way in the halls. Corridor guides also made sure that no pupils went up or down the stairs on the wrong side, and that no one loitered, whistled or shouted.

The entire community mourned the death of Southwest’s popular John Wesley McKee from a head injury suffered in a football game. Johnny McKee was named honorary president of the senior class and honorary captain of the football team, and a bronze memorial plaque to “John Wesley McKee 1918-1935” was bolted to the wall in the school’s front hall. The school board considered discontinuing high school football but were dissuaded by a committee of fathers from all seven Interscholastic League schools who urged them to continue the sport.

The ROTC battalion was named one of the country’s 60 honor units for the fifth successive year. And two pretty blonde drum majorettes were an added attraction for the marching band.

The enrollment in 1935 was 1,672, in a school built for 1,500. The congestion was eased in November when a new addition provided nine more classrooms.

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Senior Eldon Newcomb’s collection of insects, ten cases, was on display in the front hall. Newcomb, *Sachem* editor and Sis Arnold winner, would later become a Guggenheim Foundation fellow at the University of California, a Fulbright Senior Research fellow at the University of Australia, a botany professor at the University of Wisconsin and a prolific scientific author.

A newly organized student dance band furnished the music for the year’s two mixers. Some of the dancers had taken ballroom dancing lessons in Mrs. Glover’s Community Hall studio above the Brookside shops, or in Martha Belle Aikins’ Plaza Hall studio. It was the big band era, and 50 years later the class of 1936 would remember that “the music came first,” quoting in their reunion program from William Manchester’s *The Glory and the Dream*. The new songs: Cheek to Cheek, Goody Goody, The Music Goes Round and Round, and Begin the Beguine. Profits again went to the Student Council.

Larry Winn, a junior and later a distinguished United States Congressman from the Kansas Third District, was chosen co-captain of the track team.

Larry was in Anna Curry’s speech class. He recalls his experience:

“I was petrified if she called on me. Funny thing, I served in the United States House of Representatives for 18 years, where I gave hundreds of speeches. I ran into Miss Curry once, and she told me that she was proud of me.”

Herbert Valentine, senior class president, and classmate Earle Radford formed a partnership that became Kansas City's largest advertising agency. Years later, Valentine recalled Sara Van Metre as "Victorian in dress and manner ... a proper person, if not a prim one."

Edmund Suor received a West Point appointment and in 1941, as a delegate from the military academy, he was chosen to preside over the Institute for Public Affairs in Charlottesville, Virginia. Suor was an Air Corps squadron leader in World War II.

The senior class gifts were another score board and loud speakers for the athletic field, as well as financial aid for the yearbook.

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The 1936 *Sachem* accepted the previous year's challenge, promising "Southwest will carry on."

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Because courses and grading standards varied widely, a national standardized test was devised — the SAT, or Scholastic Aptitude Test. The test was administered to high school seniors, and scores were reported to colleges and scholarship programs. The test focused on identifying the very best students, for admission to the nation's elite universities. The initial SAT results were gratifying for the 328 seniors in the class of '36, and SAT performance would bolster Southwest's reputation for academic excellence in the years to come .

The SAT remains in use today:

"After hundreds of studies and countless hours of debate, one fact about these tests remains irrefutable — they are a highly reliable predictor of academic success. In fact, no other variable — grades, essays, leadership qualities or overcoming hardships — so closely correlates to the likelihood of graduation from a particular college as does the SAT." Wall Street Journal, May 26, 1999

1936-1937

In the fall of 1936, J.G. Bryan was reassigned to East High School and George R. Powell was named Southwest's vice principal.

Both the football team and the basketball team were co-champions of the Interscholastic League. The football team placed four players on the League All-Star team, and the basketball team placed two.

One of the football all-stars, quarterback G. Kenneth Hamilton, was also president of the senior class. He remembers in particular Louis House's use of "silent motivation" during the half of the Southwest-Westport game. The favored Indians were down 12-0, and the coach was displeased. According to Kenny:

"We all went into the locker room and took our places waiting to be chewed out. He came in and walked around the room, staring at each of us, and never said a word. The stares said more than words. Finally, as we got ready to return to the game, he said: 'Those of you who want to play football get out there, and those who don't want to play stay in here.' We won the game, 13 -12."

A senior on the championship basketball team, Lee Talbot, was later killed in action when, as an infantry officer, he led his troops in the invasion of Leyte in World War II. Lee's widow and classmate, Charlotte McIndoo, married Marine officer William K. Jones, class of '33.

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The band was handicapped in a music contest because members lacked certain instruments, and their mothers organized the “Tooters’ Club” to support the band financially. The Club bought over \$400 worth of musical instruments that year, and would be a source of financial support for the next 60 years. They also sponsored a party for 200 orchestra and band members at Indian Hills Country Club.

New members pledged literary societies. Sappho pledges wore green and gold ribbons in their hair, and Veda pledges carried baby dolls.

The *Trail* received Quill and Scroll’s highest possible rank, an International Honor Rating. Budding journalists learned their craft from Thelma Fisk, who taught one of the very few high school journalism courses in the country.

Streetcar regulars petitioned the Kansas City Public Service Company for a shelter house at the Southwest stop, but the company dismissed the proposal as “out of the question,” citing the \$330 price tag.

Robert Scott, later a movie star, evidenced an early talent for acting when he played a leading role in “The Swan.” The *Trail* reviewer commented:

“Bob Scott splendidly portrayed the role of the dashing Prince Albert.”

Scott’s Hollywood career included an appearance in the hit movie “Gilda” with Rita Hayworth.

The seniors once more did well in their SATs. Because the tests were sent with other records to apply for scholarships, they were serious business. Among the scholarships awarded were two to the University of Pennsylvania, one to Harvard, and one to Washington University (St. Louis).

Joe Dorr, class of ’37, contributed a trophy to be awarded annually to the school’s best athlete.

At their 50th reunion, the 1937 class would still remember the hit songs of the day: Dipsy Doodle, That Old Feeling, Boo Hoo, They Can’t Take That Away From Me, and many more. Their reunion program also recalled the end of high school days:

“The Class of 1937 had a prom, though there were so many parties just then that few remember it. Graduation took place in the school auditorium with caps and gowns. Blue Hills Barbecue was among the favored spots for afterwards, and one more sophisticated group shared a long table downtown at the Southern Mansion. The next day we went different directions.

“We had shared much that was important, much that was importantly trivial.”

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The opening of school was 12 days late in the fall of 1937 because of a fearsome infantile paralysis epidemic. For years, in the heat of July and August, polio closed swimming pools and emptied air-cooled movie theaters and dusty baseball diamonds. Most kids were able to go to school in September, but a few were concerned with recovering from paralysis.

The Salk vaccine would not end this summer scourge for another two decades.

1937-1938

A new organization was the Drivers’ Club; it promoted safety and safe driving habits. Membership was closed to freshmen. New members took an oath to drive safely, and traffic violations could result in ouster from the club.

The women's auxiliary of the Missouri State Medical Society awarded a medal to Arthur W. Robinson, later a Mayo-trained internist, for his medical essay. And Jack O'Hara painted a mural, "Early Trading Post," above one of the school drinking fountains.

Robert Milton was the school's enthusiastic new vocal music teacher, grooming the Southwest *cappella* concert choir for greatness. He favored modulation ("Any old choir can sing loud!"). Bob Milton escorted Civics teacher Mary Margaret Moore (who used the initials M 3) to school dances. They were a popular couple with the student body. According to the *Trail*, on one occasion:

"Big Chief Milton and Miss Moore were seen doing the latest steps including the new truckin'."

Grant Hatfield, a senior, was in Elwood Ramey's public speaking class:

"We had to give a five-minute talk on some object, which we were to display. I talked about a machete. After I finished, Mr. Ramey walked up on the stage and said 'Boys and girls, this is not the way to give a speech.' " Kansas City Town Squire, June 1976.

Hollister S. Smith took one of his classes out on the football field and filmed a movie with a student's eight millimeter camera. It was shot without artificial lighting, and 100 splices were required for the dialogue. He exhibited the film at several teachers' conventions, demonstrating that Southwest High School's drama students had produced a movie.

The Powwow Club was reorganized, and became once again the Pep Club.

The 1938 *Sachem* reproduced minutes of a Student Council meeting earlier in the year, which included the following information:

There would be tryouts for a student talent assembly ... students who didn't want to attend the assembly would be banished to study hall instead, guaranteeing a full house for the show.

The purpose of the library, parking and locker committees: "Keeping people out of trouble, not serving as spies;"

Corridor guides were selected on the basis of responsibility and courtesy, attitude toward service, and scholarship, and enforced the rules of the corridor code: "1. Follow the arrows. 2. Walk, never run. 3. Keep moving. 4. Never whistle or shout. 5. Keep the floors clean."

Swing reigned supreme, and Benny Goodman — the King of Swing — visited Southwest with his band, and drummer Gene Krupa.

A group of Southwest students danced the "Big Apple" before an appreciative audience at the Kansas City Club.

Seventy of Bob Milton's vocal music students sang an old French Christmas carol from a Union Station balcony.

The PTA joined the Shriners in sponsoring a circus in the Municipal Auditorium. The school chartered a streetcar and offered 10-cent round trips for the event.

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Four-hundred-four seniors chose their outfits for graduation:

"Breaking all precedent, the senior class voted decisively in favor of grey serge caps and gowns at \$1 rental ... "

The seniors were assessed 50 cents for a class gift. The gift standards were exacting: “appropriate, free from upkeep cost, permanent, reasonable cost, and acceptable to the school board.” The class chose “Pursued,” an oil painting of cowboys fleeing a band of Indians.

Senior scholarships included three to MIT, one to Mills, and one to Wellesley (the Wellesley recipient had the highest SAT score in the class).

One of those who went on to an Ivy League school, Dartmouth, was Paul Uhlmann. Paul remembers his high school alma mater as “a wonderful school” and as a Southwest graduate had no academic problems at Dartmouth College. *Jewish Chronicle*, July 18, 1997.

Charles Blackmar, '38, graduated summa cum laude from Princeton, was an honors student at the Michigan Law School, a law professor and author, and capped a distinguished judicial career as chief justice of the Missouri Supreme Court.

Sandra Warfield of the class of '38 became an opera mezzo-soprano who performed with major opera companies and symphonies all over the world and at the White House.

There were two future Kansas City School Board members in the senior class: Barton L. Hakan and Henry Poindexter. Poindexter served for 13 years.

Frank Jones, '38, editor and publisher of *Bon Appetit* and *Bon Voyage* magazines, would later reminisce:

“It was a very good year for most of us, but we were anxious to move on — to jobs or college. The former were not easy to come by, and ‘entry level’ positions at 50 cents an hour were lusted after. For the college-bound, most colleges were inexpensive and easy to get into, but if you wanted to stay in they made you take all that stuff a later generation labeled ‘irrelevant’ — things like English, Science and Math ... Teachers in the Southwest High of 1938 had prepared us well, perhaps better than we realized at the time.”

1938-1939

The 1938 football team was the undefeated champion of the Interscholastic League in the fall. Don Greenwood was awarded the Nigro-Notre Dame trophy as “most valuable high-school football player.” He later starred at the University of Missouri, playing on their 1942 Sugar Bowl team. Two stalwart Southwest linemen earned doctorates, Bedford Berrey, M.D., and Delmar (Stony) Jackson, Ph.D.

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In the second semester, construction work at Southwest added a swimming pool, a second gym, a music room, a typing room, a woodworking shop, and an addition to the cafeteria. The federal Public Works Administration paid 45% of the cost.

The basketball team now played its games in Kansas City’s three-year-old Municipal Auditorium, on a floor whose 4 x 4s embedded in concrete were unforgiving.

Ina Ray Hutton and her All-Girl Orchestra entertained at Fairyland Park.

At the Presidents’ Ball in February, a Southwest student won the \$50 first prize in a jitterbug contest ... a dance form “as diversified as events in a track meet, which it sometimes resembled.” *The Glory and the Dream*, William Manchester.

Another student was the Missouri Golden Gloves light heavyweight boxing champion.

The Senior Play was “Stage Door” with Betty Jean Hess Robinson as Jean Maitland. An ad in the program offered “Smart hats for All Occasions. Pastel Felts for School Girls \$3.30 up.”

The *a cappella* concert choir was awarded first honors at the Midwestern Music Festival in Lawrence, Kansas. Bob Milton enthused: “You kids really sang that!” Students continued to win essay and oratorical contests. The *Trail* won a first class honor rating from the National Scholastic Press Association, and Southwest had its first national winner in a Quill and Scroll news judgment contest.

The Southwest relay team set a new Kansas high school relay record at the Kansas Relays in Lawrence, before a crowd of 12,000.

Two seniors were awarded four-year scholarships to the University of Pennsylvania, and there were scholarships to Mills College, MIT, Vassar and Wellesley.

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A member of the senior class was Henry W. Bloch, a demon bridge player who teamed with junior Jack Nachman to win a bridge tournament by over 1000 points. Henry’s brother Leon had graduated two years earlier and another brother, Richard, was in the class of 1942. Henry Bloch had planned to pursue a career in electrical engineering but instead, with his brother Richard, founded H & R Block, the largest tax preparation organization in the United States. The Bloch brothers achieved eminence as business, civic and cultural leaders, and remained loyal supporters of their high school alma mater.

Richard Bloch’s three daughters would also graduate from Southwest: Barbara Bloch Stanny, ’65; Nancy Bloch Linsley, ’68; and Linda Bloch Lyon, ’71. Barbara later wrote a best seller, *Prince Charming Isn’t Coming — How Women Get Smart About Money*, and Linda became president of Kansas City’s non-profit Crittenton Center.

Another senior, Hughes Rudd, gave no indication of a future career in broadcast journalism. But after returning a decorated veteran from World War II, he became a bureau chief in Moscow, anchored TV’s “Morning News” program for several years, and was honored with Emmy and Peabody awards.

Arthur Kraft, later an artist of renown, was treasurer of the Art Honor Society, staff artist of the *Trail*, and painted another drinking fountain mural ... “The Santa Fe Trail.”

Dale D. Myers became Associate Administrator, Manned Space Flight, NASA.

George Berry had a distinguished judicial career, presiding over the Probate Court of Jackson County, Missouri. His son, Cal, taught at Southwest in the 1970s.

Charles Black, also a senior, was a transfer from Topeka, Kansas, and did not become eligible for basketball until the second semester when he helped the basketball team tie for second in the Interscholastic League. He went on to become one of K.U.’s basketball greats.

The 1939 *Sachem* lauded the Southwest faculty:

“Another year has passed and many students leave the beloved halls of Southwest forever, while others remain to proceed another rung up ‘the ladder of learning.’ Before the procession moves on, we, the editors of the Sachem, pause to pay our thanks to those who have so kindly counseled and assisted us through our years in high school. It is to the Faculty, who understand our problems and labor patiently to relieve them, that we owe our greatest debt of gratitude.”

At their 50th reunion, it was noted that almost all of the boys had served their country in World War II. George Berry referred to the class as “the cannon fodder class of 1939.” However, there were many such classes in the ’30s and ’40s at Southwest.

1939-1940

Patriotism was commonplace; in the fall of 1939, ROTC cadets daily raised the American flag to the top of the flag pole in front of the school, watched by students who paused respectfully on their way to class. The colonel of the Kansas City regiment was now chosen by competitive examination and senior J.E. Hunt was colonel for the 1939-1940 school year, defeating candidates from seven other high schools.

The Southwest Battalion held its first Military Ball. Senior Marion Boswell, an ROTC lieutenant and rifle team member, was in charge of invitations. Boswell became a decorated veteran of World War II and Vietnam, and advanced through the ranks of the U.S. Army Air Force to Lieutenant General before becoming chairman of the board of Italian Aerospace Industries.

Queen candidates had to have at least an M average, and no Fs, and senior Patty Sullivan was chosen the first Military Ball Queen.

Marion Boswell's classmate, Harry J. Huff '40, became a Brigadier General.

When senior Virginia McGill Truog was crowned queen of Kansas City's 2,500-member Girl Reserves, her picture appeared on the front page of the *Kansas City Star*. Officials of Paramount Pictures saw the picture and the following day invited her to visit Hollywood as one of seventeen 17-year-old girls from 17 cities to attend the world premiere of the movie "Seventeen." She had a date with the movie's male lead, Jackie Cooper, was featured in an article in *Seventeen* magazine, and appeared on national radio programs.

Drum majorette Sally Kaney Tourtellot Ruddy, David Douglas Duncan's first model, was the only girl in the manual training class.

The quota for the 1939 charity campaign of 25 cents per pupil was exceeded, and seniors paid 10 cents each for class pictures in the *Sachem*.

Student cafeteria guides maintained order during three 25-minute lunch periods. A weekly honor roll singled out the two boys and two girls conforming most closely to cafeteria etiquette — which included "slow and quiet eating."

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Seldom was Coach House dumbfounded, but the Saturday of the Southwest-Paseo football game was one of those rare occasions. His jaw dropped when the teams's big all-star tackle, Conway Leary, sauntered into the locker room in top hat and tails, straight from his sister's wedding; the image of Southwest as a school for the elite was enhanced.

The football team again won the Interscholastic League championship. They lacked the rock-ribbed defense of the previous year but smashed the League scoring record. Six Indians made the League All-Star eleven.

The victory was celebrated by a large bonfire, followed by an impromptu snake dance through the shops at 63rd and Brookside. There was some damage, and Southwest was banned from the Interscholastic League for the 1940 football season. A formal apology in the form of a Student Council resolution was signed by 1755 students and published in the *Kansas City Star*. None of the football team participated in the celebration; they were all at a pig roast at the home of the team captain. When the Student Council remitted \$98.50 to cover damages, the merchants returned \$65.

The *Star* sports editor proposed a charity game between Southwest and a Rockhurst High School team that included a scrappy 145-pound fullback named William H. Dunn, later the chairman of J.E.

Dunn Construction Co. The game didn't come off, leaving both teams to boast of an undefeated season.

Later, Kansas City Mayor John B. Gage addressed guests at a father-son banquet for the Southwest football team ... his son, John C. Gage, was a tackle on the team and was appointed to the United States Military Academy at West Point. The team captain, Ray D. (Jack) Mering, received an Annapolis appointment.

Jack Luitweiler, a halfback on the team and an Army Air Corps pilot, was killed during World War II. And Conway Leary finished the war as a POW after his fighter plane was shot down while strafing an air field in Hungary.

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The members of Thalian, a new girls' literary society, were guests at the annual Christmas tea given by the other girls' societies. Two alumnae, home for the holidays, poured.

Flowers for the December production of "The Night of January Sixteenth" were provided by Brookside Flower Shop in exchange for mention in the program, and readers were urged to "Call for the decorous Ruby Peed if ever for flowers you're in need."

A special insert in the December 21, 1939 issue of the *Trail* reported literary achievements at the school. It noted:

Since 1926, Southwest writers' entries in essay contests had garnered 21 firsts, 15 seconds, 6 thirds and 17 honorable mentions. Specifically, in the city-wide Thomas Jefferson contests, Southwest had finished first every year since 1931 except for second place in 1939. There were also outstanding records in the annual city-wide Sons of the American Revolution contests, in three contests sponsored by the Women's Auxiliary to the Missouri State Medical Society, in two WCTU contests, and in five other literary events.

Many other honors were earned over the years, for vocal music, band, orchestra, individual musicians and vocalists, stage and radio work, journalism, art, bookkeeping and ROTC. At least 23 alumni had been elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and there had been ten Annapolis midshipmen and four West Point cadets.

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Fortified by six-foot, seven-inch center Jack Ballard, tallest man in the Interscholastic League, the basketball team shared the League championship with Paseo. Students paid \$1 for season tickets, or 35 cents at the gate. It was the practice for the two best teams in the League to play post-season games against their counterparts from St. Louis (there was no state tournament). Southwest defeated St. Louis' Beaumont High School and Paseo won its game against Soldan. Southwest students purchased over 700 tickets for the event.

In the spring, the track team won the city meet ... completing a rare sweep of the major Interscholastic League championships. Senior Owen Joggerst won state sprint honors and later became the Big Six champion in the 60-yard, the 100-yard, and the 220-yard dash, while attending the University of Missouri.

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Four hundred thirty seniors took the SATs and did well. Scores of all Missouri seniors were posted by schools in the first floor lobby, disclosing the Southwest results as a group for comparative purposes. Individual scores were distributed to participants.

The Student Council prescribed parking zones; repeat violators were dealt with by “the office,” with chronic offenders prohibited from bringing cars to school. Student automobiles were the exception, however. Many walked to school, although it was a long hike for some. Others rode bicycles; the racks in “bicycle alley” (the driveway between the athletic field and the school building) were in constant use.

Streetcars provided much of the student transportation; public school directories listed the car lines serving each school. A shelter house for streetcar patrons was finally built across Wornall Road from Southwest after much lobbying by the Student Council ... a welcome addition “symbolic of Southwest’s determination and perseverance” according to the *Trail*.

Drugs were not a problem, but a lecture entitled “Marijuana, the Killer Drug” noted that in the previous six years marijuana had come into use in 39 states.

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The *Official Fraternity and Sorority Directory for 1940* listed a large number of fraternal organizations from several Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Kansas schools. Public, private and parochial school students belonged. Southwest had the largest representation.

Fraternity and sorority formal dances, often held at country clubs, were social highlights. Music was furnished by such jazz notables as Earl “Fatha” Hines, and Andy Kirk and his 12 Clouds of Joy.

Ads in the *Directory* were placed by several local bands, as well as by ballrooms ... the Plaza Hall at 4722 Broadway, Brookside Hall at 6247 Brookside, Hotel Continental at 11th and Baltimore, and the Pla-Mor Ballroom at 32nd and Main, where the revolving, mirrored, crystal chandelier sparkled and spun. The Green and L.G. Balfour jewelry companies offered fraternity and sorority jewelry, florists advertised their wares (corsages at the Crestwood Flower Shop were \$1.02), and *The Informer* promoted its semi-monthly fraternity and sorority newspaper.

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The price for the Senior Prom: \$1, “stag or drag;” and only seniors or invited juniors were admitted.

Graduation exercises for the class of 1940 in the 2200-seat auditorium were a ticket-only affair; each graduating senior received two white tickets for parents and three blue tickets for other relatives. Caps and gowns were voted down in favor of pastel dresses for the girls and light coats and dark trousers for the boys. Owen Joggerst and Eleanor Schmidt were saluted in the Commencement Program as neither absent nor tardy during high school.

Out of 383 graduates, 308 sent transcripts to colleges, 55 did not enter college, seven moved away, and the rest attended special schools for instruction in music or art.

Edward Matheny, class of '40 president, played varsity basketball at M.U., where he was the fourth Phi Beta Kappa letterman in the history of the university. (“Truck” Miller, '32, was another). Carl W. Nichols, class of '40 vice president, was later elected to the Advertising Hall of Fame after serving as chairman of a New York advertising agency. Don Simecheck, Student Council president, became president of Houston’s Fish Engineering Co., engaged in pipeline and petrochemical plant construction worldwide. And Harry Fredman, also class of '40 and art editor of the *Trail*, became a prominent portrait painter with a national reputation as a magazine illustrator.

1940-1941

In the fall of 1940, students were offered subscriptions to the *Trail* for 75 cents. The paper's sales pitch: "Smart Indians follow the *Trail*!"

The *Trail* reported a retreat for senior Hi-Y cabinet members, where rubbing elbows with black students from other states was noteworthy: "Bob Ellis, a Negro Hi-Y president, presided at the dinner session . . . Dunbar Reed, Negro All-American quarterback, lectured on racial prejudice and complimented the Hi-Y on its work in abolishing it."

Announcements of boys who had received Eagle Scout awards . . . "the highest award in scouting" . . . were frequent in the *Trail*. A later mayor, former Chief Scout Executive H. Roe Bartle, would comment that Southwest had more Eagle Scouts in proportion to its size than any other high school in the country.

The Fox Waldo Theater sold \$10 coupon books to Southwest students for 25 cents. And every Wednesday was dime night at the theater . . . "10 cents to one and all."

A Southwest unit of the Campfire Girls was formed, and 130 girls joined.

The 1940 football season was a casualty of the previous year's victory celebration. There were no recriminations, the 1941 *Sachem* simply noting:

"Because of our compulsory leave of absence from the interscholastic league, the gridsters did not engage with all of the Kansas City high schools in the regular interscholastic pairings."

The year of 1940-1941 was not a memorable school year on most Indian athletic fronts. However, senior Marian Gault was prominent among the city's amateur golfers.

It was a big year for tea parties. The girls' literary societies held their annual Christmas teas. The Girl Reserves had tea meetings, the Drivers Club served mothers tea after new members took an oath of allegiance, and at the PTA Founders Day meeting tea was offered by sophomore mothers and daughters.

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The ROTC unit had 194 cadets, the largest enrollment in battalion history, was an honor school for the tenth consecutive year, and was still winning rifle championships.

Students continued to garner literary honors, as did the *Trail* . . . from the National Scholastic Press Association and the Missouri Scholastic Press Association.

Not all courses were college preparatory — in commercial classes, students learned to take dictation for five minutes at a specified rate and transcribe it on a typewriter with at least 95% accuracy.

Southwest's final mid-year class entered in January 1941. Mid-year freshman James B. Nutter, age 13, found prized part-time employment in the library where his 30-hour work week paid \$30 per month at a rate of 22 cents an hour.

"When I got my first paycheck of \$29.70 (30 cents was withheld for Social Security), I put \$29.00 in a savings account and blew the 70 cents. Very few kids in Southwest had that much."

Nutter later became a business and political force in Kansas City, with a considerable interest in the welfare of the Kansas City School District.

Alumni were doing well scholastically, with William Lowry and Dorothy Bublitz, both of the

class of '36, elected to Phi Beta Kappa from Dartmouth and K.U. respectively, Walter Bublitz, class of '37, a Phi Beta Kappa and number one in his class at the University of Arizona, Jean Gillett, '37, elected to Phi Beta Kappa at Colorado University, Bernard Lieppman, '37, a Phi Beta Kappa at Washington University, and Robert Haase, '37, and Ellsworth Filby, '39, winning scholastic honors at Cornell's college of engineering.

The speaker at a Girl Reserves meeting discussed what time a girl should come home from a date and how she should say good-night. On the time issue:

"If it's 'just a date,' she should get home between 11:30 and 12:30, but for dances she and her parents should decide on an hour convenient and satisfactory."

On how to say good-night, the advice was less specific ... "impulses should be guided by a wholesome attitude."

Evan S. Connell, class of 1941, was on the track and debate teams, a member of the Engineers' club, and a participant in school assemblies. Like others in his class, he had a Kansas address. He became a Guggenheim fellow and a Rockefeller Foundation grantee. His literary talent would later propel him to national prominence with works such as *"Mrs. Bridge," "Son of the Morningstar: Custer and the Little Bighorn"* and other critically acclaimed books.

Verne E. Chaney, Jr., class of '41, became a decorated veteran of the Army Medical Corps, a renowned thoracic surgeon and clinical professor, and President of the Thomas E. Dooley Foundation, providing medical services to the people of Southeast Asia.

Scholarships to graduating seniors included two to Yale.

CHAPTER THREE

The War Years; “There’ll Always Be An England.”

1941-1942

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1941, there was no inkling of the catastrophe to befall the American fleet at Pearl Harbor a few weeks later.

In a deserted second floor hallway, Jeanne Forney Bleakley practiced with Jack Casford for a cheerleaders’ spot only to discover that the squad was to remain all male.

There was a shared football championship, now that Southwest was reinstated in the Interscholastic League. Dick Herbert, Charles Keller, Ray Kauffmann and Dick Pfeiffer made the League all-star team.

A lively student talent assembly was introduced. Hollister Smith’s speech class submitted names for the show and Barbara Breed Stark’s “Redskin Revels” was the winning entry.

The stage crew built a revolving stage for the Senior Play, “Feudin’ Days.”

The epic events of December 7 were followed by normal Yuletide activities ... a Nativity play, a Christmas assembly, and caroling in the halls. However, instructions for air raid drills were posted in the cafeteria and drills were conducted during fourth and fifth hours.

The following spring, the 1942 *Sachem* made little reference to the war. It did report that the Student Council was charged with the sale of “defense stamps.” And it noted that “Now, as never before, the ROTC and its mission have assumed a position of vital importance in the education of American youth.” Ray Pitman was a sergeant in the First Platoon, Company B of the ROTC Battalion, and Crosby Kemper was a cadet in that company’s Third Squad.

* * * * *

The class of ’42 produced another Rhodes Scholar ... Southwest cheerleader, debater and honor roll student Larry Miller.

Another member of the class, Marylou Schroeder, married industrialist Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney after a career in journalism, was named USO Woman of the Year in 1987, and is a prominent socialite.

Morton Sosland, following his graduation from Harvard, became a publisher, philanthropist, and civic leader.

Richard C. Green became president of Missouri Public Service Company, forerunner of UtiliCorp United, Inc.

Howard Sachs, '42, graduated from Williams College summa cum laude in 1947, from Harvard Law School in 1950, and was appointed by President Carter to the federal judiciary in 1979.

William Kanaga became chairman of the international accounting, tax and consulting firm, Arthur Young & Co., and chairman of the executive committee of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Hans Tuch, '42, one of the last to escape from Nazi Germany on the eve of World War II, later served as a United States expert on international affairs for the Department of State. Among his honors: the Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Public Diplomacy, and the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Richard B. Rubenstein graduated from the United States Naval Academy with a B.S. degree, and many years later retired from the Navy as a captain. He and Ann Lewis Rubenstein, '46, have four children, all Southwest graduates. One of them, Ann Rubenstein, '72, established the Young Women's Leadership School in Harlem, an all-girl public school for grades six through twelve.

* * * * *

During the summer, Southwest teachers worked at war jobs or cultivated victory gardens. Students bought war bonds with money earned at summer jobs, served as air raid wardens and fire watchers, and took courses in first aid and nursing.

1942-1943

The autumn of 1942 saw a marked change in the school's organizations. As the *Sachem* noted: "Southwest's activities have gone to war."

A national High School Victory Corps was established, chaired by World War I flying ace Captain Eddie Rickenback, to aid students planning to serve in the military. The Kansas City School District promoted the Corps, and a unit was formed at Southwest with over 1,150 members. The Southwest Corps had several divisions: Air Service Division; Land Service Division; and Sea Service Division. There were also a Production Division — to fit students for employment in essential war work, and a Community Service Division — filled by young Americans to release men for active service. The Red Cross had an immediate need.

The Pep Club was renamed "Scalpers," a more militant title.

Joe Jack Merriman, Student Council president, announced that Southwest would join other schools in buying a bomber through the sale of defense stamps. The price for one bomber: \$175,000.

The Drivers' Club became the "Drivers War — Safety Club," and its role was expanded to include direction of fire and air-raid drills and other emergency services.

* * * * *

Miss Sara Van Metre was a dedicated Anglophile; according to one who was in her class the day the British sank the German battleship Bismarck: "She was practically dancing in the aisles and singing 'There'll Always Be An England.' "

Southwest teachers of English sponsored a tea in October for the city's other high school English teachers. The *Trail* reported: "Miss Van Metre welcomed the visitors with a challenge regarding the preservation of culture during wartime." (She was tough on gum chewers, condemning the practice as "for chambermaids and stable boys.")

Miss Van Metre retired at the end of the school year; the 1943 *Sachem* was dedicated to her "in

appreciation of all that she has meant to Southwest.”

Sara Van Metre had a parting gift, a small bust of William Shakespeare, which she presented to her colleague on the faculty, W. Lawrence Cannon. An inscription on the back of the bust, added by Cannon, reads:

“Miss Sara Van Metre — the darling and possibly the most popular teacher among faculty members in her day at Southwest. She taught English Literature from the date of the school’s opening in September 1925 until June 1943 when she retired.

“William Shakespeare was her favorite writer. She coveted this miniature bust statue of Shakespeare and wished it to be preserved in her name, On the day of her retirement ceremony, she called me aside and presented me with the statue. Her request was ‘Lawrence, please keep and protect my William forever.’ The ‘forever’ part seems unattainable, but at least we have it until now.”

Miss Van Metre’s “William,” properly illuminated, occupies a place of honor in the lobby of The Forum in Overland Park, Kansas, where Larry Cannon and his wife now reside.

* * * * *

The *Sachem* published a picture of the Liberty Memorial, and an “In Memoriam” list of 11 graduates who had “given their lives that the Four Freedoms might forever endure for all peoples.” One was Eugene Earl Amick, Jr., class of 1937. The USS Amick, a destroyer, was named in honor of Ensign Amick.

Two members of the faculty were pictured in uniform ... Hollister Smith, now a Navy Lieutenant j.g., and James McKee, an Army captain. And there were long lists of former students now in the service.

Delia Ann Taylor Sinkov, Southwest ’30, was decorated by the War Department for outstanding service as a research analyst for the Army Communication Service, decoding war radio messages.

Clinton W. Kanaga, Jr., class of ’38, joined the U.S. Marine Corps after Pearl Harbor. William K. Jones, Southwest ’34, was his company commander on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. Clint, a young second lieutenant, led a machine gun platoon during the jungle fighting on the island, and Bill Jones recommended him for the Navy Cross for his heroism. After the war, Clint was appointed twice to Kansas City’s Board of Police Commissioners, the first time by Governor John Dalton for 1961-1965, and the second time by Governor Joseph Teasdale for 1977-1981. Between those terms, he served as chairman of the Area Transportation Authority as the appointee of Governor Warren Hearnes.

* * * * *

Students still won essay contests, and the football team won another championship ... Joe Ben Dickey was awarded the Nigro-Notre Dame Trophy. \$1,058.75 was raised for the Community Chest, and \$100.21 for the Red Cross.

Frank Sinatra, age 27, had his first million-selling record, “All or Nothing at All.”

SATs were no longer primarily for scholarship applicants, but replaced essay tests for college admissions. In that year’s tests, the median score of the lower half of Southwest’s senior class was eleven points higher than the median score of all Missouri seniors.

The senior class gift was the first payment on a bronze tablet honoring Southwest alumni who lost their lives in World War II. Gifts by the next three classes completed the payments, and a memorial

with 86 names was installed in the front hall of Southwest.

Betty Ann Lynn, the actress in theater, movies and TV who played the role of Thelma Lou in the popular Andy Griffith Show, was a member of the class. George Powell, Jr., also class of '43, sandwiched a hitch in the Navy between years at Northwestern University, and later became board chairman of Yellow Freight System, Inc., one of the largest trucking companies in the country.

1943-1944

The war was on everyone's mind in the fall of 1943.

Victory Corps activities resumed. The "Redskin Revels of 1943" saluted the Ferry Command that transported aircraft from factories to military bases. The Red Cross organization was elevated to a status similar to that of the Student Council; it assumed responsibility for Christmas boxes for foreign children, joke books for the soldiers, a first aid class for the ROTC, and its annual campaign produced the largest collection ever, \$1800.

Metalwork classes made ash trays out of tin cans for the USO and the Servicemen's Canteen "since a majority of servicemen smoke."

Students helped distribute ration books; they reported difficulty in persuading women to disclose their ages as the law required.

The Drivers War-Safety Club carried on, hampered by the rationing of gasoline and tires and a ban on excessive driving.

Muehlbach Field had been renamed Rupert Stadium, and the football games were played there; all high school bleachers except those at Southwest and Paseo had been condemned.

Teepee Town at Southwest provided a solution to wartime transportation problems, offering sports in the boys' gym and dancing in the girls' gym. (Coach House would not permit street shoes on the boys' gym floor.) Volunteers, primarily moms, offered hot dogs, cokes, chili, ice cream and other items at the snack bar ... an old curved counter donated by the Sweet Lumber Company and installed outside the boys' gym.

The Teepee Town facilities were available on Monday afternoons after school and on Friday and Saturday nights; on a big evening as many as 300 students might show up. A curfew ordinance had been proposed for Kansas City because of juvenile delinquency but there were no problems at Teepee Town.

In the spring of 1944, the 18th Inter-Society Literary Contest was labeled "The Battle of '44." And High School City Hall Day got its start as a city-wide spring event.

The brothers of Phi Lamda Epsilon fraternity gathered at the Hotel Continental for their spring formal, solemnly posing with their dates for a group photograph.

The 1944 *Sachem* published a much longer list of those who had made "the supreme gift," and was dedicated to alumni who had "given their lives in the service of their country."

* * * * *

John H. Robinson was senior class president, the fourth Robinson brother from Southwest who would distinguish himself professionally. Jack later reflected that the caliber of education enjoyed by Southwest students during his years there was due in large measure to the excellent faculty — "teachers such as Naomi Simpson, George MacCurdy and Carolyn Atwood, who could have taught at higher levels but chose Southwest because of the quality of the school."

Good teachers infuse their students with love of learning. The gratitude of former students is their reward and their legacy. "A teacher affects eternity. He can never tell where his influence stops." *The Education of Henry Adams*, 1907. Teachers are positioned "at the core of education." *The Good High School*, Sara Lawrence Lightfoot (1983), Basic Books, Inc., page 334.

Jack Robinson's oldest brother David, vice president of the class of 1931, became a plastic surgeon and director of the burn center at the University of Kansas Medical Center; Arthur, '38 class giftorian and Student Council president, would be a prominent medical internist; and Thomas, president of the class of '34, became managing partner of Black & Veatch, internationally known consulting engineers. Jack would succeed brother Tom in that capacity.

A *Sachem* page devoted to the senior class noted:

"We the boys and girls of the class of '44 entered school just after the fall of France. The denouement of Pearl Harbor came in our sophomore year. But our lives haven't changed very much. We have engaged in many activities not before necessary but now vital to the war effort; but on the other hand, we have taken much the same courses as our predecessors ... have had the same literary and music contests, have had about the same social contacts. True, there has been less gasoline ... but on the whole we have had much the same lives, the same opportunities as those before us did.

"And, perhaps, in this, too, 'we also serve' ... Perhaps the greatest service that we of high school age can render is to obtain, before going forth to take an active part in this war, an education upon which to base our peacetime living later on."

* * * * *

The school board scrapped its policy barring married women from teaching, and Bob Milton married Mary Margaret Moore that summer, after a courtship of several years. Barbara Tindall Weary had played cupid:

"I had Mr. Milton for music first hour, and Miss Moore for Civics seventh hour. I carried notes back and forth between them all year until he proposed. I attended the wedding at the Wornall Road Baptist Church. It was so romantic."

1944-1945

The Forward for the school district's 1944-45 *High School Bulletin* declared: "While the Nation is at war pupils are encouraged to render every possible assistance to the war effort, in school or out." And there was a section on "Preparation For Military Service."

Coach Louis House had a drill sergeant's rough sense of humor; on occasion he asked if any of the members of his gym class had a driver's license and, when an unwary boy held up his hand, directed him to push the heavy iron roller used for track maintenance (he called it the "Pierce Arrow") around the 440-yard cinder oval.

No sissy eighth hours for unruly gym class behavior, either; punishment known as "the shoe" was meted out on the spot by House — a gym shoe borrowed from the miscreant and applied to his backside. William McGonigle, '36, had been a frequent offender; House once told him that he was going to have to find a different place to apply the shoe because McGonigle was developing a callous.

House was not considered abusive ... the coach was admired by his classes and teams.

* * * * *

LIFE Magazine was the world's number one picture magazine. At the Southwest Battalion's ROTC Ball in the girls' gym, a *LIFE* photographer stopped the proceedings frequently to snap pictures that would appear in the magazine a few weeks later, part of a five-page article entitled "*LIFE Goes to a Military Ball.*" Before the dance, Joanne Warren Clingenpeel, the Military Ball Queen, and William Ackenhausen, her date, ate \$1.50 fried chicken dinners at the Green Parrott, and topped off the evening at the Nu-Way hamburger drive-in.

* * * * *

Marilyn Sweet Kiene, then a senior, remembers that her gym class volleyball game was suddenly halted with word of the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt on April 12, 1945.

The Hestia Club's future homemakers sponsored a fashion show featuring home-made clothes and refreshments. Their slogan:

*"We may live without poetry, music and art;
We may live without conscience and live without heart;
We may live without friends; we may live without books,
But civilized man can not live without cooks."*

In the annual literary society contest, a Very Superior orator was Frank Sebree representing Zenda-Vesta. Chaney O. Williams, club sponsor, met him in the auditorium daily for three weeks, an hour before the start of class, to prepare him. Frank was also an Interscholastic League tennis champion, and served as a page in the U.S. House of Representatives from January to June in 1943. He later was elected to the City Council of Kansas City.

A Very Superior extemporaneous speaker was Joseph E. Stevens, class giftorian who went on to Yale, to Michigan Law School, and to the federal judiciary in 1981 as the appointee of President Ronald Reagan. President Bill Clinton later named him a Trustee of the Harry S Truman Scholarship Foundation. Following his untimely death in 1999, there was a memorial service for Judge Stevens and a portrait presentation in Kansas City's new Charles Evans Whittaker Courthouse. Joe Stevens had devoted considerable time and effort to the Courthouse plans.

