

Memories of the Akron Public Schools



As part of the Akron Public Schools' 150th anniversary celebration, we asked the community for memories of the times they spent with us. Our very first response came from a kindergarten student. She shared her memory of playing with a Ronald McDonald House on her first day of school. Then the letters came in a steady stream. Each of the writers had a unique and personal story to tell. Writers ranged in age from 5 to 85. Some writers remembered a favorite teacher; others a school prank. Many talked about how their experiences in school changed their lives.

Although we asked for brief stories, some of the writers sent in pages. We reprinted these memories in their entirety. Memories have been organized by the cluster in which a majority of the schools mentioned fall: Buchtel, Central-Hower, East, Ellet, Firestone, Garfield, Kenmore or North. (Schools that are now closed were placed in the cluster to which they would belong today. For example, Central High School and Spicer are included in the Central-Hower section.)

Memories have the power to put a smile on your face and a warm feeling in your heart. So sit back, pour a cup of tea, and walk down memory lane with friends.

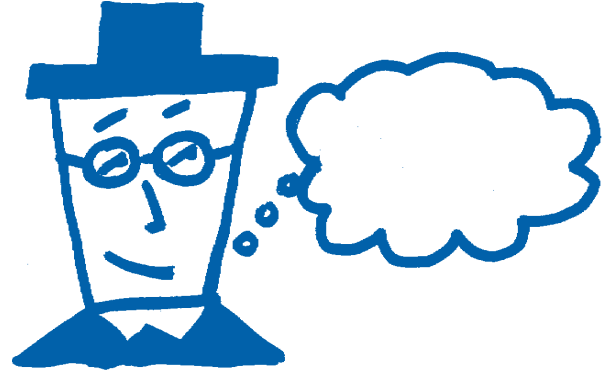


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O Doris E. Allen Steen

I attended Grace School at Five Points about 1924-1925. We had an assembly at school and sang "God Bless America." We also pledged allegiance to the flag. I had to walk from the corner of Wildwood and Work drives past a brick wall which ran along the sidewalk on West Exchange Street.

One of my fond memories was of my teacher taking the class to see the bears at the bear pit which must have been the future home of the Akron Zoo.

When I was eight years old, I transferred to Rankin School on Storer Avenue. Mary Myers was the principal. We had two teachers named Miss Davis. One taught arithmetic and one taught art.

At 14 I went to Buchtel High School, which had only just been built in 1931 so it was two years old and only one-third of the original plans. We had no home economics for the girls and no woodworking class for boys; but we made it. We graduated — Buchtel High School class of January 1938.

O Ron Somogye

I remember filing into the halls at Schumacher for "Air Raid" drills. We would lean toward our locker and place our hands behind our neck. We felt very safe from nuclear attack.

"I remember filing into the halls at Schumacher for 'Air Raid' drills."

—Ron Somogye

Although I usually went home for lunch, I remember buying an occasional hot school lunch during the late '50s for 30 cents. The milk cartons would all be in wire racks, and the lunch lady used a specially designed poker to punch a small hole in the top of each carton — a convenient opening for your straw.

My fondest memory was the day the entire school sat outside on the front lawn at Schumacher to see the Lone Ranger make a personal appearance. He arrived dressed in his TV outfit, stepping out of a white Cadillac. Unfortunately, Tonto was unable to come.

O Ms. Monic Carroll

I remember when schools, not just Akron, but none of the schools had computers. I also remember how we did not have to see policemen patrolling around unless they were there for some other reason. I remember how school started at 9:15 a.m. and ended at 4:15 p.m.

There is a lot more unity now between parents and teachers. We all have the same goal in focus, to educate our children. When I was in school, there was more prejudice. It seems as though that now people are finally getting past it. Teachers now seem to really care about our children. Home visits were not prominent when I was in school. We have indeed come a long way.

(I attended Lane and Grace elementary schools, Thornton and West junior highs, and Kenmore High School.)

O John Bennett

I remember when we used to have a haunted house for the primary grades in the lower level of Rankin Elementary School, down by Mrs. Barber's room. It was dark and spooky and great to be a sixth grader at Rankin.

How about standing in a circle in class "doing" prime numbers? Each person had to say the next number unless it was prime, and then you would say "prime." That was the day Kennedy was shot, and the announcement came over the P.A. Helen Avery fainted at the news.

I also remember walking down the long aisles at Buchtel High School as a youngster to get polio vaccines, then later riding a tricycle down the same aisles doing a "Laugh-In" comedy sketch as a senior.

O Shirlee Wright Smith

I remember when I was at Buchtel from 1945 to 1949, and I had Andrew Porosky for Civics. I trembled in my shoes when he called on me to recite. The class was made up of all girls; and, of course, I was the only Afro-American.