The Ogden twins, Carolyn and Virginia, combined their talents as Editors-in-Chief of the *Sachem*. The class of '45 wrote in the yearbook:

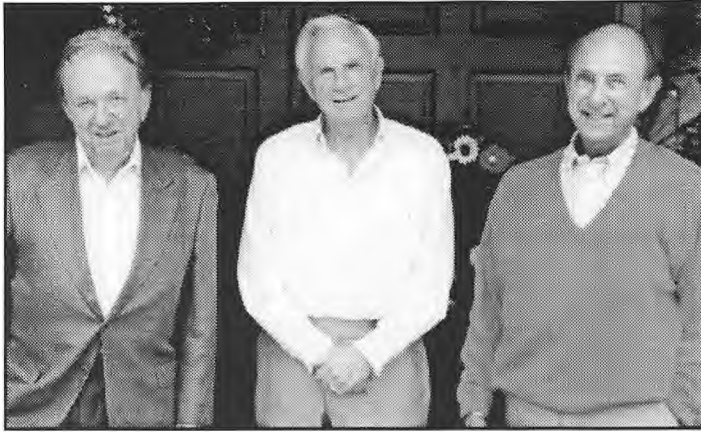
"War has dominated the thoughts and activities of the world during our brief existence at Southwest. All four of our years have been war years."

The spring of 1945 marked the end of two decades of Southwest history. Principal Monsees commented that every year there were "treasures and triumphs added to the possessions of the school," and Southwest now had "many fine traditions, splendid accomplishments, and cherished associations."

S.C. See retired, another sign of the end of an era. The *Sachem* editors wished him well: "It is our wish that he will always consider himself a part of the school which is so deeply indebted to him."

* * * * *

World War II ended August 15, 1945.



Bloch brothers: Leon '37, Henry '39, Richard '42
Photo courtesy of Henry Bloch



The impressive stone columns of Southwest greet Wornall Road travelers blocks afar. Here is a close-up of the main entrance and four Southwest girls (left to right), Dorothy Maas, Patty Lockwood, Shirley Sipple and Rosemary Meininger. *Kansas City Star, May 7, 1939*



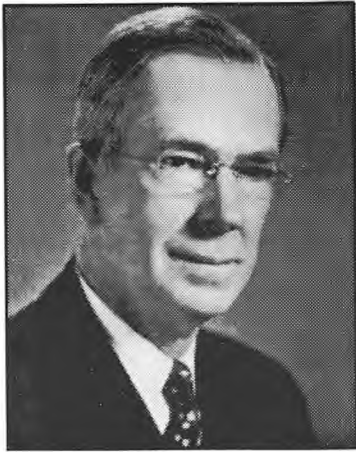
Bicycle Alley
Kansas City Star, May 7, 1939

(Right)
 Sandra Warfield '38
 Opera



(Left)
 Dale Meyers '39
 Associate Administrator
 Office of Manned Space Flight
 NASA



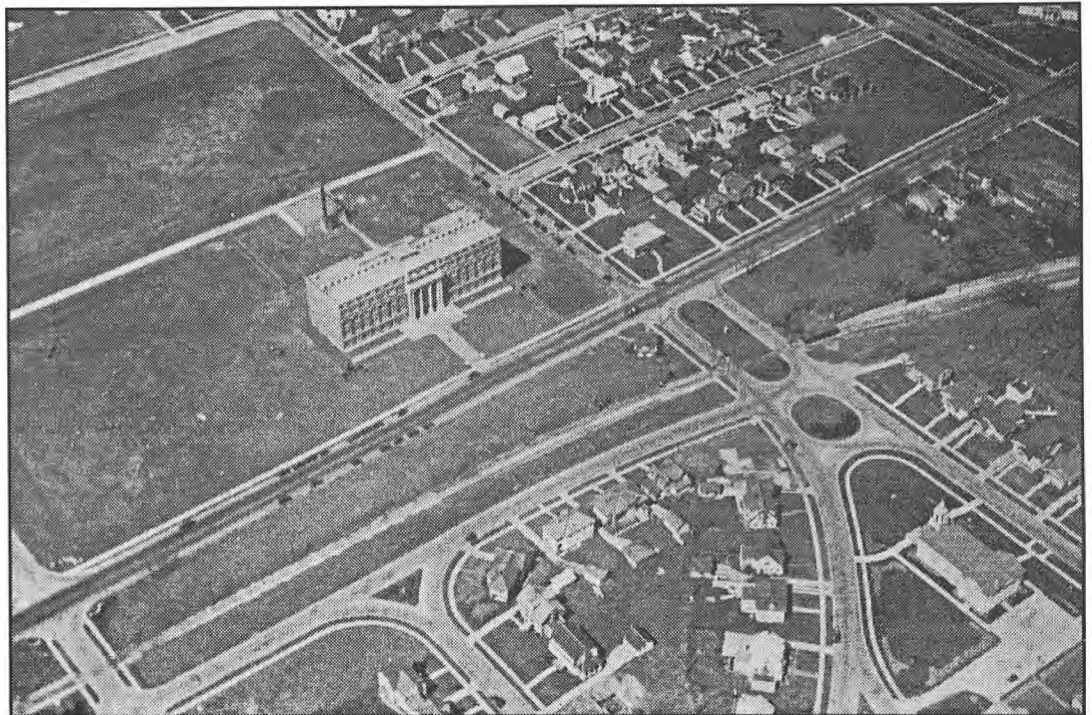


A.H. Monsees
Principal 1925-1950



J.C. Nichols
Developer Country Club District

Aerial view
Southwest neighborhood
1925



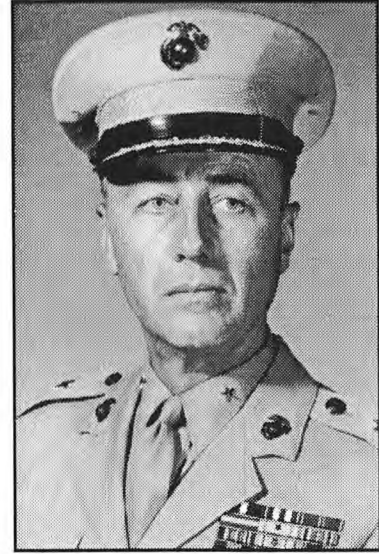
Entrance to Armour farm, site of Southwest



Corner of 65th and Wornall looking north, 1923.
Courtesy of Al Darling, Sr.



President Reagan with Congressman Larry Winn, Jr. '37
Photo courtesy of Larry Winn



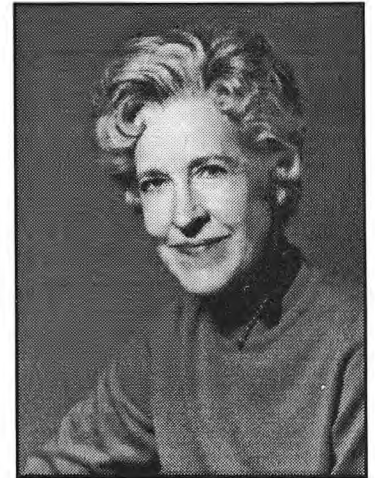
William K. Jones '33
 Marine Corps Lieutenant General



Ruth Warrick '34
 Stage, Movie and
 Television Actress



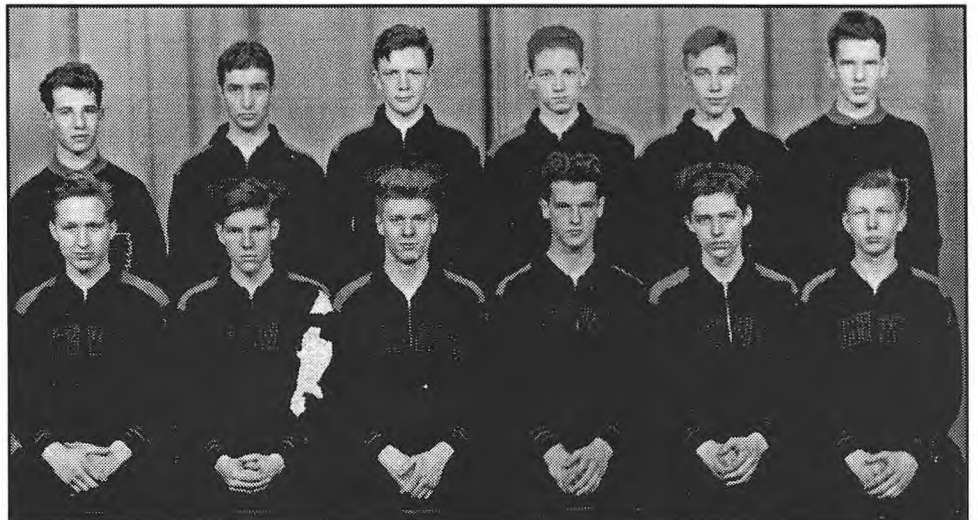
Vice Admiral Frederick H. Michaelis '35
 U.S. Navy

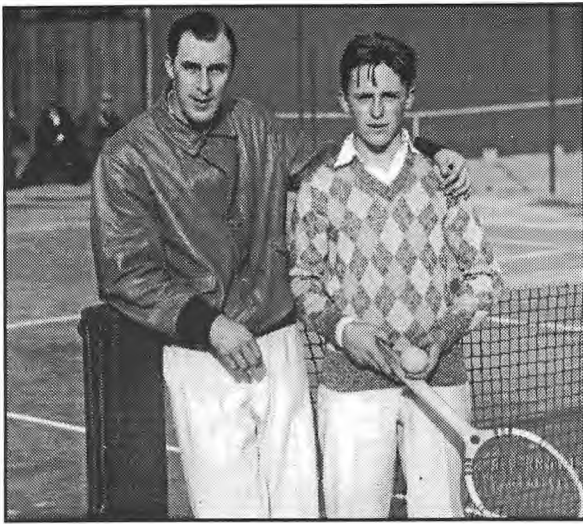


Avis Green Tucker '33
 Newspaper Publisher and
 Chairman, Board of Curators
 University of Missouri

1934 Basketball Champions.

Back row, left to right: Junior Monday, Al Nigro, John North, Phil Thomason, Roy Toomey, George Klein; front row: Bill Valentine, Harvey Kresge, Dan Wager, Lawrence Narr, Francis Holloway, Harry McFarland.





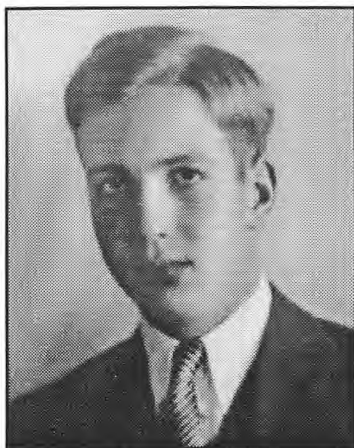
Tennis great William Tilden III and W.F. Coen, Jr. '28



Elliot Norquist '28
National Oratorical Silver Medalist
Photo courtesy of Lathrop & Gage, L.C.



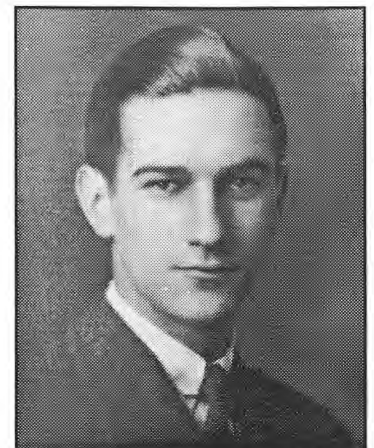
Football game, Southwest Field, 1930. *Wilborn & Associates, photographers*



Carl Allendoerfer '29
Rhodes Scholar



Benjamin Swafford '29
National Oratorical Champion



James Green '28
Geneva Disarmament Conference
Student Representative



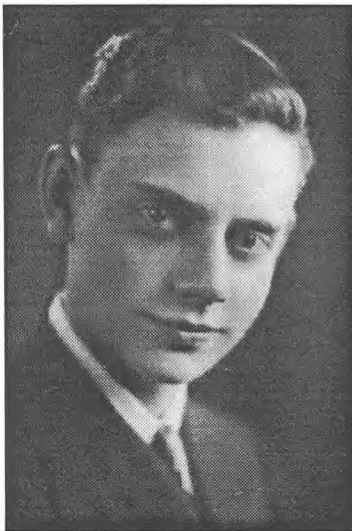
David Douglas Duncan '33, Famed Photojournalist
Photo courtesy of Sally Kaney Ruddy



William N. Deramus III — '31
 Kansas City Southern Industries



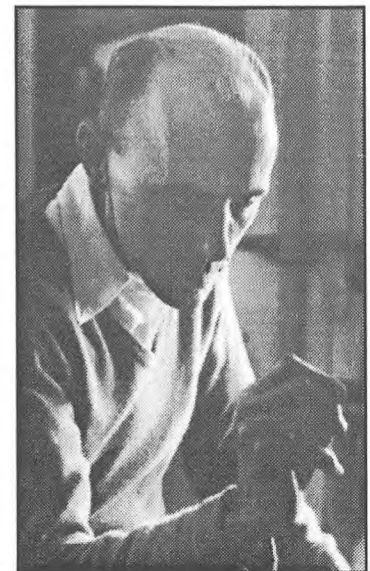
Southwest Faculty — *Kansas City Star, December 3, 1933*



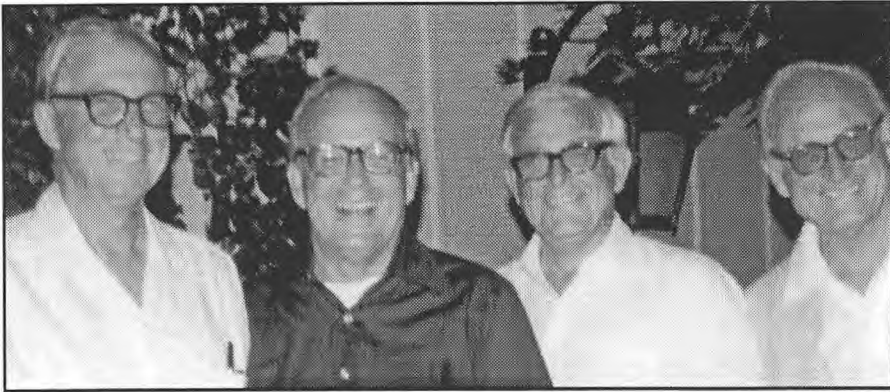
John Phillips '33
 National Oratorical
 Champion



Beverly Ann Medaris (History) observes pageant, 1932.
 Grouped around her: Mary Ruth Baxter, left (Courage); Betty Belle Estes, right (Truth); Fredericka Boone, blonde (Purity); Alice Bryan, J.G. Bryan's daughter (Posterity). *Wilborn & Associates, photographers*



Fredric James '32
 Artist



Robinson brothers: David '31, John '44, Thomas '34, Arthur '37
Photo courtesy of John Robinson



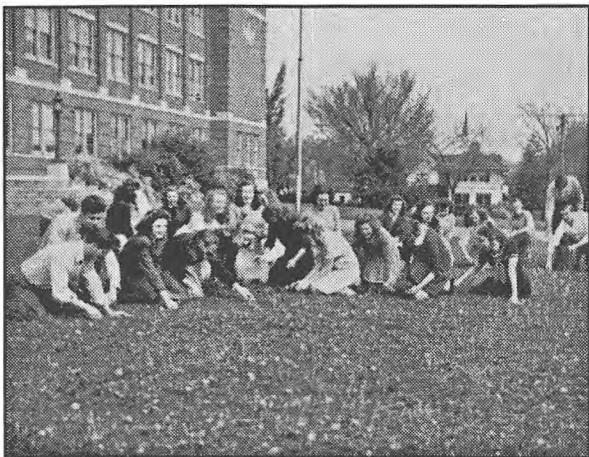
Joseph Stevens '45
Judge, U.S. District Court



Mary Margaret Moore wed Robert Milton, 1944
Photo courtesy of Marilyn Benson



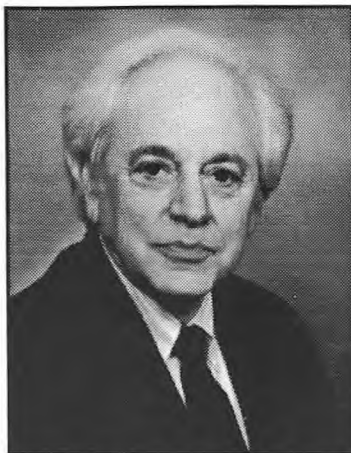
LIFE photographed Military Ball queen Joanne Warren Clingenpeel and Sgt. William Story, 1945



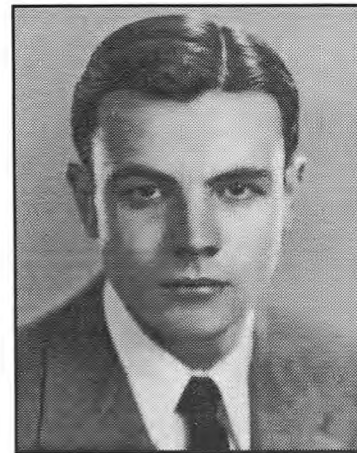
Seniors digging dandelions, 1946



Betty Ann Lynn '43
Television and Movie Actress



Howard Sachs '42
Judge, U.S. District Court



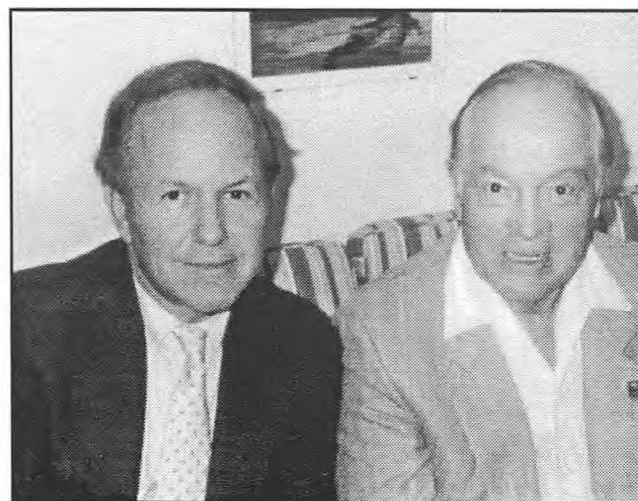
Lawrence Miller '42
Rhodes Scholar



Phi Lambda Epsilon spring formal, Hotel Continental, 1944. *Photo courtesy of Marilyn Benson.*



On "Feudin' Days" revolving stage, 1941, (left to right, standing): Janssen Wooldridge, Barbara Breed Stark, Marion Enggas Kreamer, Dick Rubenstein, Hugh Moore, Marie Bono, Paul Owen, Ray Barnett, Wendell Kerr.



Tom Leathers '44, journalist and publisher, and Bob Hope



Evan S. Connell, Jr.
1941
Author



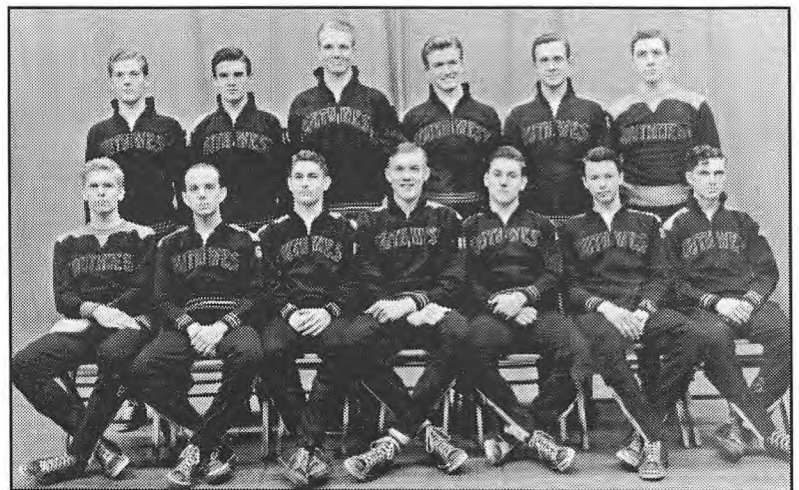
Verne E. Chaney, Jr.,
M.D.
1941
President,
Thomas A. Dooley
Foundation



1939 Football Champions and dates at Pig Roast, Mering farm.



Virginia McGill Truog '40 with Jackie Cooper on Hollywood date.



1940 Basketball Co-champions. Back row, left to right: Charles Campbell, Carl Nichols, Conway Leary, Ed Matheny, Blaine Hibler, Doug Kirk; front row: Tom Draney, Don Wysong, Jack Luitweiler, Jack Ballard, Jack Mering, Leon Jacobs, Don Sirnecheck.



Richard Smalley '61
Nobel prize, chemistry, 1996



Nancy Matheny as Maria with the Von Trapp children. "The Sound of Music," 1968.



Twenty-year reunion, ladies of '43. *Plaza Magazine*, July 1963.



David Bean as "The Music Man," 1967



Scott Simon '66
Musician and composer, Sha-Na-Na



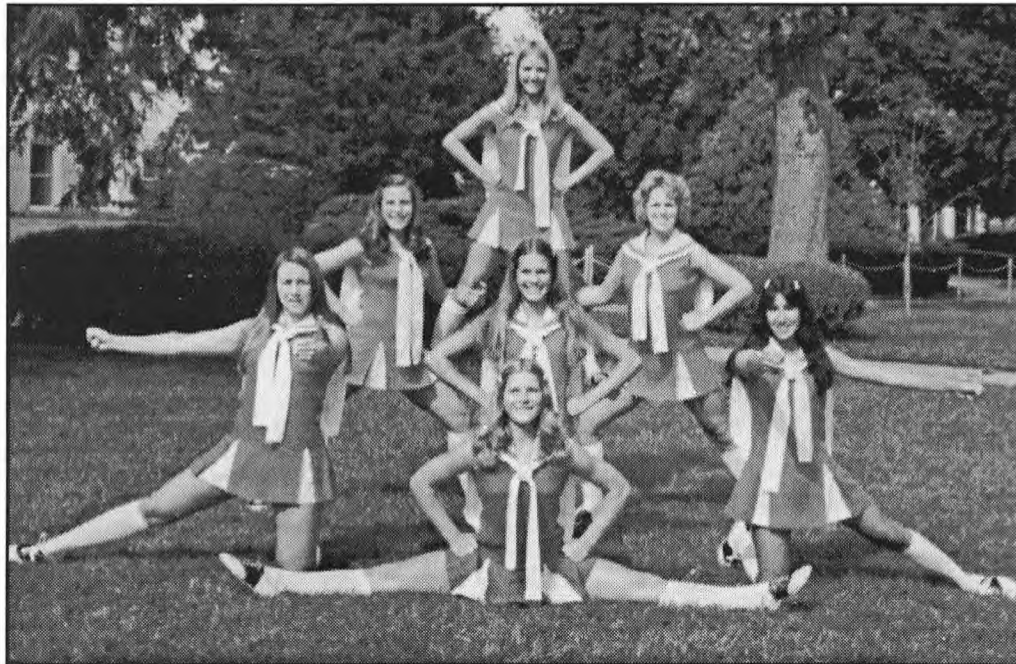
Tom Kipp, Principal
1971-1981



Mark Smith, '82 class president (center), with classmates
Kelly Waldo and Laura Vinlove



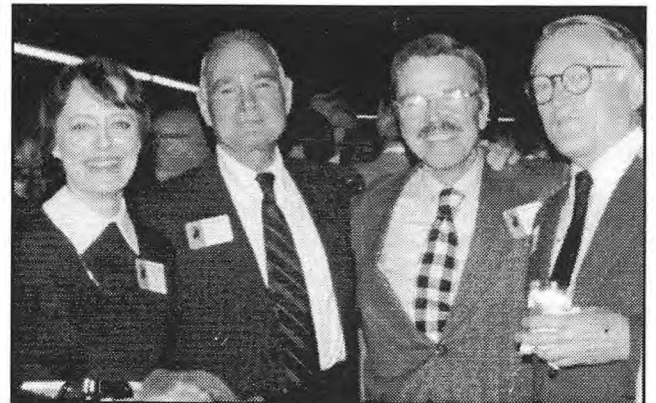
Judge Russell Clark
U.S. District Court
presided over the
desegregation case,
1977-1997



Southwest cheerleaders were perennial National Clinic champions. 1974-1975 squad: Kim Bean, Cindy Drake, Nancy Newell, Lisa Eubank, Karen Stewart, Malinda McMurry, Kathy Aguirre.
Photo courtesy of Molly Bean.



Powder Puff football. 1971.



Celebrating Southwest's Golden Anniversary were alumni Sally Kaney Ruddy '40, John Ruddy '31, John Taylor '40, Robert Brink '31. 1976



Male Octet, left to right: Ron Jarvis, Steve Aguirre, David Ledgin, John Perkins, Ed Matheny, Jim Birt, Steve Lundergan, Steve Chellgren, 1971.

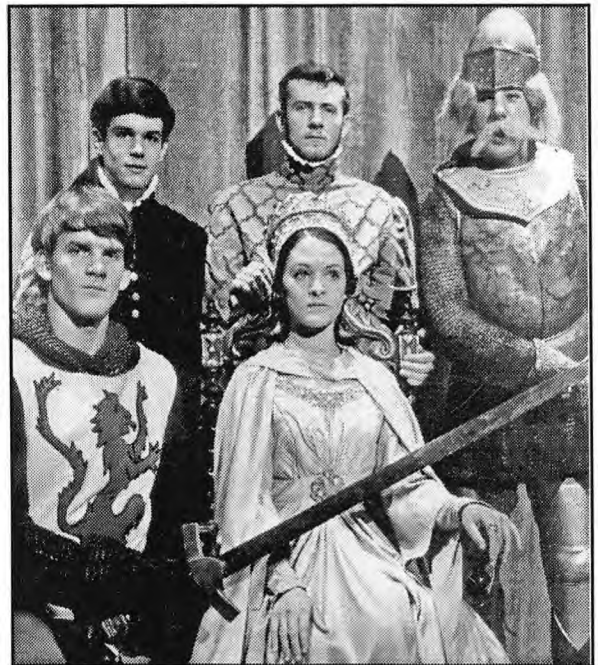


Chris Cooper '69
Movie Actor



Football sideline; Coach William Robinson (far right) with assistants

Surrounding Melanie Bean (Queen Gwenevere) beginning front left: Mark Wheeler (Lancelot), Alan McDermott (Modrid), Mike Wenig (King Arthur) and Roger Rowan (King Pellinore). Cast of "Camelot," 1969.



Southwest marching band parades downtown, 1971.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Third Decade; “A district of comfortable homes and genial living.”

1945-1946

THE FIRST EIGHTH GRADE CLASS entered Southwest under the supervision of Mary Margaret Moore, now Mrs. Robert Milton.

Three returning veterans were among the new teachers.

Southwest ROTC cadets met General Jonathan M. Wainwright, the “hero of Bataan,” at the Municipal Airport on November 5, 1945. November 6 was “General Wainwright Day” in Kansas City, celebrated with a parade, and the Southwest Battalion was the honor guard for the general.

The seniors experienced their first high school year of peace. The Victory Corps was a thing of the past; a Vocational Conference for Southwest students drew speakers representing 52 civilian career opportunities. And the Drivers War — Safety Club reverted to the Drivers Club.

The big bands of Harry James, Duke Ellington, Woody Herman and Tommy Dorsey were student favorites, as were vocalists Frank Sinatra, Andy Russell and Betty Hutton.

Robert F. Fountain was a senior that year, remembered by him as “peaceful with very little stress.” Bob has other fond memories:

“Very few students had cars, and public transportation was readily available. The streetcar could take you about anywhere.

“I remember the high school fraternities and sororities. The administration frowned on these groups, and I suppose they didn’t promote the overall success of the school. However, they provided a lot of activities and entertainment, and I made friends that I still have today.”

Marian Rippeteau’s poem was accepted for publication in “American Anthology of High School Poetry.”

Naomi Simpson conducted an SAT cram course on Sunday afternoons at her apartment near Gilham Park. She used as a text book *Thirty Days to a More Powerful Vocabulary*. Her voluntary (unpaid) effort went on for many years.

B.H. Overton’s World History classes suffered through his atrocious punning ... “The Knights of the Round Table never got a square meal,” for example.

After the basketball season ended, the band discarded school fight songs and martial airs for a spring repertoire featuring boogie woogie and concert pieces.

That was the year when students voted to have girl cheerleaders. Barbara Tindall Weary remembers:

“In the spring of 1946, a big issue before the Student Council was whether or not to have girl cheerleaders. An all-school vote approved the idea and auditions were held before the Student Council in the boys’ gym. I survived the audition and was one of three girls on the squad for 1946-1947.”

Neighborhood theaters encouraged attendance with “dish nights,” a free piece of china for those purchasing tickets. Breakage could be heard during romantic scenes.

Seniors celebrated springtime by digging dandelions from the front lawn of the school. Among the graduates, Southwest girls won three of the prized Seven College scholarships: the Ogden twins and Barbara Longfellow.

On graduation night, a large quantity of soapsuds decorated the Meyer Fountain.

1946-1947

The “Hall of Fame” pictures posted on a corridor wall in the fall of 1946 celebrated the achievements of six alumni, including the Rhodes Scholars.

Phil Klein was the all-city quarterback on an undefeated football team. The Southwest-Northeast game, played at Rupert Stadium, drew in excess of 10,000 people, a record crowd. Southwest won the game, 20-19, and the championship. One of the players, Carl Bolte '47, remembers that eleven of the 22-man squad won college letters in various sports.

A yell of the day:

*“Big Chief, Little Chief
“Papoose, Squaw
“Southwest High School
“Rah! Rah! Rah!”*

A graduating senior lamented that she would no longer be rocketing to football games on the Country Club streetcar. A favorite prank on the return trip was pulling the trolley off its overhead wire, bringing the streetcar to a stop.

Two of the original boys’ literary societies, Baconian and Ruskin, merged to form Excelsior.

There was a vesper service the Sunday before Christmas, an annual event. Homerooms packed gift boxes for servicemen in hospitals, advanced French classes sang ancient Gallic carols, and the choir carolled in the halls on the Friday before the holiday vacation.

Dale Helmers, a senior and the Student Council president that year, recalls as “places to hang out”: Winsteads, Nu-Way at Meyer and Troost (home of the crumbly Nu-Way with chopped onions and pickles), Plaza Bowl (near the present Seville Square), Z-Lan (across from the Plaza’s Casa Loma apartments), and Roys and Rays at the top of the Main Street hill east of the Plaza.

Barbara Tindall Weary, now a senior, won a Seven Sisters Scholarship to Vassar.

* * * * *

The five fraternities and five sororities remained socially prominent at Southwest. Off campus, they conducted rush weeks and formal rituals. Assessments funded Christmas and spring formals at the Continental Hotel, the Little Theater, and at country clubs.

A driver's license only cost 50 cents but the minimum driving age was 16, and most freshman and sophomore boys had to rely on older friends for transportation to parties. They solicited rides early. According to Dale Helmers, "Woe to the boy who had to pick up his date in a car driven by 'dear old Dad.' "

Several of the fraternities were national organizations. Each group had approximately 60 to 70 members, and fully a third of the student body belonged to something.

1947-1948

Parental involvement was important, and constant. The annual Open House in the fall of 1947 introduced parents to school life ... a program in the auditorium followed by meetings with teachers in classrooms. And the PTA sponsored father-son and father-daughter banquets.

College recruiters met with interested students from time to time. It was assumed that most of the seniors would go on to college; 85% of Southwest's graduates applied for college transcripts that year. For them, the only question was "Which one?"

Marjorie Patterson, education counselor, kept a record of every student beginning with the seventh grade and continuing through the high school years. She maintained an extensive file of college catalogues and made sure that seniors met the requirements for college entrance as well as graduation.

Forty-seven seniors were inducted into the National Honor Society. William Bailey was not elected to the National Art Honor Society but later became the head of Yale's art department.

Although the basketball team had a mediocre season, the Paseo game was a thriller; senior Arnold Eversull sank the winning basket in overtime.

To provide realism for the 1947 Redskin Revels, music director Bob Milton added a pair of mules to the opening act. According to the *Sachem*:

"On stage the entire choir in colorful attire sang and enacted 'Gypsy Life' by Schumann. They were assisted by two somewhat stubborn mules who were obviously overcome by stage fright."

Joan "Pinky" Snider Wells recalls that further realism was manifest on the stage floor after the mules made their exit.

In the school auditorium, Zend-Avesta speakers continued to prepare for the annual Inter Society Literary Contest under the watchful eye of mild-mannered Chaney O. Williams. Early one morning, senior Woody Davis awaited his turn at the podium while junior Mendel Small practiced. According to Woody:

"As Mendel was in the middle of his routine, Mr. Williams took hold of a folding chair below the stage and suddenly hurled it across the floor so that it noisily banged along and then collapsed below Mendel. He of course was startled, stopped in mid-sentence, and looked inquiringly at Mr. Williams. After a few moments, Mr. Williams said: 'Now Mendel, if the night of the contest there is a disturbance in the auditorium, you pay no heed and just go right on with your speech.' "

Both Mendel and Woody won medals in the contest and are now prominent Kansas City attorneys.

1948-1949

Sergeant Story retired after 15 years at Southwest, and became sergeant of the guard at the Truman

Library where he doubled as an affable greeter/host. He was succeeded by Sergeant Walter L. Halverson, transferred from Manual High School. The rifle team again won the League championship.

Gordon E. Wesner taught Political Science. He told jokes, provided insight into school matters, and generally “hung out” with the students at football games and dances. He was one of the school’s most popular teachers, a role he had to relinquish later when he became vice principal and chief enforcer of decorum.

In the spring of 1949 the track team won its fifth straight title before 1,500 fans on the Southwest field.

Denslow Bolte was another Zend-Avesta “Very Superior” orator, and like Mendel Small experienced English teacher Chaney O. Williams’ trial by chair.

Denny was one of four tennis lettermen coached by the General Science teacher, Frank Stark. Denny recalls

“Coach Stark had never even seen a tennis match, let alone played the game, but we all got in his car and went to Central and Westport (they had courts close to their schools) and we played Southeast and Paseo down on the Plaza courts. Bob Boxer and I were doubles partners. Boxer later went on to be a very well known doctor in the Chicago area and I saw him at one of our class reunions. Did we win any of our matches? Yes, 2 and 2 as I recall ... and remembering that is not too bad considering that it was 50 years ago.”

Frank Stark was later honored by his peers in the National Association of Biology Teachers. The Association’s certificate, dated May 1966, recognized Stark as “an outstanding biology teacher” ... it was an award given to only one teacher each year and named him as the Missouri recipient.

The 1949 *Sachem* was dedicated to vice principal George A. Peterson, who died in May.

The yearbook also paid homage to “the farsighted men and women who have developed our part of the city, the Country Club District, into a residential section acclaimed by city builders at home and abroad as the finest in the world.” The Southwest neighborhood straddled the state line; *Sachem* pictures included “The droll little Chinese musicians, which stand on Mission Road ... ” and the Verona columns in Mission Hills, Kansas.

In addition to its grander houses, the neighborhood included block after block of comfortable, middle-class residences, modest bungalows and apartment buildings.

1949-1950

The 1949-1950 school year was shortened by a levy failure, and all Kansas City high schools lost their North Central Association accreditation. The Association, a school evaluation organization, was established to assure colleges that applicants’ schools maintained good academic standards. The Kansas City schools were reinstated the following year.

The 1949 football team shared the Interscholastic League championship with Northeast.

A Southwest cadet was the city’s ROTC Regimental Commander, the third from the school in ten years, and a Southwest girl was the Regimental Ball Queen.

In the auditorium students presented the school’s first opera, “Down in the Valley.”

All space on the first Sis Arnold Award cup was filled when Joe Williamson was named the winner, and Joe presented a replacement to the school.

Southwest's original eighth grade class graduated in 1950. There were not many of them. Allan Hall explains:

"Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of the class of 1950 was its small size. 1945 saw the beginning of the 8th grade at Southwest, but kids coming from Catholic grade schools, and certain transferees from in town and from out of town were allowed to bypass the new 8th grade and enter as freshmen. My recollection is our class had only about 90 graduates in 1950 and has perhaps always suffered a certain sense of inferiority as a result.

"Even our reunions have had to be 'piggy-backed' with the full classes before or after us. I'm enclosing a flyer from this spring's 1949 reunion ... they have invited us again."

The *Sachem* was largely devoted to the 25-year history of Southwest. It also reported the death on February 16, 1950, of J.C. Nichols ... "to whose vision and judgment we owe the beautiful district in which we live."

* * * * *

The Korean War began the summer of 1950. Characterized by President Truman as a police action, it is sometimes dubbed "the forgotten war." Sandwiched between World War II and Vietnam, it had no appreciable impact on Southwest High School during the three years that it was waged.

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In 1950, *LIFE Magazine* devoted an entire issue to the condition of American education. It compared "an especially troubled" segregated black school in West Memphis, Arkansas, to "an especially good" suburban white school in Winnetka, Illinois — New Trier High School.

LIFE reported that the Negro took "the leavings in education," with fewer than one African American in four finishing high school, and quoted historian Henry Steele Commager: "Many of the failures we ascribe to contemporary education are in fact failures of society as a whole."

1950-1951

A.H. Monsees, the only principal the school had ever known, retired in 1950 and W. Lawrence Cannon, who had left Southwest in January 1945 for Paseo High School, returned as principal in September 1950.

The *Trail* reported the scene on the first day of school:

"The doors of Southwest opened to the largest enrollment of Kansas City senior high schools. The experienced freshman class of 360 students busily gave advice to 388 awed and trusting eighth graders concerning elevator passes and the fifth floor dancing room. Wise seniors, numbering 312, and juniors, numbering 332, laughed among themselves, while 379 sophomores greeted summer-lost friends."

Robert Milton, elevated to supervisor of music for all of the Kansas City public schools, was replaced by Lawrence Nivens.

There was a new Drama Club, "The Spotlighters." And two new literary societies, Delphi and Omega.

At a pre-season pep rally for the football team, Coach House told cheering students:

"If we lose, we'll try to keep our chins up, and if we win, we'll try to keep our noses down."

The words embodied his philosophy.

The football team didn't have to cope with adversity; they were co-champions, and John Handley was awarded the Nigro-Notre Dame Trophy ... acclaimed as the city's best.

* * * * *

After a tragic automobile accident that resulted in paraplegia, the Southwest Youth Court was formed to deal with traffic offenders who accepted as punishment driver's license suspensions imposed by a jury of their peers. A green safety flag flew at Southwest if none of its students appeared before the court for a month. Students from Pembroke-Country Day, Sunset Hill and Barstow also participated. A significant reduction in teen-age traffic accidents was attributed to the program.

1951-1952

The fall of 1951 produced an undefeated football team, and John Handley was again awarded the Nigro-Notre Dame Trophy.

Pem Day had a new field house, and a basketball game with Southwest was the inaugural event ... the first such contest between the two schools. Sparked by the tandem guard combination of Dick Jensen and Carl Ade, Southwest won an exciting game before a full house, 47-43.

The "Duke Duncan Award," named for a former Pep Club president, honored enthusiastic members of that organization.

Luanice Littick taught a dozen friends to dance the Charleston. They performed it in an assembly, wearing period costumes made by them for the occasion.

On a dare, a student jumped out a second floor window on the north side of the school building and walked away unharmed.

Fred Heath, a Southwest senior, was elected governor of Missouri Boys' State ... sponsored by the American Legion to promote interest in the responsibilities of citizenship.

Carl Ade did not fare as well in his candidacy for mayor on Student Government Day. His platform, presented to the All-City Student Council in a three-minute talk, proposed an Interscholastic League stadium. When it was pointed out that construction materials were "frozen," Carl thought that the reference was to weather conditions and responded accordingly, whereas the questioner had the Korean War in mind. Carl was elected a Municipal Judge.

Carl was just a little ahead of his time ... two new stadia were opened for League play only two years later.

When George R. (Dick) Haydon was the sole member of Carolyn Atwood's class to solve an algebra problem, he was summoned to the blackboard to enlighten his classmates but was unable to explain how he arrived at the answer.

The Southwest track team won the high school division of the Big Seven Indoor Meet, second place in the state high school indoor meet, and later in the spring of 1952 raced to victories at the K.U. Relays and at the St. Joseph Invitational Meet, took second place at the state outdoor meet, and won the Interscholastic League track championship. Tom Albert won the 100, the 200 and the 440 in the League meet and was state 440 champion.

* * * * *

Segregation was mandated under the Missouri constitution, but the segregated facilities had to be equal to satisfy federal law.

In the early '50s, 150 black students in Kansas City attempted to integrate a school for whites that had an auditorium and a gymnasium, which their school lacked. Their suit was dismissed, the court citing evidence that the Kansas City School District had 19 schools without an auditorium and ten without a gymnasium. *Missouri's Black Heritage*, Revised Edition (1993), University of Missouri Press.

Another case, *State of Missouri ex rel. Gertrude Hobby et al vs. Butler Disman et al*, reached the Missouri Supreme Court in its April 1952 session. It was a suit filed by the parents and guardians of black elementary school children. Plaintiffs asked the court to transfer their children from the dilapidated Bruce School to another public elementary school in the same area.

The Bruce School began as a frame building in 1900, and was enlarged over time to three structures. One of the school buildings lacked an inside toilet, there was no modern cafeteria service, and no modern equipment or facilities such as those at five elementary schools for white children in the same area.

The Hobby case was not a desegregation case ... what was sought was equal facilities for the black children's segregated education.

The Kansas City School District was exonerated on the ground that many white schools were in equally bad shape, in the financially strapped District. Just two years later, *Brown vs. Board of Education* would throw out the whole "separate but equal" concept upon which the Missouri segregation laws depended, but the Hobby complaint did not go that far.

1952-1953

In the fall of 1952, a new organization was introduced ... "The Spanish Club," to promote friendship between students of Southwest and those of Spanish-speaking countries. Southwest also elected its first Homecoming Queen.

The year 1952 saw another Southwest senior elected governor of Boys' State, J. William Sayler, the senior class president. Bill Sayler campaigned on a platform advocating Youth Courts at other Missouri high schools, and the Southwest model came to be followed elsewhere,

A *Wednesday Magazine* article entitled "The Heritage of Southwest High School" reported that to students and former students, Southwest was "a hallowed place."

The Junior-Senior Prom at Kansas City's Little Theater was the biggest dance of the year and the one most anticipated by all the juniors and seniors.

The track team in 1953 won Southwest's first state championships, indoor and outdoor, as well as all meets. Karl Englund was the state pole vault champion, and Roger Ornduff made the high school All-American team as a hurdler.

* * * * *

The 1953 *Sachem* contained several pictures of the Country Club District, identified as "a district of comfortable homes and genial living."

Bill Sayler, chosen to speak at graduation, selected as his topic significant world events that had occurred during the seniors' lifetime. His carefully written speech was peppered with dates, each one dependent on its predecessor for coherence. The day before graduation, Bill learned that there would be no podium and no notes, and at the eleventh hour he attempted to memorize all of the dates, in proper order. The next day, everything went well until he forgot April 12, 1945, the date of death of FDR. The rest of the speech was a disaster. Bill Sayler later became president of Business Mens' Assurance Company (BMA).

* * * * *

Among the graduating seniors was Calvin (Bud) Trillin, president of the Student Council, on the Honor Roll every semester, and a member of Quill and Scroll. He would later become a reporter/writer for *TIME Magazine*, a staff writer for *New Yorker* magazine, a columnist for *Nation* magazine, and the author of several books.

In one of his columns, Trillin noted that he had been in elementary school when Kansas City “put in” an 8th grade. Before that, according to Trillin, “A child left elementary school after the seventh grade and then he became a freshman in high school.”

Trillin recounted a conversation with a former teacher who said that “many educators consider eighth grade a complete bust.” This exchange was reported by Trillin:

“I’m from a place that didn’t have eighth grade for a while,” I said.

She looked impressed. “Didn’t have eighth grade,” she repeated, nodding her head as if I had mentioned some simple but ingenious solution that the education commissions and task forces had somehow missed.

“That’s right,” I said.

“You don’t mean that you just called it something else?”

“No,” I said proudly, “We didn’t have it.”

Many years later, Calvin Trillin directed, produced and acted in his own Broadway show. On opening night, several of his high school classmates were in attendance.

1953-1954

The football team had only four returning lettermen in the fall of 1953, and Louis House commented: “I have no prediction for this team as it is green and inexperienced.” However, they tied for second in the Interscholastic League and placed two men on the all-star team.

The Youth Court celebrated its third year and police statistics reflected a 75% reduction in teenage automobile accidents.

Teepee Town’s annual Cabaret Dance was held at the Ambassador Hotel. The top floor roof garden was converted into a French nightclub, and the music was supplied by Rick and his Nitwits.

Norman Cannon, the principal’s son, was elected president of the Junior Red Cross in a school-wide election, and Gordon Wesner, Jr., son of the vice principal, was the 24th Sis Arnold award winner.

* * * * *

Richard Lawrence, a sophomore, won an essay contest sponsored by the ladies’ auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. When the National Merit Scholarship program was instituted two years later, Richard would be Southwest’s first National Merit Scholar.

Freshman Paul Roach wrote the editor of *World Week*, challenging an article that described the scientific principle involved in jet plane propulsion. The editor acknowledged that Paul was correct. Paul also would later be a National Merit Scholar.

The seniors scored well in their SATs. One of them, Richard Vrooman, later enjoyed a successful vocal music career in opera, concerts, television and recording, and was a soloist with the Vienna Opera Company and the German Opera of the Rhine.

* * * * *

A watershed event occurred in the spring of 1954. *Brown vs. Board of Education* was decided by the United States Supreme Court in May. It banned segregation in the country's public schools, a decision of monumental significance for Kansas City's public schools although the consequences were several years away for Southwest.

The School District's *Bulletin* for 1953-4 stated that, while pupils were normally expected to attend high school in the attendance area in which they lived, "eligible pupils" living anywhere in the Kansas City School District might attend segregated Lincoln High School and R.T. Coles Junior High and Vocational School.

Lincoln had its origin in 1868 when a newly organized Kansas City School District established a school for black children at 10th and McGee. After several moves, in 1936 it opened at 2111 Woodland, the current location of Lincoln College Preparatory Academy.

Southwest High School and Lincoln High School exchanged assemblies in 1954. The Southwest performers received a warm welcome at Lincoln, where a reception committee led them on a tour of their school following the performance. The performers from Lincoln were well received at Southwest, presenting a "great show" to "thundering applause."

1954-1955

There were 2,027 students at Southwest for the 1954-1955 school year. The Pep Club reflected the large enrollment ... over 700 members.

Frenchman Pierre Sisser enrolled as a senior at Southwest. He was the recipient of an American Field Service Scholarship and the first foreign exchange student in a Kansas City public school. It was the beginning of a highly successful, enduring AFS program at Southwest that would see many Southwest students going abroad and many foreign students coming to Southwest.

A season pass to Tepee Town cost \$2, where the dance band dressed as Indians.

Ten schools in Johnson County, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri, including Southwest, adopted a social code governing the conduct of students away from school; the rules addressed etiquette, driving, and a dress code, and provided that high school students should be home by midnight.

A cloud loomed on the horizon for some social organizations. The Kansas City Superintendent of Schools commented that fraternities and sororities that chose members by distinguishing as to class and creed were in conflict with public education ideas; they were "a problem across the nation and are under study here."

Midway through the football season the Interscholastic League opened new football stadia at Southeast and East. The end of the season was followed by the Pigskin Prom and the crowning of a Homecoming Queen.

Enrollment was large for the seventh annual College Conferences night, where students and parents interviewed representatives from many colleges and universities.

* * * * *

Louis A. House died December 19, 1954, of throat cancer. In his 29 years at Southwest, Coach House won 129 games, lost 72 and tied 12 in football, with ten football championships. His basketball teams in the early years won two titles, and he had 11 track championships ... nine in the past ten years.

The young men he had taught and coached over 30 years numbered an estimated 3,500.

Classes at Southwest were suspended to permit students and faculty to attend the funeral. Over 700 people, including many former players long since graduated, filled the Wornall Road Baptist Church. Larry Cannon commented:

“There are hundreds of living monuments to Mr. House throughout this broad land. These were once boys who became better men because of their association with him in his gym classes and on his athletic teams.”

Another monument was erected to Louis House, this one historically significant. Steven Talge was a member of the class of 1955. His grandfather, Henry Talge, had been a close friend of President Harry S Truman since Truman’s days in the United States Senate. When the west wing of the White House was remodeled during the Truman administration, the president presented to Talge some of the stone from the original White House, predating 1812. And Henry Talge, and his son Foster (Steve’s father) anonymously contributed White House stones for a monument to Coach House.

The monument was erected at the northeast corner of the football field and dedicated with remarks by W. Lawrence Cannon. A dedicatory plaque was later installed in a more prominent location, the base of the flagpole at the north end of the field, with an inscription by the class of 1935. And there it may be seen today.

The 1955 *Sachem* also recognized the coach’s legacy to the school:

“From the rich natures of both faculty and students, Southwest has been blessed by many bequests of the spirit. Now to these has been added the bequest of Louis A. House, beloved teacher and athletic coach for nearly 30 years,”

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The track team won the state outdoor meet in 1955.

Wallace Graham, Jr., son of Harry Truman’s personal physician and Southwest student, won the Golden Gloves featherweight championship.

A team of five Southwest girls placed second at Hall’s annual tablesetting contest with their “Sunday Breakfast” entry. Another student came in second in the Science Fair at the Municipal Auditorium with his small radio-controlled car. And there was a first-place winner in a national poetry contest.

The seniors voted for twin sisters as “most talented” on their senior ballot. They also voted for “traditional commencement garb” again ... caps and gowns.

The seniors won 28 scholarships to schools including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Mt. Holyoke, Northwestern, Scripps, Wisconsin and Beloit.

Norman Cannon, president of the senior class, accepted his diploma from his father. He would later earn a cum laude Harvard degree, and a Harvard MBA.

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Responding to *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the Kansas City School District structured a desegregation program that closed three formerly black elementary schools and established one system of neighborhood geographic attendance areas and secondary school feeder patterns in place of separate black and white systems.

One of the elementary schools closed was the Penn School. The building was later (1969)

destroyed by fire. A plaque in a small park northwest of 43rd and Broadway now marks the site.

In March 1955, the School District issued its “Policies for Transition from a System of Separate Schools to a Desegregated School System.” It addressed the Interscholastic League as follows:

“There have been separate programs of competitive athletics for high school students. The white high schools have held membership in the Interscholastic League and set up game schedules among themselves. The Negro high schools have scheduled games with schools outside Kansas City. It is now proper that all high schools should be eligible for membership in the Interscholastic League, participate in all activities of the League and be governed by its regulations.”

In September 1955, segregation ended without incident but white enrollment in the district dropped by 1200. Many white kids, expected to attend formerly all-black schools, failed to show up.

Because of segregated residential patterns, Southwest was little affected. The same year that 15 acres of the Armour farm had been purchased for Southwest, J.C. Nichols filed the plat for his company’s Armour Hills subdivision. The accompanying deed restrictions prohibited ownership or tenancy by blacks. Similar restrictions controlled other Country Club District developments. *J.C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City*. (Pages 132-134, 146). The Supreme Court struck the first significant blow against discrimination in housing in 1946, when it held racial housing covenants unenforceable, but the segregated residential patterns in the Southwest attendance area were hardly disturbed. The Country Club District remained de facto segregated until well into the 1960s.

CHAPTER FIVE

Camelot; “Insist on the Highest Standards.”

1955-1956

SOUTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL had an enrollment of 2,050 for the 1955-56 school year.

The School District had a new Superintendent of Schools, James A. Hazlett, a product of the Kansas City school system.

Andy Nurski was now the head football coach at Southwest. The team also had a new support group, the Quarterback Club, comprised of fathers of football players.

The school’s arch-rival was Shawnee Mission High School, once a small country institution (Shawnee Mission Rural High School), but not any more.

A new social event was a Baby Doll dance — a girl-asks-boy affair sponsored by the Red Cross Council as a fund raiser.

Tepee Town moved from the school gyms to a nearby new Country Club YMCA building, named for alumnus William N. Deramus III.

A new Southwest handbook was published, prepared by the students.

And a new instrumental music organization, the Scherzo Club, gave a plaque to the outstanding orchestra student similar to a band award named for the grocery store magnate and alumnus, Lester Milgram.

Melvin P. Bishop, Jr., son of the former basketball coach, was now the director of vocal music.

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A significant new program, the National Merit Scholarship Program, was funded by grants from the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation. The program would award four-year scholarships to high school seniors. The awards would be on merit, without regard to financial need, and National Merit Scholars would be selected for aptitude for college work on the basis of two tests, high school record, character, and qualities of leadership. The program would become the yardstick for measuring the quality of the country’s high schools.

Nineteen Southwest seniors, selected by a faculty committee, took the test along with 60,000 others from around the country. Nine of the Southwest entrants were among the 6000 finalists. 504 National Merit Scholars were ultimately named, and one of these was from Southwest ... Richard Lowrence, a senior who chose to go to Harvard.

* * * * *

Tom Van Dyke, later a successful lawyer, was one of three Southwest AFS students. Tom was also vice president of the Senior Class, vice president of the Pep Club and vice president of the Student Council, prompting his father to comment: "Always a bridesmaid."

The A.H. Monsees Chapter of the Future Teachers organization helped members choose fields of teaching and prepare to become good teachers.

The Engineers' Club took field trips to the Kansas City Waterworks, to the James W. Weldon Metallurgical Labs, and to the University of Kansas City for a lecture on topology.

The Cafeteria Courtesy Committee enforced the rule: "Pass your dishes to the end of the table and push your stools under the table."

Richard Vrooman, now a student at the Kansas City Conservatory of Music, returned to Southwest to sing the lead in the school's production of H.M.S. Pinafore.

The March 22, 1956 issue of the *Trail* carried a picture of Larry Winn, '37, W. Dean Ray, '39, and W. Lawrence Cannon inspecting plans for the Louis House Memorial Gate to the Southwest athletic field.

The girls' literary societies held their annual tea at the University of Kansas City. And the spring Inter-Society Literary Contest got underway with a dinner, and was enlivened by skits and club songs, as well as the oral events and announcement of awards.

A school bond proposal was submitted to the voters and carried by a four to one margin. One benefit would be a new junior high school in the Southwest attendance area.

Of the 356 graduating seniors, 44 won 55 scholarships. Thirteen seniors had scored in the 99.5 percentile on a college aptitude test, ten were at 99, and the median percentile for the entire senior class was 81 compared to the state median of 50.

The president of the class, Charles Schmitz, went to Yale and the Yale law school, and became a senior State Department official.

Martin Dickinson was chosen dean of the Kansas University law school. And Judy Ade Levering was elected president of the United States Lawn Tennis Association, the first woman to hold that position.

The summer of 1956, junior Marilyn Hall was one of 92 students from 36 states selected to attend the National High School Journalism Institute at Northwestern University ... the only one chosen from Missouri.

1956-1957

Thomas E. Kipp, later Southwest's third principal, was a new member of the faculty in the fall of 1956. He also coached the basketball team, and made the acquaintance of the indomitable Julia Guyer; she delayed the team's departure for a tournament in St. Louis for an hour until two athletes completed their American History examination. Miss Guyer made her classes study, assigning much homework and grading hard. Former students realized, much too late to thank her, what a great teacher she had been.

A new AFS student from New Zealand enrolled: students had sold shares at 50 cents apiece ("Share the Fare"), to help pay the cost of bringing him to Southwest.

The Cooperative School and College Test ("Junior Aptitude Test") was given for the first time to

all juniors in the Kansas City Public Schools. Southwest students “made a fine record” according to the April 11, 1957 issue of the *Trail*.

* * * * *

Nationally, 162,000 seniors were selected for the National Merit Scholarship program. Thirty-three Kansas City seniors were among the 7500 finalists, and 13 of these were from Southwest. Paul Roach, now a senior, and his brother Pat were both named National Merit Scholars.

Southwest students held the most important all-city high school offices: one senior doubled as both the president of the all-city student council and City Hall Day’s Missouri governor; another was cadet colonel of the Kansas City ROTC regiment; and a third was president of the all-city Red Cross.

The National Art Honor Society celebrated its 25th anniversary; there were now 52 schools in the society.

The 1957 track squad, coached by George Ewing, won the state indoor championship for the fourth time in seven years, and the state outdoor championship for the third time, as well as the Interscholastic League championship. No other area team had so dominated track and field competition.

Fifty seniors won college scholarships, a new record for Southwest.

The senior class gift was a plaque board listing the gift of every senior class to date.

1957-1958

In the fall of 1957, two more foreign exchange students entered Southwest. They entered a school that could boast of high scholastic ratings in national standardized tests, numerous National Merit Scholarship finalists, many honors in art and music contests, champion orators and essayists, and an abundance of all-city and all-district athletes.

The Southwest PTA was the largest in the state of Missouri — 2,235 strong.

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Dr. Robert Marschner, senior research associate for Standard Oil Co. (Indiana), was president of an Illinois school board that planned to build a high school in their newly-formed district. Dr. Marschner conducted a survey which determined that Southwest was among the country’s 38 foremost high schools ... the only Missouri school on Marschner’s list. New Trier High School was also listed. His study, described in detail in the October 6, 1957 *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, received national attention. The study began:

“Residents of the Homewood-Flossmoor High School District have long believed that their community could have an outstanding high school. In many cases, the belief was held without knowing just why. The reasons were hard to discover because there has been no good way of measuring the quality of a school. How does one compare a century-old classical school in Massachusetts with a ‘progressive’ one in Washington, or a segregated school in Alabama with a consolidated one in Kansas?”

“One way has recently become available through the National Merit Scholarship Program. For the past two years, seniors in nearly all high schools in the United States have taken the same NMS examinations. A few small schools have turned up with long lists of finalists, whereas many large ones have none at all. The number of finalists cannot

measure everything one expects from a high school, for it only deals with mental achievement, and is not concerned with physical or social skills. But it is far better than nothing ... ”

The surveyors also asked college admission officers what high schools sent them the best prepared, most successful students.

The conclusion reached by the study:

“An excellent community can have an excellent high school if it demands one and has the means and conviction to support it. Better-than-average children give the school a head start, but teachers of the highest caliber are essential. Homogenous grouping brings results, and there is no substitute for tests and examinations — in the grades as well as high school — as a guide to grouping. The way to get high quality is to insist upon the highest standards and to accept nothing less”

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A *TIME Magazine* article (October 28, 1957), also reported that Southwest High School was one of the outstanding secondary schools in America. The magazine publicity produced 100 requests for information concerning the curriculum, activities, facilities, and policies of the school.

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Sara Van Metre died in 1957. Among the many tributes was one from Virginia Tanzey Jordan, *Trail* editor in 1928:

“I was one of the hundreds of students who went on to fine colleges or universities — found that college English was not so difficult after all, because we had been well-trained, we were, in fact, with Miss Van Metre, already doing some college English.”

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At the literary societies’ annual tea, a panel discussed “Going Steady.” And the banquet preceding the 31st Inter-Society Literary Contest was held at the Country Club Christian Church.

Plans were being made for the new junior high school, and Dr. Jonas Salk’s miraculous polio shots were administered in the school gym.

A Southwest senior girl, bound for Northwestern, won second place and \$500 in a state Betty Crocker Homemaker of Tomorrow contest.

The track team once more won both state championships, as well as the city meet and the St. Joseph Relays.

Thirty-six of the graduating seniors won 42 scholarships. One senior, Bruce Ennis, went on to Dartmouth, then law school (University of Chicago), and a Washington, D.C. legal career — as a star of the First Amendment bar, he has argued several landmark Constitutional law cases before the United States Supreme Court.

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The theme of the 1958 *Sachem* was “The Fame of Southwest” (the school’s fight song: “Fight for the Fame of Southwest”). The yearbook’s message from Principal W. Lawrence Cannon cautioned: “To a large degree, the fame of Southwest has been earned by the students and teachers who have preceded us. It is our duty to maintain for our school the high level set by others.”

Newspaper reporter George Gurley attended Pembroke-Country Day School at that time, and later remembered the line that separated Pem Day and Southwest as “thin” and the rivalry as “keen”:

“Both schools were lily white, affluent and academically exceptional. Southwest was always in the top rank of public schools nationally.” Kansas City Times, January 26, 1988.

A.H. Monsees, one of the architects of Southwest’s fame, died May 13, 1958. The *Trail* published a two-page spread, with many tributes. Among the tributes was one from W.F. (Junior) Coen:

“In any school there must be a select group of individuals closely identified with its organization, its growth, and its success. We have lost several from that group, Coach Louis House and Sara Van Metre to mention two, but now Southwest has lost the man who must forever stand out as the one who with his leadership, did the most to make Southwest the school it is today.”

1958-1959

There were 2,240 students entering Southwest in the fall of 1958. The school was crowded, but the number was expected to decline when the new George Caleb Bingham Junior High School opened its doors to 7th, 8th and 9th graders. Bingham’s attendance boundaries had not yet been determined.

The *Kansas City Star* reported efforts by student leaders, including the head of the Inter-Fraternity Council, to combat vandalism in the Southwest area. W. Lawrence Cannon suggested that the fraternities keep the Country Club Police Station informed of their rushing activities.

The Pep Club opened its membership to boys, but students no longer rode streetcars to games ... the Kansas City Public Service Company had discontinued its last three electric rail lines in 1957.

William C. Robinson took over from Andy Nurski as football coach after five years as assistant coach. The 1958 football team had a mediocre season under its new coach, but snapped a jinx of several years when it barely defeated Shawnee Mission, 13-12.

The ROTC won the *Kansas City Star* award, placing first in most categories of the competition.

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The language department was strong. 951 students were enrolled in one or more foreign language courses. Southwest offered four years of Latin, Spanish and French, and two years of German. That year, a course in Russian was introduced and a new Russian Club joined the school organizations.

An electronics-equipped foreign language lab was installed at Southwest, the first in the area. It permitted students to hear a language spoken and to practice pronunciation.

Southwest also had its first Advanced Placement class, in American History. Those completing the college-level course would receive college credit. Although the AP program was initiated in 1955 in some of the nation’s schools, this was the first AP class in the Kansas City public schools. Advanced Placement English was soon added to the curriculum.

The school had 14 National Merit Scholarship finalists, the highest number yet at Southwest, and one National Merit Scholar.

Again, many scholarships were awarded to graduating seniors.

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At the end of the school year, the school board outlawed fraternities and sororities in the public schools. Those already belonging could continue membership without penalty if they refrained from

activities on school premises or at any school sponsored affair. But there were to be no new initiates, insuring that fraternities and sororities would disappear from the scene in four years.

On the last day of school, W. Lawrence Cannon with some trepidation informed a student assembly of the edict and followed up with letters and meetings over the summer. A group of 15 parents brought suit to overturn the board's action but were unsuccessful.

1959-1960

The senior class returning in the fall of 1959 was the largest ever. However, many eighth graders from the Southwest attendance area were at Bingham Junior High.

Six cheerleaders, now all girls, had attended a clinic at Southern Methodist University in Dallas and placed first in their division. Following their return, 500 "loyal Indians" joined them at the first Pep Club meeting of the year.

Due to dwindling ROTC enrollment (there was a 100-cadet minimum), the Army dissolved the Southwest Battalion in 1959.

The 12th annual College Conference Night attracted representatives from 80 colleges and universities.

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Because of the elimination of fraternities and sororities, major social repercussions were anticipated at Southwest where more than 1200 students belonged. To compensate, Southwest formed an Activities Council to strengthen school clubs and literary societies, promote school spirit, and according to the *Star*, sponsor "dances, dances, dances."

School dances included a street dance in Waldo, the usual sock hops (the proceeds from one, \$204.50, went to Children's Mercy Hospital), a Halloween Dance, a Christmas Literary Society Dance, a "Heaven and Hades Dance," a dance at the Elks Club, and the first Basketball Dance.

The music at one of the first dances that fall was furnished by a non-union disc jockey from a local radio station. The following day, W. Lawrence Cannon received a call objecting to the non-union musician and proposing that Cannon write a letter to the union stating that only union musicians would be employed at Southwest in the future. Cannon refused. The dispute was finally resolved with the school board decreeing that Southwest could only employ union musicians.

Participation in extracurricular programs also reached an all-time high. Assemblies, held once a week, included a popular jazz Modern Jazz Workshop concert set up and staged by the musicians' union.

Meanwhile, faculty were alerted to watch for fraternity or sorority pins or rings, or other indicia of membership in the banned organizations.

There were organized a Latin Club, a Radio Club, a new Law Club for prospective lawyers, and a Philatelic Society to promote better stamp and coin collections.

Southwest High School hosted the first National Student Safety Association Convention, with representatives from every state. Firestone Tire and Rubber Co. was the sponsor, and delegates were guests in Kansas City homes. Rockhurst High School joined the Youth Court, now in its ninth year, and Southwest was recognized as one of 25 secondary schools in the country doing the most to promote student safety.

A few juniors were inducted into the National Honor Society (previously an all-senior organization) in the spring of 1960. They would conduct the initiation ceremony the following year, replacing the alumni who had previously undertaken that task.

Graduating seniors numbered 431, with two National Merit Scholarship finalists. The class valedictorian had a 4.276 grade point average ... the result of extra credit from advanced placement courses. Almost everyone went on to college, many of them on scholarships.

1960-1961

Three foreign exchange students entered Southwest in the fall of 1960, the first time that three foreign countries were represented. They entered a school that offered five foreign languages and two language laboratories.

Katherine Morgan, a former Latin teacher at Southwest, provided by will for a large sum of money to go to the school to enrich language studies.

Carder Manning was the talented new music director, and although there were fewer assemblies than the previous year the quality of the entertainment did not suffer.

In September, an enlarged Interscholastic League stadium at Southeast was dedicated, expanding capacity from 1,200 to 4,200. Superintendent of Schools James Hazlett called the improvement the League's "first real progressive step" in many years.

A Sportsmen's Club at Southwest promoted interest in fishing, hunting and hiking, and a chapter of the national Thespians was chartered to recognize excellence in drama and speech.

The *Trail* identified three Southwest students brought before the Youth Court for driving offenses, reporting that two agreed to suspend driving but one refused. The traffic flag did not fly that month.

The Washington Elm that was the gift of the class of 1932 was cut down, a victim of Dutch elm disease.

The school's speech team won first place in the University of Kansas City Speech Festival.

For the first time, there was a *Sachem* Queen, Nancy Hunter. The *Sachem* staff nominated five queen candidates based on character, personality, intelligence and school service, and then a school-wide ballot elected the queen. A full-page head shot in the 1961 yearbook of her majesty was accompanied by pictures of four pretty attendants.

Among the seniors were eight National Merit finalists, and National Merit Scholar Sheryl Ruskin. Eleven graduates had grade point averages above 4.0, and won scholarships to many colleges including Harvard (2), Northwestern (3), Smith, Dartmouth, MIT, Williams and Yale.

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One 1961 graduate, Richard Smalley, would receive the Nobel prize in Chemistry in 1996. According to *Star* reporter Lynn Franey:

"The passion that led Smalley to his science-world celebrity began at a Southwest assembly just after the Soviets launched the Sputnik satellite. A scientist and an engineer regaled the students with tales from their professions. Smalley was thrilled." Kansas City Star, October 11, 1996.

Dr. Smalley stated that he became very serious about his education in the fall of 1959, at the beginning of his junior year at Southwest:

“This happened to be the year when I began to study chemistry for the first time. Luckily, these years were some of the best ever for the public school system in Kansas City, and my local high school, Southwest High, was one of the most effective anywhere in the US as measured by scores on standard achievement tests, and the fraction of students going on to college.” Les Prix Nobel, 1996.

Smalley praised his chemistry teacher at Southwest, Victor E. Gustafson, as a great inspiration, as well as his physics teacher, J.C. Edwards.

1961-1962

The bleachers on the football field were torn down during the summer of 1961 ... a public safety inspector declared the 34-year-old structures to be unsafe. The *Trail* reported on October 12:

“The school board decided to move the metal bleachers from Lincoln to Southwest to satisfy the needs. Before the end of the football season, Southwest will be able to boast of a much-requested, safe arrangement of bleachers.”

However, the Lincoln bleachers never arrived.

The Student Council published a new student handbook, the first since 1958. Under “Fundamental Manners,” the guide quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson: “Life is not so short but that there is also time for courtesy.” It also disclosed that the halls were now decorated with 19 student murals.

The price of lunch in the school cafeteria: 35 cents for students, 40 cents for adults. Students were to have the correct change or tokens, available before school at the cashier’s cage near the cafeteria entrance.

The pace in the halls was brisk; students were allotted five minutes to get from one class to another, and an eighth hour was the punishment for tardiness.

The cheerleaders returned from the clinic in Dallas with their third consecutive victory.

Thirty cars representing school clubs formed the Homecoming Parade. Jazz great Jay McShann and his band played for the Homecoming Dance.

Center High School and Shawnee Mission East joined the Youth Court.

Carder Manning directed his concert choir at the Liberty Memorial rededication where the speakers were two former presidents, Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower; the choir’s performance was broadcast on television and radio.

Student preferences included bouffant hair styles for girls, crew cuts for boys, and “the twist” for dancers. The Car Club sponsored a dance at the Country Club YMCA (75 cents admission), where the champion “twister” won a record album.

New clubs included the Socratic Society, formed to promote interest in comparative philosophies, religions, theologies and morals. R. Crosby Kemper, candidate for the U.S. Senate from Missouri, addressed the Society in November.

The Doublemint Twins, marketing chewing gum, performed at Eddys’ Restaurant downtown; as a promotion, the restaurant conducted a “Twins Contest” and the winners were Mary and Margaret Dailey from Southwest. Miss Van Metre would not have approved.

A petition was prepared for presentation to the school board, asking for the addition of a south wing to the crowded school as originally planned.

Because of race discrimination at Fairyland Park, the NAACP opposed use of the park for the picnics that were the annual fund-raisers for the School District's PTAs. The school board told the PTAs that they would have to find another project the next year. Fairyland Park was integrated in 1964.

Alumnus Lester Milgram arranged a concert by the U.S. Navy band in the Southwest auditorium. Over 1,700 people attended, and the proceeds from the modest admission fee went to the Tooters Club.

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In the senior class were two National Merit Scholars and 12 National Merit finalists. One Scholar, Ronald MacLennon, had the third highest NMS score in Missouri and the other, Gilbert Fulmer, was seventh.

Among the Southwest classes for students of high academic ability were junior and senior honors courses in English, mathematics, foreign language, science and social studies. A math team of 150 placed first in a seven-state region, in a contest sponsored by the Mathematical Association of America and the Society of Actuaries.

Ninety percent of the graduates that year went on to college, a not uncommon number for Southwest.

1962-1963

The enrollment in the fall of 1962 was 2,059.

The campaign for a new south wing had borne fruit ... the entering student body were confronted with a noisy construction project that would result in more classrooms, laboratories and cafeteria space.

The school also needed a new trophy case. Not a year went by that Southwest did not add to its collection of hardware ... in 1958, there had been a record 27. And they were scattered all over, primarily in the front hall, the office and the boys' gym.

The faculty included four education counselors, one each for seniors, juniors, and sophomores, and the fourth, Marjorie Patterson, worked with eighth graders and freshmen on the eve of her retirement.

Seventy percent of the Southwest parents belonged to the PTA.

The football team's only loss, to undefeated Southeast, cost the Indians the Interscholastic League title. Alumnus Jay Robertson, class of '58 and captain of Northwestern University's 1962 football team, returned to speak at the football banquet.

The Hi-Y sponsored two all-school dances and revived a moribund Tepee Town. Students were issued identification cards, orange and black ... mandatory for admission to school dances.

All clubs were very busy. A new "International Club" was associated with the AFS chapter, which through affiliation with the People-to-People program acquired sister schools in Ghana, Sweden and the Philippines. The Science Club created a research division. And the Synchronized Swim Club practiced in the school pool.

Helen Hayes and Maurice Evans took to the Southwest stage in February of 1963 to present selections from William Shakespeare.

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Nuclear warfare was a specter ... the year before, the Cuban Missile Crisis had brought the country to the brink of war. The second and third floors of Southwest were designated student fallout

shelters by the Kansas City Civilian Defense Department, and stocked with food and medical supplies. And a Southwest junior joined his father in excavating an underground bomb shelter in their back yard.

The school board voted to discontinue a student textbook exchange at Southwest. The enterprise had been instituted as a student economy measure, but competing book dealers contended that students were not mature enough to make business decisions, and that the exchange was morally and economically wrong.

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Southwest had another governor of Boys' State, Betty Crocker Homemaker Award winners, and gold key and merit awards from *Scholastic Magazine* for photography and art. There were many Betty Crocker and *Scholastic Magazine* awards over the years.

Barbara Yeo won first place in a national contest sponsored by the American Newspaper Publishers Association, and Jim Cravens was a double winner in a Quill and Scroll contest, placing among the top four in the country in both editorial and feature writing.

Three seniors were National Merit Scholarship finalists, and there were college scholarship winners, and band, orchestra and vocal music honors.

In the spring, Phil Manuel broke the national high school record in the pole vault.

The literary societies held their annual, spirited contest ... 20% of the student body belonged. Not everyone was eligible: a 3.0 average in English was required, as well as at least a 2.0 in all other subjects. However, every eligible applicant became a society member. Their activities were not confined to the spring of the year ... many held dinners in the fall featuring serious initiation ceremonies; all adopted Christmas families and supported the school Carnival.

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The *Ladies Home Journal* named Southwest High School one of the country's 25 best college preparatory high schools. The competition was stiff — nationally, SAT scores peaked that year. *Inside American Education*, Thomas Sowell, The Free Press, 1993, pages 3 and 27.

The magazine announcement began:

"Which high schools in the United States rank among the very best? Most educational authorities avoid answering this question, as there is no official national rating of high schools. How well any high school serves its students depends upon its purpose — and its students ... Here is a list of high schools known to be outstanding for many years."

In reporting the honor, the *Kansas City Star* noted that Southwest occupied a 37-year-old building to which nothing much had been added since 1940. However, according to one authority, greater financial investment does not necessarily mean better education:

"More affluent communities are typically better educated communities, where parents emphasize education to their children, and may be more willing and able to put more money into local schools. But it is by no means clear that whatever better educational results come out of this combination of circumstances is due to the money. A highly respected Brookings Institution study concluded: 'When other relevant factors are taken into account, economic resources are unrelated to student achievement.' " Inside American Education, *supra*, page 11.

The *Star* went on to say: "In fairness, it should be added that Southwest serves an area of unusual stability ... There is an interesting permanence even to the faculty." It also reported that for the past ten years, 85-90% of Southwest's graduates had gone on to college.

The *Trail* exulted:

"Southwest has once again been named as one of the top high schools in the nation. The April issue of the Ladies Home Journal included Southwest in its listing of 25 high schools that have been known for many years to be outstanding in college preparation."

The *Sachem* noted the "national recognition of Southwest's excellence:"

"Of the thousands of secondary schools, Southwest ranks among the leaders; and her reputation commands a respect for her graduates throughout the country."

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In June, 42 women of the class of 1943 gathered for a reunion luncheon at the home of Mary Breed Brink and posed for a cover picture for the *Plaza Magazine*.

Marjorie Patterson, education counselor at Southwest since 1930, died in the summer of 1963. A tribute to her appeared in the fall issue of the *Trail* and, fittingly, her memorial was a scholarship fund. Naomi Simpson also passed away; she had taught at Southwest from 1925 until her retirement in 1960. Her family too asked that her memorial be scholarship fund contributions.

1963-1964

The enrollment was 2,236 in the fall of 1963, the size of a small college. Many of the faculty were college caliber instructors, members of the Phi Beta Kappa honorary scholastic organization. (It was a time when fewer than one-fourth of the nation's public school teachers had postgraduate degrees but SAT scores were at their highest. *Inside American Education*, supra, page 27.)

There was more room — the new wing was ready for occupancy. The PTA sponsored a "housewarming."

A new English teacher, James C. Kilgore, was a black man. And three black students appeared in class pictures, two freshmen and one sophomore ... one of these, Laurence Smith, was a basketball team manager.

The Southwest cheerleaders had chalked up their fifth straight win in the SMU clinic in Dallas. But there were still no bleachers on the Southwest field, where junior varsity football games were played before crowds of standees.

The football team tied with three other teams for the Interscholastic League championship. The diluted triumph was welcome ... it was the first football championship since 1951.

Literary societies were so popular that two more clubs were formed, Aurora and Alethea. There were too many members for the traditional Sunday tea, and an after-school coke party in the new cafeteria was substituted. Contest victories were still the societies' prime objective, but a scarcity of judges required that each club submit only one entry in each of the five divisions, and the contest was shortened by holding orations in advance, with only the declamations presented the final evening.

The Beatles' music was in demand at Southwest; their rendition of I Want to Hold Your Hand topped the charts that year.

Southwest was the only Kansas City high school to receive the Youth Award of Merit from the National Safety Council.

The senior class produced one National Merit Scholar, Jim Gardner who chose Yale, and twelve National Merit finalists. Ten percent of the seniors graduated with at least a 4.0 average.

Southwest had 500 graduates in 1964 ... too many for the school auditorium, and the exercises were held in Kansas City's Municipal Auditorium. There was a long list of colleges that the graduates would attend.

1964-1965

James Kilgore remained the only black faculty member in the fall of 1964, but a few more black students were pictured in the yearbook.

The September enrollment of 2389 escalated to 2,405 in October.

In a home room poll, 1,738 ballots were cast for president of the United States: 60% voted for Lyndon B. Johnson and Hubert H. Humphrey, 40% for Barry Goldwater and William E. Miller.

The football team won the Interscholastic League championship. This time it didn't have to share it. Dennis Rains and Pete Cortelyou made the all-city team.

The space program was now well underway and the "Astronauts" played at the Christmas Dance.

Students rode the train to Clinton, Missouri for a basketball game. A round-trip ticket cost \$5.75.

Albert Sabin had developed an oral vaccine for polio, and physicians administered it free of charge on "Sabin Sunday" in 1965. Five thousand Kansas Citians received the vaccine in the Southwest gym, with student assistance.

Senior Bill Hess led the golf team to a state championship, and in the process defeated Pem Day sophomore Tom Watson.

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Many of the Kansas City School District teachers belonged to the Kansas City Education Association, affiliated with the National Education Association (NEA). The NEA prided itself on being a professional association, like the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association. However there was a rival organization, the Kansas City Federation of Teachers (KCFT), affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, and the KCFT was unabashedly a trade union.

The two local organizations vied for members among the School District's teachers. Organizing efforts were fueled by the competition and by dissatisfaction with teachers' salaries. As the rivalry grew more intense and discord mounted, the Kansas City Education Association began to look less like a professional association and more like a union.

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The June 1, 1965 *Trail* reported another triumph:

"Southwest was one of the ten high schools in the United States to receive a plaque given in recognition of marked excellence in secondary education by the Fisk Foundation.

"The school was chosen for superior educational advantages, proficiency in competitive athletics, balanced extracurricular activities and a high spirit throughout the student body."

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Southwest had two National Merit Scholars, Mike Colvin and Ken Krupsky, and 14 National Merit finalists in 1964-65.

The drop-out rate was a modest 2%, mostly boys according to the principal.

The graduating class of 605 was a record. It was the end of Southwest's fourth decade.

One of the graduates, Chuck Roberts, later pursued a career in broadcast journalism as a highly visible anchorman for CNN. And the senior class president, Lee Shepherd, became an actor on Broadway and in Hollywood.

J.G. Bryan, Southwest's first vice principal, retired as director of secondary education for the School District, a position he had held since 1940.

1965-1966

The enrollment for the new school year was 2,489, an all-time high.

A new literary magazine, *Blaze*, made its debut in the fall of 1965. Its two issues published poems, essays and short stories.

Two senior boys, Scott Simon and David Achtenberg, were chosen cheerleaders after several years of all-girl squads. Both were also National Merit Scholar semifinalists.

The band and orchestra merited number one ratings in the district music contest. The concert choir, now 150 strong, and the girls' choir were both rated number one in the district competition for the fifth consecutive year.

The school play was "Molly Brown," and the girl who played the unsinkable Molly had a Mission Hills, Kansas address.

The New Christy Minstrels entertained in the Southwest auditorium.

Results from the School and College Aptitude Test (SCAT) for juniors included one almost unprecedented perfect score, by Mark Wasserstrom, and eight others with 99%. Joann Elam was one of the top four in Missouri in the National Merit Scholar Qualifying Tests.

The *Trail* discontinued disclosing the names of Youth Court traffic offenders.

Southwest had two national Quill & Scroll winners, one in news and one in features; the same two students had finished one-two in the Sons of the American Revolution essay contest earlier in the year. And David Achtenberg was rewarded for his short story in *Atlantic Monthly*, one of 20 high school students so recognized.

Among the Indian athletes were an all-state basketball player, and a city record holder in 50-yard freestyle and 100-yard butterfly swimming events.

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The graduating seniors included a National Merit Scholar and eight finalists.