Clara Goss was the gym teacher. From September until Thanksgiving, we were outdoors playing soccer in gymsuits and sweatshirts.

Miss Stuckey was a history teacher. If you did not write on both sides of a term paper, next year's

classes would have to use the blank side.

Kathryn Sexauer, librarian, was one of my favorites at Buchtel.

From Margaret Oeschner and Vincent Biondo, English teachers, I learned tolerance and how to write term papers.

O Sidney Moskovitz

I started kindergarten at George T. Perkins School at the corner of West Exchange Street and West Bowery, probably in September 1920. Perkins School was a very modern, beautiful brick and sandstone decorated building. When I say “beautiful,” that’s exactly how I perceived it then and to this day. It was four stories high and contained a cooking and sewing room (for girls) on the top floor (with a balcony overlooking West Exchange Street). It was also equipped with a dentist’s chair and dental facilities.

The building, although very large, was only one-half complete. In fact, one of the entrances on West Exchange Street had columns of some kind of attractive stone and was fitted with beautiful wrought-iron gates that fronted the entryway to the regular doors (this entrance was really to be the main entrance — as I said above, the building was only one-half complete).

The building was made to enclose an outdoor and completely protected courtyard that served as an outdoor kindergarten space. The indoor kindergarten room was very large with a high ceiling and with a huge fireplace that was never used as a fireplace. The room had an indoor sliding board, piano and big wooden construction blocks for children to build with.

The sliding board proved to be a bad thing for me as I fell off the top platform. A boy underneath the slide was calling to me to find him. I leaned out too far, fell to the floor — probably about eight or nine feet — and broke my right arm in two places. I think the slide was removed after that. Mr. McGaughey was trying to catch up to my young aunt (who also attended school there) and me walking home to our house at 222 W. Buchtel Ave. — about one-half mile from school. I was put into Children’s

Hospital (at High or Broadway — its location at that time).

My kindergarten teacher was a Miss Mueller. I attended Perkins through the third grade (Perkins was torn down some years ago; the neighborhood didn’t require a school there anymore — I look at this as sad).

I contracted infantile paralysis (polio) about the age of 5 or so. My left leg was impaired as a result. I remember a music teacher at Perkins in the corner street-level room right on the corner of Bowery and West Exchange. Her name was Brinkerhof. She was

very strict and, by my impression, quite mean. She broke rulers over your knuckles at times.

We moved to Delia Avenue, way out in a new section. There was no gas to cook with. We used an electric hot plate for about five or six months.

Bus service required a walk of about one-half mile to Delia Avenue and Rose Boulevard (end of Delia Avenue bus line).

I entered Rankin School, then only one-third built. The principal was Mary E. Myers — very nice but a strict woman. She drove a two-door Pontiac, about a 1926 or 1927 model.

Rankin School had very nice, dedicated teachers among them. As I reached the upper grades, there was Emma Dunn (arithmetic); later came Rose Crano, who was doing her practice teaching then. She was my favorite; she was our homeroom teacher.

As the school was enlarged, we had a science room that was equipped with a science table with sinks, electrical outlets, gas, air, etc. The teacher was Olive Keck, another favorite of mine (very stern but fair-minded and very good at science subjects).

I remember a science project I had with a partner, Louis Bertolini. We proved that air had weight by weighing a deflated football on a balance scale on the science table and then pumping it full with air and weighing it again.

I was later assigned by Miss Keck to visit our janitor, a Mr. Barker, to explain to me how the coal-fired boiler in the building functioned and wound up heating our school rooms with either steam or hot water heat. I gave our class an oral report on the sys-

“With my head bowed and facing the class below me, I announced, ‘The Purple Cow’ ... ”

—Sidney Moskovitz

tem. I was very proud of that. I had a very fine bunch of teachers — gym was taught by a Miss Ryan and later a Miss Kennedy (red-haired young woman with a cultured Carolinian speech manner — she later became Buchtel High’s gym teacher for girls).

I remember Rankin had a small auditorium with a stage with wing entries. I vividly remember being called on impromptu to perform on stage with whatever I could do. Rankin in those days was populated with kids from well-off families — at least 60% of them. They would go on exotic-type vacations and had exciting things to tell. Others could perform with music, some at elocution lessons, etc. There was lots of competition for me. As the beginning of the Great Depression had started, my family didn’t even have a car, and we didn’t go on exciting vacations. I wore a brace on my left leg in those days due to a corrective bit of surgery on my polio-afflicted leg. It squeezed at the ankle hinge as I walked. I was called on to perform on stage. I “squeaked” my way up there (I was very bashful). With my head bowed and facing the class below me, I announced, “The Purple Cow:”

*I never saw a purple cow,
I never hope to see one;
But I can tell you anyhow,
I’d rather see than be one.*

I pivoted to leave the center stage, and the teacher stopped me in my tracks and asked if that’s all I had for my performance (indicating I should be ashamed). Needless to say, I’ve never forgotten that experience. I’m still a shy, bashful guy. I do think the teacher should not have done that to me.