The senior class also included Southwest's first black graduates: Donald Jenkins, whose achievements included the National Honor Society, silver medal in oration in the literary society contest, president of Summus, and membership in the National Forensic League; and Laurence Smith, who played varsity football and sang in the concert choir, in addition to managing the basketball team. Among his subsequent achievements, Smith coached at Purdue University, worked in the school systems of Fairbanks and Anchorage, Alaska, and was principal of Meadowdale High School in Edmonds, Washington. When last heard from, he was pursuing his doctorate at the University of Washington, in preparation for serving as superintendent of schools in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska.

Another member of the class, Barbara Shanklin, attended the Kansas City Art Institute and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, and became an internationally recognized sculptress.

A few years after graduation, Scott Simon became one of the organizers of Sha Na Na, a musical group and theatrical act that began as the Kingsmen on the campus of Columbia University in New York and later appeared in their own syndicated television series and in the hit movie "Grease." They have performed worldwide and their albums have earned gold and platinum records.

Scott, an accomplished instrumental musician and composer, later returned to Southwest for a week to work with music students and, with his drummer, to entertain with a concert.

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The school board determined that Southwest should revert to a four-year school, with all Southwest eighth graders transferred to Bingham and all Bingham ninth graders moved to Southwest. Southwest was also declared closed to students residing outside the school's attendance area because of the additional students anticipated in the fall.

Busing would be necessary as a result of the Bingham transfers. Four hundred apprehensive parents met with School District officials at a June meeting in the Southwest auditorium, where concern was expressed about erosion of the neighborhood school system. Sentiment was divided over the changes at Southwest.

1966-1967

The net result of the transfers of eighth and ninth graders to and from Bingham was a slightly reduced enrollment at Southwest in the fall of 1966 ... 2,461 students.

James Kilgore was no longer on the faculty, but there were three other black instructors: Verlyne Foster, Practical Arts; L.G. Livingston, Commerce; and Lonnie Powell, Art.

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The Beatles were still popular — the October 1966 issue of *Datebook Magazine*, a monthly New York publication for teenagers, pictured John Lennon on the cover. *Datebook* listed Southwest High School, Kansas City, among "AMERICA'S 50 GROOVIEST HIGH SCHOOLS." (According to Webster, groovy means "marvelous, wonderful, excellent." *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Tenth Edition.) The article noted that America had more than 29,000 high schools with almost 13 million students. It went on to say:

"But for the purposes of the Datebook Honor Roll of the nation's top 50 public high schools, after much consultation with experts in education as well as high school students themselves, we decided that 'groovy' is as good a word as any and that a really groovy high school has certain basic characteristics. They are: good library facilities; well-paid, well-trained teachers; imaginative curriculum; pleasant buildings; complete social and athletic facilities; an atmosphere in which students can flourish as individuals.

"Schools which can boast of fulfilling these characteristics, inevitably produce top students and provide swinging classroom days as well as swinging social events for the student body.

"In a few of the top 50 schools listed below, all of the conditions have been met. In others, most of them. But in all, enough of the basic elements are there to make the school one of the top all-around high schools of 1966. Here they are — the 50 grooviest public high

schools in America today.”

Southwest High School, Kansas City, was the only Missouri school on the list. New Trier was one of two Illinois schools named.

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Coach William Robinson, a worthy successor to Louis A. House, issued an edict that football players were to have short hair, and established a deadline for compliance. When some freshmen and junior varsity players failed to meet the deadline, varsity players gave them haircuts.

The undefeated football team won the League championship. Keith Lieppman was Southwest's first high school football All-American and also won the Knute Rockne award.

The swimming team, under Coach Jack Weyforth, was dominant in the Interscholastic League. The 400-yard freestyle relay team of Chris Lockwood, Dick McDonald, John Smith and David Wysong broke seven school records in as many meets along with League and district records. Wysong later was elected to the Board of County Commissioners of Johnson County, Kansas.

David Bean starred as Professor Harold Hill in a polished production of “The Music Man.”

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The Missouri Association of Student Councils held their convention at Southwest, with 1000 delegates.

George C. Ewing, the highly admired track coach since 1955, passed away and a George C. Ewing Award was established in his honor.

The senior class had seven National Merit Scholar finalists. The valedictorian had a grade point average of 4.947, the salutatorian 4.864, and 33 other graduates had GPAs above 4.0. Many were awarded college scholarships.

Among the graduates were five black students who had participated in the life of the school in various ways ... athletics, Pep Club, choir, a literary society treasurer, an honor roll student, and one, Richard Kaiser, who had attended Southwest for four years, was vice president of Red Cross, Orchestra president, and a member of the debate and track teams.

One of the 1967 graduates, Brooke Kroeger, earned journalism degrees from Boston and Columbia universities, worked for eleven years for United Press International including assignments in Europe and the Middle East, and covered the United Nations for *Newsday* in New York.

Another graduate, Rod Fleeman, became one of Kansas City's most noted jazz guitarists. He credits George Alter with changing his life, giving him the direction necessary for a career in music.

1967-1968

The ROTC returned to Southwest in the fall of 1967, after an absence of eight years. There were now 1,500 cadets in nine Kansas City public high schools, and the program was renamed Junior ROTC (JROTC) to distinguish it from the college program. The army provided uniforms and text books.

Principal W. Lawrence Cannon told the *Wednesday Magazine*:

“We have some notable alumni who were in ROTC here and who chose to follow the service as a career. We know of one general and one admiral and think there are other high-ranking officers who started in ROTC here.”

In October, 50,000 people demonstrated in Washington, D.C. against the conflict in Vietnam. The crowd was orderly, and made up largely of college students. The average age of a soldier was 19, not much older than a Southwest senior.

The *Trail* invited student opinion, through a survey, on the Vietnam War. There were only 150 responses, with these results:

- 20% approved of the war as the administration was running it;*
- 40% favored an all-out war, without nuclear weapons;*
- 20% wanted gradual de-escalation and a greater peace effort;*
- 8% would have an immediate US withdrawal;*
- 12% wanted to turn the problem over to the UN.*

The Southwest Red Cross Council showed concern over the fighting in Vietnam, donating money to an evacuation hospital in that country and sending "Friendship Kits" to Vietnamese children.

* * * * *

Southwest won the Youth Award of Merit from the National Safety Council for the eighth time in nine years — the best record of any high school in the country.

The debate team won numerous trophies including second and fourth places in the National Forensic League State Tournament. It participated in more than 25 contests, including a tournament of its own in which 20 other schools took part.

Seneca, the National Spanish Honor Society, was a new organization. Members were third-year Spanish students with grades of S or better.

The *Trail* sports editor won a Quill & Scroll International Award.

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In April there were race riots following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. Kansas City, Kansas schools closed the day of Dr. King's funeral, but Kansas City, Missouri schools remained in session, a decision that provoked anger in the black community.

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The Kansas City School District was whipsawed by the rivalry between the Kansas City Education Association and the KCFT, as each tried to outdo the other in pressing grievances and demands. The District cut the Gordian knot with an election ... to determine which organization would represent the School District's teachers. The more militant KCFT was a narrow winner. Eighty percent of the District's teachers voted.

* * * * *

The swimming team enjoyed its most successful season to date, winning a seventh straight League championship and scoring well in the state meet. Carl Noback set a record in the 200-yard medley, and was named a member of the high school All-American team.

The senior class had four National Merit Scholar finalists.

1968-1969

The faculty numbered 100 for the new school year ... compared to 31 in 1925.

The football team again won the Interscholastic League championship in the fall of 1968, the only undefeated team in the Kansas City area, and placed one player, quarterback Bob Bruegging, on the all-state team.

A Student Council candy sale raised \$10,000 for the foreign exchange student program; a *Trail* poll favored Richard Nixon in the presidential campaign; and the *Blaze* continued its literary publications.

The Southwest JROTC Battalion, in the second year of its reincarnation, had 187 members and the city's cadet colonel.

U.S. combat troops, fighting in Vietnam, participated in major battles including the six-month-long battle of Khe Sanh and the Tet Offensive. An army sergeant, returned from Vietnam, spoke to the Socratic Society on the "possible outcome of the war" in that country.

The concert choir, wearing its traditional blue robes, continued to win number one ratings, as did the girls' sextet and the male octet. And a charming production of "The Sound of Music" featured Nancy Matheny as Maria.

The swim team won the state championship, the first time that a team from the western half of the state had accomplished this; Carl Noback repeated as an All-American, joined by diver Larry Renfro. A stellar supporting cast included Roland Sabates, Chris Mahley, Steve Kase and Jeff Chappelow.

The wrestling team was assisted in its home meets by the Grapplettes, girls who recorded statistics and kept time. They were rewarded at the end of the season with athletic letters and red roses.

* * * * *

When a court challenge of the long-standing cross-endorsement system for school board elections failed, the proponents of change successfully mounted a campaign for a new statute providing for election of subdistrict representatives as well as those elected at large. A member of the Missouri Legislature criticized the new statute, arguing that now school board elections would become political.

The *Wall Street Journal* has since noted that as school boards over the country moved to geographic representation from at-large seats, they did indeed become "increasingly political." June 7, 1999.

Another consequence of the new statute was also predicted — that the Southwest attendance area would have less influence. In the past, the southwest part of town had been disproportionately represented on the school board. This would change.

Many qualified people have run for and been elected to board seats under the revised system, only to be frustrated by increasingly complex, seemingly insoluble problems. And the board meetings have not always been pleasant experiences ... required by law to be conducted in public, they have sometimes been attended by unhappy patrons and militant teachers. A number of public-spirited citizens over the years have suffered the slings and arrows of school board service.

* * * * *

Missouri's school finance laws also imposed a serious handicap on Kansas City's schools.

An April 1969 *Trail* editorial urged passage of a proposed increase in the school tax levy. Without it, the Kansas City School System would "grind to a halt" the following October.

The Missouri constitution fixed the school tax levy at \$1.25, but by majority vote the levy could be increased to \$3.75. Any increase beyond that required a two-thirds vote ... a very big hurdle. The school board proposed an increase of \$3.05 above the constitutional limit of \$1.25, for a total levy of \$4.30. This required that two-thirds of the voters approve; the levy failed although a majority, 53%, voted for the increase.

Some KCFT saber rattling was followed by a union meeting with the governor, in an unsuccessful effort to obtain more state funding for the Kansas City School District.

After the District's schools shut down for a few days, a reduced levy increase of \$2.50 (for a total of \$3.75) was approved by 63% of the voters in another election. It was the last tax increase for Kansas City schools until Judge Russell Clark ordered one many years afterward.

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The Southwest golf and tennis teams won League championships in the spring of 1969, with sophomore Molly Hannas defeating her male tennis opponents ... the only girl to receive a varsity letter. She was also the Girls' Missouri Valley Champion.

Seven black students were pictured in the *Sachem*; three of them were seniors, all involved in the activities of the school.

In a Letter to the Editor published in the *Trail*, a former Lincoln student now at Southwest found Southwest to be more liberal in dress and behavior, with emphasis on "enriching the mind." She went on to say:

"As for discrimination, yes, there are a few people who give us a little trouble. But I put the blame where it belongs, on the older generation. For, as the old saying goes, 'Children are the reflection of their parents.' "

She concluded:

"If I had my choice of what school I would want to go to, I'd pick Southwest. Whenever an old friend asks me what school I go to, I proudly reply, 'Southwest, (of course).' "

* * * * *

That spring, an excellent school production of "Camelot" was one of many fine musicals staged at Southwest over the years by Carder Manning with music conducted by George Alter. Chris Cooper, who portrayed Sir Dinadin in the play, later achieved motion picture stardom (The Horse Whisperer, October Sky, Matawan, Lone Star, etc.). Mark Wheeler, son of Mayor Charles Wheeler, M.D., was Sir Lancelot, Mike Wenig was King Arthur, and Melanie Bean played Queen Gwenevere — she would go on to Stanford, a music major, and a career in music and acting in New York City.

Today to many alumni, in wistful retrospect, Southwest itself was a "Camelot" kind of place. For them, in the poignant words of King Arthur:

*"Don't let it be forgot,
That once there was a spot,
For one brief shining moment,
That was known as Camelot."*

* * * * *

Among the seniors were two National Merit Scholars, Carl Noback and Steve Kanaga, and four finalists. The senior valedictorian was two-time All-American swimmer Carl Noback with a 4.842 GPA. Noback was also named a Yale National Scholar. And there were 44 other scholarships.

Steve Kanaga received an Annapolis appointment, was commissioned a Marine Corps officer after graduation, and after rising to the rank of captain went on to the Yale Law School. After Yale, Steve joined the most prestigious law firm in San Diego, made partner, and then moved to Eugene, Oregon to become a legal aid lawyer at a considerable financial sacrifice.

1969-1970

James A. Hazlett resigned as Superintendent of Schools, and was succeeded by an acting

superintendent, Dr. Donald Hair, in the fall of 1969. Hazlett had served for 14 years.

The Kansas City School District lacked the funds to operate programs as before at Southwest High School. Changes for the new school year included fewer teachers and larger classes, the Drivers Education course dropped, a rental fee for 11th and 12th grade books, reduced funding for athletic programs, less available money for classroom equipment and laboratory supplies, and reduced custodial services which necessitated vacation of the school building by 4:30 p.m..

Thanks to the Tooters Club, the Southwest band had new uniforms: the Club raised \$10,000 for the orange and black outfits, aided significantly by an anonymous donor.

The cheerleaders made it eleven straight wins in the SMU clinic in Dallas, Texas. The Pep Club was again Southwest's largest organization — 500 strong.

The football team repeated as League champions, and placed its center on the all-state team.

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The war in Vietnam dragged on, causing deep divisions in the country; *Trail* articles and student letters to the editor were both pro and con.

In November, 250,000 people demonstrated in Washington D.C. against the conflict, and there was dwindling support for the war from the general population of the country. A few Southwest students wore black arm bands in protest against the conflict. However, an opinion poll indicated majority support for the war among the Southwest student body.

A nationwide drop in ROTC enrollment was attributed to the Vietnam conflict, but the resurrected Southwest JROTC battalion continued its winning ways with a number-one rating in the annual federal inspection and four-year college scholarships for two cadets.

A bomb threat emptied the building for 45 minutes in April 1970. A similar hoax was perpetrated at a Shawnee Mission school.

* * * * *

Southwest had a dress code. According to Larry Cannon, students were to come to school in "suitable school dress — not the way we would look at a picnic, on the beach, at the shopping center on a summer day, or while mowing the yard." Now, at the request of the Student Council, a trial period without a formal dress code was instituted.

The basketball team enjoyed its first winning season in five years.

Not to be outdone by the wrestlers, swim team supporters organized the "Second Hands" ... girls who timed races, collected tickets and money, kept scores, turned lap markers, and cleaned the pool after meets.

The senior class had four National Merit Scholar finalists.

A high percentage of the 575 graduates were accepted in the college or university of their choice.

One of the graduates was Tom Reefer, who would return as Southwest's principal. He was an accomplished pianist and had received a #1 rating in piano in the District Music Contest.

Another graduate, Sandy Aguirre Mayer, now serves on the school board.

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Before the opening of school in the fall, students pitched in to prepare books for distribution and perform manual tasks.

1970-1971

The trial period without a dress code had been successful and the practice was continued for the new school year. There was a further relaxation of rules when a "student honor pass" was initiated, freeing junior and senior honor students (a 3.5 grade point average was required) to work on school activities, study in the library, or leave the school grounds, if they had no scheduled classes.

The football team tied with Southeast for the League championship, champions for the third straight year.

A bonfire, to kindle enthusiasm for the Shawnee Mission East game, got out of control and required a fire truck, 600 gallons of water and several firemen for one hour, to extinguish it.

The annual Powder Puff football game pitted the senior girls against the juniors.

October 15 had been named a day of protest by anti-war activists. Larry Cannon spoke to the student body over the public address system citing the controversy as an example of freedom of speech but urging the students to make it a normal day at Southwest. The student body complied.

* * * * *

A Black History class was instituted. Of the 25 juniors and seniors enrolled in the class, only two were black. Robert Wheeler, head of urban education services for the School District, spoke to the Black History class in January 1971. He noted that with a history of neglect and an unsupportive home environment, 26 inner-city schools had "depressed achievement." But he believed that a good program could overcome these disadvantages.

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The Red Cross, now the principal service organization at Southwest, was involved with the inner city and problems of the needy. It provided tutors, and shared Christmas and Easter parties with children from the Yates School. It also collected food for people impoverished by construction strikes ... Union workers had staged their second six-month job action in two years, and Kansas City led the nation in days lost to construction strikes. The Red Cross projects were financed by a Baby Doll Dance in October and a Sadie Hawkins Dance in the spring.

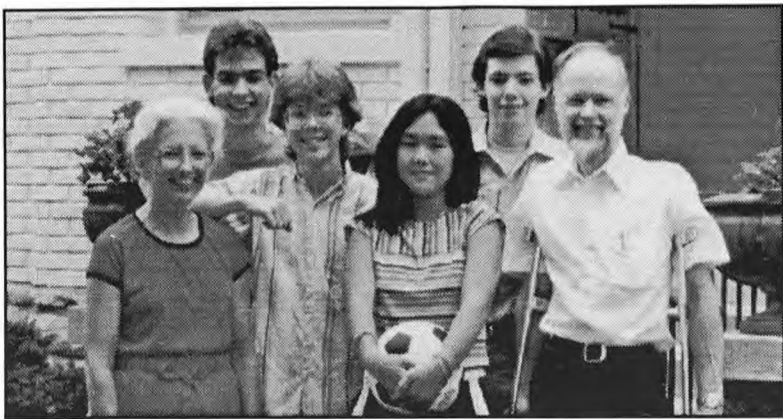
Under new musical director Jack Foster, the Southwest concert choir and girls' glee club earned number-one ratings at the state contest. And George Alter's orchestra, string orchestra and band matched that. It was the first time that all of the school's large musical groups had been so ranked.

In addition to another governor of Boys' State, there were literary and art awards, and a Seneca International Scholarship. The swimming team won its tenth straight League title, the track squad's relay team set a record, and Molly Hannas achieved national tennis ranking: tenth in girls' 18 and under doubles, and 47th in singles.

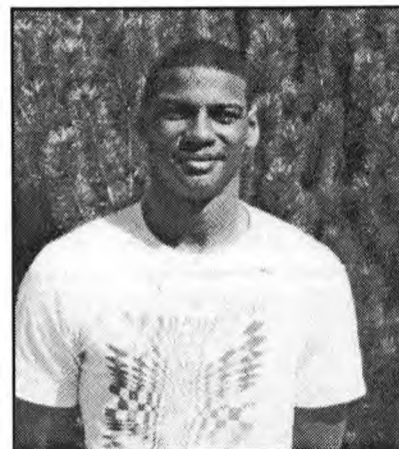
The senior class produced eight National Merit finalists. The president of the Student Council was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to be used in studying the U.S. government in any college of his choice.

One senior, James Moody, was an inspiration to his classmates. Legally blind since birth, he demonstrated a capacity for leadership that culminated in his election as president of the senior class. Jim went on to MIT, Georgetown Law School, and a brief brush with fame when for a short time he was the attorney for Linda Tripp of Monica Lewinsky renown.

Larry Cannon, now 65, retired despite a petition signed by Southwest's faculty and staff urging him to remain. He received plaudits and honors for his many years of service, and was made an honorary colonel of the Junior ROTC Battalion.



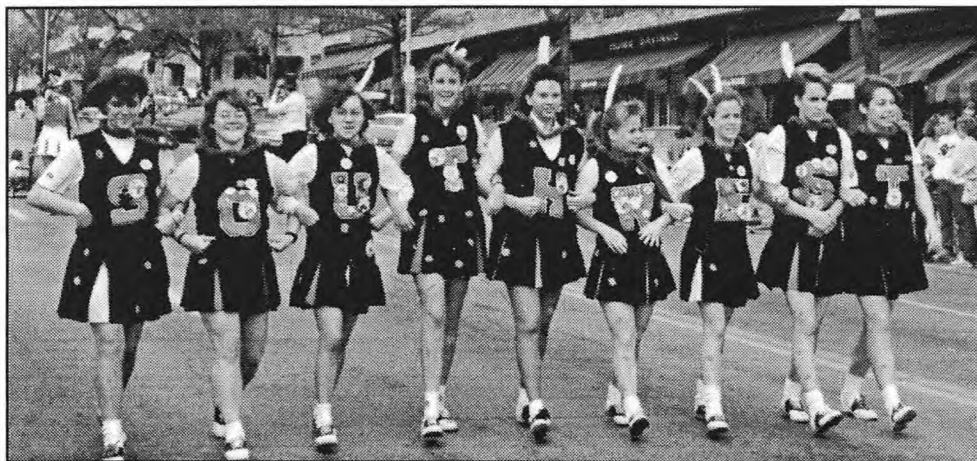
The Thomas family boasted three National Merit Scholars, father Timothy and sons Peter and Steven, here joined by mother Marian, AFS sister Ywe Meyer and sister Julia, 1986. *Photo courtesy of Marian Thomas.*



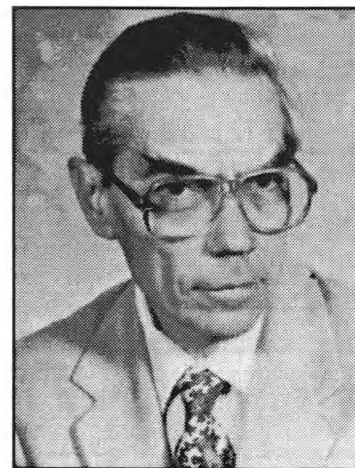
Mike Jones '88
NFL star, St. Louis Rams



1987 Football Squad, with sophomore girl Stacy Simpson. First row: Robin Patterson, Donald Simms, Sean Abner, Shawn Robinson, David Winfield—Captain, Darroyce Thornton, Steve Ford, Paul Williams—Captain, Christopher McDonald, William Harris, Arthur Armstrong, Matthew Fulson; Second row: Byron VonLeggitt, Thomas Reese, David Polk, **Stacy Simpson**, Adam Booser, Angelo Bottley, Eric Murray, Miguel Maybon, Roger Franks, Michael Silvey, James Garrett, Dwayne Orr, Eric Neal, Lary Lomak; Third row: Coach Portanova, Royce Sawyer, Cory Payne, Steve Owens, Eddie Moore, Edward Fowler, **Michael Jones**—Captain, Curtis Roberts, Coach Hannaman, Robert Sweets, Harold Bohannon—Captain, Torron Phillips, Eric Henuber, Jesse Webb, Thomas Gibson, Sean Reams, Coach Owens.



1987 Honor 9 on parade, left to right: April Miller, Julie Wertman, Sarah Gatson, Lori DeFoor, Kim Marsh, Kim Trusty, Holly Mehl, Renee Parks, Mary Smith. *Photo courtesy of Lori DeFoor.*



George Alter
Exceptional teacher



Barbara Lusk
Principal 1982-1986



Homecoming Parade — 1984



Tim Lewis, '84 class president and documentary subject, with AFS classmates



Southwest Band on Parade, 1984



Trail Staff, 1984-85. Front row: Bridget O'Brien, Robin Bennett, Beth Moore, Tricia Williams, Barbara Washington; second row: Chris Swope, Susan Blevens, Christine Hanson, Yvette Alnutt, Casey Simmons, Sara Stevens, Lisa Fillpot; third row: Paul Laughlin, Gretchen Wilhelm; last row: Howard Pearson, Vincent Pruitt, Brian Payne, Mary Dunham, Matthew Wilson, Debbie Conchola, Valerie Root.



1985 Basketball Champions. Front row: Tyronne Williams, Marvin Fight, Shawn Fugate; second row: Greg Watson, Robert Cain, Randy Newman, Maurice Byrd, Coach Bill Madison; last row: Elisha Verge, Maurice Cunningham, Napoleon Smith and Travis Paige.



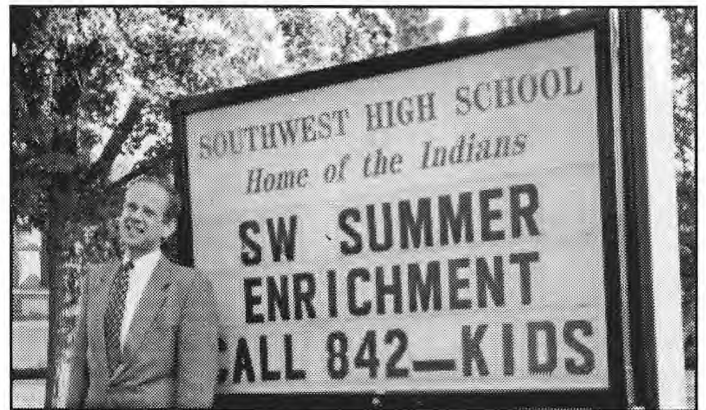
JROTC Cadet Colonel
Monica Roberts, 1992



50th Reunion, class of '42, 1992



LIFE Magazine computer ad, 1992,
with Principal Diane Stevenson and computer class



Thomas Reefer, Principal 1992-1995



William DeLay '46 presented Southwest Foundation award
to teacher Vickie Shelton, 1994



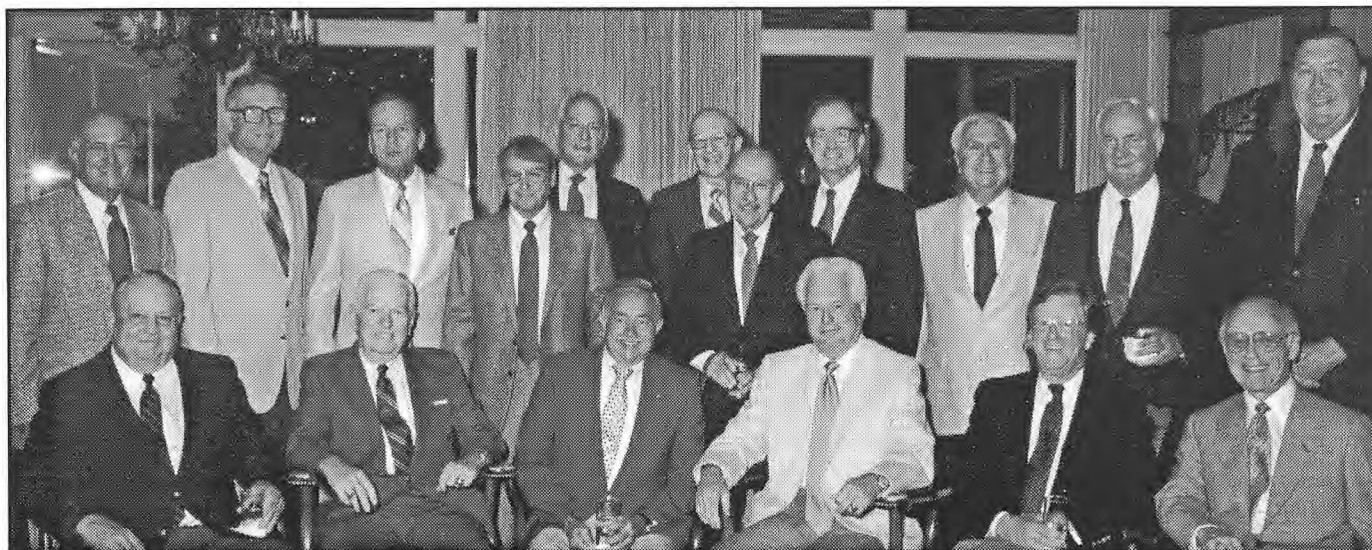
Senior Business Committee, Class of '91: Yemen Khalifah, Breck
Ferguson, Stacie Henderson, Angela Shinault, Delfonda Jackson,
Isaac Juarez, Clewon Taylor, Liz Davis, Beth DeFoor.



National Merit Scholars
Steven Thomas and Michael Connaghan. 1988
Photo courtesy of Marian Thomas



Southwest Planetarium. 1989
*Photo courtesy of Missouri Valley Special Collections
Kansas City Mo. Public Library*



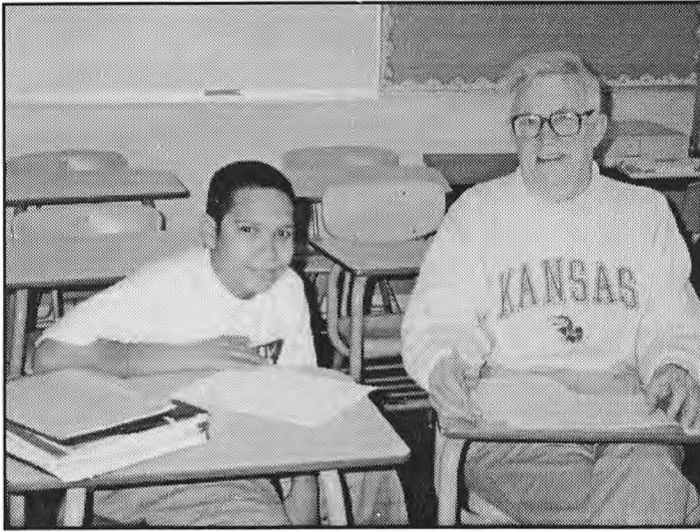
Class of '40 lettermen. 1990. *Photo courtesy of Wilborn & Associates*



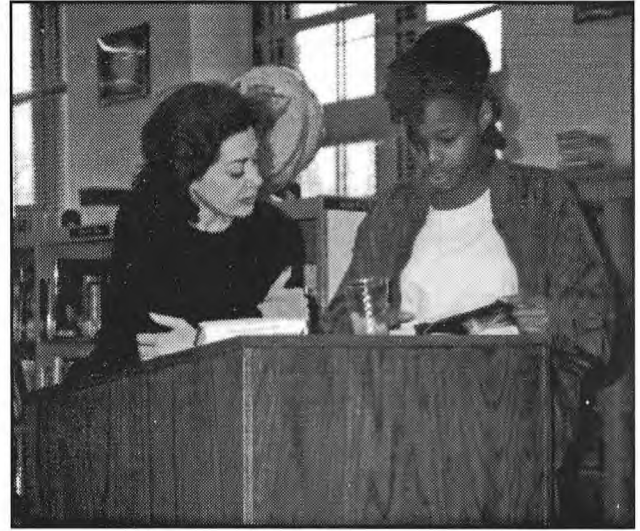
Southwest High School exchange programs were the topic among (seated) Jamie Hopkins, returned from an AFS summer in Germany, John P. Fletcher whose Class of 1938 presented AFS with a handsome check, and Sarah Still, Southwest AFS/International Club officer. Looking on: Southwest AFSers, Kirsten Melville from Australia, Tal Helbitz from Israel and Maribel Aizpun from Venezuela. *Photo courtesy Wednesday Magazine.*



AFS students Karin du Jonchay (left) and Natalie Avenell (right), with host sister Antonia Butler. 1991. *Photo courtesy of Wednesday Magazine.*



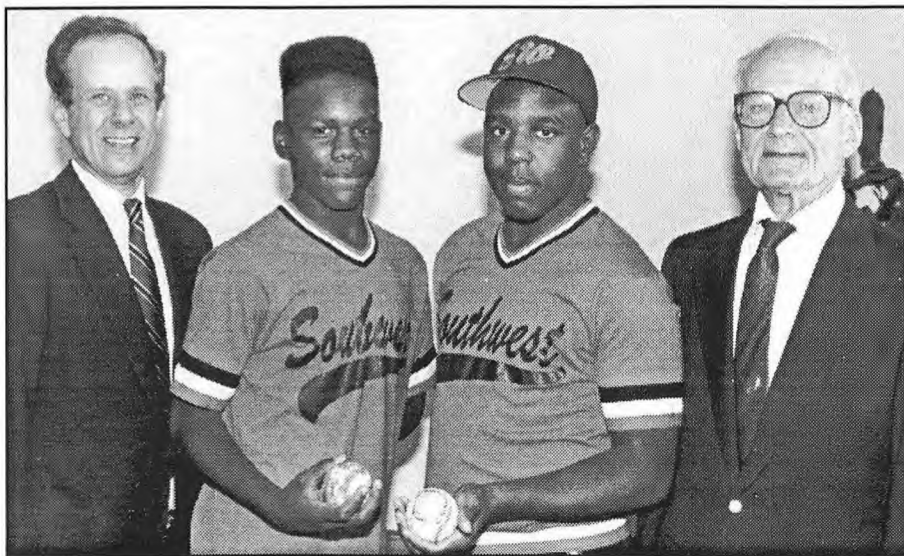
George MacCurdy '43 tutoring Jason Jones



Elaine Kagan '60, author and actress, spoke to Southwest students in the school library, 1994.



Baseball team, with Coach Ned Scott rear row second from left, 1994.



James Reefer '32 (right) with son Tom '70 and baseball players Royce Ersery and Aaron White, 1994.



The three 1940 drum majorettes, left to right: Patty Sullivan Allerdice, Eleanor Cook Gardner and Sally Kaney Ruddy, with Barbara Bodwell Nottberg. 1995.

CHAPTER SIX

Winds of Change; The “Glory Years” End.

SOUTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL’S final 25 years must be viewed in the context of greatly intensified desegregation pressures.

For some 17 years after the *Brown* case required the dismantling of Missouri’s segregated school system, there was little change in the racial make-up of Southwest ... a score of black students and two or three black faculty members.

Meanwhile, the enrollment in the Kansas City School District had become more than 50% minority, a trend that would continue as private school enrollment increased and families with children moved to surrounding school districts. Continued use of the term “minority” was confusing; numerically, the minority were now the majority. But they were part of an ethnic group sometimes subjected to differential treatment, and in that sense the word still applied.

In January 1971, when Robert Wheeler spoke to the Black History class at Southwest, he stated that despite the majority of non-whites in attendance the District’s schools were no more integrated than they had been in 1955 following the *Brown* desegregation decision. He attributed this to the “relatively rapid” resegregation of neighborhoods because former residents moved out.

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A monumental change was triggered later in the year by another Supreme Court decision, *Swann vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District*. The Court held in the *Swann* case that when geographic attendance areas resulted in continued segregation, (as was the situation in Kansas City), a school district was required to take further steps to achieve integration, including busing students outside their residential neighborhoods.

This decision by the highest court in the land would prove to be the death knell of the neighborhood school system in Kansas City and, ultimately, of Southwest High School. Fourteen years later, a federal judge in the Western District of Missouri would have no choice but to follow its dictate.

Advised of the implications of the *Swann* case, the school board considered a number of plans to end the continuing racial imbalance in the District’s schools, but no significant changes were made.

1971-1972

Andrew S. Adams was the new Superintendent of Schools when the 1971-72 school year got underway.

The year began at Southwest with six education counselors, a black vice principal, and one black

teacher. A new principal, Thomas E. Kipp, succeeded Larry Cannon, retired after 20 eventful, successful years. The first two principals at Southwest had served for a total of 45 years, providing important stability.

The *Trail* reported a “large increase” in fights, drinking and speeding in the campus area in the first five weeks, primarily on the north side of the building. The majority of the incidents were attributed to intruders.

There was a *Trail* article on the dangers of drug abuse.

Honor pass privileges were expanded, but limited to seniors ... 300 seniors had freedom to use at will the library and an honor pass lounge, to go anywhere on the first floor, and to sit in on classes with the teacher’s consent.

* * * * *

The football team won the League championship for the fourth consecutive year. Following the title game with Southeast on October 29, 1971, there was fighting in the stadium parking lots. According to the *Trail*:

“A large group of black youths swarmed the area and inflicted serious injuries upon Southwest students. Southwest won the game, Southeast won the post-game. And win they did, with violence, which included broken wine bottles and broken jaws.”

Later in the year, after an upset Southwest victory in basketball over Paseo, there was another post-game fight. The *Trail* editorialized:

“We are tired of the lack of concern that the blacks continue to exhibit toward the whites.”

When a near riot broke out following a basketball game between Central High School and suburban Raytown High School, a *Trail* editorial commented on the fights between predominantly black schools and predominantly white schools in the Kansas City area and called for disciplinary action against Central.

This prompted a letter from a Kansas City resident criticizing the *Trail*’s views:

“You do not believe in equality or else your school would not have the few amount of black students and Mexican American students now enrolled.”

* * * * *

The School Board member elected from the Southwest subdistrict expressed opposition to the busing of students, declaring it to be a waste of time and money without any advantage to students.

Congressman Richard Bolling, the powerful Democratic Congressman for whom the downtown Kansas City federal office building is named and whose Congressional District included Southwest, described busing as “a phony issue,” and said the real issue was quality education for everybody. He asserted that the solution was to “give schools massive federal aid.”

Aid was needed. Students of the Kansas City School District campaigned in behalf of a levy proposal ... the voting public had faced and defeated the last three. The *Trail* criticized the two-thirds approval required to pass the levy, and accurately predicted defeat of the latest effort. The loss threatened the Interscholastic League and the District’s arts programs.

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The orchestra was selected to participate in the 25th Annual Midwest National Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago, one of three high school orchestras in the country so honored; it was the

first time a Missouri orchestra had been chosen, and selection was on the basis of a tape submitted by the orchestra the previous year.

A Southwest student was awarded a medal by the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, alma mater of teacher George MacCurdy. One medal was offered annually by the Institute to a secondary school student from each of more than 2100 schools throughout the world, the medal schools being chosen for their exceptional academic programs.

The *Sachem* commended the Student Council:

“The 1971-72 Student Council has become more than just an example of democracy at Southwest, it has become a new base for increasing student interest, student opinion and student service.”

* * * * *

A new support organization, the Southwest Foundation, was incorporated in 1972 by hardworking PTA mothers. The Foundation raised money for equipment, curriculum enrichment materials and special projects at a high school handicapped by the School District’s inadequate tax support. With the help of alumni and friends of Southwest, the organization would assist the school in many significant ways over the ensuing 25 years.

A Foundation incorporator, Margaret Carswell Lyddon ’43, was the mother of four Southwest graduates and president of the PTA ... one of the country’s largest Parent/Teacher organizations.

* * * * *

Two seniors were National Merit finalists, but National Merit Scholarship accomplishments were diminishing at Southwest High School. The NMS record would remain a good one for a time but the “glory years” were coming to an end.

1972-1973

Employee dissatisfaction over low-paying jobs was not limited to teachers. The 1972-3 school year got off to a shaky start when District schools were closed September 7 and 8, due to a strike by School Service Employees Local No. 12. The Employees union was the labor organization that represented the District’s janitors and other service personnel. The two lost days would have to be made up later in the year.

The honor pass experiment was abandoned in the fall of 1972, and there were fewer assemblies.

The Student Council suffered through a chaotic year; an attempt to rewrite its constitution was voted down, an experiment to open all meetings to students hindered the transaction of business, and doubts were expressed as to whether or not the Council was a truly representative body.

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The football team not only won the League championship but was state co-champion. After defeating Oak Park High School in a semifinal game in the Kansas City Chiefs’ Arrowhead Stadium, the Indians played Hazelwood High School on Washington University’s field in St. Louis for the championship. The game, played in the rain, ended in a 6-6 tie. A large crowd from Kansas City endured cold weather and flooded bathrooms to cheer for Southwest.

This was the first time that a Southwest football team had reached the state playoffs since the playoff system was inaugurated. One player was elected to the high school All-American Team.

The Southwest state championship would prove to be “the last speck of football glory” in the Interscholastic League. *Kansas City Star*, January 24, 1993.

The *Trail* praised greater “physical security” at the games for Southwest fans, describing it as the “most successful attempt yet of bridging the prejudicial gap between blacks and whites of the League.” The improvement was in large measure due to the crusading efforts of Jean McGreevy Green, aided by Margaret Lyddon and Ann Nichols, all Southwest parents. Jean described the crusade as “all-consuming, difficult, and finally highly successful.”

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The Concert Choir was one of 20 in the United States chosen to tour Budapest, Prague and Vienna. The track team’s “Trackettes” kept time and records, and cheered for the Southwest runners.

An altercation between a student and her former boyfriend ended in the front hall of Southwest when she fired at him with a .22 caliber revolver. The shot did no harm to the boy but reports publicizing the incident did tremendous damage to Southwest’s image.

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A March 1973 editorial in the *Trail* noted that the federal government was requiring the Kansas City School District to achieve proportional racial integration in the schools. Judge John H. Pratt of the United States District Court, District of Columbia, had ordered HEW to institute action against school districts in 17 southern and border states; the Kansas City School District was one of 116 named.

To advance integration in the city’s public schools, the District applied for federal funds under the Emergency School Assistance Act (ESAA), a program designed to financially assist schools adopting voluntary desegregation programs. A meeting was held at Southwest with parents and others, to “put to rest fears that the district is considering district-wide cross-busing of black and white school children.” They were assured that the busing of students was not part of the proposal to qualify for ESAA funds. A school board member declared that a majority of the board did not want an ESAA plan that would lead to white flight to the suburbs.

A *Trail* editorial opposed busing. The writer asked:

“Does it make sense to make a child ride on a school bus for several years when he lives within walking distance from an area school? This certainly is not desirable. Also, it follows that people will not be able to get as involved in their schools and activities if there is a transportation problem. The disadvantages resulting from this decision seem to outweigh any possible resulting advantages.”

* * * * *

In April Principal Tom Kipp, note pad in hand, made a trip through the school building and recorded Southwest’s “desperate needs,” which he made known to Acting Superintendent Glen Travis in a letter of April 17, 1973:

Chimney inspection; repairs to steps; two restrooms rebuilt annually for the next six years; a minimum of twelve new tables and 80 more stools in the cafeteria (Southwest had purchased and painted 48 stools out of its own funds in December but despite this “students may be standing to eat lunch next year”); two or three classrooms replaced each year for 15 years; 70 desks and two work tables in the two Art Rooms (“the only way you would believe the condition of those desks is to come out and see them”); chemicals (\$500) and glassware (\$500) for chemistry classes; five electric typewriters at once, and ten more per year for seven years, as well as new electrical wiring.

Kipp cautioned that the General Science classes were hazardous ... "Alcohol burners operated on a small individual desk is asking for trouble."

Three years earlier, after two fires, the school had replaced the auditorium's stage wiring out of its own funds at a cost of \$8000, and had repeatedly requested a new lighting system for the drafting room to no avail. Also, audio-visual equipment was needed "like yesterday."

Kipp advised that the PTA had "begged and borrowed" in coming to the aid of Southwest.

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Two students described drug traffic at Southwest to a meeting of the school board. The accuracy of their accusations was challenged; the School District coordinator of health and safety education was skeptical, arguing that the problem in the city schools was considerably less than in the suburbs.

The Southwest Student Council conducted a survey of drug use in their school. The results indicated that only a few students were continuous users, though drugs were available at Southwest. The principal drug was marijuana. A large majority (the percentage depending on the drug) had never tried drugs. An expert in the field commented that the total numbers involved were less than he would have predicted from information available for other schools.

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The 1973 *Sachem* pictured only four black students among the seniors but reflected increasing diversity among underclassmen: 13 black juniors, 18 sophomores, and 22 freshmen appeared in the class pictures. And many more black students were shown engaging in various organizations and programs ... girls' JROTC Drill Team, officers of literary societies, and debate and forensic activities.

One of the black students, Charles Monroe, was elected president of the Student Council for the coming fall term. The *Kansas City Star*, interviewing him in May 1973, noted that he was one of the few black students in a school that was 97% white and reported:

"Charles wants to see more integration of Kansas City's public schools, but doesn't want forced integration. He believes there would be substantial integration if integration were not forced."

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference did not entertain Charles' reservations; it filed a lawsuit to force further desegregation of the Kansas City School District. The Kansas City school board responded with a proposal to include suburban Center, Raytown, and Independence school districts as additional defendants in the case.

A Southwest parents' group backed the school board, believing that integration limited to the city's schools would only result in resegregation, whereas a metropolitan solution would stabilize the entire area and reduce opportunities to "escape." Kansas City was particularly vulnerable to such flight, with many surrounding districts on the Missouri side and a state line dividing the metropolis. There was irony in the fact that Kansas, once a haven for fleeing black slaves, now harbored departing whites.

The parents had also reluctantly concluded that Kansas City's neighborhood school concept was doomed in light of the *Swann* decision.

The SCLC did not pursue their suit and it eventually was dismissed for want of prosecution. The first metropolitan approach to school desegregation died with it.

1973-1974

As a condition of receiving ESAA funding, racial balance in the District's teacher assignments was required. To meet this requirement, the District reassigned more than 400 teachers and administrators in the fall of 1973. The transfers began one week before the semester started. It was a hectic time for the new teachers at Southwest. A black vice principal, a black counselor, and 19 black teachers were now a part of the faculty.

An editorial in the *Trail* reported that 13 Southwest teachers had been "uprooted" and sent elsewhere, and questioned the fairness to teachers of the wholesale transfers.

The School District's new Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Robert L. Medcalf, told the community that the integration process was going smoothly; a few faculty members had resigned, but most accepted responsibility to create a multi-racial system. The District's poor financial picture was the most pressing problem, necessitating reduced music, art and athletic programs.

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The school year began at Southwest with 2,313 students. A new resource center for Advanced Placement English and History classes did not cost the impoverished School District anything; students did the painting, and the project was paid for with PTA money and proceeds from the previous year's Southwest Carnival.

The German Club had the best entry in Southwest's annual Homecoming Parade circling the football field; the football team lost the Homecoming game the following day on the Southeast field, turning over the "Southside Trophy" to Southeast for the first time in several years. Southwest had won or tied for the League title eight out of the past nine years, but not this year. Coach Robinson perceived a loss of school spirit: "Few people cared what the team did."

A Girls' PomPon squad was a new organization.

A new student exchange program, AFS-USA, brought American youngsters from Maine and Mississippi to Southwest, as well as students from abroad.

Vandalism was a problem. Four girls spent 2-1/2 weeks redecorating a girls' restroom, and then vandals broke in over a weekend and ruined their work. Although the *Trail* described vandalism as "rampant," an editorial complained that a majority of the student body were not involved but the vandals got all of the publicity.

A woman police officer was assigned to the school to patrol the halls and girls' restrooms.

Rowdiness in an assembly prompted a critical *Trail* editorial. A new policy was adopted: assemblies would be smaller and geared to special interest groups unless they involved something of general interest.

A new policy for handling truancies made use of the counselors.

Because of problems with people loitering outside the building, Southwest was now part of a regular hourly police patrol beat.

A *Trail* editorial lamented: "Since the beginning of this school year, Southwest has been the scene of more trouble than at any other time in its history." It asked: "What can be done to stop the downfall of Southwest?" and answered: "Southwest can be saved, but only we can do it."

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In November 1973, Superintendent Medcalf stated that enrollment in the Kansas City School District as a whole was down 22%. White flight had changed the numbers in the District; enrollment

was in a steep decline, and the racial mix among the remainder was shifting ... from three-fourths white en route to three-fourths non-white. Dr. Medcalf commented:

“People who move out to the suburban districts think they are leaving the problems behind. This is not so. They will be affected.”

An exchange of family relations classes between Southwest and predominantly black Central High School was amicable. The students had common concerns as reported in the *Trail*:

“In discussing busing, both Southwest and Central students agreed that busing was an unsatisfactory way to achieve racial integration. Many of the kids said their parents were against busing as well. The question then arose ‘If the parents and the kids are against it why is it being pushed so hard?’ An acceptable answer could not be reached, the only suggestion being that the government was going to integrate the schools no matter what anyone wanted ... ”

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A new technological tool, the portable electronic calculator, was being used in tests. The *Trail* questioned whether this was fair to students who did not own one.

Literary societies were on the wane ... fewer were pictured in the *Sachem*.

The fifth annual Southwest Carnival, a fund-raiser for school organizations, featured booths and bumper car races, as well as other entertainment.

Ninety-two Southwest students took AP classes in American History, English, chemistry, biology, French and Spanish. Seven of them qualified for sophomore college study, and 80 qualified for credit and placement.

Fifty-two seniors were awarded certificates by the Missouri School-College Relations Commission, in recognition of their standing in the top 15% of their class for their first three years and in the top 15% of those taking the SCAT test their junior year.

Nineteen seniors and 11 juniors were named Outstanding American High School Students and nine seniors were named Outstanding Teenagers of America. All were eligible to compete for college scholarships.

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In March 1974, the Kansas City School District received a crippling blow when the teachers went out on strike. It lasted six weeks, and in some respects the District — and Southwest — never recovered from it.

The Kansas City Federation of Teachers (KCFT), representing the teachers, demanded a 10% salary increase at a time when the District faced a \$2.9 million budget shortage and possible cutbacks in both state and federal funding.

An unsuccessful attempt was made to keep the schools open during the strike. At Southwest the students were orderly and quiet, with virtually no vandalism.

The School District obtained a restraining order against the striking union. It was ignored and the union president spent time in jail for contempt of court.

An April article in the *Star* described an Advanced Placement History class meeting with a teacher in a student’s home, studying for tests that would permit advanced placement in college the following year. The teacher was questioned about his role as a strikebreaker, and responded:

“You have to have a legal union and a legal strike to be a strikebreaker. The union has no legal status in the state and has no legal right to strike.”

It was reported that the teacher and the students agreed with the strikers’ objectives, but did not agree that the school should be closed.

Another home-study class of a dozen students was conducted by Mary Margaret Milton, in the home of junior honor student Kim Bean. Kim’s father, Albert C. Bean, Jr., was a 1938 graduate of Southwest. Kim returned to Southwest for her senior year, and then went on to Yale. She was joined there by classmate David Prestigiacommo, who became a “gentleman songster” with Yale’s fabled Whiffenpoofs.

Christine Williams, Social Studies teacher, was another Southwest faculty member who taught students during the strike.

School-related activities such as the district music contest had to be cancelled.

Track athletes were allowed to work out, but it was an uncomfortable situation ... the athletes found themselves in the middle between bickering, striking teachers and non-striking coaches. The coaches were later reimbursed for furnishing transportation and entry fees.

The Southwest track team, though without a coach, competed with the O’Hara High School team and won eight of 17 events but lost the meet. A *Trail* article referred to the strike as “an almost fatal blow to the already second-rate Interscholastic League track program.”

After six weeks the strike ended with little resolved. There was no money to be had. An increase in the school operating levy was proposed, to enable the School District to meet the demands of the AFT. Southwest students became involved in the levy campaign. The election was held June 11; the levy did not carry.

The seniors produced four National Merit finalists. Graduation exercises were held in the Music Hall.

Pictures in the *Sachem* reflected increasing black enrollment and greater participation by black underclassmen in school activities.

1974-1975

By 1974, the student body at Southwest was 27% minority. Southwest’s enrollment on opening day in the fall of 1974 was 1,950. By October, the figure had grown to 2,030, but was still significantly below the pre-strike number of 2,200. Due to the six-week strike and fear of continuing instability, many of the brighter students had left Southwest.

A bright black student lost by Southwest in 1974 was Maurice Watson, who lived outside the Southwest attendance area but rode a Public Service Co. bus to Southwest. After the strike, Maurice transferred to the Barstow School and then went on to Harvard College, Harvard Law School, and a partnership in a major Kansas City law firm.

Superintendent Medcalf organized a Superintendent’s Advisory Council, seeking input on school matters from the District students. Similarly, the Principal’s Student Advisory Board was a new organization at Southwest.

For a time, things improved with respect to loitering, vandalism and discipline.

In the annual high school math contest, Southwest placed third in the state and had the highest score of any school in the Kansas City, Missouri area including Rockhurst and Pem Day. There was a

Southwest winner in a VFW essay contest with over 2,000 area entries, and first place in the Missouri Association of Life Underwriters essay contest (the winner was going to Williams College). A new Math Club had its initial meeting, and the music department continued to excel.

The Missouri School-College Relations Commission issued 72 Certificates of Recognition to Southwest students.

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Despite the gains, a senior wrote in the *Trail*:

"To many of us who have been here a while, Southwest seems to be headed downhill."

Vandalism resurfaced, with damage to rest rooms, stage, auditorium and halls. Lack of school pride and fear of reprisal were blamed. And there was no money for repairs.

The resurgence of vandalism was attributed by some to the influx of black students at Southwest, but an article in the *Trail* refuted this notion:

"... this total falsehood about who the vandals were should be corrected. Of those caught, all were white. If prejudiced whites are seeking to find evidence that the Blacks are tearing the school down, they will have to look elsewhere."

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Rejecting the recommendation of the 19-member AFT executive board, the Kansas City teachers voted against another strike. However, Southwest families were haunted by the memory of the previous year's 42-day stoppage. The *Trail* reported:

"Because of the district's instability, many parents reportedly informed their children that they would have to move or attend a private school."

A *Trail* editorial charged that the school board, the teachers, and most recently the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) had "most certainly forgotten their purpose — our education."

A student wrote that much learning occurred after school, from working on various projects, meeting with clubs, or just studying in the library, and that these experiences might be even more valuable than the formal classroom instruction. And now, "HEW wishes to strip the student of that knowledge and force him to spend that time after school riding a bus home because of new boundary lines."

The 1975 *Sachem* recognized the changes that the school was undergoing, in contrast to what had gone before:

"Styles and attitudes have changed throughout the years, but Southwest High School is still going strong ... However, today's class is quite different from preceding classes, being more diverse and spirited than ever before. Activities and classwork are performed in the spirit of today, and many people feel that yesterday's values are being thrown out. This idea is not completely valid, because never has a class worked so hard at making its senior year one of the best."

The senior class produced two National Merit finalists.

Two *Trail* editorials by seniors passed along advice to the junior class. One maintained that the opportunity to learn at Southwest was as good or better than ever:

“With the teaching available here, a student has a chance to rank in the top one percent nationally in every academic area and to go to any university in the nation, as evidenced by the number of seniors accepted at MIT, Princeton, Northwestern, Stanford, Yale and a number of other very selective schools.”

The other issued a challenge:

“It would hurt a lot of people to see Southwest be cast off as another also-ran ... We feel that it is extremely important that you take care of this school and most of all instill a certain degree of pride into not only yourselves but Southwest as a whole.”

1975-1976

By the 1975-1976 school year, the enrollment at Southwest was 33% minority.

Many students, a lot of them minority youngsters, rode a school bus every day. They were prisoners of the bus schedules. According to Tom Kipp:

“They come in and go back. They arrive at ten minutes before eight in the morning. And the bus loads at 3:20 every afternoon. These youngsters lose a rich part of high school.”
Kansas City Town Squire, June 1976.

Parents, at considerable sacrifice, often drove their children to and from school.

A Back-To-School Dance was held in the Southwest cafeteria ... “an experiment to see whether the students could control themselves in a mature manner, not cause any vandalism or destroy school property” according to the Student Council president. He advised that the dance was a success although it lost money (\$10).

Self-help continued. When the track around the football field needed improvement, a concrete company donated concrete, and Southwest parents and students did the work. The remodeling cost the School District nothing.

A Southwest junior girl attended a Shawnee Mission school for three weeks and then returned to Southwest. She acknowledged that the Shawnee Mission schools had beautiful facilities, modern equipment and large football stadiums, but she had come back because of the teachers:

“Southwest has many experienced teachers that enjoy teaching good students and that is what counts the most.”

The 1975 football team won five out of six League games but lost all of the rest. The suburban and private schools were fielding stronger teams.

Instead of driving past other schools as had been the practice, the Homecoming Parade marched through the Brookside area in an effort to increase student/community involvement.

A *Trail* writer labeled student restrooms as “Fun Spots” at Southwest. He asserted that when a restroom could be found unlocked, it usually contained “half the smokers at Southwest.”

Southwest hired a security guard to patrol halls, keep the campus and the halls clean, handle disturbances on school property, prevent outsiders from entering, and in general make sure that school rules were followed.

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Among the students, parents and faculty at Southwest, there were numerous heroes and heroines as the school struggled to cope.

An October editorial in the *Trail* commented that despite the fine academic record of Southwest, many undergraduates had left the school because of the instability of the School District ... instability attributed to the teachers' strike and the "HEW battle." The article acknowledged that racial prejudice existed, but students were combating it. Courage and strength would be required for those considering private or suburban schools to remain at Southwest, but they would have to do so unless there was to be a society where those who could afford it would attend private schools and those who could not would attend public schools.

Three members of the *Trail* staff surveyed 50 black students. Most of them liked Southwest, and were being assimilated into the student body with relatively little difficulty. Disturbances were few, and none was racially motivated.

There were more Hispanic students and a new course, "Latin American Mythology," helped Spanish-speaking students at Southwest better understand their culture.

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The Mathematics Club was active, stimulating interest in math and in a new field, computer science. Members also tutored students having problems with math. The Club participated in various regional mathematics competitions. In a math contest at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas with six Kansas schools, the Club won eleven individual medals and the first place team plaque.

The music program continued to perform well. A total of 350 Southwest students participated in a district music contest at William Jewell College, and all conducted groups received honor ratings.

Southwest hosted its sixth annual Debate and Forensics Tournament, attended by 33 schools from Missouri and Kansas. Over the past ten years, the Debate and Forensics squad had won 50 championship trophies. The number of members had dwindled but the squad continued to win. The school was admitted to membership in the National Forensics League, reflecting achievement by students in various debate and forensic tournaments.

Sixty-nine university representatives attended College Night.

The previous year's *Sachem* had noted that the Student Council and Red Cross had fallen "victim to apathy." The year 1975-1976 was better for the Student Council, but the Red Cross was still a disappointment ... "hit by a shortage of members."

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In a major departure from the past, the literary societies were transformed into social service clubs. Literary societies had been a proud tradition dating back to 1925, the school's first year. Their disappearance underscored the changes underway. The presidents of the societies had agreed that students were losing interest. Different economic and social conditions had diverted the clubs from their original purpose. When literary contests and award banquets were discontinued, "members felt that was when their clubs lost any and all purposes and goals."

Sesame was the first club to take advantage of the change, adopting a poor family for Christmas.

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The ESAA program was implemented, but meanwhile the U.S. Office of Civil Rights (OCR) conducted an investigation. Despite increasing integration (Southwest was now 36% minority and the Southwest elementary school cluster 65%), the OCR was not satisfied with the District's progress and presented a plan calling for numerical balance in individual school enrollments and for more high school principal reassignments. The District declined the OCR's plan. Under the Civil Rights Act, the

Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) could withdraw federal funds from school districts that failed to desegregate and the OCR filed an action with HEW, seeking the withdrawal of all federal funding.

HEW determined that the Kansas City School District student enrollment essentially remained segregated and ordered it to develop a satisfactory remedy. The impoverished Kansas City School District could not afford to lose all federal funding, and the school board approved the organization of a community task force to help it devise a plan for further school desegregation, acceptable to HEW. The task force included representatives from Southwest.

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A 50-Year Southwest High School Reunion was scheduled for April 30, 1976 at the Municipal Airport, to mark the school's golden anniversary. Invitations were extended to alumni nationwide. William D. Grant, '35, CEO of Business Men's Assurance Company (BMA), was chairman of the anniversary committee, and W. Lawrence Cannon was honorary chairman. Grant predicted that several thousand of the school's 30,000 graduates would be in attendance.

Tom Leathers, a Southwest alumnus (class of '44) wrote a cover story for his *Squire* newspaper about the event (May 6, 1976). It began:

"Never has Kansas City seen anything like it. In fact, possibly nowhere has there been such an event as occurred Friday night. About 4000 alumni of Southwest High gathered at the old Municipal Airport to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the school. They talked, they danced, they laughed, they proudly saluted their own school in a happy, enthusiastic way. You had to see it to believe it. All those alums — from 1926 through 1975 — in one big, brightly decorated hall."

Three generations of students and alumni attended and there were official representatives from every class beginning with Charles Waldron, class of '26, and ending with Mark Larrabee, a senior from the class of '76. Photojournalist David Douglas Duncan, and artists Jack O'Hara and Fred James provided door prizes ... art work done especially for the occasion.

Principal Thomas Kipp served on the steering committee, and Vice Principal Tom Neal and his wife Jean handled decorations. The Southwest Stage Band provided music, accompanied by the Belles and Beaux Singers, and PomPon girls. A reunion publication celebrated the past glories of the school and the achievements of its alumni.

In an interview, Larry Cannon remembered the glory years: "They once made a study that showed Southwest to be one of the top 25 schools and then one of the top ten high schools in the country."

Tom Leathers concluded that not much had changed at Southwest. However, another article in the same *Squire* issue reported that 34 Shawnee Mission High School seniors from that district's East, South and West high schools had been named National Merit Scholarship finalists. Southwest no longer measured up with the best, according to that yardstick.

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That year, Southwest had five National Merit Scholar semifinalists, out of only seven produced by all of the Kansas City, Missouri public schools.

David Parsons, a junior, was in his third year with the Missouri Dance Theatre. Of one of his performances, a *Kansas City Star* reviewer wrote:

“Among the outstanding men dancers ... was David Parsons, only an early teen-ager but showing beautiful promise that could bring him to star status before he is 20.”

A *Trail* article by a graduating senior with older brothers who had graduated in the mid-sixties noted that in her siblings’ day Southwest had been one of the top schools in the nation ... teens then had some sense of respect and responsibility for school property, with no need to keep restrooms locked during class. She was saddened by what had happened since, but hoped that those who remained at Southwest would try to return the school to the “good old days.”

There were acceptances from prestigious colleges such as Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Brown, Michigan and Washington University (St.Louis).

A *Trail* editorial commented that in the past year Southwest had been a “proving ground” where new experiments in busing and integration had been tried.

1976-1977

In the fall of 1976, the School Board labored to formulate a desegregation plan acceptable to HEW. One of the plans rejected by HEW involved busing black junior high students to the Van Horn High School area. Believing that black students would be unwelcome and unsafe there, black parents picketed the school board.

A newspaper article in December described the board as attempting to ensure that the southwest part of the district would remain stable after it was balanced racially. The goal was a 50-50 balance, and transfer policies might have to be revised to achieve this; continued transfers under existing policies would mean that elementary schools would open in the fall with 60% minority, and within three years Southwest would be 70% minority.

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A new Superintendent of Schools was installed in the spring of 1977, Robert Wheeler, now a deputy commissioner of the U.S. Office of Education.

In March 1977, with Wheeler barely in office, the Kansas City Federation of Teachers threatened another strike. A *Kansas City Star* editorial noted that the danger of another teachers’ strike came at a dreadful time ... “The uncertainty of what formula will be used to implement school desegregation in the Kansas City School District breeds enough discontent among patrons.” A strike could be “tossing the proverbial last straw onto the storied camel.”

The District adopted a plan for desegregation ... “Plan 6C,” named for the number of revisions that had been considered. Plan 6C called for some busing of students.

The teachers’ union went out on strike on March 21. Some teachers reported for work but on March 23 the schools were closed. That day the *Star* published another editorial:

“Just when the Kansas City School District was mustering support for its desegregation plan, which was adopted Sunday by the school board, the thorny issue of a teachers’ strike emerged. This deplorable action by some of the teachers comes at a time when the district can hardly afford any further loss of community support and confidence.”

The strike lasted for seven weeks. Again the union president was cited for contempt of court and served most of a 30-day jail sentence.

During the strike, centers were opened at some of the high schools to accommodate senior students hoping to graduate. One center was at Southwest, staffed by non-striking teachers.

This time track athletes were not allowed to compete while the strike was in progress.

The strike finally ended on May 8 with several issues still unresolved. Thanks to the senior centers, graduates received diplomas by mid-June. Three outstanding black students who went on to college that year were: Mike Myers, a class leader and National Merit Scholar finalist, earned a Johns Hopkins undergraduate degree and graduated from Harvard Medical School; Craig Heath, the 1977 Mr. Baby Doll who was awarded an NMS merit commendation, received an engineering degree at University of Missouri-Rolla, followed by an IBM career and ordination in the ministry; and Gisele Girault, another class leader and NMS merit commendation winner, obtained a Yale undergraduate degree and K.U. School of Medicine diploma. A white graduate, Mitch Crain, another NMS finalist, acquired both a law degree and an engineering degree, and is a Kansas City patent attorney.

Schools remained open in June and July for the other students to make up days lost from the strike. However, Principal Kipp later recalled: "I lost 100 of my best students each strike. Both black and white parents who were interested in their children's education pulled them out because they couldn't see their kids losing 30 or 40 days of school." *Pitch Weekly*, November 13-19, 1997.

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Because of the busing under Plan 6C, the school board was concerned that flight to the suburbs would accelerate. Informed of several pending cases in which largely minority urban school districts were seeking to consolidate with predominantly non-minority suburban districts, in May 1977 the board filed a consolidation lawsuit of its own in the federal court for the Western District of Missouri. All of the districts surrounding the Kansas City District were two percent or less minority, and the suit named as defendants 17 surrounding Missouri districts, four Kansas districts, the State of Missouri, and HEW.

The case was ultimately assigned to the newest member of the bench, Judge Russell Clark of Springfield, Missouri, who would preside over the desegregation litigation for the next 20 years.

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A *Trail* editorial reported that attitudes, academic quality and school spirit were on the rise. And the *Sachem* for 1977 quoted Principal Kipp:

"Our school has undergone tremendous renovations ... in student morale."

Through the efforts of Dr. Paul Garcia, Southwest was awarded a Fine Arts Grant by the State of Missouri. Part of that fund was used to employ a UMKC drama student, a skilled mime. He offered mime training to Southwest special education classes with excellent results. One of those students, who had spoken very little for three years because of a severe hearing impairment, gained enough confidence to lead the senior prayer at the graduation ceremony.

One senior listed, as an activity in the *Sachem*, "Chairman of Committee for Action to Stop the Strike."

The senior class of 400 produced three National Merit finalists.

David Parsons, a member of the graduating class, joined the Paul Taylor Dance Company the following year and later formed his own dance company. Parsons' group has performed throughout the United States and Europe, Australia and Brazil, including in 1997 the Folly Theater in Kansas City.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Instability; Musical Chairs in the Principal's Office

1977-1978

PLAN 6-C WAS IMPLEMENTED in the fall of 1977. Freshmen and sophomore students who lived outside the Southwest attendance boundaries but had been permitted to attend Southwest were now excluded, but boundary changes under the plan brought 300 new students, many from greater distances.

Busing was intensified, although not as massive as would be required ten years later. School hours at Southwest were changed to accommodate the new bus schedules; instead of school beginning at 8:25 and ending at 3:05, it began at 7:35 and ended at 2:25.

The Kansas City School District lost its AAA rating in 1977, indicating that it lacked the resources necessary to provide minimum basic education to its students. It was the only district in the Kansas City area to be rated below AAA.

The School District faced bankruptcy, with facilities in terrible condition and classroom materials woefully outmoded. Budget cuts threatened many elective courses, but Southwest managed to cling to some of the most popular including photography and science-fiction.

Despite the deficiencies, a North Central evaluation committee visiting Southwest praised the general atmosphere of the school and the attitude of its teachers and pupils.

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The *Trail* noted that the Kansas City School District had been ordered by HEW to desegregate in order to qualify for federal aid and comply with federal law, and Southwest now had 47% minority enrollment. But the article observed that, even with the "great amount of busing," many extracurricular activities at Southwest were not integrated.

A white Homecoming Queen and her five white attendants led the Homecoming Parade through Brookside.

The JROTC was now virtually a black organization; in the military lay career opportunities for black students. The JROTC Queen and her attendants were black. The all-city JROTC colonel was from the Southwest Battalion.

Sachem pictures for the school year showed the basketball team to be almost entirely black; the Horse Club was all white, as were the tennis, swimming and golf teams. Those who made the ski trip (now an institution) were all white, but the Winter Sports Queen was black.

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Most of the old organizations still functioned, including the National Honor Society. There was

one notable exception; the National Art Honor Society had gone the way of the literary societies, replaced by an Art Club.

The week of April 20-27, a "Write-in" brought writers from the Kansas City area together with over 700 Southwest students to stimulate the students' writing talents. Poets, novelists, and dramatists participated in 45 seminars. The results, representing the diversity of student interests and backgrounds that then constituted Southwest, were published in *Southwest Speaks Out* with an introduction by Paul Garcia.

The *Trail* reported that the band received high ratings at a state music contest and the orchestra was "fantastic." Southwest also tied for first out of 48 entrants in a state Debate and Forensic contest.

There were two National Merit Scholarship finalists. One of them, David Hirsch, wrote of Kansas City's desegregation efforts in his Princeton senior thesis entitled "We're on the Bus." Following Harvard Law School and fluent in Japanese from his AFS days, David represented his New York law firm in Tokyo.

The 1978 *Sachem* noted:

"Because a wonderful mix of people attended Southwest, a unique opportunity presented itself. Together, students learned to understand each other."

Sachem pictures reflected the "mix."

1978-1979

The 1978 football team shared the League title with Paseo but lost five non-conference games.

More clubs were added: Southwest Announcers, Horse Lovers, Senior Men, Senior Ladies, and Senior Guys and Gals.

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College Night became College Day, and was no longer a gathering of neighbors ... a consequence of busing.

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Principal Kipp observed in the 1979 *Sachem* that it had been a better school year but cited a need to emphasize teaching and learning. However, there were National Merit Scholar finalists and NMS letters of commendation. One NMS honoree, Brian Hirsch, spent the year following graduation from Southwest with the AFS in Germany. After college, he served two stints in the Peace Corps in Zaire and is currently negotiating an EPA international agreement on chemical control.

As seniors prepared for graduation, a local television station reported truants and hall-walkers at Southwest. And a *Kansas City Times* reporter, after spending ten days at the school, wrote a damaging three-part "real story" of Southwest High School.

The newspaper described Southwest as having epitomized the upper class to many Kansas Citians ... " 'the' place Kansas City's more affluent families sent their sons and daughters when they ruled out private schools." Now it reported class-cutters in the halls, locked classroom doors during class, and groups of students in the bushes "furtively swilling beer or smoking marijuana and talking to drop-outs and others who drop by 'to see what's going on.'"

The final series article, however, stated that Southwest's teachers wanted to "keep the school on a

par with Lincoln Academy, the Kansas City School District's magnet high school, despite district funding that has failed to keep up with spiraling costs, and despite disruptive turnovers in the student body because of recent desegregation orders."

A white graduating senior boy and a black junior girl went to the *Times* to register a strong protest about the articles. They did not believe that the stories reflected the opinions or experiences of most Southwest students; they acknowledged that Southwest was not the "ivory tower" of the past, and that it had its problems. But so had the Southwest of the past ... "what school doesn't have problems?" They charged that misbehavior by Shawnee Mission students was called "pranks" whereas similar incidents at Southwest were painted "more darkly."

1979-1980

An October 1979 article in the *Trail* further responded to the earlier media criticism of Southwest, stating that the incidents cited occurred at all schools, public and private. It was true that Southwest was not the same school as before; 16.9 % of its students failed in 1978 compared with only 4.4 % in 1971, and fewer students were now willing to participate in extracurricular activities. The fact that the school was now largely black was not the reason for the decline, however. And there were assets: German, French, Spanish and Russian language programs, a strong speech and debate squad and a good choral music group.

There was also one of the city's best bands. The talented pianist with the stage band, Dale Rieling (son of Raymond Rieling, '48, and Sylvia Spencer Reiling, '50), is now music supervisor and conductor for the Broadway production and road show of "Les Miserables."

The 1979 football team repeated as League champions but lost to Shawnee Mission South, Center and Rockhurst. After the Shawnee Mission loss (42-8), the coach pointed out that the Kansas school had a squad of 71 players compared to Southwest's 20.

A *Kansas City Times* article on November 2 reported: Southwest, the school that won eight championships in ten years from 1963-72, suited up just 18 varsity players for the recent Central game. "They used to have more people than that try out for fullback ... " But veteran Coach Bill Robinson was optimistic about the future, citing a good freshman team ... "just the kind to make a grand old lady feel as proud as she ever did."

A Student Adjustment Committee was formed to address matters of discipline. Offenders were banished to a Student Adjustment Center for an hour, some for a full day, usually for truancy or smoking.

The Redskin Revels continued, and the National Honor Society. A student was a finalist in the National Council of Teachers of English contest. And the Debate and Forensics teacher was awarded the Diamond Key Award of the National Forensics League in recognition of the achievements of her students.

The Southwest battalion won the JROTC's highest award, "Honor Unit With Distinction." They had pride and esprit de corps.

Between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., 300 parents attended a parent-teacher conference day.

Several students were elected to "Who's Who Among American High School Students."

There were three valedictorians in the senior class, and the college acceptances included several prestigious schools.

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The Office of Civil Rights was finally satisfied that the Kansas City School District was in compliance with the federal regulations for desegregation under the Civil Rights Act.

Pictures in the 1980 *Sachem* indicated further integration at Southwest: although the student body was now mostly black, they chose many white class leaders, and the winners on the senior ballot were evenly divided, racially.

The Homecoming Queen, Elaine Robinson, was a black girl. Rachel Mauro, the first attendant, was white but her campaign was managed by a black friend, Elliott Threatt.

Following her graduation from college, Rachel spent several years in London at Christy's as a member of its board of directors and director of Christy's Old Masters painting department. She now directs U.S. operations for Britain's second largest art firm.

Elliott Threatt enjoys a successful business career operating his General Nutrition Centers.

Rachel's father, Albert Mauro, admired the talented black youngsters in his daughter's class, many of whom were guests in the Mauro home just a block away from Southwest. In his view, the assimilation of black and white students was working, and the earlier teachers' strikes had a greater adverse impact on Southwest than the busing of students.

The class of 1930 gathered for their 50th reunion, and among those who returned were: Kelly Woods, technical advisor to the U.S. delegation of the U.N. Atoms for Peace Conference in Geneva; Scott Corbett, noted humorist whose novel "Love Nest" became a 20th Century Fox motion picture; and Dick Smith, Jr., retired associate editor of the *Los Angeles Times*.

1980-1981

According to Principal Kipp, Southwest began the 1980-1981 school year "on a positive note." However, the enrollment of 1,300 students was far below the number in 1977, the year of the second teachers' strike and the adoption of Plan 6 C.

Many parents felt that Southwest should look to the future, not the past. No matter how rich or historic that past had been, they wanted the school to establish new traditions.

The 1980 football team had a new coach who reflected this sentiment. Keith Hannaman replaced William Robinson, whose won-lost record over a 22-year span was comparable to that of Louis House.

The new coach was introduced to the school in a *Trail* interview:

"Coach Hannaman feels strongly that the traditions of Southwest we never knew are not realistic in today's 'real world.' He boldly speaks of the Southwest of the past as now comparable to a Sunset or Pem Day, and that the current Injun graduates will be more prepared for life as it really is. He feels Southwest represents a good, healthy mixture of the population and that we are combating the isolation of an unrealistic black/white separation.

"Academically, he says he can see stabilization in Southwest and hopes that the federal government can now 'leave us alone' for awhile to continue this progress."

The team's 4-6 record in Hannaman's first year included losing big to Shawnee Mission South, Center and Rockhurst.

The Shawnee Mission schools and Rockhurst were not on the next year's schedule ... what had become an annual drubbing would be avoided, but \$3,500 in revenue would be lost.

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Fifty college representatives spent the first two hours of one school day in the cafeteria, meeting with seniors.

The basketball team had an “up and down” season. The girls’ cross-country team was first in the Interscholastic League and second in the state. And the boys’ swimming team was League champion.

The Debate and Forensics team kept the two large trophy cases in the front hall filled with awards.

The JROTC had its first female battalion commander. The five drill teams (two boys’ teams, two girls’ teams, and one coed) performed well. Of the 197 cadets, only two were white.

Four graduating seniors were named University of Missouri Curators’ Scholars on the basis of academic achievement, and the valedictorian was bound for Dartmouth. One of the senior top ten, academically, was a black girl who said that she wished there were more black students in that group. She commented:

“Because of their background at other schools, black students are not motivated when they come to Southwest, and that’s a bad start. I do think we are all treated the same way as far as motivation is concerned here at Southwest.”

The year’s achievements were reported in the *Sachem*. One senior girl was awarded third and second places, respectively, in the 1979 and 1980 Central Missouri State High School Art Exhibit, and also the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute medal. Another won both the Williams College Book Award and the National Council of English Teachers Achievement Award in writing ... one of only 16 in the state.

Two active, popular seniors were Kelly Waldo whose mother, Kay Waldo Barnes, was later elected Kansas City’s first woman mayor, and Marge Stark, whose mother, Joyce Stark, was a member of the school board.

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School District finances had not improved. As a result, the Southwest track, pool and girls’ gym were in poor condition. And 19% of the school’s teachers were to be furloughed; class size would increase substantially in the fall.

1981-1982

The 1981-1982 school year began with a new principal, Neal Schmelzel; Tom Kipp had resigned after ten years at the helm. For its first 56 years, Southwest had only three principals.

To be effective, a school needs a principal who creates the proper learning environment, responding to teachers and parents, managing crises, evaluating classrooms, setting learning standards, and serving as an authority figure.

“The literature on effective schools tends to agree on at least one point — that an essential ingredient of good schools is strong, consistent and inspired leadership. The tone and culture of schools is said to be defined by the vision and purposeful action of the principal. He is said to be the person who must inspire the commitment and energies of his faculty; the respect, if not the admiration of his students; and the trust of the parents.” The Good High School Sara Lawrence Lightfoot, 1983, Basic Books, Inc., page 323.

It is a crucial position, where continuity is important.

From now on, however, “musical chairs” would be a characteristic of the principal’s office at Southwest, and many teachers would have only a passing acquaintance with the occupant.

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The new principal commented that Southwest had more parent interest than he had observed elsewhere.

Three Southeast High School students came to Southwest daily for Advanced Placement English.

Sixty colleges were represented at the two-hour College Day program. Some of the more prestigious Eastern colleges were missing, however, and the *Trail* expressed “severe disappointment that more colleges did not attend ...”

The *Trail*’s existence had been threatened by a shortage of money, and now the *Sachem* too faced financial problems. The School District could provide only limited funding, and most of the publication expense was defrayed by the yearbook staff’s efforts ... yearbook sales and senior portrait charges. This year there would also be advertising revenue. The staff suffered a financial setback when someone broke into the *Sachem* room and stole almost a third of the underclass pictures, many of which were later recovered from a male restroom.

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The School District designed a strategic plan to raise academic standards and improve school “climate.” Budget cuts, however, eliminated many advanced and college preparatory courses at Southwest and the school needed a strategic plan of its own.

Trail articles confirmed the need. Ten years earlier, Southwest had 2,500 students, state championships in football and swimming, and belonged to one of the most dominant leagues in the state. Now it was a school of 1,299 students with an apathetic attitude:

“If the most elite school in the district has deteriorated this much in the past ten years, we can only pray that something works.”

Thirty-nine faculty members were polled on ways to improve curriculum and school spirit. Ten returned suggestions. One respondent was bothered by “the concentration of effort on trying to teach those who still cannot read, write or work a simple mathematical problem after 9-11 years in school, and not giving enough attention to the average and above student ... ”

A meeting to provide Southwest plan input had been advertised in the *Star* and the *Kansas City Call*, at concerts, and in school announcements, but the turnout was poor. Nothing significant resulted from the effort.

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In March 1982, School District representatives paid a surprise visit to Southwest in response to reported problems in the school’s halls. One of the visitors spoke at length over the intercom, alluded to what was wrong, spoke of “wiping out pockets of resistance,” and of elevating Southwest to its “former greatness.”

The visit was not well received, and was badly timed ... many students and a few teachers were away on the senior ski trip and the principal was out with the flu. But it had a salutary effect on loitering in the halls.

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At the annual Awards Assembly in the spring of 1982, the class of ’56 donated \$2,300 to AFS,

proceeds from their 25th reunion. The presenter was lawyer Thomas Van Dyke. Another member of the '56 class was Southwest's vice principal, Tom Myers.

A message from Principal Schmelzel in the 1982 *Sachem* summed up a lackluster year:

"In balance I believe that our successes have exceeded our failures and that we can reflect on a year that has been more positive than negative."

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An eloquent *Trail* article by a graduating senior lamented the resignation of a veteran math teacher, who out of frustration was moving to the Blue Valley School District.

Describing the teacher's departure as a "sad, sad situation," the writer said that while one could blame faculty or non-involvement of the majority of the students, or "maybe even the busing," it all related to one source, the Kansas City School District. She cited the Interscholastic League's constant budget cuts, AP Chemistry lost because only 16 kids wanted it, and some of the more intelligent juniors being "stuck" in remedial English after the popular Poetry of Music course was cut.

The article stated that six years before, private schools could not compare with Southwest, but little by little it was surrendering its once exciting educational opportunities. The writer asked: "How much longer before Southwest loses all of its strong points?"

1982-1983

There was another new principal in the fall of 1982; Barbara Lusk was a black woman, the first principal at Southwest of her gender and race. She brought new dedication and enthusiasm to the job, declaring:

"Southwest, now, as through the years, still reigns as a school of scholars, champions and good citizens."

Minority student enrollment at Southwest High School reached 74.3% during the 1982-3 school year.

Kansas City Magazine published an article in September 1982 entitled "Glory Lost: Southwest High," with the sub-title "What went wrong with the city's once-prized high school and can it make a comeback?" The article contended: "The school — and the school district — deserve a better fate. In its 56 years of existence, Southwest nurtured a tremendous legacy." It was "a happy place where patriotism and athletic ability and musical talent and brains abounded ... " The article continued:

"Southwest's years of producing one after another solid — occasionally outstanding — class of students, its list of locally and nationally known alumni, and all of the nostalgia that goes with those two things, has made Southwest's decline that much more heartbreaking for many."

Neal Schmelzel was quoted: Southwest's future was "at best uncertain." He predicted that one to three of the District's high schools would be closed in the next few years. The article concluded: "And Southwest has as good a chance as any of being one of them."