In sixth, seventh and eighth grades we had shop training (electricity) at Grace School to which we walked for one-half day and then in seventh and eighth grades to Crouse School for woodwork, again walking. We missed out at sheet metal training as it was discontinued. Girls had cooking and sewing at Schumacher.

At Grace School we had a tough, wiry man named Orval Sellers. We had to diagram a simple doorbell, lights and an elevator signal in our notebooks, then get his “OK” to go up to the experimental panels along the wall and actually connect the wires to make the various electrical fixtures work. First, however, we had to line up and experience electrical shock by quickly touching two live electrical terminals with our index and middle fingers to

prove we weren’t “sissies.” 110 volts felt like your fingers would wind up on the floor. We were only 11 years old. Sellers also taught us how to twist the copper-insulated wire to make a continuous connection and another type of twist to make a connection that represented an off-shoot from the main wire. Then we had to learn to solder the joint and wrap it with friction tape for insulation. The soldering was done with irons heated in a gas flame furnace (too heavy for little hands) — no electric soldering irons. We loved that tough little guy anyhow. He couldn’t stand Rudy Valle (a popular radio crooner), and we teased him about that.

At woodworking at Crouse School, we had a Mr. Lutz — no power equipment, only hand tools (planes, hand saws, hand drills, screws, hammer, nails).

I started at West High School one semester, grade 9B (principal was Mr. Flood), then went to Buchtel — then a new building and only one-third the size it is today. We had only 20 or 30 minutes for lunch. We carried lunch or visited cars on Copley Road. People there had sandwiches to sell and pastry from a City Bakery truck. Among the cars was a 1924 or 1925 green Chevy operated by a Mr. Swenson (yes, the name still lives on — but now a different owner; after all, that was over 60 years ago). Mr. Swenson converted “carry-your-own ice” wooden buildings at South Hawkins and West Exchange streets into the original Swenson’s curb service business.

If you took mechanical drawing or other shop courses, you went to West. We didn’t yet have that at Buchtel. In fact, Russ Beichly at West used that fact to keep some of his better athletes at West even though they lived in the Buchtel district. Our coach at Buchtel (Mr. Bob Harper) had to do with the others of us. Our teams were known as “the cake eaters” because part of the kids came from well-off families (I say part of us — about 50% rich). Mr. Harper was a very fine man. Our gym teacher was Glenn Boots, moved over from West — a very fine man, too. We had calisthenics, tumbling, etc. (also wrestling and even tap dancing).

When I was starting my advanced algebra class, the schools in Akron extended our mid-season December vacation from two weeks to seven weeks to save Akron schools’ coal supply to last through the winter. It was the middle of the depression, and

I mean depression. Teachers were being paid with artificial money called scrip. It was not accepted by all businesses, but it had to do. Buchtel was a beautiful experience nevertheless. Our principal was C. J. Bowman and assistant principal was Miss Rentschler, both very strict. I did graduate in January of 1935.

P.S. There were too many kids at Buchtel and not enough classrooms. Therefore, there were two separate sessions of juniors and seniors from 7:30 a.m. to noon, and freshmen and sophomores from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. or so.

I loved athletics, but polio kept me out of team sports (but I played those sports with my friends in the streets).

I've been fortunate to have grown up and attended Akron schools. I think we've had that all these years in spite of the Great Depression that my generation faced — fine teachers and schools.

O Orpheus Nurches

When I was about 6 years old during the 1920s, I was a student at Lane School. There was an evening class in English offered to foreign immigrants to assist them in becoming American citizens. My parents, who had come to this country from Greece, were both anxious to become American citizens; and so my mother enrolled in this evening class. I can remember one evening when my brother and I accompanied my mother to the school and saw one classroom full of foreign immigrants. We decided to walk around the hallways while waiting for the class to end. We looked out the window and saw a fire burning in the field across from the school. We initially thought it was a bonfire and that some people were having fun. As it turned out, it was the KKK burning a cross and wearing their hoods to demonstrate against the “foreigners” who were in the building and trying to learn English. There was much prejudice during that period both toward the black and the foreign population.

“One of the most popular activities was shooting marbles.”
—Orpheus Nurches

I remember some of the disciplinary methods used by teachers of primary students such as pad-

dling, slapping across the face, standing in the corner, and even taping a child's mouth when they talked too much. The teachers had the right of “Loco Parentis,” and their disciplinary techniques were seldom questioned by parents.

I remember our various activities on the playground before school, during recess and after school. The playgrounds were not paved but were just dirt.

One of the most popular activities was shooting marbles. We would draw a circle in the dirt and each participant would put a marble in the pot. Then each would have a turn at trying to hit the marbles out of the circle. If you were successful, the marble was yours. Some students, after playing, would come into class with pockets full of marbles, hands dirty and sometimes with knuckles bleeding. The teachers weren't always too happy about these distractions. This was a very popular activity, and there were marble-shooting contests throughout the city which were well-publicized in the newspapers (*Akron Beacon Journal* and *Akron Times Press*).

Another activity on the playground was spinning tops. We used a string to wrap around the top and then throw it down and watch it spin. This, too, was great fun.

When I attended Crouse School, they offered a class for the older boys called “Woodworking.” Mr. Lutz was the teacher. In this class we learned all about basic tools used by carpenters. We were also required to make different projects out of wood such as tables, flower stands and bird houses.

Making a bird house was one of the most popular projects chosen by the students. In fact, the bird houses were entered into city-wide competition and were displayed throughout the city. I can't recall what the prizes were, but I do know that this was also a well-publicized annual affair.

I remember another class that was offered in elementary school called “Electricity.” Crouse School, where I was attending at the time, did not offer it so we had to walk over to Lane School. This class emphasized simple electric circuitry (fixing door bells, changing light switches, etc.). One of the most interesting projects in the class was to make a “crystal set” which could pick up radio stations. The crystal set base was a cigar box turned upside down. Mounted on the box were two terminals for ear phones, a terminal for ground and a terminal for the antenna. At one end was the crystal and “cat's whisker.” At

the other end was a coil (the coil was made from an empty toilet paper roll which we wrapped with thin wire). What a thrill when we were able to pick up a radio station by maneuvering the cat's whisker on a spot on the crystal.

I remember a Savings Program conducted by the schools and a local bank (I believe it was Akron Savings & Loan). The participating students were issued a regular bank book. On a designated banking day, we would bring our money (usually nickels, dimes or quarters) to deposit in our account. The teacher would take the money and enter the amount in our bank book. This was during the Depression years. When the banks were closed, I don't know what happened to the program. I think this program, however, made our generation aware of the virtue of saving.

I worked as a school psychologist for many years in the Akron Public Schools. In 1983 I came down with a complete heart block which required a pacemaker implant. This was the reason for my official retirement. However, I felt well enough to work. Since then I have been called by the Child Study Department to fill in when necessary. One interesting experience — about two years ago, when I was assigned to Crouse School (where I attended as a youngster) to do some testing, the counselor took me into an empty classroom to do my work. I looked around the room and commented, "This was my classroom almost 70 years ago." It brought back many memories.

Another interesting memory that came to me was when I substituted at Kenmore High School. Larry Weigle was the principal. I recalled that about 60 years ago I played basketball at Buchtel High School with his father, Darwin Weigle.

O Sally Clements Tenney

I was selected to be in the May Festival of Music, which was held at the Akron Armory, downtown! I was about 11 years old. We washed and ironed my best dress, took the bus to my destination, and very proudly sang with the chorus to represent Portage Path School.

I also remember when our class took a "field trip." We walked to a classmate's home to experience her family's new possession — a television! What a concept!

O Mary Lou Nay

I have many happy memories of my years as a student in the Akron Public Schools. At West Junior High School, under the guidance of Elizabeth Ricketts, I began to learn the mechanics of written communication. By the time I had graduated from Buchtel High School in 1969, Sally Kohnz had convinced me that my real gift was in Extemporaneous Speaking for the debate club. All of my APS teachers encouraged me to pursue my dream of making the written word come alive. But it was my fifth-grade teacher at Crouse Elementary School who really started it all. Jeanne Randles was my favorite teacher. She was beautiful and kind, and she made each student in her class feel special. Mrs. Randles often let me write sample paragraphs on the board for my classmates. She praised my work and gave me "extra paper" so that I could practice my writing at home. Imagine my delight when in 1986 Principal Joanne Shippy introduced me to the teacher alongside whom I would be working. My new colleague was my beloved Mrs. Randles!

"I will always be grateful to the fine teachers in the Akron Public Schools for giving me a solid background in writing and the motivation to set lofty goals and boldly pursue them."

—Mary Lou Nay

In 1995 I left a 23-year teaching career in the Akron schools to pursue freelance writing. It has been my good fortune to have already been published in numerous magazines and anthologies. I owe a great deal of my success to the high level of instruction that I received in all of my English and literature courses in the '50s and '60s. I will always be grateful to the fine teachers in the Akron Public Schools for giving me a solid background in writing and the motivation to set lofty goals and boldly pursue them.