It was a so-so year for sports. The football team again won the League championship but lost non-league games to Truman, Ward and O'Hara (twice).

Two articles in the December 15 issue of *Local Letters*, one by a Southwest graduate of the '60s and one by George C. Alter, recognized the changes in "Kansas City's most famous school." The

Southwest graduate maintained that the turmoil Southwest had recently experienced “could actually help it in the long run ... Southwest’s glory was never lost, it’s still waiting to be found ... If Southwest has hit bottom, it has a chance to move in some different direction — and that wouldn’t be all bad.”

George Alter reasoned: “Southwest, like all institutions of society, mirrors the society which it serves. Logically, as society changes, the demands placed upon institutions change, and the institution itself changes direction. The most obvious change in direction at Southwest is that a cross section of American society attends the school.”

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Over the years, cooperation among parents, neighborhoods, businesses and churches had maintained Southwest as a community asset. One project, initiated by local churches, was Quest (Quality Education Through Student Tutoring) — a tutoring program conducted by volunteers.

In 1983, many of these efforts were formally combined in the School/Community Partnership Program, initiated at Southwest by H & R Block with its “adoption” of Southwest High School, and later including Block, Allied Signal, St. Andrews Church and UMKC. Block directors included Morton Sosland, Southwest ’42, and Block executives included chief operating officer Jerome Grossman, class of ’37 (he had married his classmate Marian Navran), and Barbara Lebedun, class of ’61, president of the H & R Block Foundation. The partners brought a number of resources to the school in the form of access to programs, grants and other benefits as well as financial assistance.

Financial assistance was badly needed. Since the successful election in 1969, there had been six levy elections; four of the proposals received a simple majority but all failed to carry because they did not win the required 2/3 approval.

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A May 1983 *Kansas City Star* article was headlined: “Southwest: The Decline of a Public School” and began “If one school mirrors the decade of decline in the Kansas City School District, it is Southwest High.”

The article noted that while Southwest remained one of the District’s better schools, it no longer enjoyed a national reputation or neighborhood stability.

Louis E. Selvey, the sponsor of the French Club who had taught French at Southwest for 20 years, agreed that the school had changed drastically ... ”with desegregation we began to meet students who did not come ready, but were nevertheless educable.” Selvey saw no point, however, in reliving the old days: “To spend a lot of time talking about halcyon days ultimately postpones the real job we have to do.” And the Southwest staff was optimistic about making the school better.

David Barnes, a black senior who was president of his class of ’83, became a lawyer and a Special Assistant United States Attorney, and returned to speak at a later Southwest Commencement.

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On August 10, 1983, the *Kansas City Times* erroneously reported that Southwest had dropped advanced algebra and trigonometry although 100 students had pre-enrolled. The correction printed a few days later did not attract the widespread attention of the original front-page story.

1983-1984

The enrollment at Southwest for the 1983-84 school year was 1,089, with 76% minority.

Southwest senior Tony Staples was a semifinalist in the National Merit Scholar Program, based on his junior year's score in the PSAT/NMSQT.

The Pep Club now had two male members: Maurice McKibben and Guy Baryo.

The *Trail* staff designed, wrote and sold cookbooks as a fund raiser for the paper.

Senior James Van Ross was the winner of an essay contest sponsored by the Federal Aviation Administration. His title: "Black Education in America, the Struggle Continues."

The student body was well aware of the desegregation suit and its significance. The 1984 *Sachem* later commented:

"Whatever the decision, the implications of the debate will affect many future classes."

The theme of the 1984 *Sachem* was "Southwest Renaissance," and the yearbook reported:

"Southwest excels above other Inter-Scholastic High Schools by offering advanced college courses, a student run newspaper and a foreign and fine arts department. Southwest is the only High School in the Inter-Scholastic area that offers Orchestra as a class."

The *Sachem* presented assessments of Southwest by its teachers. In the eyes of some of the faculty, Southwest had improved recently. George Alter was one who saw improvement. He commented:

"Stability of the student body and of the administration in the last two years has helped."

But this belief was not universal. Jack Foster was quoted:

"... I don't think Southwest has changed that much and any change for the better is due to Mrs. Lusk and her associates ... Eight years ago we had a good student body and it went down. Hopefully, it is on the way back up."

However, most of those interviewed agreed with Alter that things were better.

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On September 4, an ABC documentary hosted by Peter Jennings painted a bleak picture of public education in the United States, citing Kansas City schools including Southwest. A success story reported, however, was that of Tim Lewis, football captain and president of the class of '84. Tim was admitted to Yale, an achievement referred to as a small victory in a larger struggle. In the ABC interview, Tim commented that there was a great deal of misinformation in the community about Southwest; the school was fine, although he wasn't sure what it would be like in two more years.

Another member of the class of 1984 featured in the documentary, Student Council president Stephanie Spears, was accepted at the University of Houston. A black girl and class leader, she would be the first college graduate in her family.

1984-1985

The 1984-5 school year began with a slightly larger enrollment at Southwest, again with 76% minority.

The erosion of neighborhood schools had decimated Kansas City's PTAs, once a cornerstone of the city's public school system. They were replaced by School Advisory Committees (SACs). The September issue of the *Southwest Communicator*, a publication financed by the "Southwest Boosters" (a non-profit corporation organized by parents, staff and supporters from the Southwest community), invited parents to join SAC.

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The desegregation case went to trial in the fall of 1984. Initially, the case sought a metropolitan solution — a solution fiercely resisted by other area school districts on both sides of the state line. Early in the proceeding, Judge Clark dismissed the Kansas school districts from the lawsuit. And now, after a three-month hearing, Judge Clark also dismissed the Missouri suburban school districts, finding that unconstitutional segregation existed only within the Kansas City School District and that the suburban districts were not responsible for that segregation.

There would be no metropolitan solution. Only the Kansas City School District was held liable, together with the State of Missouri; the Kansas City School District would have to go it alone.

The *Sachem* that year summarized the “Desegregation Battle,” noting the federal court’s rejection of the Kansas City School District’s attempt to create a “super-district” consolidating suburban schools with the Kansas City schools.

An NAACP lawyer who had participated in *Brown vs. Board of Education* would later comment:

“I think the big problem here in Kansas City is, the case called for an interdistrict remedy (which would have combined suburban districts with the Kansas City School District) and that part of the case was lost.” Kansas City Star May 7, 1994

The *Sachem* also compared the Kansas City School District, where of the last 16 attempts to increase the levy only one had succeeded, with the “more affluent” Shawnee Mission School District where the converse was true — only one levy proposition in 16 had failed to carry.

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The JROTC battalion won the Honor Unit With Distinction award for the fourth time in four years. It was a crack unit ... this was JROTC’s highest award and only three other units in the country were so distinguished.

The Pep Club was rejuvenated with 150 members, the largest number in several years. And Maurice McKibben became the first male inducted into the Honor Nine ... a dedicated senior group of exemplary character and school spirit.

The foreign language clubs were active, with increased enrollment in language classes. Because of his success in teaching German, Dr. Paul Garcia of the Southwest faculty was asked to present a workshop at the Central States Conference on Foreign Language Teaching. And he accompanied German language students on their eleventh annual trip to Germany.

The music department remained good, with seven students making District Band, one All-State, and two making All-State orchestra.

Southwest had the only orchestra in the Kansas City School District.

H & R Block donated \$5,800 for a part-time calculus teacher, permitting a calculus course to be offered at Southwest. The “match” of the school and Block was recognized that year as the top school/business partnership in the nation. *Kansas City Star*, May 9, 1988.

The Homecoming and Winter Sports queens were white girls, the four JROTC queens were black.

Responding to a *Trail* poll, 60% of the Southwest student body preferred Walter F. Mondale for president; 40% favored a second term for President Ronald Reagan.

Southwest students were among the 17,000 people who listened to Bruce Springsteen and danced to the music of the E-Street Band at the Kemper Arena.

The boys' basketball team won the Interscholastic League trophy and the League's post-season tournament, as well as state sectional and divisional championships.

A March 9, 1985 *Trail* editorial noted a smaller Publications class, as well as dwindling enthusiasm, pride and support for the *Trail*, but maintained that the paper remained one of the few positive things about Southwest. While there were students who cared no more for the school than the public, others were striving to make it a worthwhile institution to attend and it was about those students that the *Trail* would write.

The *Trail* reduced its size from 16 pages to eight, in order to publish twice a month, and cut its price to 25 cents per issue.

There was a National Merit Scholar. And Tris Londre, a National Merit semi-finalist, won a gold medal from the Federation of French Alliances for his extraordinary skill in the French language, on the basis of a nationwide test — a first for the Kansas City School District.

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The yearbook expressed pride in Southwest, acknowledging that “something happened” to the school after years of being “good, real good,” but now Southwest was getting better despite being handicapped by “a callous story” in the media, an “experiment” by the downtown office, and by “some kid who doesn't want to be here and lets everyone know it.”

A *Sachem* review of favorite musicians praised Lionel Richie:

“Go to a Lionel Richie concert and you see all kinds of people — young and old, black and white. They all sing along to those uplifting songs about not much at all, and cry when he leaves the stage. To me, he seems like the musical equivalent of milk and chocolate chip cookies. I happen to like milk and chocolate chip cookies and sometimes it's fun to cry.”

The *Sachem*'s senior summaries named many Chiefs car parkers, earning money for the athletic and music departments. Many of the car parkers, including band director George Alter, earned over \$100 apiece for the school, parking cars for events at the Chiefs' Arrowhead Stadium.

The spring SAC roster listed 85 members including Sue Fulson, school board member from the Southwest area, David Griffin, the School District director of secondary instruction, Dr. Paul Garcia, and Barbara Lusk. Lusk advised parents of a constant problem with students intercepting and destroying grade cards and other information intended for them.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Struggle Continues; “Build It and They Will Come.”

1985-1986

THE 1985-1986 SCHOOL YEAR began with Barbara Lusk still the principal at Southwest and a student enrollment of 1,116, a number that grew to 1,216 by the first of October.

There was also some fresh paint — the result of 14 students’ summer work. However, the 60-year-old building needed much more than a coat of paint. The average age of the District’s school buildings was 58, and all had deteriorated badly. Bonds for school repair required two-thirds voter approval, and maintenance had been deferred for many years because of inability to pass a bond proposal.

Federal desegregation money did fund a School-Within-A-School (SWAS) program at Southwest. Participants were low-achieving ninth graders. There was also Quest II, a spin-off of the Quest program developed through local churches six years earlier. Quest II sessions at the Second Presbyterian Church, 55th and Oak, served students interested in advanced algebra and chemistry, as well as those needing extra help.

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There were 180 students making the Honor Roll with a GPA of 3.0 or better for the first quarter of the school year, and five had a 4.0 GPA.

The concert choir was much smaller, but the music department still acquitted itself well. The Red Cross organization, also small, was active and placed candy stripers at local hospitals.

There were five AFS students at Southwest, and the class of ’45 donated proceeds from their 40th reunion to the school’s enduring AFS program. There was also an AFS exchange teacher from Thailand, Miss Kanoktip Anguhrathorn.

It was reported at an October SAC meeting that some students had been expelled for hiding a shotgun in a school locker, and police were apprehending truants found roaming the neighborhood and returning them to Southwest.

Sixty persons attended a joint SAC/Boosters meeting in November, to hear Superintendent of Schools Claude Perkins state that federal desegregation money was helping the severely underfunded School District improve its instructional programs.

A January, 1986 issue of the *Trail* reminded readers that a levy election was scheduled for February 4, and urged approval. The levy effort suffered its usual dismal fate, however.

Periodically, a “Southwest Happenings” column, written by George Alter, appeared in the

Wednesday Magazine. The issue for February 22, 1986 reported that 15 German language students from Southwest were preparing for an annual two-week trip to Germany and would visit both East and West Berlin. Also, 38 seniors would go to Taos, N.M. for the annual senior ski trip.

Redskin Revels, discontinued for a time, were revived in April with a variety show staged by the students with help from Southwest Booster parents Rita Klepac and Jennifer Bilski.

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On April 18, Gregory S. Bates, the dedicated SAC chair for the Southwest attendance area, wrote a thoughtful, lengthy letter to Willie Giles, of the School District's Desegregation Monitoring Office. The thrust of his letter: Plan 6C was a failure; since its implementation, the Southwest area schools had moved from racial integration to racially isolated minority schools — going from 40% minority to 75% minority. An accompanying chart showed Southwest High School in 1977 to have 585 black and 1248 non-minority, the following year (after 6C took effect) 868 and 989 respectively, and by 1986 there were 916 black and 296 white students. The minority percentage had shifted from 36% to 76% in nine years.

He submitted: "The Southwest area has resegregated and the Kansas City School District is confronted with the very real possibility of adding all schools in the area to its list of schools with 90% or greater minority enrollment."

Bates proposed substituting a K through 12 magnet program for the entire Southwest area. The proposal was not pursued by the School District.

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When Judge Russell Clark found the Kansas City School District and the State of Missouri liable, he asked each to propose a remedy. They offered two vastly different proposals, as described in "MONEY AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE — Lessons from the Kansas City Desegregation Experiment," by Paul Ciotti, published in the conservative Cato Institute's *Policy Analysis* paper dated March 16, 1998:

"The state took the aggressive but (as events would later show) not entirely irrational position that most of what was wrong with the KCMSD had more to do with crime, poverty and dysfunctional families than it did with the failure of the state to meet its constitutional obligations. Under the circumstances, the state argued, all that was legally required was a little reroofing, patching, painting, and carpet repair coupled with curriculum reform and emphasis on better teaching.

"The plaintiffs, on the other hand, encouraged by what they saw as the increasing sympathy of the judge for their position, decided to 'go for the moon'— to ask for far more than they thought they could ever get.

"The choice for Clark was a stark one — he could go with the state's plan, which in the words of Harvard researcher Alison Morantz was 'laughably insufficient,' or he could go with the plaintiffs' plan ... " (Pages 5-6).

Given the choice between doing hardly anything and the plaintiffs' remedy, Clark decided for the plaintiffs.

The remedial plan ultimately developed called for the conversion of every secondary school and most of the elementary schools to magnet schools. Neighborhood schools were to be abandoned and students bused across town.

According to Paul Ciotti, Kansas City's magnet school concept operated on a "Field of Dreams" theory ... "If you build it, they will come." (Page 5).

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In May 1986, advanced placement tests were given to Southwest students in English, American History and German; 85% of the advanced placement English students qualified for advanced college work or college credit.

The class of '36 held their 50th reunion in May, a bittersweet occasion. Their reunion program noted:

"Overwhelmed by nostalgia, we dropped everything to return, like salmon from the sea. And once again, as though there had been no intervening 50 years, we were together."

In conjunction with their 40th reunion, 100 members of the class of 1946 contributed a total of \$7000 to the Southwest High School Foundation. Believing that the strength and dedication of the faculty at Southwest during their high school years was the most important single factor in their education, and was the basis for later college and business or professional success, they effected a shift in the Foundation's emphasis from periodic gifts of equipment and other tangible property to recognizing and fostering faculty performance through awards for teaching excellence.

The *Kansas City Star* for May 18, 1986 published the winning essay entered by Southwest's Holly Mehl in a World Trade Week contest. Her prize was a trip for two to the Netherlands, and she took her brother Allan, Southwest '85. Holly also won the Dartmouth Book Award.

A "Southwest Happenings" column for May 28 noted a number of accomplishments including the Rensselaer medal to Kim Trusty and the Williams College Book Award to Stephen Connaghan, as well as substantial scholarship and grant money and other financial aid awarded to seniors.

Peter Thomas, class of 1986, was a National Merit Scholar. He later graduated from Yale, and is now completing work on his doctorate at the University of Chicago. NMS success was a family trait; Peter's father, Timothy Thomas, was in the original group of National Merit Scholars selected when the program was first instituted, in 1955-1956.

Marian Thomas, Peter's mother, marveled at George Alter's ability to generate enthusiasm in the band members at Southwest. The Stage Band practiced at 6:30 a.m. and received no academic credit for their efforts ... they played just for the pleasure of accomplishment.

Alter was a deserving winner of the "Excellence in Teaching" award in a contest sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, the *Star*, and the Learning Exchange. The award recognized "truly exceptional teachers who gave of themselves to provide a quality education for students in the Kansas City area."

1986-1987

Barbara Guinn replaced Barbara Lusk as principal in the fall of 1986. Enrollment was 1066, with 1140 students projected as the final number.

The District's Superintendent of Schools resigned, the third top administrator to depart in four years. If the Southwest principal's office had musical chairs, the downtown office of the Superintendent now featured a revolving door.

In October, several students took the PSAT-National Merit Scholar Qualifying Test, and juniors Michael Connaghan and Steven Thomas (brother of Peter Thomas) became National Merit semi-finalists on the basis of their scores. Senior Tim Harline, whose sister and brother were respectively National Merit finalist and semi-finalist, became a National Merit finalist and won a Carnegie Mellon scholarship.

A *Trail* article reported that a sophomore girl was playing split end and quarterback on the junior varsity football team, a first for the Kansas City area. She appeared in the *Sachem's* team picture — a pretty blonde girl named Stacy Simpson.

Michael Jones, later a professional football player in the NFL, was a B student, made the League's all-star team, was also captain of the Indian basketball team, and won a scholarship to the University of Missouri.

Steve Connaghan, captain of the cross-country team and senior salutatorian, was Southwest's first Homecoming King. Michael Jones was first runner-up.

Coach Richard Samuels was among the first recipients of the "Select Circle Coaching Award" sponsored by the Franklin Life Insurance Company.

According to their faculty sponsor, the *Trail* and the *Sachem* were "absolutely unfunded by the Kansas City Missouri School District," but were able to survive through sales, advertising, and support from H & R Block, Marion Laboratories and the Southwest Foundation.

A *Trail* ad invited students to "Relive the '50s at Winstead's."

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When the Interscholastic League required Pep Band members to pay their way into athletic events, George Alter called a halt to their performances: "We don't pay to play."

There were numerous awards in the spring of 1987 for the music department. One student was selected for the Sousa National Honors Band (one of three chosen from Missouri) that performed in concert with the Marine Band in Washington.

For the first time in Southwest's history, band uniforms were supplied by the School District. Tooters' Club funds, earmarked for uniforms, could now be used for scholarships for summer music camps and private music lessons.

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Levy increases had been attempted in February, August and November of the previous year. All had failed. A March 1987 issue of the *Trail* predicted that if levy and bond elections scheduled for later that month did not receive voter approval, "Judge Clark may very well have to follow precedent established in St. Louis and order a tax increase." Voter approval was not forthcoming. Opponents attributed their success to the public's frustration with School District mediocrity; despite being out-organized and out-spent, they had administered a stunning defeat.

In April the *Trail* praised the many things that H & R Block had done for Southwest, since the formation of their partnership with the school in 1983.

Dr. Paul Garcia again escorted German Club members to West Germany, and to the Maifest in Hermann, Missouri.

Celebrating their 50th reunion, the class of 1937 provided funding to purchase a new podium and speaker for the auditorium.

The class of '67 gathered for their twentieth reunion and, to prepare them for the event, the beauty editors of *Woman's Day Magazine* gave much publicized beauty treatments ("makeovers") to six women from the class: Susan Bisman, Martha Clay, Margaret Ganwee, Nancy Messplay, Lynda Owen and Gloria Gale. The magazine "wanted to feature women from a city with an All American image and Kansas City just seemed to fit the bill."

An article in the 1987 *Sachem*, "Magnet Plan to Save District," discussed the implications of the pending magnet proposal — abandonment of the neighborhood school system, an enormous busing program, and "a massive bill" at Kansas City's door.

The yearbook also commented on the varied local concert scene: "Everything from the disturbed wailings of Alice Cooper to the mellow rock of Kansas hit the Kansas City stages."

At the end of the school year, George Alter and Paul Garcia transferred to District posts downtown; it was a great loss for Southwest — the programs of these two men had kept many neighborhood families at the school.

The *Sachem* that year was dedicated to George Alter. It also contained a farewell message from Paul Garcia, whose classes had met in Sara Van Metre's old classroom. He expressed the hope that "the affection, caring and learning that became synonymous with room 205 are ours forever."

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Lorie DeFoor Etheridge was president of the graduating class:

"I graduated from Southwest in 1987. Looking back now I can see that the school was already in trouble but at that time we thought we had one of the best schools in town. We had a very close knit class, as were the classes ahead of me and that made for fabulous times and memories. Of course there were pranks pulled in the school and we had our share of bad students but it was not four walls full of gang members and drug dealers as some people would like to believe. People from our class went on to Yale University, Washington University, American University, and of course MU, KU, and many other local colleges. We received many scholarships and even had our own National Merit Finalist, and as a whole I feel we did a good job of graduating a well educated class of students. My only lingering bad memory when it comes to academics was when I was a junior, we were forced by the administration to lower the requirements for being selected into the National Honor Society ... That is one thing that always bothered me, and now I see it as one more sign of a school on its way down. It is never a good sign when you have to lower your standards to include more people in a group ...

"As for the faculty, ours was no different than I'm sure you would find at any other school. We had a few teachers: Sharon Tuley, George Alter, Pat Lyons, Doc Garcia and others, who put in countless extra hours to help keep the old Southwest going. Those teachers challenged our minds as well as nurtured our spirits. And then there were the few that taught their classes to whoever would listen and then would go straight home, never pushing us that extra mile.

"We lost a lot of 'old Southwest' while I was there and shortly afterward. Belles and Beaux was discontinued, the marching band could no longer spell out their name on the football field, the swim team disbanded, we rode our last carnival rides and many of the clubs that remained were formed with the same few students. But we started up soccer teams, crowned our first Homecoming King, hosted AFS students, held Proms and

marched in the Brookside parade. At the time I was at Southwest there was still a little bit of fight left in her, she just needed some help from the students, faculty, neighbors and the city in general. Unfortunately Southwest didn't get that help.

"It is very hard to look back over all of my memorabilia and know that there are no more classes passing through Southwest. They will never be part of Honor 9, build floats for the Homecoming parade through Brookside, sing our fight song or wear the orange and black with pride. But at least I have my memories to share with my children, of doing all of these things and more ...

"I found a copy of the speech I gave at our graduation and a sentence in there kind of sums up how I feel about Southwest. 'What lies behind us is over, what lies ahead of us is yet to come, but what lies within us is always at our disposal to be called upon whenever it is needed.' We know that the old Southwest is gone, what will happen to the school itself is yet to be seen, but the memories of four great years of our lives will always be with us."

1987-1988

After several ballot measures to raise taxes to pay the District's share of the cost of the desegregation remedy were defeated, Judge Clark acted unilaterally on September 16, 1987, against both the District and the State to finance a massive program. He ordered tax increases to help pay the District's share. No longer would the Kansas City School District suffer from woeful under-funding ... a monumental and historic plan was to be implemented, and cost would not be a deterrent in a district that had been financially starved for a long time.

Southwest had another interim principal in the fall of 1987 ... David Griffin, director of secondary education for the Kansas City School District. Griffin endorsed Judge Russell Clark's September tax increases as a necessity; the students applauded as well.

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Morale was boosted by building improvements, computer lab refurbishing, and a library/resource center that replaced the former Southwest branch library (gone for the past year). The new center had 12,000 books, and an audio visual room. It was also the meeting site for the Southwest science and math magnet task force, formed to provide input for a new magnet school at Southwest.

In October, David Griffin was replaced as principal by another interim appointee, Evelyn Belser, a Southwest faculty member.

A strike by players of the National Football League prevented the faithful Chiefs car parkers from earning badly needed funds for the bands, orchestra and German Club.

There was an Open House in October 1987, for parents, as well as a College Workshop — an informational meeting for college-bound students and their parents.

The Southwest football team placed ten players on the All-League team in the fall of 1987.

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An article in the October 30 issue of the *Trail*, "Shape Up," condemned student misconduct — "everything from fighting to furniture being thrown out of windows."

Serious student behavioral problems were national in scope. In February 1988, a comparison between the 1940s and the 1980s was drawn by California authorities. The benign 1940s list: talking,

chewing gum, making noise, running in halls, out of place in line, improper clothing, not using wastebasket, messy locker, and holding hands. The 1980s problems: drug abuse, alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery, assault, arson and bombings.

However, a *Trail* rebuttal of “horror stories” by local TV, newspapers and “people who ‘stereotype’ public schools,” concluded:

“An education is only as good as you can make it. So the next time someone asks you where you go to school just tell them: ‘Southwest, and I am proud of it.’ ”

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Senior citizens living in the neighborhood had their lawn mowers and other small gasoline-powered tools repaired free of charge by students in Southwest’s Power Mechanics classes, and the seniors donated money to nearby St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church to help the poor.

For its part, St. Andrew’s sponsored an “advocacy” program at Southwest which, among other things, set up meetings with business people and college admission offices.

AFS remained one of the most successful Southwest organizations with four foreign exchange students. Booster activities, under president Marian Thomas, included an annual Ethnic Awareness Celebration featuring a pot-luck dinner in February 1988. The Stage Band played, foreign language classes presented brief programs, and AFS students performed dances and songs of their native lands.

In January, Missouri Governor John Ashcroft officiated at the opening of a year-round reading and writing course at Southwest, designed for illiterate adults and at-risk high school students.

An excellent education was still a possibility at Southwest:

Several Southwest students earned positions in the Kansas City Metro-District Band, Orchestra, and Jazz Band. Four Southwest students submitted winning essays in a 4-H Club Black Heritage Essay Contest that had 1,000 entries. And four seniors placed in the top ten of their respective sections at a regional math contest in Excelsior Springs.

Among the scholarships was one to Harvard for National Merit Scholar Steven Thomas. Steven, whose Southwest activities included participation in choral groups, is working on his doctorate in choral conducting.

Michael Connaghan was chosen a Kansas City Star scholar-athlete ... among other accomplishments, he too was a National Merit Scholar, and one of four Kansas City seniors selected for a \$1,000 Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship Award. Michael later earned a B.S. in mechanical engineering, a masters in thermo dynamics from Johns Hopkins, and was employed by the Army to engage in heat exchange and transfer research.

CHAPTER NINE

Magnet School; A Bad Wizard

1988-1989

THE 1988-1989 SCHOOL YEAR began with another new principal, Dr. Herbert Ruffin ... the fifth principal at Southwest in four years.

On September 13, Ruth Warrick visited her alma mater and was pleased to find the auditorium where she had performed the same as she remembered it — “very neat and clean and there was no graffiti.”

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The court-ordered desegregation plan called for the creation of magnet schools, with every high school in the Kansas City School District converted by the 1991-1992 school year.

Lincoln College Preparatory Academy, the one-time Lincoln High School, had been a magnet school for several years. An older generation of black students at segregated Lincoln had used hand-me-down textbooks from Southwest, recognized as the Kansas City School District’s foremost college preparatory high school. Now Lincoln was the prep school. As such, it siphoned off the District’s elite students, some of them from the former Southwest High School attendance area.

Southwest became the Southwest Science and Mathematics Magnet School. New faculty positions mandated by the court were Program Administrator, occupied by Diane Stevenson, transferred from her biology classroom, and Curriculum Coordinator, occupied by Robert Van Maren, formerly at parochial Bishop Miege High School.

There were also many teachers of mathematics and science, as well as computer instructors, but the faculty still included instructors in English, Art, Social Studies, Spanish and French.

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It was a difficult year. To achieve the best possible racial balance, the desegregation plan called for massive busing and the District quickly went from 100 bus routes to 850. School bus driving was the top career opportunity in Kansas City, according to the Missouri Department of Labor. The September 30, 1988 issue of the *Trail* described schedule mix-ups and bus problems at Southwest.

Magnet school applications were accepted on a first-come, first-served basis within the racial guidelines established by the U.S. District Court. Enrollment was lower than anticipated at Southwest. Fewer non-minority students than expected applied there, and minority students interested in the science/mathematics courses were on a waiting list, barred by the desegregation program’s racial quota requirements.

Parents, faculty and community members served on the magnet task force formed to supply input

to the Southwest construction project. The project architect was alumnus Mel Solomon, class of '54, who cared deeply about Southwest.

A dispute with the contractor interrupted construction “for discussion and renegotiation.” Work did not resume until April 1989. Meanwhile, students were scattered all over the building to avoid the workmen. The *Sachem* would later refer to “all of the indecision from changes in court decisions and construction problems.”

Because of construction, the freshman class could not be accommodated at Southwest. They were transferred to the old Ashland Elementary School at 23rd and Lawn.

These freshmen were the first Southwest class to be part of the District’s complete magnet program, and the first class required to meet the racial guidelines of the court ... 40 percent white to 60 percent black.

In the course of the construction work, some of the trophies won by earlier classes disappeared from view ... those mementos of past triumphs, and the traditions they represented, seemed to be no longer relevant.

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Southwest students, parents and faculty were still gamely trying, under difficult circumstances.

Although Jack D. Foster presided over a much smaller choir, the music program remained a good one — true to its tradition.

The Pep Club had 60 members. Two busloads of students traveled to Springfield for the second game of the season, where the team lost a close contest to the Kickapoo Chiefs 21-18.

The football team was the champion of the Interscholastic League.

A Homecoming celebration included a dance and a parade (a ten-girl Flag Team joined the Marching Tribesmen ensemble). The *Trail* described Homecoming as “somewhat successful.”

The basketball team had a 13-13 season. And boys’ soccer was introduced at the school.

The Publications staff handled the *Sachem* and the *Trail* in two different classes, and reinstated a literary magazine. The class of '36 provided computerized equipment to help students produce their publications.

The class of '46 established a fund to provide annual cash awards to honor one teacher and one student who had made significant contributions to the school. It was later merged with Foundation funds.

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In March 1989, *Kansas City Times* reporter George Gurley deplored the demise of Quest. The volunteers who ran the program were discontinuing their effort, blaming lack of support at Southwest and a community “fed up” with the Kansas City schools. Gurley declared that public education had lost a valuable resource, and concluded: “The end of Quest is yet another installment in a depressing story.”

In the spring, Herbert Ruffin’s contract as principal was not renewed. It was not a popular decision with students, faculty or parents ... about 200 students staged a brief walkout, and a picture in the April 18 *Kansas City Times* showed two students holding a sign that read: “Another Principal. WHY? We Want Dr. Ruffin.” A *Trail* article reported “Fighting for Ruffin.”

A Southwest student asked: “Do you want to make upheaval a tradition at Southwest?” Later many students were transferred by their parents to the Lincoln College Preparatory Academy. One

parent commented that “The present senior class has had three principals, one acting principal, and one interim principal.”

1989-1990

Ruffin was succeeded as principal in the fall of 1989 by Dr. Randy Wortman, who had served as principal of a science/math magnet elementary school in Chicago.

There were AFS students from Canada, Belgium and Mexico. The DECA Club sponsored a talent show, and contributed the proceeds to various charities in the community.

The boys’ basketball team clinched the Interscholastic League title with a 50-49 victory over Central. The girls’ team finished second.

The Pep Club was sponsored by English instructor Ruthie Pickens, later a winner of the Southwest Foundation’s Distinguished Teacher Award. She crowned the Homecoming Queen and King at the Homecoming Dance and stated the Club’s major concerns to be “academics, extra curricular activities and having fun.”

During the year, Dr. Wortman conducted tours and interviews to introduce the community to “Starship Southwest,” the school’s ambitious new planetarium where students would study astronomy, aerospace science and astrophysics.

Rescued from poverty, the School District was spending \$9,000 per pupil per year by the end of the decade.

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A March 1990 issue of *LIFE Magazine* published a nostalgic reprise of its earlier story covering the Southwest ROTC Ball of 1945:

“The kids at Southwest High knew nothing of sex, drugs or rock and roll. They necked, drank shakes and swung to ‘String of Pearls.’ ‘LIFE Goes to a Military Ball’ hit the social high note of 1945: ‘ROTC officers formed an arch of sabers before a silver throne, and a wreath of orchids was set on Joanne Warren’s head.’ GI readers corresponded with the 16-year-old from all over a world at war. Her face — fresh and full of promise — evoked home in times that were already changing too quickly.”

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There were several scholarships, a Dartmouth book award and a 4-H essay contest winner, among the seniors.

The 1990 *Sachem* was dedicated to the school:

“In a world of perpetual change, people need something that is constant, something they know they can cling to in case of trouble. For many, Southwest has been that something, Therefore, due to its ability to shine through the darkness and stand through thick and thin for 65 years, the 1990 Sachem is being dedicated to our school ... Congratulations on your longevity, Southwest, best wishes for the next 65 years.”

A *Sachem* “In and Out” list included “inter-racial relationships” (in) and “racism” (out).

Because of failing health, Louis Selvy retired after 27 years of teaching French at Southwest. The yearbook for the following year would be dedicated to him and to his wife, Bunny Lawler Selvy, class of ’43 and popular English teacher.

In June, the class of '40 gathered for their 50th Reunion, and a photographer took a group picture of the class lettermen including those from three major championship teams: football, basketball and track.

1990-1991

On September 30, 1990, faculty, administrators and friends of Southwest gathered on the lawn in front of a new wing at the high school. It was a state-of-the-art science building. In addition to the planetarium, there was a vivarium ... a space in which a flora and fauna habitat was created, for ecological study. There were also two greenhouses and an outdoor garden plot, biology and general science labs, a computer resource lab, chemistry and physics labs, and a darkroom for holography, spectral analysis and film development.

At the dedication program, two Southwest students announced that they were receiving the finest education the city offered, praising their teachers and the school's challenging curriculum.

The 1990-91 Student Handbook included information on student conduct and dress code, and prohibitions against smoking and possession of articles hazardous to the safety of others. Traditional clubs and activities were listed.

A Student Advisory Board replaced the Student Council as the student governing body, to give students a voice in school policy and relay good news about Southwest to the public.

A special 1990 issue of the Southwest *Trail* reported that, although Southwest was not a magnet school for computer science, the Southwest Computer Team took first place in a city-wide competition, and two teams finished eighth and twelfth in a state contest.

In the annual "Math Wars" competition held in the Southeast fieldhouse, the Southwest Advanced Math Team was the winner and the Algebra Team was third.

A Southwest student, Christine Kuchar, won first place and \$1000 for her essay in the annual Harry S Truman competition. And two sophomores were chosen to attend the sixth annual Missouri Scholars Academy held on the MU campus in Columbia.

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A new publication, *Southwest Smoke Signals*, made its debut, edited by Sylvia Farnsworth, a popular AFS advisor. The January 1991 issue noted that only 30 people had joined the Boosters. It also reported that William J. Smith '29 and his wife Helen Nichols Smith '34 of Prairie Village, Kansas, had completed and returned an "alumni news" form.

A favorite hangout for Southwest students playing hookey was the Milgram's Food Store near 63rd and Brookside. Principal Randy Wortman occasionally drove his van, equipped with a loud-speaker, to the store and broadcast orders to truants to return to school.

The Pep Club held its annual banquet at a nearby church, 13 students were chosen for the next year's PomPon squad, and the Junior-Senior Prom was held at the Royals Club. The girls' basketball team won the Interscholastic League championship.

The new baseball team at Southwest was coached by Social Studies teacher Ned Scott ... their first season was the spring of 1991. No District money was available to support the team, and the Southwest Foundation supplied uniforms and equipment.

The Southwest Academic Decathlon Team placed third in the Missouri State Decathlon Contest

on March 16, claiming 35 gold, silver and bronze medals.

The *Smoke Signals* alumni news form produced more responses, printed in the March issue, from John Henderson, '31, Houston, Texas, who described his aging class as "almost an endangered species;" Frank Henderson, '33, of Mt. Prospect, Ill., who asked to be informed of any future reunions; and Shannon D. Lientz, '33, of Richmond, Va., who wrote that "thanks to the fine education I received at Southwest, I was able to obtain a BS and MS in Chemical Engineering at the University of Michigan."

The Boosters, down to nine members, disbanded April 1, 1991.

The June 1991 issue of *Smoke Signals* cited a number of accomplishments by Southwest students. The Southwest JROTC Drill Team placed first in the annual JROTC Field Day. Southwest won second place in the Interscholastic League Math Bowl. Four graduating seniors were awarded Regents scholarships to Central Missouri State University. The Kansas City chapter of MU's School of Business and Public Administration had awarded a scholarship to a Southwest student. The Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute recognized a math and science student with its medal.

Southwest had 17 entries in the Kansas City Science Fair; seven were rated outstanding and there was one grand prize winner.

The "Top of the Charts" list in the 1991 *Sachem* included Madonna and Janet Jackson among best artists, and Depche Mode, INXS, and The Black Crowes as best bands.

Several *Sachem* pages were devoted to Desert Storm. A "War Opinions" page was generally supportive, but the brief war had little impact on Southwest.

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William DeFoor and his wife Linda were active with the Southwest Foundation. Bill became a member of the school board, elected from the Southwest subdistrict. Lorie, president of the class of 1987 (supra), was now attending the University of Missouri in Columbia and Mark DeFoor, class of 1989, was also in college.

The DeFoods still had one daughter in Southwest, Beth DeFoor Shatto. Annually, the family had discussed withdrawing from Southwest but Beth in particular had resisted. Now she was vice president of the senior class and the 1991 *Sachem* editor. The yearbook carried her message: "No one, not the press or any outsiders, truly knows what really goes on at Southwest. We are a family. We do have good things going on inside our school. Even though this is NEVER publicized, we know."

1991-1992

Southwest had an interim principal for 1991-1992, Diane E. Stevenson, former biology teacher and Program Administrator.

September enrollment was 1,080, a disappointing number; an earlier projection had been 1600. 10.3% were white.

The enrollment grew significantly during the first month, a not uncommon occurrence. Because initial enrollment figures were not reliable, classes were reorganized in October after attendance stabilized. Teachers were then added or withdrawn, depending upon the numbers, and students were shuffled from one class to another. The January 1992 enrollment at Southwest was 1,092.

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An October SAC meeting was sparsely attended: two guest speakers, two neighbors, four parents, and four school staff members. After Annette Morgan, area representative in the Missouri Legislature, reported several phone calls from area residents complaining that Southwest students were roaming the streets, there was a lengthy discussion of truancy.

Also discussed was an incident in which a neighbor who asked a group of students to leave his back yard was struck by one of them. The neighborhood was becoming less and less hospitable, and news of this incident did much to further alienate Southwest's neighbors from the high school.

The constant turnover in the principal's office was also a handicap to good community relations. Normally, the high school principal "sits on the boundaries between school and community" ... the voice of the school, inextricably linked to its public image. *The Good High School*, supra, page 323. At Southwest, that voice was muffled.

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Michael Jones, class of '87, was now a professional football player. He wrote the Southwest football coaches:

"I thought I would drop you a note and send my thanks for developing me into what I am. Tell all the students at Southwest that dreams can be reality with hard work and determination."

The card was signed: "Forever an Indian, Michael Jones, # 52, Los Angeles Raiders."

Mike was indeed "forever an Indian." He returned to visit classes at Southwest from time to time, where he was a joy to the teachers and an excellent role model for the students.

Monica Roberts, a Southwest senior girl, won the competition for JROTC Cadet Colonel; she would command all 1700 JROTC cadets in Kansas City. The Southwest battalion ranked number one in the city.

Johnnie Roberts starred on the boys' cross-country team ... the first Southwest runner to win the 3 A title. He was also the Interscholastic League MVP, and its cross-country champion for the third successive year.

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The January 7, 1992 issue of the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Kansas City's magnet school innovation was receiving nationwide attention. This was confirmed in February with a report on the PBS MacNeil-Lehrer program that included an interview with Judge Russell Clark. The program's assessment of the plan's success to date was lukewarm at best, but Judge Clark declared that he did what he thought was right and lost no sleep over his decisions.

LIFE Magazine's February 1992 issue carried an Apple Computer advertisement, featuring Diane Stevenson and Southwest students. The school computer program was strong.

The senior class had 144 graduates that year. They were the class that spent their first year at Ashland Elementary School, and were the first graduates of the Southwest Science/Math Magnet Program.

A senior, Inez Garcia, was awarded a \$2500 scholarship by the Kellogg Foundation for an AFS year-long program in Mexico. It was a highly coveted prize, the object of keen competition. Inez was encouraged in her scholarship quest by Stuart Tredway, Southwest '83, an AFS returnee from Bogota, Colombia.

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In a heartwarming demonstration of concern and support for students, several members of the Southwest faculty established the Southwest Teachers School Fund, financed by monthly withdrawals from modest paychecks. In June 1992, the fund awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to a Southwest senior.

At their 50th reunion, 86 donors from the class of 1942 contributed \$10,300 to the Southwest Foundation. At the same time, a restructuring of the Foundation insured its good standing for corporate and tax purposes as well as the responsible administration of Foundation funds.

George Crawford, class of '42 and Harvard Law School honors graduate, provided leadership and rallied alumni to the cause.

A Foundation publication stated the case for coming to the aid of Southwest:

Motivation of current students who lacked the advantages enjoyed by those who came before them, and recognition of teachers devoting their professional lives to the education of their students.