O Nancy J. Jackson

I remember when my grandparents, my mother, her brothers and sister, my sisters and brother, my children and I all attended Akron Public Schools — four generations of our family attending from 1893 to 1980. I attended Portage Path grade school; and my fondest memory is of my wonderful first-grade teacher, Mrs. Smith. In those days we had nurses placed right in the schools. It was time for booster shots. I remember my arm hurting so after getting my shot, and Mrs. Smith let me put my head down on the desk and rest if I could. It sure made the hurt go away and left a fond memory. I had wonderful teachers all through my school years as did my family.

O Helen Eisinger Behl

School days in the 1920s at Portage Path School made it necessary for us to walk to school in the morning, then home for lunch and back to school for the afternoon session, and after school again the trek home. My outstanding memory at Portage Path was the day it became almost black outdoors and there was a rampant rumor that the world was coming to an end!! Fear seeped through our bones, and school was dismissed so we could hurry home! Needless to say, nothing catastrophic happened.

I spent from 1925-1929 at Akron West High School with Mr. John Flood as our principal. For French I had a Miss Helen French, a fine lady and a wonderful teacher. Miss Olive Smeeth was our teacher for Oral English. Every lesson required us to give a speech before the class — a wonderful way to become at ease before a group. I also recall our English teacher, Dwight Packard. He always reminded me of the actor, Harold Lloyd, because his black hair was parted in the middle and shiny, with “Bryl-creme” or some pomade.

After graduation, I was off to Heidelberg College and fields to conquer. Now, after 60-some years, I am back in Akron catching up on all I have missed.

O Elizabeth A. Dalton

I’m a graduate of Buchtel High School and very proud of the wonderful experience I had there back in the ’40s. I graduated in 1946 and have a few memories to share.

Buchtel was actually half the size it is today. The juniors and seniors went to classes in the morning (we went from 7 a.m. to noon), and the freshmen

and sophomores went from noon until later in the afternoon. We thought it was a wonderful situation, but of course it was an answer to a housing problem. After I graduated, I think the second half of the Buchtel plant was built starting in 1953. For instance, the auditorium didn’t exist. We had a gym that stood in for the auditorium for every kind of assembly situation we needed. Buchtel has a lot more luxury now than it did in my day.

I have memories of some remarkable faculty — Mabel Riedinger, who served on the Board of Education for a long time; and Eulo Weiss, who was my algebra teacher and the toughest guy you ever wanted to imagine. He didn’t care if your paper was correct — if you didn’t put your margin down at the side of the paper, it was pitched into the wastebasket. He really made you obey rules and pay attention to neatness and all the detail work that Eulo thought was very important.

“The things we would get into trouble for then probably would seem like child’s play today because the world is different than it was back then.”

—Elizabeth A. Dalton

Buchtel was a well-disciplined school. There was a lot of silence in the halls. The things we would get into trouble for then probably would seem like child’s play today because the world is different than it was back then.

Before coming to Buchtel, I went to Rankin for kindergarten through grade 8. There again, I have some wonderful, wonderful memories of some excellent teachers and a very, very happy experience. Both Buchtel and Rankin will always rate high in some of my best life experiences

I had an aunt who was a Latin teacher — Mabel Marsh — in the Akron schools. She taught for 40 years, ending up at East High School. You could never quite please her as far as your grades. If you brought home an A, she would ask why wasn’t it an A+? She, too, was a tough taskmaster back from a lot of years ago.

I’m proud of the Akron Public Schools. I’m serving this 150th anniversary year as a fill-in on the

Board of Education in place of Jim Laria, who felt it was important to resign because of a new public position he had. Another person will be running for this seat in the fall of 1997. I'm happy to be on the board, and I'm proud of the tradition of this Akron school system. I think we're the finest in the state, and we have every reason to be proud of this wonderful system.

O Mrs. William C. Seidel

When I went to school many years ago, perhaps it was more a joy than today. I walked to school. In winter the brick wall along Exchange Street going to Grace School helped to protect us from the cold. A nurse used to come to school to check on pupils. This seemed to bother me, and I would ask my mother every day before leaving if the nurse would come that day.

I would see a lady driving an electric car, and that was quite an attraction. I believe the car belonged to Mrs. Billow. The neighbor next door had a car with a rumble seat, and I thought that that was wonderful.

Everyone was not perfect in that day, but I am sure we did not have the problems of today.

“As I walked to school ... I would see a lady driving an electric car, and that was quite an attraction.”

—Mrs. William C. Seidel

O Maxine Green

I attended Lane Elementary School in the mid '50s. Mrs. Elizabeth Washko, our principal, and the mascot, Lanie the Lion, made announcements each morning. Mrs. Washko always wished everyone “a red letter day.” Lanie could “see” us in our rooms and even at home. She knew when we did our chores, or were especially helpful at school or at home, or got good grades. How encouraging! We eagerly awaited mention of our names. It was pure magic, and I loved it.

O Steve Tellis

Between 1951-1954, I attended Rankin and Perkins. When we move to Akron from the Bronx in the

fall of 1951 to 1067 Delia Ave., my father told me I could stay home until the movers arrived from New York City. They were late so my father enrolled me at Rankin. My teacher was Mrs. Smith. After about an hour in class, I was excused to go to the bathroom, found my locker (no locks) and headed home. The school sent my cousin after me but to no avail. Once the movers arrived, I went back to school. It was a great day — instant celebrity.

In the sixth grade, our teacher was Mr. Isaacs who everyone enjoyed learning from. I attended Perkins in the early session due to the ongoing construction — it was nice to get out of school at 1 p.m. My favorite teacher at Perkins was Jerry Rhodenbaugh, although I've forgotten what he taught. I still have a Women's Garden Club certificate for my tomatoes signed by him.

For any of you Buchtelites, my next-door neighbor was Miss Nottingham, the English teacher.

After school many of us would head to Haakes Soda Fountain for phosphates. Those were great years — the best years of our lives. My father worked at Polsky's; my mother shopped at the Acme on Delia Avenue; and my cousin, Barry Applebaum, and I enjoyed ourselves — plenty of friends to spend time with. We still talk about Mary Coyles or the Krispy Kreme on South Maple. I have never been back to Akron, but I have wonderful memories of those few years.



O Chalmers K. Stewart

I entered Henry School in the third grade in September 1918 when I was eight, my parents having moved from Milwaukee, Wisc., like so many others mesmerized by the booming wartime rubber industry.

Unlike the boy of universal folklore, which I had neglected to read up on, I liked school. I especially remember the sixth grade, run by Ella Rhodes. She was a dear. The classroom seemed very large, with a high ceiling and tall windows which in summer could be pulled down from the top with a long pole — provided you could locate the socket into which the prong at the end of the pole was inserted. It was no mean skill, not easily mastered by a small, myopic boy.

Above the slate blackboards hung maps which could be pulled down like roller blinds. English possessions, upon which I never personally saw the sun ever set, were in pink. I remember idly noting how neatly Africa, though separated by thousands of miles, fit into South America. Alas, I never rose to the level of abstraction necessary to formulate the tectonic plate theory of the origin of the continents. Henry School thereby lost the opportunity of having a bronze plaque mounted on its walls informing the gaping citizenry of Akron and the world of the great scientific insight achieved there.

When I remember best about the sixth grade was the music. Oh, there was arithmetic; but I was then, as now, paralyzingly inept. But I was fascinated by the onion skin overlay practice sheets on our exercise pads.

We did a lot of singing — rounds like “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” or “Juanita.” “Neeta, Wah-Hah-Hah-Neeta,” we sang, in a relentless treble. The house favorite, however, which we were allowed to sing only as a special dispensation, was “A Capital Ship,” a rollicking juvenile sailors’ chantey which I remember yet. It went:

*A capital ship
For an ocean trip
On a walloping window blind.
No wind that blew
Dismayed her crew
Or troubled the captain’s mind-d-d, etc.*

Every once in a while, the city music supervisor, Nathan Glover, would drop in. He seemed very old, set the pitch with a tuning fork — very powerful

magic, indeed — and left messages on the blackboard to b-natural and c-sharp. Some years later, his daughter Nellie herself became the supervisor. His son Carl, a dapper sophisticate wearing ice cream pants and sporty oxfords, who had been conductor of the pit orchestra at the Colonial Theater on Mill Street, later became the band director at Central High School. He was also an admired role model who voiced world-weary, equally sporty observations on music, life and love.

The higher culture was not neglected. Every year a music memory contest was held. This consisted of, I think, a hundred records of classical music, snippets of which had to be identified. You won a gold, silver or bronze medallion, depending on how well you did. It was mostly the girls, wearers of hair ribbons and otherwise torchbearers of culture as well, who participated. Once, the music teachers, hoping to sandbag one of us innocents, slipped a ringer on the victrola, a record not on the list. Sure enough, up shot Max Griffen’s hand. “That’s ‘Traumerei,’ ” he said; and so it was. That’s what came of taking private violin lessons. On another occasion, I, whose cultural pretensions took the form of trying to make gunpowder in our cellar out of sulfur, saltpeter and charcoal, was stricken bug-eyed when Mildred Poster, a sultry-eyed harem-beauty type, complete in ballet tutu, spun out of the cloakroom dancing to the music of one of Dvorak’s “Slavonic Dances.”