The critical need for support and improvement of the public school system.

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Also in June, Southwest's planetarium director attended a three-week seminar offered by the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, to learn the latest teaching techniques and hear lectures on research.

In July, a \$5,000 grant was received from the United States Environmental Protection Agency to conduct a water-monitoring project at Southwest.

1992-1993

September enrollment at Southwest for the 1992-1993 school year was 778 ... a drop of over 300 from the previous year.

As a catalyst for integration, the "field of dreams" concept was not working. The only way to integrate a school district already overwhelmingly non-white was to attract white children from private schools and from the suburbs. Each magnet school was to retain the basic academic curriculum, in addition to its particular theme, and be so attractive that it would draw non-minority students. Although a fine education from an excellent faculty was available at Southwest, many suburban parents perceived the school as unsafe. Few non-resident students enrolled, even though transportation by taxi was provided, door-to-door.

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On the first day of school, Dr. Thomas M. Reefer greeted students at the front door of Southwest. He was the new principal. The *Trail's* front-page story was headlined: "Southwest Administration Changes Again."

Tom Reefer had graduated from Southwest High School in 1970, attended Oberlin University, and earned two advanced Harvard degrees. In 1970, black students had been 3 percent of Southwest's population; they now comprised almost 89 percent.

The *Trail* noted that the year began "with many positive aspects," including a change in student behavior and a much shorter student "Do Not Admit list." It reported "a general feeling among the student body that 'Southwest is coming back!'"

The magnet system continued to pose particular problems at Southwest. Youngsters who did not get their first choice were assigned to other schools, and because the science/math theme was unpopular with District students Southwest tended to be the last school chosen. Many Southwest students, barred from the magnet school of their choice, were unprepared and disinterested. But the new principal expressed faith in the school's magnet theme, and confidence that within two or three years Southwest would again be one of the best high schools in the state.

Dr. Reefer was an advocate of the Coalition of Essential Schools, a national network of innovative schools championed by a former dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The Coalition established certain principles for teaching that varied from the traditional education approach.

A task force of Southwest teachers, formed because of concerns about their school's future, decided to pursue the Coalition approach.

The majority of the Southwest faculty did not initially support the task force proposals. Many of the dissenters believed that the student-oriented Essential Schools principles were inappropriate for a science/math magnet school, where in their view courses required even tighter control and discipline. Some teachers also believed that change was premature.

Despite the faculty dissenters, restructuring went forward with the adoption of a Freshmen Studies Program that granted greater freedom to the students.

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The September enrollment of freshmen (ninth graders) was 153, down from 369 the previous January. They were placed in a special magnet program located on the fourth floor ... a self-contained group who studied "Language in Society" (social studies and language arts) and "Math in a Physical World" (space science and mathematics) in two two-period blocks every day, with three remaining periods for electives. Some students disliked the isolation, but it was believed to be the key to improved test scores.

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The October issue of *Smoke Signals* reported that faculty and staff had greeted students, parents and friends at an Open House in September.

The Math Club held its first meeting of the year, the language clubs (French, German and Spanish) would convene later in October, the Science Club had two projects under way, and the Tooters Club was hard at work as usual raising money to support the music department. In response to student requests, a Gospel Choir was organized.

At a December SAC meeting, Dr. Reefer reported on school activities, noting that the school had been presented with a Rotary Award for Excellence, and there had been a science "lock-in" for interested ninth graders.

The football glory of two decades earlier was long forgotten. A January 24, 1993 issue of the *Kansas City Star* quoted the Southwest High School football coach, Jeff Gourley:

"I found the state championship football trophy we won in 1972 hidden away in a box of junk in a storage room," Gourley said. "Nobody could've known where it was. That's sad."

A February 1993 issue of *Wednesday Magazine*, featuring principal Tom Reefer, noted that the AFS program at Southwest "chugs along" in a school now 90 percent minority despite a court-ordered goal of 60-40 minority/non-minority.

The Southwest AFS chapter leaders, Barbara Miles Kaufman ('41), Muriel Oppenheimer Levinson ('39), Edris Crain, Virginia Buckner, Jean Gross, Rosemary Peterson, and Susan and John Still, lent their skills to other high schools and provided leadership for the area AFS organization. In addition to students from Southwest, they enabled students from Lincoln, Central, Paseo, Southeast, St. Teresa's and Rockhurst to study abroad and host foreign students at their schools.

A March 1993 SAC meeting was attended by six parents and three faculty members. Dr. Reefer reported that at the St. Patrick's Brookside Parade on Saturday, March 6, he and five students had ridden in a convertible furnished by Major Cadillac, that there had been signs identifying honor students, and the Southwest band and JROTC units had received a warm and enthusiastic reception.

Similar to other District schools, Southwest had a number of special education students, both L.D. (learning disability) and B.D. (behavioral disability). Forty of these were in separate classrooms. In April there were allegations of rape of a mentally retarded student at Southwest by another special education student. Media treatment was repetitive and extensive, and like the earlier shooting incident this event left a lasting, injurious impression.

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Alumni and faculty continued to provide aid and comfort. The Southwest High School Foundation, its contributors and supporters, epitomized the loyalty of the school's graduates. It was painful for them to watch Southwest's struggles, and many were generous with time and resources in a valiant effort to sustain the school.

The Foundation in June gave its first Distinguished Teacher Award, \$500, to the mathematics department chair, Barbara Katz, Southwest class of '64 and a teacher at her alma mater for 15 years. Katz was selected by the Foundation's directors from six highly qualified candidates nominated by faculty members. The second annual Teachers Scholarship Award of \$1000 went to a graduating senior.

The class of '32 bought orange and black baseball uniforms for Southwest players and attended the team's games. Tom Reefer's father, James Reefer, was a member of the class.

The 1993 *Sachem* was a skeleton publication — a dedication page, an ROTC section, pictures of the faculty and the seniors, and a section combining all of the underclass pictures. The yearbook's title: "To be ... or not to be."

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Attending their 50th reunion were 126 members of the Southwest class of '43, including actress Betty Lynn. She still remembered her Redskin Revels performance:

"Betty Hays and I on a shaky scaffold in a bird's nest, dressed as bluebirds, singing 'Just a Love Nest."

And all of them remembered the Snake Dance in 1939, their sophomore year ("the storming of Brookside").

Presentations by Foundation representatives resulted in 54 gifts by the class, totaling \$7,500.

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The Freshmen Studies Program appeared to have succeeded, with improved grades and test scores. In June, Tom Reefer pronounced the program a success and stated that it would be continued in the fall with a Sophomore Studies Program added.

Southwest's teachers were encouraged to employ Essential Schools fundamentals, including team teaching, with help from the Learning Exchange, a teacher training institution. The entire faculty signed a School Renewal Plan espousing Coalition principles.

1993-1994

Enrollment at Southwest was now in a steady slide ... 689 in September and 621 in January. To neighbors like Al Mauro, it was clear from symptoms at the school that "the patient was dying."

A shortage of funds limited the *Trail* to one issue every three months in the 1993-94 school year. The orchestra was reduced in size to seven.

The football team in the fall of 1993 was "short on players but long on heart" — there had been some doubt that a team could be fielded, but Coach Jeff Gourley and his assistants "beat the bushes" and managed to produce a team. The only winter sport at Southwest now was basketball.

The primary social events of the year were two Homecoming dances, for football and basketball.

Members of the Science Club participated in the Science Knowledge Bowl at Rockhurst College, and the Marching Band "swept away the competition" in the Interscholastic League, according to the *Sachem*.

Tom Reefer reported in the December 1993 issue of *Smoke Signals* that the new metal detection screening was working well, with students cooperating. "This phenomenon is not unique to Kansas City; schools across the nation, from suburbs, to small towns, to large cities are taking that extra step to protect young people."

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The Freshmen and Sophomore Studies Programs continued to explore "teaming and integrated thematic instruction" using as a model the work of the Coalition. There had been discussion of formally joining the Coalition, and money was budgeted to visit other Coalition school sites and gain better understanding of Coalition programs. Also, 16 teachers had volunteered to participate in training at the Learning Exchange.

However, many teachers still disagreed philosophically with the reforms. There was a widening gap between teaching styles; traditionalists lectured to their classes, whereas the advocates for change favored team teaching, with more "hands on," personal attention to individual students.

Tom Reefer advised in February 1994, that the faculty had begun training in cooperative learning and had written a second School Renewal Plan addressing possible Coalition membership.

The reformers favored Coalition membership while retaining the science/mathematics magnet theme.

Again, all of the faculty signed on to the Plan. However, many were not really committed, and when it began to appear that restructuring might actually occur, they made known their preference for the status quo.

An innovative "advisement" period was instituted, a non-structured time for addressing individual weaknesses, encouraging participation in clubs and activities, and establishing personal relationships between teacher and student. Many of the faculty objected that the period was a waste of time.

Opposition to the advisement period led to its rejection at a faculty meeting. This disappointed Coalition supporters.

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In February 1994, a CBS “60 Minutes” segment was devoted to the Kansas City desegregation plan — it was largely critical.

Southwest was asked not to participate in the St. Patrick’s Brookside Parade. There was a major protest from parents, teachers and administrators at this perceived insult.

Meanwhile, in the District as a whole, support for a return to neighborhood schools was strong and growing. A *Star* poll indicated that 47% of non-black parents wanted neighborhood schools and 39% of the District’s black parents supported the idea. *Kansas City Star*, May 11, 1994.

Elaine Kagan, a 1960 Southwest graduate whose new novel “The Girls” (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1994) was Kansas City-based, visited her alma mater. English teachers brought their classes to the library to hear her entertaining, informative remarks.

At the Awards Assembly in May 1994, Southwest High School Foundation president William Delay presented \$1,000 and the second Distinguished Teacher Award plaque to Vickie Shelton, chairman of the Social Studies Department, and a silver bowl and \$500 to Ann McCoy, chairman of the Science Department, for outstanding tutorial performance. The third annual Teachers’ Scholarship went to senior James Littlefield, who was voted “Most Likely to Succeed” by his classmates and would attend Washington University in St. Louis.

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The 1994 *Sachem* was larger than the previous year’s annual, and the underclasses were grouped separately: pictured were 77 freshmen, 65 sophomores, and 87 juniors. The theme was a more optimistic: “On top of the World.”

Inter-Society Literary Contests were a thing of the past, and it had been many years since the *Sachem* showcased winning entries. However, the *Sachem* published an eloquent poem by sophomore Rebecca Frazier, “Invisible Chains”:

*“You see these people dealing drugs and in gangs
I see them in invisible chains
You see the families of the victims who have been slain
I see the ones who did it in invisible chains
The invisible chains aren’t silver or long
I look at them and it reminds me of the wrong
The invisible chains have got us all
Not just the “bad guys” or the people in law
We must look for these chains then find the key
Education is one part that you need
The chains have tied you down
You’ll tolerate anything now
You’ll tolerate drug dealing
You’ll tolerate black on black crime
You tolerate drive-bys
You tolerate young people joining gangs
Still wearing those invisible chains
Don’t you feel them
They are pulling our race
Slowly
Slowly
Down the drain”*

Rebecca had an outstanding record at Southwest and following graduation went on to St. Louis University.

* * * * *

Southwest had its largest graduating class for several years, 189, and Tom Reefer was upbeat. In June 1994, he celebrated a successful year for the Freshmen and Sophomore Studies Programs, both of which would continue in the fall, and planned training programs for faculty.

The class of 1944 held its 50th reunion and the class of '54 its 40th, and their members subsequently contributed \$3800 and \$4400 respectively to the Foundation.

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The Kansas City School District approved an enrichment summer school program at Southwest. The eight-week session, called Mindworks, was implemented by Superintendent Walter Marks and publicized with Southwest Foundation funds. The Learning Exchange held its summer institute at Southwest to observe the program.

Mindworks was based upon principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools, mutually agreed upon by students, teachers and parents. There was an honor system, with no school bells and no disciplinary problems. Socratic-style teaching was conducted in the library, with more freedom and interaction between students and teachers.

Teachers spent hours after classes preparing for the next day's sessions. And there was genuine collegiality among them.

The five Mindworks faculty members were excited with the results, obtained with a student body that included special education students as well as youngsters from outside the District. Computer resource teacher Chuck Naudet would later comment that he had benefitted professionally from the experience. (Resource teachers, a feature of the desegregation plan, helped faculty with magnet theme courses, including training in computer use.)

Because of the success of Mindworks, hopes were high among Essential Schools proponents for the next school year.

1994-1995

In a July letter, Tom Reefer advised his staff of faculty cuts he had been compelled to make, to conform with the reduced enrollment projected for the 1994-95 school year: 522 regular education students and 58 special education students. He commented:

"We've got a big job ahead of us in terms of healing and deciding that we will be driven this year by VALUES and not by emotions."

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September enrollment of regular education students was actually 603 ... over the Labor Day weekend, a large number of additional pupils were assigned to Southwest. These were "contingency kids," who could not be accommodated at the schools of their choice, or whose parents enrolled them belatedly. Enrollment after the first month was even greater.

In a November 6 Principal's Letter to the faculty, Tom Reefer declared that Mindworks would be back the following summer, "stronger than ever." Dr. Reefer also noted that Southwest's achievement "usually runs second or third in the district — with Lincoln, of course, holding first place — but this

achievement was far below national norms.” And another Principal’s Letter that same month asked:

“Does the pre-collegiate American high school exist for all? If it does, then should we let kids leave it miserably unprepared? Should we change the school to make sure all kids leave far better prepared? How can we do that?”

At a November SAC meeting, Tom Reefer was joined by a community representative and two parents. Dr. Reefer announced that an “Ambassadors Program” was to be initiated ... boys representing Southwest at civic events, wearing clothes provided by Brooks Brothers.

Later, several parents volunteered their services for school functions ... assistance to faculty sponsors, donation of treats, and chaperoning social events.

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Resistance to the Coalition of Essential Schools programs again cropped up among the faculty. Traditional teachers expressed their displeasure to the District’s Director of High Schools. District administrators concluded that the Essential Schools classes could only succeed if they were conducted by trained, committed teachers. Tom Reefer was directed to inform the faculty that all teaching positions at Southwest would be vacated and only those interested in working at a Coalition School need reapply.

Southwest teachers opposed the vacating/reapplying plan, and it was scrapped. And because of the premise that the plan was necessary for the Essential Schools project to succeed at Southwest, the entire movement came to an end.

Tom Reefer would later recall: “Even though we had very few teachers not willing to cooperate, this very small number can take a reform effort and bludgeon it to death.” *Pitch Weekly*, November 13-19, 1997

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For the second semester, only 538 students were enrolled. However, the freshmen were showing up for class; ninth grade attendance for the year was 79.8%, the best for many years.

The *Smoke Signals* issue for January-February 1995 reported that three Southwest students were among area winners of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Writing Contest sponsored by Anheuser-Busch Companies: the 11th grade and overall high school winner, the 10th grade winner, and the 10th grade runner-up. Eight Southwest students had been nominated by the counseling department for the Missouri Scholars Program. And ten former Southwest athletes were now playing college basketball.

At the March 1995 SAC meeting, it was reported that the Southwest band and JROTC units had been reinstated in the Brookside St. Patrick’s Day Parade ... the 1995 event was well organized and very well attended.

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Tom Reefer’s contract was not renewed for the next school year. The students were sad, and the Southwest Foundation proposed to reward Dr. Reefer for his three-year effort as principal. Reefer asked instead that the Foundation underwrite a college tour, luncheon and reception for Honor Roll students and their parents. This was done.

The *Southwest Smoke Signals* May-June issue had a final message from Tom Reefer. Although it noted that Southwest was not to be a Coalition school, the message was constructive with no signs of ill will or recrimination, and concluded with Reefer’s best wishes.

The *Kansas City Star* described the graduation ceremony that year as chaotic ... "where one audience member was handcuffed after being accused of pushing a police officer. Another officer called the scene a madhouse."

One of the 122 graduates that spring was Alex Silvius, a white member of the class who had come to school by taxi from the suburbs. He praised his Southwest education — AP calculus, AP physics, AP chemistry, and other advanced placement classes. He went on to the University of Missouri—Rolla, and a career in scientific research. *Pitch Weekly, supra.*

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Foundation efforts to encourage contributions by classes having reunions in 1995 were underway when it became known that the very survival of Southwest was in jeopardy, and fund raising efforts were discontinued. Funds generated by the 55th reunion of the class of 1940 were returned.

In the June 6, 1995 issue of the *Kansas City Star*, editorial writer E. Thomas McClanahan, the parent of a child in a Kansas City parochial school, wrote that "while failing to significantly raise test scores and failing to meaningfully desegregate Kansas City's schools, the federal court has discounted something vitally important to many parents, namely the desire to live in neighborhoods where the schools serve as the center of community life."

McClanahan further observed:

"There are no easy answers to the dilemmas of race and education, but up to now the court's decade long experiment has shown little regard to how schools mesh with neighborhood and family. This is grudgingly acknowledged in the proposed settlement of the desegregation case, which — if approved by the federal court — calls for the initial creation of three modified neighborhood schools based on walk zones."

1995-1996

The Southwest principal in the fall of 1995 was Carmel Sheppard, the school's tenth principal since 1981. There were 561 students enrolled, a number that fell to 515 in January.

When the new principal arrived, she found that all of the previous administrators and some of the faculty had been transferred. Gone were sponsors of favorite activities, and there were no class officers, no after-school clubs, and no Student Council.

Sheppard imposed stricter discipline; students were not allowed to wander the halls.

Sensationalist reporting by the media was a problem — reporters and newscasters cited and quoted the few, colorful, publicity seekers and delinquents among the student body rather than the vast majority of students quietly going about the business of learning.

During the first semester there were some small arson fires at Southwest, and some students harassed firemen responding to the alarms. TV coverage was extensive and critical of student behavior and the failure of faculty and security personnel to intervene. The *Kansas City Star* reported that Principal Carmel Sheppard and the students were distressed by the stories and the resulting negative perception of the public. Sheppard remarked that the fires were not intended to burn down the building, but rather to attract media attention, and she had never before worked in a district subjected to so much scrutiny.

Students called a news conference to counter the bad press resulting from the confrontations with the firemen. They criticized the media for exaggerating, apologized for the misbehavior of the few, and

recounted the good things to be found at Southwest.

There followed a barrage of letters to the editors of local publications. One critic referred to Southwest as “nothing more than a minimum security prison.” This outraged Kay Waldo Barnes, a neighbor whose two children were graduates of the school. She responded that perhaps more of those living in the neighborhood around Southwest needed to become part of the solution by supporting the faculty and students.

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A column by Lewis W. Diuguid in the *Star* commented on the problems at Southwest, a school that had a peak of about 2470 students in the early '60's compared with 560 students currently. He concluded: “District officials are talking about closing schools to save money, and Southwest looks like a prime candidate.”

Diuguid stated that the Southwest community wouldn't cry over a school closure that would rid the mostly white community of “outsiders.”

The “problems” were not limited to Southwest, or even to the Kansas City School District. Between 1988 (the year of the California report on student misbehavior) and 1994, juvenile drug arrests escalated by 239 % in Johnson County, Kansas, where surveys showed that it was easy for teens to get alcohol and even easier to buy drugs.

At a small December 1995 SAC meeting, school board member John Still — a Southwest parent — reported that parental waivers, to permit promotion of failing students, were to be eliminated in the District.

Unruly behavior did not end. A *Star* article later noted that from May 1995 to May 1996, firefighters had responded to ten fires, four smoke bombs, and six false alarms at the school. (January 31, 1997).

The Southwest graduation in May 1996, was at the Kansas City Music Hall because the school auditorium lacked air conditioning and adequate parking. The speaker was pro football star Mike Jones.

One of the 75 graduates, black senior Chris Morris, was offered a Naval Academy appointment. A good student, he had not opted to go to Southwest at all: it “wasn't even on my list ... but Southwest was the only place I could go.” In a *Pitch Weekly* interview, he said that money spent on busing would have been better spent on deserving teachers. (November 13-19, 1997).

1996-1997

On August 1, 1996, Henry Williams became the Superintendent of Schools, the eleventh since Robert R. Wheeler took office in March 1977. The Kansas City experience was not unique. The *Wall Street Journal* has observed: “In most districts, the solution to troubled schools still is to fire the superintendent; the average term of a superintendent now is only 2.7 years, says the Education Commission of the States.” (June 7, 1999).

William Elliott succeeded Carmel Sheppard as Southwest's principal.

Enrollment for the 1996-1997 school year at Southwest was listed at 486 in September, and dropped to 416 in January.

Enrollment figures overstated the number of students in the classroom. Actual attendance at

Southwest had steadily decreased during the '90s, and for the 1996-1997 school year was down to 65.7% or about 275 students the second semester. A given class might have 20 to 30 students, on paper, but far fewer attended regularly. Buses that could accommodate 45 passengers often had only a few riders.

The percent of students dropping out of Southwest increased year by year in the '90s, from 5.2% in 1991-1992 to 19.6% in 1996-1997

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George MacCurdy (son of the former Southwest teacher), Robert Fountain and George Crawford, directors of the Southwest Foundation, assisted two math teachers in a year-long after-school teaching project in math and SAT preparation during 1996-1997. This experience strengthened the belief of Foundation leadership that the Southwest faculty still included many fine teachers who were both qualified and dedicated, and students who wanted to learn.

A 1996 Foundation appraisal of Southwest noted that significant positive aspects of the school remained:

Through the process of interviewing nominees for annual awards, directors of the Foundation were convinced that Southwest still had a fine teaching faculty with a level of professional competence and dedication that rivaled the great faculty of earlier times. The math department had established a position of preeminence in the Kansas City School District and the school had graduated more seniors in recent years than any other high school in the District, with the exception of the Lincoln Academy.

The student body contained many fine young people who were seriously interested in learning and qualifying themselves for future success, as well as in the survival and success of Southwest High School. This belief had been substantiated by attendance of Foundation directors at student assemblies and honor role functions.

The physical maintenance and appearance of the school was excellent — floors clean and waxed, no indications of graffiti or vandalism, numerous glassed-in show cases filled with materials and trophies regarding student activities and accomplishments.

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On the day Southwest High School opened in 1925, the Country Club Congregational Church sat directly across Wornall Road, and it was still there in the fall of 1996. In the intervening 70 years, it had hosted school events and organizations, and benefitted Southwest in many other ways. An October 1996 issue of the *Kansas City Star* reported the opening of a day care center at the church. It stated "For years, Southwest High School students have had an uneasy relationship with the surrounding neighborhood at 65th and Wornall Road." But this year, the church was opening a day care center for Southwest's teen mothers and would provide licensed day care for their children. The article noted that Southwest had about 35 teen parents each year. The center had to be discontinued, however, because the young mothers were prohibited from bringing their children with them on the school buses.

Extracurricular activities were non-existent except for sports; bus schedules interfered with after-school events.

The first two football games were canceled because there were not enough players, but later Southwest was able to field a team.

Chuck Naudet's computer program was successful, with interested students and good equipment.

However, there were not many students and a brand new computer lab was only used once or twice.

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In March 1997, Judge Clark ruled that the State of Missouri would not be required to make desegregation payments to the Kansas City School District after 1999. The massive effort was to be ended.

An article in the *Star* by Mark J. Bredemeier, newspaper columnist and former General Counsel of Landmark Legal Foundation, commented on the unrealistic expectations that had been imposed on the federal judiciary:

“As for Russell Clark and his legacy in Kansas City, I think it is best summed up by a friend of mine who once compared the Springfield judge to the overburdened ‘Wizard of Oz.’ When the wizard’s mortality was finally discovered by Dorothy and company, she rebuked him for being ‘a very bad man.’

“ ‘Oh no, my dear,’ he replied sadly. ‘I’m a very good man. I’m just a very bad wizard.’

“Russell Clark is a good man. And, examining his caseload in its entirety, he has been a pretty good judge. But when asked to wave his judicial wand and cure a complex urban school district of a plethora of educational, economic and societal woes, he was indeed a bad wizard.”

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The March 26 , 1997 issue of *Wednesday Magazine* reported that Mike Jones, now a St.Louis Rams player, had scheduled a three-day free summer camp at Southwest for boys and girls, including one special session for the physically and mentally challenged. The Michael Jones Foundation also provides college scholarship funds for high school students in Kansas City and St. Louis.

The sports section of the *Kansas City Star* later (December 20, 1999) reported that Mike, now an eight-year NFL veteran, had tied a team record when he scored his third touchdown of the season against the New York Giants:

“All of Jones’ touchdowns have come in the last three games. Jones, who played at Kansas city’s Southwest High School and Missouri, also converted on a 37-yard fumble return against Carolina on November 14 and a 44-yard interception return against San Francisco on November 21.”

Then, in January of 2000, Mike climaxed a great season by making the key tackle in the Super Bowl. On the last play of the game, he made a tackle heard ’round the world — stopping a Tennessee Titan on the one-foot line and saving the game for the Rams. The following day *Kansas City Star* reporter Jason Whitlock began his column:

“When your Saint Louis friends call you this week bragging about their Super Bowl champion Rams, remind them that a Kansas City kid won the game for them.

“Tell them about Mike Jones.

“Tell them about the linebacker who learned to be tough playing both ways at Southwest High ... Mike Jones won the Super Bowl.”

CHAPTER TEN

Euthanasia

1997-1998

AUGUST 7, 1997, THE KANSAS CITY SCHOOL BOARD voted to close Southwest High School at the end of the 1997-98 school year.

After a lingering illness, the patient was to be put to death.

School board member Lance Loewenstein said that the decision to close Southwest was made “with sensitivity to the district’s racial make-up”:

“This is a majority black school district. And sometimes that is hard for white people to accept. If you’re closing a high school, you’re not going to close one that the majority of the black community wants to stay open, because this is a democracy.

“They (the black community) care about Southwest ... but it is not as important to them as it might be to some in the white community.” Jewish Chronicle, July 18, 1997.

Another member of the school board, Patricia Kurtz, noted that a reason offered for closing Southwest was lack of neighborhood support. However, she criticized the result:

“We chose to close buildings with enviable education spaces, lower maintenance costs and with more renovation already accomplished and paid for while we keep open some that will cost millions of dollars to repair and still be relatively substandard when compared with those slated to close.” Ingram’s Magazine, September 1997.

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September enrollment the final year was 465 pupils, of whom almost half were assigned to Southwest after the first month. Enrollment in January was 411, and attendance for the year was 64.1%. In a district that was 19.2% white, Southwest was 5.4% white.

Many of the pupils were assigned to Southwest from the criminal justice system. In a district where high school out-of-school suspensions of one day or more were 24.7%, the figure at Southwest was 48%. (The figure did not include in-school suspensions.)

There were also the usual disappointed students who had not chosen the science/math theme but were sent to Southwest when denied their magnet school preference. And Southwest continued to draw its share of disabled students.

Parental involvement was discouraging. At a parent-teacher conference, the only parent to appear at Barbara Katz’ math classroom was the school custodian, whom she saw daily anyway.

Bob Fountain again spent time at Southwest as a volunteer tutoring ninth grade math students. He compared his own school years in the '40s with his experience during Southwest's final year:

"The difference between then and now is beyond my ability to express. Our time at Southwest seems like something from a different world or maybe even a different galaxy."

Despite the handicaps, learning went on, thanks to dedicated teachers and persevering youngsters. Teacher attendance exceeded 95%, about the average for District high schools. Although the percent of students failing two courses in the second semester was 21%, this was below the District average of 23% and the best showing for many years except for the previous year's 20.6%.

Upon learning that they could not recover the balance in the Southwest Teachers School Fund, the teachers gave the rest of the money to deserving students and closed out the account.

As the school year drew to a close, students watched the physical dismemberment of Southwest. Telephones and television equipment were removed from classrooms, and band instruments — many of them supplied by the Tooters Club — were carted off.

Not surprisingly, the percent of students who dropped out of Southwest the final year was 24.3%, compared to an average of 8.2% in the District's high schools.

The Commencement program listed 84 candidates for graduation; 78 received diplomas. The exercises were held in the Kansas City Music Hall on May 18. The speaker, from the class of 1983, drew little attention from a noisy crowd.

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The Southwest class of 1948 held their 50th reunion in June. The prevailing sentiment: "Whoever thought we would outlive the school?"

Wyatt Townley (Barbara Baker, Class of '72) wrote nostalgically of Southwest's demise in her poem "Southwest High, 1925-1998." *Kansas City Star*, September 21, 1998. She remembered cinders from the track in her knee and bleacher splinters in her legs and reminisced: "One way or another the school found its way into us."

Southwest alumni find it difficult today to drive by the abandoned building at 65th and Wornall and its ghosts of better days.

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In 1999, *LIFE Magazine* revisited once comparable New Trier High School in suburban Winnetka, Illinois, and found that there "the clothes had changed but not the tradition of excellence." The Chicago suburbs that support the school are described as "fabulously wealthy." Most of the teachers have advanced degrees, the dropout rate is .3 percent, and almost all graduates go to college. And parents are "active liaisons" between students and administration, and attend school forums on parenting. However, *LIFE* also concludes that while New Trier is a good school, it is not a perfect school ... "New Trier's African American enrollment is less than 1 percent, and one can question whether the school is adequately exposing its students to America's diversity."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Post Mortem

PITCH WEEKLY'S November 13-19, 1997 article, entitled "Southwest, a School the Community Stopped Caring About," was written by Miriam Simon and Bruce Rodgers. Miriam Simon's son, Scott Simon of Sha Na Na fame, is a 1966 graduate of Southwest. The article stated:

"At one time Southwest High School was the best, the brightest and whitest high school in the Kansas City, Mo. School District. Being a Southwest graduate meant doors could open for success later in life."

Pitch noted that "court-ordered desegregation brought a change in the educational approach, a change to the student body and a change in the way the community viewed its high school." And it described Southwest as "a classic American symbol of failed school integration."

Alison Morantz of the Harvard Project on School Desegregation, in her treatise *MONEY, CHOICE AND EQUITY IN KANSAS CITY — Major Investments with Modest Returns*, quotes Judge Clark from a 1992 interview as follows:

"Based upon hindsight it would have been much easier to integrate the Kansas City schools if I had kept them (the suburban districts) in ... So it would not have been necessary to come up with a lot of these plans, and with a lot of the capital improvements ... I could have ordered some of the Kansas City school children transferred to the suburban districts and vice versa ... the very minute I let those suburban districts out, I created a very severe problem for the court and for myself, really, in trying to come up with a remedial plan to integrate the Kansas City Missouri School District." (page 9)

The concluding paragraph of the Morantz article begins:

"The irony of the comprehensive voluntary magnet remedy is that although it has been used by the Courts to fulfill Brown's desegregation mandate, it may in fact help perpetuate the very dual education system which Brown sought to eradicate. Magnets, when used alone, are simply not powerful enough to overcome economic and demographic trends which have increased the racial isolation of the inner city. In this context, the most promising function of magnets is not their effectiveness as a desegregative tool, but their potential for enhancing educational quality for disadvantaged minority youth."

The Kansas City School District settled the desegregation lawsuit, reducing magnet programs in favor of neighborhood schools and cutting spending by tens of millions of dollars.

Twenty years earlier, George Clay, Southwest '28, had predicted: "I think we'll live through this, and we'll move back to neighborhood schools, or find substitutes for them." *The Kansas City Town Squire*, June 1976.

According to the *Kansas City Star* (August 13, 1998), Edward Newsome, the president of the School Board at the time “frequently cited the district’s need to focus less on integration and more on education of its black students.”

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An education consultant found that, “contrary to the notion on which the whole desegregation plan was founded — that going to school with middle-class whites would increase blacks’ achievement — the Kansas City experiment showed that ‘integration has no effect.’ ” (*Policy Analysis*, supra, page 18).

A September 6, 1998 editorial by the Editorial Page editor of the *Kansas City Star* observed:

“Well-intentioned social planners decided that African-American children could not learn unless they were side by side with white students. Now, in a backlash, some African-Americans have concluded that no education is worthwhile unless it focuses on Afro-centric themes.”

The *Star* also referred to the pastor of a Kansas City church, the Reverend David Martin, as “among those who see the partial return of neighborhood schools as a way to involve the community with the schools and to reintroduce neighbors.”

When the 1998-1999 school year got underway the first of September, the *Kansas City Star* began its report of the event: “The Kansas City School District returns to the past today.” It noted that a majority of the District’s students would attend school close to their homes. “Many now will walk to schools in their neighborhoods.” And District officials would spend less money trying to integrate classrooms and more trying to improve academic performance. One budget cut was the \$30 million spent annually on transportation.

According to the *Star* reporters:

“Kansas City is one of several large urban districts, including Cleveland, Denver and Oklahoma City, that have scaled back busing in favor of neighborhood schools. Boston, Seattle and numerous other districts are considering similar changes.

“Ultimately, officials hope the change will allow the Kansas City schools to re-establish rapport with communities that may have felt abandoned by the magnet system or alienated by the district.

“Officials also hope the return to neighborhood schools improves the district’s chronically low parent participation by making it easier to attend more school events.”

The massive plan to achieve both integration and a quality education at the expense of the neighborhood school system was a failure in Kansas City. Neither goal was accomplished:

“Despite \$2 billion spent, the district is neither more integrated nor is it educating students better, at least according to standardized test scores.” Jewish Chronicle, July 18, 1997.

In the process of pursuing the magnet plan, the fabric of many of the city’s neighborhoods was torn apart. If the Kansas City metropolitan area has a serious problem with “sprawl,” as city planners tell us, the failed desegregation experiment was a major contributor.

Southwest High School was one of the casualties.

POSTSCRIPT

There has been considerable community interest in restoring the Southwest High School campus to life.

Lance Loewenstein suggested one alternative for consideration:

“Southwest is in a part of town which, because of economic status and educational philosophy, is a perfect demographic for a private school. There are a lot of high school-aged kids who live there who are going to private schools.”

—*Jewish Chronicle, supra*

In the summer of 1998, St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church offered to lease or purchase the Southwest High School campus, for the purpose of establishing an independent Episcopal coeducational, college preparatory school for grades 9-12. Nothing came of that overture.

Another alternative was offered by Missouri’s new charter school legislation. School Board member Sandy Aguirre Mayer, Southwest ’70, is a proponent of charter schools in the Kansas City, Missouri School District.

A flyer circulated in February 1999 advertised a Southwest Charter School: “A public school in the Brookside area serving grades 6-9 and scheduled to start September 1999. Additional grades will be added in subsequent years.” Among the features: “Intense participation of the parents, faculty, students and community members.”

Southwest Charter School, sponsored by Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg, was approved by the Missouri Board of Education. An experienced principal was hired and twelve teachers employed to teach math, science, English, social studies, Spanish, art, music, special education and other subjects. The school was awarded an \$80,000 federal grant to assist in acquiring computers and funding staff development.

Southwest Charter School opened in September 1999 for grades six and seven at The Temple Congregation B’Nai Jehudah. The following year it leased space in the high school building at 65th and Wornall for a larger student body, grades six through nine.

Southwest Charter School is financed by the same per-pupil funds as other public schools in the Kansas City School District. It cannot charge tuition, and must observe federal anti-discrimination policies that apply to all public schools. About four out of every ten of the school’s students are white.

The new “Southwest” is held contractually accountable for measurable student achievement and sound fiscal management. In exchange there is a waiver of traditional school rules and regulations. The Southwest Charter School teachers, parents and students have set the goal of becoming the best school in the state.

Former school board member Bill DeFoor believes that the future is promising:

“The ‘community’ that was Southwest is gone forever ... ‘It’ can never be recaptured. Norman Rockwell is simply of another era. But because of the neighborhood, a new Southwest community could once again achieve greatness. The closeness, the demographics, yes, even the diversity is here, capable of showing the world a new urban Southwest.”

On October 21, 2000, about 1500 alumni and guests attended an all-class reunion. Seventy-five years had passed since Southwest High School first opened its doors. The master of ceremonies was Elliott Threatt, Southwest '80, and the proceedings were enlivened by Southwest Charter School cheerleaders. The program featured the introduction of seven inductees to the Southwest Hall of Fame. The latter included Nobel Prize winner Richard Smalley, who traveled from Houston's Rice University to receive the award, and Michael Anthony Jones, the St. Louis Rams star linebacker who was in town for a Chiefs' game the following day. Henry W. Bloch and Edward T. Matheny, Jr. were other inductees present for the ceremony. Calvin Trillin, Chris Cooper and Richard A. Bloch were unable to attend, but were represented by family members.

James Lloyd, president of Southwest Charter, told a *Kansas City Star* reporter:

“They came to celebrate a new beginning.”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer is grateful to all who supplied anecdotes, fond memories and treasured pictures for this book. These collaborators are far too numerous to mention, but hopefully the result is worthy of their valued contributions.

Mary Breed Brink deserves special mention, not only because of her enthusiasm for the project and the wealth of information that she supplied, but also because of her staunch loyalty to Southwest High School, its faculty and its students, over a period of many years.

John Duncan, archivist for the Kansas City School District, was a wonderful resource, as were the courteous, patient staff of the Special Collections section of the downtown public library's Missouri Valley Room. The research department of the Kansas City School District was also most helpful.

Interviews with W. Lawrence Cannon and Thomas Kipp offered a perspective that only former principals could furnish.

Finally, this book would not have been possible without the suggestions and support of Tom Leathers, publisher and loyal Southwest alumnus.

WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT THIS BOOK

My sister Linda forwarded to me a signed and inscribed copy of your wonderful book, *The Rise and Fall of Excellence at Southwest High School*. Thank you. Of course, in reading it, and remembering the world you described, I began to cry, or should I say weep! I think you are helping all of us grieve the loss of a wonderful school and the memory of very precious, joyful, formative days in a beloved community.

— Sallie Manley, La Mesa, California

Please accept my praise and gratitude for your extraordinary work, *The Rise and Fall of Excellence*. As a sentimental graduate of Southwest High School (1960) and as a long-time principal at a private school, I was moved by the wonderful memories that the book invokes, as well as deeply saddened, not only by the fact of the closure of Southwest, but by the judicial and social factors that brought about its demise.

— Michael C. Brown, Head of Upper School
The Wheeler School, Providence, Rhode Island

As a Southwest graduate of 1933, and one who has seen little of Kansas City since graduation, I always wondered what ill wind could so effectively degrade that marvelous school. Now I know. And I realize that despite political and/or economic variances, the genuine quality of Southwest's faculty and administration infused a permanent support to us who were lucky to pass through those halls.

— Robert R. Anschutz, M.D., Alton, Illinois

Ed's story of Southwest High School is a sad tale. "Rest in Peace" is a fitting obituary. I had wondered what had happened across the years to humble that proud institution. But on reflection, now, I am not sure I really wanted to know.

The great thing about Ed's book is that it will cause each reader to reach back into their own personal experiences.

— Frank McMullen, Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired), Omaha, Nebraska

Just a note to say how much I am enjoying your finely etched portrait of our beloved alma mater, *The Rise and Fall of Excellence: The Story of Southwest High School*. It brings back so many blessed memories; some names I recall, others I do not, some details I knew, some I did not. It's simply a great read.

Southwest High School was a class place. People took pride in themselves and each other and were the first to congratulate a job well done. What comes through on each page before the last section of your book, Mr. Matheny, is the vital sense of community that pervaded the school and the neighborhood. People — students, faculty and parents — cared; it's as simple as that! Like you, I am profoundly grateful for my experiences at Southwest and I find it hard to believe that it is gone. It's just heartbreaking.

Thank you so much for an absolutely delightful book. All the best.

— Robert E. Coleberd, Mission Hills, California

It was a great and very pleasant surprise to receive from my brother-in-law, Ray Rieling, a copy — a warmly inscribed copy, no less — of your timely history of Southwest High School. You had a wonderful idea, and the many graduates of Southwest over the years are much indebted to you for all the hard work and devotion it must have taken to carry it out. Bob Hunt, Walter Bublitz, my brother Norman and I have kept one another more or less informed of the decline of our beloved high school over the years, so it is especially gratifying to have it all summarized and published in accessible form.

— Professor Eldon H. Newcomb, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin

I was riveted by it — just couldn't put it down — and yet know I need to re-read it more than once — especially the sad, disturbing final chapters.

My political leanings certainly put me on the side of racially integrated public schools but to learn, in your magnificently impartial documented book how very badly this worked at Southwest High School was a real eye opener. Sad, sad, sad.

— Melvin Goldblatt, Petaluma, California

The story of Southwest's demise, it seems to me, is really a much larger story — the story of the collapse of public education in urban America. Your book adds a great deal to the literature about that larger story. I'm only sorry that *The Rise and Fall of Excellence* isn't more widely available. I know that wasn't your purpose — obviously the book as it's written is aimed at the audience of Southwest alums — but so much fine research went into the book (especially in its final chapters) that it seems a shame that a wider audience won't get to see it. The more I read and learn about this story, the clearer it seems to me that Southwest really *was* an emblem of something, a symbol of both the potential greatness and the terrible inequities in American public education.