Occasionally, larger productions would get mounted. I remember one evening performance for parents during the war in which a chorus of girls dressed respectively in red, white and blue and waving small flags, sang a song which ended, “Then hurrah for the three little sisters, hurrah for the red, white and blue.” Christmas was always a special occasion. I recall Eddie Bergland, among others, singing “We Three Kings of Orient Are,” while the rest of us stood watching, massed on the wooden staircase leading to the second floor, wondering hardly at all what “Myrrh-is-mine-its-bitter-perfume” meant. Occasionally, the orchestra would put on a brief concert. It would play waltzes like “Over the Waves,” a favorite at roller skating rinks. I played the piccolo, taught in a dank, dark room in the massive basement by a Mr. Henry, a contemporary martyr, listening to me work over “Robin Adair.” It must have been awful, all of it.

Well, that’s a small, selective part of how it was in the late teens of the century at Henry School.

O Patricia Vinson

As a native Akronite, I am a graduate of the Akron Public Schools. I attended Henry Elementary School (over near City Hospital), which included eight grades. Henry was an old school with wooden floors and great big wooden staircases. The Board of Education decided to remodel the school. As a result, I had to walk a whole year to Bowen School at 70 North Broadway. I remember how the building (which is now the Administration Building) looked. On the second floor I had English and could look out over the viaduct, and in the basement was the gym.

Going back to Henry was a real treat — brand new individual lockers, inside fire exits and new lights in the whole building. I think Henry was closed permanently in 1977. It is now a daycare facility for children whose parents work at the hospital.

I enjoyed my grade school years and also my years at Central High School from which I graduated.

O Mrs. Charles Slaybaugh

I remember when, at the age of 6, I entered the first grade of Spicer School. At this point I would like to say that my mother also went to Spicer School some 20 years before me. I am now 87 years young.

“ ... We stood at the edge (of the field) and cheered while our team met the enemy. In those days there were no girls’ athletics.”

—Mrs. Charles Slaybaugh

Mr. App was the principal, and I remember some of my teachers, namely Miss Randolph, Miss Ion, Miss Stecklen, Miss Wolcott, Miss Crispin, Miss Rook, Miss Rivkin and Miss Naylor.

In those days we had a music teacher, Mr. Nathaniel Glover — tall, straight in height, gray hair and seemingly quite elderly. He came once or twice a week. If a student failed to listen, Mr. Glover would pick up a piece of chalk and toss it at him. Mr. Glover always came with his tuning fork.

Miss Randolph, a tall, stately lady, taught me and my mother earlier. I remember her because dur-

ing a Home and School League meeting she called upon me to go to the blackboard and do an arithmetic problem because I did such nice figures. I have been inspired by her these many years. On occasion, if the electricity went off during class, the teacher would take a book, go to the window and read to the class (the lights were a bulb fastened to a wire hanging down from the ceiling).

Spicer School did not have facilities for “Domestic Science” as it was called, so we would go to Mason School once in a while for a cooking lesson.

In the corner of the outside steps was a beautiful Bleeding Heart plant which I always enjoyed when it bloomed. I was very fond of flowers.

After eight grades, I moved on to Central High School for four years. The auditorium had just been built.

One event which stands out was the half day off when the fleas (from the pigeons) that had taken over the tower and found their way into some of the school rooms had to be exterminated.

Central had no ball field or bleachers so we went to a field on Wooster Avenue, and we stood at the edge and cheered while our team met the enemy. In those days there were no girls’ athletics.

Some teachers I recall were Mabel Todd, Mrs. Brady, Inez and Gladys Parshall, Mrs. Richardson (Latin), Miss Dawson, Miss Goff, Miss Ammons, Miss Phillips, Mr. Roose, Miss Simmons, Miss Schwinn and Mrs. Shaffer. Mr. Bowman was the principal, and Nell Glover had her office there.

Miss Todd and Mrs. Brady and the Glee Club put on musicals for which they were well known. Two of the musicals I sang in were “The Red Mill” and “The Three Twins.”

I became a member of the Censowe and the Squire and Scroll clubs.

Many memories come to mind from time to time, and I am thankful for my education received in the Akron Public Schools.

As time went on my son also went to Windemere Elementary School and Ellet High School. I served two years as a PTA President as my interest in school affairs is still a priority. I graduated in the class of 1927, 70 years ago.