— Gerald D. Shapiro, Professor of English, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska

Rise and Fall has been my book of enjoyment, revelation and sentimental flashbacks ... thanks so much!

— James A. Stewart III, Kansas City, Missouri

My brother Warren sent me a copy of your wonderful memoir, *The Rise and Fall of Excellence*. I read it with great joy and sadness. Joy, for all the happy memories, sadness because of its demise.

— Marietta Hewitt Hansen, Houston, Texas

I read with great interest the inscribed copy of your book on Southwest High which Russ sent me. You have done an outstanding job, and the book brings back many memories.

— Charles B. Blackmar, Retired Chief Justice, Missouri Supreme Court, Jefferson City, Missouri

I have been reading and enjoying immensely the book *The Rise and Fall of Excellence* by Edward T. Matheny, Jr. There are a good number of Southwest graduates who now live in California, and we all remember our wonderful years so long ago. I would like to order three more books to give to my friends out here.

— Virginia Dew Geer, Carmichael, California

This book represents a tremendous amount of work on your part. We have appreciated it from beginning to end.

— Marjorie Lovelace, Eldridge H. Lovelace, St. Louis, Missouri

Thanks for a great and honest book.

— Walter Bublitz, Ph.D., McMinnville, Oregon

Heartiest congratulations on your preparation of *The Rise and Fall of Excellence* which I have just completed reading with both nostalgic joy and abject sadness.

— Robert E. Carl, Dallas, Texas

I realize it has been a long time since you kindly sent me a copy of your excellent treatise on the story of Southwest High School; and I want to take this opportunity to thank you very much for your thoughtfulness, as well as for the thoroughness with which you have documented this remarkable saga!

I have so often, over the years, thought back on my days at Southwest, and thought how fortunate we were to have been in that place, at that time! The foundation I received there has helped me through all my future studies and efforts. I am sure that so many of the former students share in this belief.

— James R. McVay, M.D., Boca Raton, Illinois

I did think the Circuit Library (which we all use) should have your Southwest book. Very interesting and balanced coverage of the racial issues and litigation.

From my standpoint I was particularly pleased by what you recovered from the early '40s (actually 1938-42) which was awfully well done.

Congratulations on doing a much-needed job in a fine manner.

— Howard F. Sachs, Judge, United States District Court
Western District of Missouri, Kansas City, Missouri

The story of Southwest High School is one that needs telling because of the pursuit of excellence that took place there for many years. You are to be congratulated for having undertaken the task. There are many of us out here who are deeply grateful to you. Our families have certainly heard a lot from us about Southwest and the impact it had on our lives. Now they will know a great deal more about it than they could have ever learned from us as individuals. We can better share the experience with them. And who knows, perhaps the story may find its way to some concerned people who will, as a result of having read it, be motivated to initiate or encourage actions that may lead to a replication of Southwest in today's educational environment.

— *Joseph E. Hunt, Seattle, Washington*

I read your interesting book about Southwest and congratulate you!

After finishing it, I reached the conclusion that its demise was one of the greatest tragedies Kansas City has ever witnessed. The result of Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education and its effect on us was powerful, but I'm not at all sure it had to be, to the extent it has been here.

Your lawyerly treatment of the deterioration of high education standards was clear and sound. It is depressing to know that there were School Board members after the Brown decision who had vision and hope but were unable to overcome their peers.

Yours is a very provocative book, bound to cheer some and arouse old, dormant memories not too cheering in others. But yours is not an effort to be taken lightly. Thank you.

— *Kenneth Krakauer, Kansas City, Missouri*

First, Nan and I would like to compliment you for *The Rise and Fall of Excellence*. Hal and Barbara Kaufman, long-time neighbors and close friends, provided us with a copy. We have read it carefully. You do a superb job of conveying the life of the school in such a way that its rise and fall are real for readers. The messages are powerful. Sadly, evidence, reason and logical conclusions so often fail to govern human behavior. This book should help move people toward more enlightened responses to pressing current problems, or opportunities in John Gardner's language.

— *Richardson K. Noback, M.D., Las Vegas, Nevada*

Thanks so much for the history of Southwest High School — I read every word! Now it is wending its way to California to my brother, three years older than I am, who *did* have Miss Van Metre (I didn't) and who was one of Coach House's boys.

What a tale! And what research! A job splendidly done!

— *Rosemary Flanigan, CSJ, Kansas City, Missouri*

I've just come back from my 55th Southwest High School reunion where I got a copy of *The Rise and Fall of Excellence*. I finished it on the plane home and wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed remembering the familiarity of the excellence, and understanding the decisions and rulings that led to the fall.

— *Marilyn S. Newton, Washington, D.C.*

Remarks to Class of 1949 (September 26, 2009)

By Ed Matheny

Responses to the book in various forms have been very gratifying when I consider how seldom, if ever, I have contacted the editor of a book about his work. They have come from everywhere. There was an order from a bookstore in Taiwan, Formosa, and famed photographer David Douglas Duncan called me from the South of France.

Most have been nostalgic – often not confined to reminiscing about Southwest but recounting neighborhood or family memories as well.

One of the best began: "My sister Linda forwarded to me a signed and inscribed copy of your wonderful book, the Rise and Fall of Excellence. Thank you. Of course, in reading it, and remembering the world you described, I began to cry, or should I say weep. I thank you for helping all of us grieve the loss of a wonderful school and the memory of very precious, joyful, days in a beloved community." Sallie Manley

A "Thanks for the Memories" Amazon entry from a reviewer in Columbia, Maryland: "As a graduate of that grand high school Southwest, I was overwhelmed by the memories this book brought. I hope everyone who ever walked through the magnificent front pillars on Wornall Road will have a chance to read this book and remember".

There were, as you might imagine, a great many Southwest anecdotes. Jack Casford (San Francisco) wrote seven type written pages. His first story: "S.C. See was my Chemistry teacher. My partner and I were hopelessly inept at following the lab experiments. Our sink stopped up and the plumber's helper was ever present. We succeeded in completing only one assignment, the making of a Borax glass bead. Delirious at having accomplished this, I seized it and en route to taking it to Mr. See for credit, I dropped it and it smashed into bits. Mr. See looked at me

wearily and said, 'You know, a teacher, if he's lucky, only gets someone like you every 10 years or so.'

There were also some new stories – new to me. Dr. Russ Sheldon told me that his 1938 swimming team were city champs. There have been many swimming championships at Southwest since then, but theirs came before Southwest had a swimming pool.

There were a couple of corrections, both involving the same picture. Laura Hockaday's Kansas City Star story included a picture from the book of 1947 cheerleaders, whom I had identified as the first squad to include girls. It wasn't long before she heard from a 1946 cheerleader – a girl – who wrote that hers was an integrated squad, and sent proof. This was soon followed by another letter from a 1945 cheerleader, Grace Hovey Johnson in Los Gatos, California. Grace sent pictures proving that her squad were the pioneers.

There have been countless accomplishments by alumni, achieved or made known to me since the book was published. Hal White, class of '68 and an MIT Ph.D., wrote from Delmar, California, where he is a professor of Economics at the University of California, San Diego, that he, Calvin Trillin and Robert Altman were elected fellows of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences together in the 1999 Class, giving Southwest the rare distinction of being a public high school having three such fellows elected in the same year.

Robert Worcester, Class of '51, is our only Knight, having been knighted by Queen Elizabeth, II. And the late Richard Smalley, our only Nobel Prize winner so far as I know, was a junior at Southwest in 1959 and wrote this in his autobiography:

"While I had been a rather erratic student for many years, I suddenly became very serious with my education at the beginning of my junior year

in the fall of 1959. . . .This happened to be the year when I began to study chemistry for the first time. Luckily, these years were some of the best ever for the public school system in Kansas City, and my local high school, Southwest High, was one of the most effective anywhere in the US as measured by scores on standard achievement tests, and the fraction of students going on to college. . . .It was an exhilarating experience for me, and still ranks as the single most important turning point in my life, even from my current perspective of nearly four decades later. . .

Dr. Smalley's Southwest Hall of Fame Induction was in October, 2000 and he came to Kansas City for the occasion. Also present then was another inductee, Mike Jones, who in January of 2000 tackled a Tennessee player on the one foot line in the last play of the Super Bowl game, saving the game for the Rams.

A more recent inductee into the Southwest Hall of Fame was Ann Rubenstein Tisch, class of 1972. Ann was inducted into the Southwest Hall of Fame at a dinner on September 15, 2007. She is best known for founding the Young Women's Leadership School in East Harlem, listed by the New York Magazine as one of the top public high schools. These were her remarks, presented at that dinner:

"Southwest High School is a place, that in many ways, I never left and in many ways, it certainly never left me.

"I was in my 30's when I went to work at NBC Network News in New York...and my immediate supervisor, my boss then was Tom

Brokaw. As you know he was bigger than life and I was nervous, excited, and a bit intimidated to meet him face to face for the first time. I, the new kid on the block and fresh correspondent. He...the great looking, highly respected and adored anchorman. I walked into a conference room where he was and extended my hand to meet him. First thing he said was...'Rubenstein...where did you go to high school?' I remember being a bit taken aback because at that age...I was mostly asked where I went to college. I think I said...'High School? I went to Southwest High School.' He said...'I had a feeling that's where you went. I'm great friends with Calvin "Bud" Trillin, and he went there too'. It was a warm moment and one of many that I've had over the years where I was just so proud to say that I am a Southwest High School graduate.

"I enjoyed my four years in the big red brick building on Wornall. And now, when my young New York born and raised daughters are in Kansas City with me, I always drive by it...and they say...'We know mom...you told us...that's Southwest high school where you and all the Rubensteins went.'"

"My years at Southwest truly marked the end of an era...when entire families and generations grew up in the same neighborhoods and schools. I remember several of my teachers not comparing my work to Jane or John...my siblings...but to my parents! I had more than one teacher who taught Dad and Mom and who reminded me that I was not the history student my father had been!!

"So, I guess in many ways I'm still an Indian...imprinted with the orange and black and I often wish myself back to that place and time."

I have received many, many letters – too many to reply to. I only hope that the writers know how much I appreciated them. The reception the book has received has been overwhelming to me, and certainly justified my belief that the story of Southwest High School was a story that needed to be told. In 1969, Southwest produced the Broadway musical "Camelot" – the program cover is reproduced in my book, as well as a picture of the leads. A lesser member of the cast, senior Chris Cooper, would go on to movie fame and win an Oscar. In the minds of many, "Camelot" is a metaphor for Southwest. You will recall King Arthur's lament: "Don't let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment, that was known as Camelot."

And that's why I wrote the book. Thanks for listening.

– Ed



INDEX

The Rise and Fall of Excellence The Story of Southwest High School - R.I.P.



Index provided courtesy of Richard ShROUT,
class of 1964 Southwest High School ...
(Potomac Indexing, L.L.C.)

Reunion cartoons are the artistry of
Jack O'Hara, Southwest class of '38.

INDEX

A

Abner, Sean, 84d
Achtenberg, David, 63
Ackenhausen, William, 38
Adams, Andrew S., 71
Ade, Carl, 44
Aguirre, Kathy, 84b
Aguirre, Sandy. *See* Mayer, Sandy Aguirre
Aguirre, Steve, 84a
Aikins, Martha Belle, 21
Aizpun, Maribel, 84e
Albert, Tom, 44
Allendoerfer, Carl, 17, 36d
Allerdice, Patty Sullivan, 84g. *See also* Sullivan, Patty
Alnutt, Yvette, 84c
Alter, George C., 65, 68, 70, 84d, 91, 92, 93, 95, 97,
99, 100, 101
Amick, Eugene Earl, Jr., 35
Anguhrathorn, Miss Kanoktip, 97
Armour, Charles W., 1
Armstrong, Arthur, 84d
Arnold, Francis (Sis), 11
Ashcroft, John, 103
Atwood, Carolyn, 2, 36, 44
Avenell, Natalie, 84e
Azar, Stella, 68b

B

Bailey, Mamie, 12
Bailey, William, 41
Baker, Barbara, 124
Ballard, Jack, 28, 68c
band (1971), 84a
band (1984), 84c
Barnes, David, 92
Barnes, Kay Waldo, 89, 119
Barnett, Ray, 68d
Bartle, H. Roe, 30
Baryo, Guy, 93
baseball team (1994), 84g
Bates, Gregory S., 98
Baxter, Mary Ruth, 14, 36e
Bean, Albert C., Jr., 78
Bean, David, 65, 68g
Bean, Kim, 78, 84b
Bean, Melanie, 68, 84a
Belser, Evelyn, 102
Bennett, Robin, 84c
Berrey, Bedford, 25
Berry, Cal, 26
Berry, George, 26
Bilski, Jennifer, 98
Birt, Jim, 84a

Bishop, Melvin P., 11
Bishop, Melvin P., Jr., 51
Bisman, Susan, 101
Black, Charles, 26
Blackmar, Charles, 25
Blair, Frank P., 12
Bleakley, Jeanne Forney, 33
Blevens, Susan, 84c
Bloch, Barbara. *See* Stanny, Barbara Bloch
Bloch, Henry W., 26, 36g, 128
Bloch, Leon, 26, 36g
Bloch, Linda. *See* Lyon, Linda Bloch
Bloch, Nancy. *See* Linsley, Nancy Bloch
Bloch, Richard A., 26, 36g, 128
Bodwell, Barbara. *See* Nottberg, Barbara Bodwell
Bohannon, Harold, 84d
Bolling, Richard, 72
Bolte, Carl, 40
Bolte, Denslow, 42
Bono, Marie, 68d, 68b
Boone, Fredericka, 14, 36e
Booser, Adam, 84d
Boswell, Marion, 27
Bottley, Angelo, 84d
Boxer, Bob, 42
Bredemeier, Mark J., 121
Breed, Barbara. *See* Stark, Barbara Breed
Breed, Mary. *See* Brink, Mary Breed
Brink, Mary Breed, 61
Brink, Robert, 84b
Bruegging, Bob, 66
Bryan, Alice, 14, 36e, 68b
Bryan, Joseph G., 2, 4, 6, 14, 22, 63
Bublitz, Dorothy, 30
Bublitz, Walter, 31
Buckner, Virginia, 113
Burke, Dorothy, 68b
Butler, Antonia, 84e
Buxton, Cora, 2
Byrd, Maurice, 84c

C

Cain, Robert, 84c
Callaway, Redman, 15
Calloway, Cab, 10
Cameron, Jeremiah, 13
Campbell, Charles, 68c
Cannon, Norman, 46, 48
Cannon, W. Lawrence, 15, 35, 43, 48, 52, 54, 55, 56,
65, 68f, 69, 70, 82
Carolyn, Virginia, 38
Carswell, Margaret. *See* Lyddon, Margaret Carswell
Carter, President, 34

Casford, Jack, 33
 Chaney, Verne E., Jr., 31, 68c
 Changnon, Louise, 68f
 Chappelow, Jeff, 67
 cheerleaders, 1925-1926, 36b
 Chellgren, Steve, 84a
 Ciotti, Paul, 98-99
 Clark, Judge Russell, 68, 84, 84b, 94, 98, 100, 102, 110, 121, 125
 class of '40 lettermen (1990), 84e
 Clay, George, 8, 125
 Clay, Martha, 101
 Clingenpeel, Joanne Warren, 38, 68e. *See also* Warren, Joanne
 Clinton, President Bill, 38
 Coen, W.F., Jr. (Junior), 5, 6, 8, 17, 36d, 55
 Colvin, Mike, 62
 Commager, Henry Steele, 43
 computer class (1992), 84f
 Conchola, Debbie, 84c
 Connaghan, Michael, 84e, 100, 103
 Connaghan, Stephen (Steve), 99, 100
 Connell, Evan S., Jr., 31, 68c
 Cook, Eleanor. *See* Gardner, Eleanor Cook
 Coolidge, President Calvin, 6
 Coon, Carleton, Jr., 13
 Coon, Johnny, 13
 Cooper, Chris, 68, 84a, 128
 Cooper, Jackie, 27, 68c
 Corbet, Scott, 87
 Cortelyou, Pete, 62
 Crain, Edris, 113
 Crain, Mitch, 84
 Cravens, Jim, 60
 Crawford, George, 111, 120
 Cunningham, Maurice, 84c
 Curry, Anna, 21
 Curry, Charles E., 19

D

Dailey, Margaret, 58
 Dailey, Mary, 58
 Dalton, John, 35
 Danneberg, Bob, 68f
 Davis, Liz, 84f
 Davis, Woody, 41
 DeFoor, Beth, 84f. *See also* Shatto, Beth DeFoor
 DeFoor, Linda, 109
 DeFoor, Lori, 84d, 109. *See also* Etheridge, Lori DeFoor
 DeFoor, Mark, 109
 DeFoor, William (Bill), 109, 128
 DeLano, Helen. *See* Sutherland, Helen DeLano

DeLay, William, 84f, 115
 Deramus, William N., III (Bill), 12, 36e, 51
 Dickey, Joe Ben, 35
 Dickinson, Martin, 52
 Diuguid, Lewis W., 119
 Dorr, Joe, 23
 Dorsey, Tommy, 39
 Drake, Cindy, 84b
 Draney, Tom, 68c
 du Jonchay, Karin, 84e
 Duncan, David Douglas, 15-16, 27, 36e, 82
 Duncan, Duke, 44
 Dunham, Mary, 84c
 Dunn, William H., 27-28

E

Edwards, J.C., 58
 Eisenhower, Dwight, 58
 Elam, Joann, 63
 Ellington, Duke, 39
 Elliott, Llewellyn, 7
 Elliott, William, 119
 Ellis, Bob, 30
 Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 58
 Enggas, Marion. *See* Kreamer, Marion Enggas
 Englund, Karl, 45
 Ennis, Bruce, 54
 Ersery, Royce, 84g
 Estes, Betty Belle, 14, 36e
 Etheridge, Lori DeFoor, 101
 Eubank, Lisa, 84b
 Evans, Maurice, 59
 Evans, Shirley, 68b
 Eversull, Arnold, 41
 Ewing, George C., 53, 65

F

faculty (1933), 36e
 Farnsworth, Sylvia, 108
 Ferguson, Breck, 84f
 Field, E. Stanley, Jr., 2
 Field, Gertrude. *See* Oliver, Gertrude Field
 50th Reunion, class of '42 (1922), 84f
 Fight, Marvin, 84c
 Filby, Ellsworth, 31
 Fillpot, Lisa, 84c
 Fisk, Thelma, 23
 Fleeman, Rod, 65
 Fletcher, John P., 84e
 football champions and dates (1939), 68c
 Ford, Steve, 84d
 Forney, Jeanne. *See* Bleakley, Jeanne Forney
 Foster, Jack D., 70, 93, 106

Foster, John J., 18
 Foster, Verlyne, 64
 Fountain, Robert F. (Bob), 39, 120, 124
 Fowler, Edward, 84d
 Franey, Lynn, 57
 Franklin, Benjamin, 12
 Franks, Roger, 84d
 Frazier, Rebecca, 115–116
 Fredman, Harry, 29
 Friedman, Meyer W., 17, 36b
 Fugate, Shawn, 84c
 Fulmer, Gilbert, 59
 Fulson, Matthew, 84d
 Fulson, Sue, 95

G

Gage, John B., 6, 28
 Gage, John C., 28
 Gagé, Marjorie Hires, 6
 Gale, Gloria, 101
 Ganwee, Margaret, 101
 Garcia, Inez, 110
 Garcia, Paul, 84, 86, 94, 95, 100, 101
 Gardner, Eleanor Cook, 84g
 Gardner, Jim, 62
 Garrett, James, 84d
 Gatson, Sarah, 84d
 Gault, Marian, 30
 Gibson, Thomas, 84d
 Giles, Willie, 98
 Gillet, Jean, 31
 Gillham, Mary, 68f
 Girault, Gisele, 84
 Glover, Mrs., 21
 Goldwater, Barry, 62
 Goodman, Benny, 24
 Gourley, Jeff, 112, 114
 Graham, Wallace, Jr., 48
 Grant, William D., 82
 Greef, Mary, 6
 Green, James Frederick, 8, 36d
 Green, Jean McGreevy, 74
 Green, Richard C., 33
 Greenwood, Don, 25
 Griffin, David, 95, 102
 Griffin, Wentworth, 17
 Griffith, Andy, 36
 Gross, Jean, 113
 Grossman, Jerome, 92
 Guinn, Barbara, 99
 Gurley, George, 55, 106
 Gustafson, Victor E., 58
 Guyer, Julia, 52

H

Haase, Robert, 31
 Hair, Donald, 69
 Hakan, Barton L., 25
 Hall, Allan, 43
 Hall, Marilyn, 52
 Halverson, Walter L., 42
 Hamilton, Fowler, 2, 36b
 Hamilton, G. Kenneth, 22
 Hamilton, Thomas R., 2
 Handley, John, 44
 Hannaman, Keith, 84d, 88
 Hannas, Molly, 68, 70
 Hanson, Christine, 84c
 Harline, Tim, 100
 Harris, William, 84d
 Hatfield, Grant, 24
 Haydon, George R. (Dick), 44
 Hayes, Helen, 59
 Hayworth, Rita, 23
 Hazlett, James A., 51, 57, 68
 Hearnes, Warren, 35
 Heath, Craig, 84
 Heath, Fred, 44
 Helbitz, Tal, 84e
 Helmers, Dale, 40
 Henderson, Frank, 109
 Henderson, John, 109
 Henderson, Stacie, 84f
 Henuber, Eric, 84d
 Herbert, Dick, 33
 Herman, Woody, 39
 Hess, Betty Jean. *See* Robinson, Betty Jean Hess
 Hess, Bill, 62
 Hibler, Blaine, 68c
 Hines, Earl "Fatha," 29
 Hires, Majorie. *See* Gage, Marjorie Hires
 Hirsch, Brian, 86
 Hirsch, David, 86
 Hirwitt, Irwin, 5
 Holloway, Francis, 36f
 Hoover, Herbert, 8
 Hope, Bob, 68d
 Hopkins, Jamie, 84e
 House, Jack, 14
 House, Louis A., 2, 3, 4, 11, 22, 27, 36, 37, 43, 46, 47–48, 55, 68f, 88
 Huff, Harry J., 27
 Humphrey, Hubert H., 62
 Hunnacutt, Margaret Stansell, 18
 Hunt, J.E., 27
 Hunter, Nancy, 57

Hutton, Betty, 39
Hutton, Ina Ray, 25

J

Jackson, Delfonda, 84f
Jackson, Delmar (Stony), 25
Jackson, Janet, 109
Jacobs, Leon, 68c
James, Frederic (Fred), 14, 36a, 36e, 82
James, Harry, 39
Jarvis, Ron, 84a
Jenkins, Donald, 63
Jennings, Peter, 93
Jensen, Dick, 44
Joggerst, Owen, 28, 29
Johnson, Lyndon B., 62
Jolson, Al, 10
Jones, Frances, 68b
Jones, Frank, 25
Jones, Jason, 84g
Jones, Michael Anthony, 84d, 100, 110, 119, 121, 128
Jones, William K., 16, 22, 35, 36f
Jordan, Virginia Tanzey, 54
Juarez, Isaac, 84f

K

Kagan, Elaine, 84g, 115
Kaiser, Richard, 65
Kanaga, Clinton W., Jr., 35
Kanaga, Steve, 68
Kanaga, William, 34
Kaney, Sally. *See* Ruddy, Sally Kaney Tourtellot
Kase, Steve, 67
Katz, Barbara, 113, 123
Kauffmann, Ray, 33
Kaufman, Barbara Miles, 113
Keller, Charles, 33
Kemper, R.Crosby, 33, 58
Kerr, Wendell, 68d
Khalifah, Yemen, 84f
Kiene, Marilyn Sweet, 38
Kilgore, James C., 61, 62, 64
Kimpton, Lawrence, 2, 36b
King, Martin Luther, 66
Kipp, Thomas E. (Tom), 52, 72, 74–75, 80, 82, 84, 84b, 86, 89
Kirk, Andy, 29
Kirk, Doug, 68c
Klein, George, 36f
Klein, Phil, 40
Klepac, Rita, 98
Kraft, Arthur, 26
Kreamer, Marion Enggas, 68d

Kresge, Harvey, 36f
Kroeger, Brooke, 65
Krupa, Gene, 24
Krupsky, Ken, 62
Kuchar, Christine, 108
Kurtz, Patricia, 123

L

ladies of '43, twenty-year reunion, 68g
Larrabee, Mark, 82
Larson, Anna, 2
Laughlin, Paul, 84c
Lawler, Bunny. *See* Selvy, Bunny Lawler
Lawrence, Sara. *See* Lightfoot, Sara Lawrence
Leary, Conway, 27, 28, 68c
Leathers, Tom, 68d, 82
Lebedun, Barbara, 92
Ledgin, David, 84a
Lennon, John, 64
Levinson, Muriel Oppenheimer, 113
Levitt, Aaron, 13
Lewinsky, Monica, 70
Lewis, Ann. *See* Rubenstein, Ann Lewis
Lewis, Tim, 84c, 93
Lientz, Shannon D., 109
Lieppman, Bernard, 31
Lieppman, Keith, 65
Lightfoot, Sara Lawrence, 37
Linsley, Nancy Bloch, 26
Littick, Luanice, 44
Littlefield, James, 115
Livingston, L.G., 64
Lloyd, James, 128
Lockwood, Chris, 65
Lockwood, Patty, 36g
Loewenstein, Lance, 123, 127
Lomak, Lary, 84d
Londre, Tris, 95
Longfellow, Barbara, 40
Lowrence, Richard, 46, 51
Lowry, William, 30
Luitweiler, Jack, 28, 68c
Lundergan, Steve, 84a
Lunsford, Mary Jane, 14
Lusk, Barbara, 84c, 91, 93, 95, 97, 99
Lyddon, Margaret Carswell, 73, 74
Lynch, Frank C., Jr., 17
Lynn, Betty Ann, 36, 68d, 113
Lyon, Linda Bloch, 26
Lyons, Pat, 101

M

Maas, Dorothy, 36g

MacCurdy, George, 36, 73, 84g, 120
 MacLennon, Ronald, 59
 Madison, Coach Bill, 84c
 Madonna, 109
 Mahley, Chris, 67
 Manchester, William, 21, 25
 Manning, Carder, 57, 58, 68
 Manuel, Phil, 60
 Marks, Walter, 116
 Marschner, Robert, 53–54
 Marsh, Kim, 84d
 Martin, David, 126
 Matheny, Edward T., III, 84a
 Matheny, Edward T., Jr., 29, 68c, 128
 Matheny, Nancy, 67, 68g
 Mauro, Albert, 88, 114
 Mauro, Rachel, 88
 Maybon, Miguel, 84d
 Mayer, Sandy Aguirre, 69, 127
 McCause, Raymond, 18
 McClanahan, E. Thomas, 118
 McCoy, Ann, 115
 McDermott, Alan, 84a
 McDonald, Christopher, 84d
 McDonald, Dick, 65
 McDonnell, Bonnie Ann, 68b
 McFarland, Harry, 36f
 McGibben, Maurice, 94
 McGill, Virginia. *See* Truog, Virginia McGill
 McGonigle, William, 37
 McIndoo, Charlotte, 22
 McKee, James S., 2, 35
 McKee, John Wesley, 21
 McKibben, Maurice, 93
 McLeod, Dorothy, 4, 16
 McMurry, Malinda, 84b
 McShann, Jay, 58
 Medaris, Beverly Ann, 14, 36e
 Medcalf, Robert L., 76–77, 78
 Mehl, Allan, 99
 Mehl, Holly, 84d, 99
 Meininger, Rosemary, 36g
 Melville, Kirsten, 84e
 Mering, Ray D. (Jack), 28, 68c
 Merriman, Joe Jack, 34
 Messplay, Nancy, 101
 Meyer, Ywe, 84d
 Meyers, Dale, 36g
 Michaelis, Frederick H., 19, 36f
 Miles, Barbara. *See* Kaufman, Barbara Miles
 Milgram, Lester, 51, 59
 Miller, April, 84d
 Miller, Dick (Truck), 14, 29
 Miller, John, 11
 Miller, Lawrence (Larry), 33, 68d
 Miller, William E., 62
 Milton, Mary Margaret. *See* Moore, Mary Margaret
 Milton, Mrs. Robert. *See* Moore, Mary Margaret
 Milton, Robert (Bob), 24, 26, 37, 41, 43, 68e
 Mondale, Walter F., 94
 Monday, Junior, 36f
 Monroe, Charles, 75
 Monsees, A.H., 1, 6, 9, 15, 19, 36c, 38, 43, 55
 Moody, James, 70
 Moore, Beth, 84c
 Moore, Eddie, 84d
 Moore, Hugh, 68d
 Moore, James A., 7
 Moore, Mary Margaret, 24, 37, 39, 68e, 78
 Morantz, Alison, 98, 125
 Morgan, Annette, 110
 Morgan, Katherine, 2, 57
 Morris, Chris, 119
 Munson, Betty, 68b
 Murray, Eric, 84d
 Myers, Dale D., 26
 Myers, Mike, 84
 Myers, Ralph, 18
 Myers, Tom, 91

N
 Nachman, Jack, 26
 Narr, Lawrence, 36f
 Naudet, Chuck, 116, 120
 Navran, Marian, 92
 Neal, Eric, 84d
 Neal, Jean, 82
 Neal, Tom, 82
 Newcomb, Eldon, 21
 Newell, Nancy, 84b
 Newman, Randy, 84c
 Newsome, Edward, 126
 Nichols, Ann, 74
 Nichols, Carl W., 29, 68c
 Nichols, Helen. *See* Smith, Helen Nichols
 Nichols, J.C., 1, 4, 10, 36c, 43, 49
 Nigro, Al, 36f
 Nivens, Lawrence, 43
 Nixon, Richard, 67
 Noback, Carl, 66, 67, 68
 Norquist, Elliot, 8, 36d
 North, John, 36f
 Nottberg, Barbara Bodwell, 84g
 Nurski, Andy, 51
 Nutter, James B., 30

O

O'Brien, Bridget, 84c
Offut, Mary, 8
Ogden, Virginia, 38
Ogden twins, 40
O'Hara, Jack, 24, 68b, 82
Oliver, Gertrude Field, 15
Oppenheimer, Muriel. *See* Levinson, Muriel
Oppenheimer
Orr, Dwayne, 84d
Otto, Sam, 7
Overton, B.H., 39
Owen, Lynda, 101
Owen, Paul, 68d
Owens, Coach, 84d
Owens, Steve, 84d

P

Paige, Travis, 84c
Paris, George, 16
Parks, Renee, 84d
Parsons, David, 82–83, 84
Patterson, Doyle, 19
Patterson, Marjorie, 11, 41, 59, 61
Patterson, Robin, 84d
Patzner, Patricia, 68b
Payne, Brian, 84c
Payne, Cory, 84d
Peabody, Elbert H., 1
Pearson, Howard, 84c
Perkins, Claude, 97
Perkins, John, 84a
Peterson, George A., 42
Peterson, Rosemary, 113
Pfeiffer, Dick, 33
Phi Lamda Epsilon spring formal (1944), 68d
Phillips, John, 15, 36e
Phillips, Torron, 84d
Pickens, Ruthie, 107
Pitman, Ray, 33
Poindexter, Henry, 25
Polk, David, 84d
Portanova, Coach, 84d
Powder Puff football (1971), 84b
Powell, George, Jr., 36
Powell, George R., 22
Powell, Lonnie, 64
Pratt, Judge John H., 74
Prestigiacommo, David, 78
Price, Warren, 13
Pruitt, Vincent, 84c

Q

Quaintance, Bob, 68f

R

Radford, Earle, 22
Rains, Dennis, 62
Ramey, Elwood, 24
Ray, W. Dean, 52
Reagan, President Ronald, 36f, 38, 94
Reams, Sean, 84d
Reed, Dunbar, 30
Reefer, James, 84g, 113
Reefer, Thomas M. (Tom), 69, 84f, 84g, 111, 112, 113, 114, 116–117
Reese, Thomas, 84d
Renfro, Larry, 67
Richardson, Katherine B., 13
Richie, Lionel, 95
Rickenback, Eddie, 34
Rieling, Dale, 87
Rieling, Raymond (Ray), 68f, 87
Rieling, Sylvia Spencer, 87
Rippeteau, Marian, 39
Roach, Davis, 68f
Roach, Pat, 53
Roach, Paul, 46, 53
Roberts, Chuck, 63
Roberts, Curtis, 84d
Roberts, Johnnie, 110
Roberts, Monica, 84f, 110
Robertson, Jay, 59
Robinson, Arthur W., 24, 68e
Robinson, Betty Jean Hess, 26
Robinson, David, 37, 68e
Robinson, Elaine, 88
Robinson, John H. (Jack), 36, 37, 68e
Robinson, Shawn, 84d
Robinson, Thomas, 37, 68e
Robinson, William C. (Bill), 55, 65, 76, 84a, 87, 88
Rodgers, Bruce, 125
Rogers, Will, 3
Roosevelt, President Franklin D., 38
Root, Valerie, 84c
Rousche, Beron, 8
Rowan, Roger, 84a
Rubenstein, Ann, 34
Rubenstein, Ann Lewis, 34
Rubenstein, Richard B. (Dick), 34, 68d
Rudd, Hughes, 26
Ruddy, John, 84b
Ruddy, Sally Kaney Tourtellot, 27, 84b, 84g
Ruffin, Herbert, 105, 106
Ruskin, Sheryl, 57

Russell, Andy, 39

S

Sabates, Roland, 67
Sabin, Albert, 62
Sachs, Howard, 34, 68d
Salk, Jonas, 54
Samuels, Richard, 100
Sawyer, Royce, 84d
Sayler, J. William (Bill), 45
Schmelzel, Neal, 89, 91
Schmidt, Elea^ñor, 29
Schmitz, Charles, 52
Schroeder, Marylou, 33
Schroer, Esther, 2
Schutzel, Emil, 68f
Scott, Mary White, 1
Scott, Ned, 84g, 108
Scott, Robert, 23
Sebree, Frank, 38
Secrest, Bessie Gay, 8
See, S.C., 2, 3, 7, 12, 38
Selvy, Bunny Lawler, 107
Selvy, Louis E., 92, 107
Shakespeare, William, 35
Shanklin, Barbara, 64
Sharp, Harriet, 68b
Shatto, Beth DeFoor, 109. *See also* DeFoor, Beth
Shelton, Vickie, 84f
Shepherd, Lee, 63
Sheppard, Carmel, 118, 119
Shinault, Angela, 84f
Silvey, Michael, 84d
Silvius, Alex, 118
Simecheck, Don, 29, 68c
Simmons, Casey, 84c
Simms, Donald, 84d
Simon, Miriam, 125
Simon, Scott, 63, 64, 68g, 125
Simpson, Naomi, 2, 36, 39, 61
Simpson, Stacy, 84d, 100
Sinatra, Frank, 35, 39
Sinkov, Delia Ann Taylor, 35
Sipple, Shirley, 36g
Sisser, Pierre, 47
Small, Mendel, 41, 42
Smalley, Richard, 57–58, 68g, 128
Smith, Dick, Jr., 87
Smith, Helen Nichols, 108
Smith, Hollister S., 24, 33, 35
Smith, John, 65
Smith, Laurence, 61, 63
Smith, Mark, 84b

Smith, Mary, 84d
Smith, Napoleon, 84c
Smith, William J., 108
Snell, Sanford, 2
Snider, Joan "Pinky." *See* Wells, Joan "Pinky" Snider
Solomon, Mel, 106
Sosland, Morton, 33, 92
Sousa, John Phillip, 8
Southwest Midgets, 1926, 36b
Sowel, Thomas, 60
Spears, Stephanie, 93
Spencer, Sylvia. *See* Rieling, Sylvia Spencer
Spottedcrow, Lucy, 7
Springstein, Bruce, 94
Stanny, Barbara Bloch, 26
Stansell, Margaret. *See* Hunniacutt, Margaret Stansell
Staples, Tony, 93
Stark, Barbara Breed, 33, 68d
Stark, Frank, 42
Stark, Joyce, 89
Stark, Marge, 89
Stevens, Joseph E., 38, 68e
Stevens, Sara, 84c
Stevenson, Diane E., 84f, 105, 109, 110
Stewart, Karen, 84b
Still, John, 113, 119
Still, Sarah, 84e
Still, Susan, 113
Story, Sergeant, 41
Story, William, 16, 68e
Sturm, Paul, 10
Sullivan, Patty, 27. *See also* Allerdice, Patty Sullivan
Suor, Edmund, 22
Sutherland, Helen DeLano, 9
Swafford, Benjamin W. (Ben), 9, 36d
Sweets, Robert, 84d
Swope, Chris, 84c

T

Talbot, Lee, 22
Talge, Foster, 48
Talge, Henry, 48
Talge, Steven, 48
Tanzey, Virginia. *See* Jordan, Virginia Tanzey
Taylor, Clevon, 84f
Taylor, Delia Ann. *See* Sinkov, Delia Ann Taylor
Taylor, John, 84b
Teasdale, Joseph, 35
Thomas, Julia, 84d
Thomas, Marian, 84d, 99, 103
Thomas, Peter, 84d, 100
Thomas, Steven, 84d, 84e, 100, 103
Thomas, Timothy, 84d, 99

Thomason, Phil, 36f
 Thomson, Albert, 13
 Thornton, Darroyce, 84d
 Threatt, Elliott, 88, 128
 Tilden, William, III, 5, 36d
 Tindall, Barbara. *See* Weary, Barbara Tindall
 Toomey, Roy, 36f
 Townley, Wyatt, 124
 Travis, Glen, 74
 Tredway, Stuart, 110
 Trillin, Calvin (Bud), 46, 68f, 128
 Tripp, Linda, 70
 Truman, President Harry S, 19, 43, 48, 58
 Truog, Virginia McGill, 27, 68c
 Trusty, Kim, 84d, 99
 Tuch, Hans, 34
 Tucker, Avis Green, 15, 36f
 Tuley, Sharon, 101

U
 Uebelmesser, Nancy, 15
 Uhlmann, Paul, 25

V
 Valentine, Bill, 36f
 Valentine, Herbert, 22
 Van Dyke, Thomas (Tom), 52, 91
 Van Maren, Robert, 105
 Van Metre, Sara, 2, 7, 10, 15, 17, 18, 22, 34–35, 54, 55, 68f
 Van Ross, James, 93
 Verge, Elisha, 84c
 Vinlove, Laura, 84b
 VonLeggitt, Byron, 84d
 Vrooman, Richard, 46, 52

W
 Wager, Dan, 36f
 Wainwright, Jonathan M., 39
 Waldo, Kay. *See* Barnes, Kay Waldo
 Waldo, Kelly, 84b, 89
 Waldron, Charles, 82
 Wallingford, Phoebe Tyler, 17
 Warfield, Sandra, 25, 36g
 Warren, Joanne, 107. *See also* Clingenpeel, Joanne Warren
 Warrick, Ruth, 17, 36f, 105
 Washington, Barbara, 84c
 Washington, George, 13, 14
 Wasserstorm, Mark, 63
 Watson, Greg, 84c
 Watson, Maurice, 78
 Watson, Ray, 18
 Watson, Tom, 18, 62
 Weary, Barbara Tindall, 37, 40, 68f
 Webb, Jesse, 84d
 Wells, Joan "Pinky" Snider, 41
 Wenig, Mike, 68, 84a
 Wertman, Julie, 84d
 Wesner, Gordon E., 42
 Wesner, Gordon, Jr., 46
 Weyforth, Jack, 65
 Wheeler, Charles, 68
 Wheeler, Mark, 68, 84a
 Wheeler, Robert R., 70, 71, 83, 119
 White, Aaron, 84g
 White, Mary. *See* Scott, Mary White
 Whitlock, Jason, 121
 Whitney, Cornelius Vanderbilt, 33
 Wiley, Wayne, 13
 Wilhelm, Gretchen, 84c
 Wilkerson, Ralph, 15
 Williams, Chaney O., 38, 41, 42
 Williams, Christine, 78
 Williams, Henry, 119
 Williams, Paul, 84d
 Williams, Tricia, 84c
 Williams, Tyronne, 84c
 Williamson, Joe, 42
 Willits, Bob, 18
 Wilson, A.M., 12
 Wilson, Mathew, 84c
 Winfield, David, 84d
 Winn, Larry, 21, 36f, 52
 Witmer, Webb, 4, 6
 Woods, Kelly, 11, 88
 Wooldridge, Janssen, 68d
 Worley, William S., 12
 Wortman, Randy, 107, 108
 Wright, Flora, 16
 Wysong, David, 65
 Wysong, Don, 68c

Y
 Yeo, Barbara, 60

Z
 Zahn, Logan, 17