O Malynda Riles

I attended Spicer Elementary School for half of my kindergarten year. My teacher would let us ride

a tricycle up and down the hall for good behavior. I remember being transferred from Spicer Elementary to Henry Elementary during the middle of my kindergarten year. At Henry Elementary, Mrs. Young was my teacher. We built a choo-choo train in the classroom.

First grade was also spent at Henry Elementary. I loved first grade. I can still remember sitting in those little old-fashioned desks that were nailed down to the floor in rows. I remember sitting in a half circle during reading group time. My teacher used Ideal Phonics charts to teach reading. In our reading books, I read of Alice and Jerry and their dog, Jip. In my mind, they were real and we played together and had many adventures in the meadow near their grandmother's farm.

For second grade through sixth grade, I attended Mason School. My teachers were Mrs. Jones (second grade), Miss Salem (third grade), Miss Barbara (fourth grade), Mrs. Harris (fifth grade) and Mr. Felton (sixth grade).

I attended Goodrich Junior High School for seventh through ninth grade. The highlight of those years was the biology class I had in the ninth grade taught by Mrs. Ealy.

Tenth through 12th grade was spent at Central-Hower. I dearly loved attending Central-Hower. I cherish the memories of our pep assemblies and attending championship basketball games when Bob Seigfert was the head coach there. How I remember entering into the auditorium every Friday for pep assemblies. Excitement was in the air. Our team was on stage. We were winners! It was a wonderful and glorious feeling to be a part of a winning team, but it was equally heart-wrenching to know the agony of defeat after so long a trail of victories.

At the end of my 11th-grade year, Central-Hower High School was torn down to make way for a new Central-Hower High School. Everyone was shifted to the Hower building on Exchange Street, which was then across the street from Children's Medical Center. Dental Assisting was my vocation during my last year of high school, and Mrs. Snyder was my dental assisting teacher.

Searching for old pictures of Akron's school buildings is a hobby of mine. Learning the history of Akron's school system and how it developed is an exciting adventure for me.

Overall, I'd say my first-grade year left the strongest impression in my memory. Perhaps those

first-grade memories are the reasons why I love teaching first grade today in the Akron Public Schools' system.

“I cherish the memories of our pep assemblies and attending championship basketball games when Bob Seigfert was the head coach there.”

—Malynda Riles

O Mary Ann (Likevich) Franz

I remember when I went to school, we had to walk home for lunch every day since we had no cafeteria or lunchroom. So that was four times back and forth, and we didn't have such things as school buses. I went to Miller School, which is not used as a grade school now; but we had kindergarten through eighth grade. In the seventh and eighth grades, we did go to other rooms for different subjects with different teachers. At that time there was no junior high as in the present time. My brother, Steven Likevich, who was older than I, had perfect attendance through 12 years of school, which is quite an accomplishment. He received an award upon graduation from high school.

Going to South High School was a big change because the pupils came from so many different grade schools, and we certainly learned a great deal about different cultures and backgrounds. Most of us, at least 70%, were first-generation Americans; our parents learned the value of education and appreciated it so we used it to great advantage.

O Debra McDonald

I have a few memories of the Akron Public Schools I'd like to share. The three schools I went to are now called something else.

I went to Miller School on Steiner Avenue from kindergarten through the first half of fourth grade. I remember going out to recess and playing on the tall swings and sliding boards. Now Miller School is called the Ott Building.

I then went to Spicer School through the eighth grade. Two memories come to mind. One time our

class was singing in the Christmas program, and we were standing along the wall in the auditorium. It got so hot that I started to faint; and, before I knew it, my favorite fifth-grade teacher Olga Adams was by my side and took me out for fresh air. She read part of the Bible to us usually every day, and I loved to watch her talk because her eyebrows went up and down all the time. I always tell people about her eyebrows and it makes them laugh, but it makes me feel happy because she was a good teacher. The other memory is a sad one. The ONLY time I had a detention in eighth grade was the day John F. Kennedy was shot. I got the detention because I took a small transistor radio to school. While we were in detention, we listened to the news and then we were sent home. Now Spicer School is part of the University of Akron.

I went to Central High School, and we were called the Wildcats. My favorite teacher was Judy Chapman. I have many memories that involve her — going to the Montreal Expo, her becoming a cheerleader advisor with no experience (but she ended up being great), and her coming to my wedding. I loved her very much. Now Central High School is called Central-Hower (to some, not me), and they are called the Eagles.

O Kathie Capriolo

Being a member of the last graduating class of Akron Central High School (1970), I have great memories of my high school days at Central High. Back in the “old days,” we had two gymnasiums, one for girls and one for boys. The boys’ gym was on the second floor above the math classrooms on the first floor.

“I remember the excitement and the sadness felt by all of the students of an era ending and a new one beginning.”

—Kathie Capriolo

Every day at the beginning of math class, the ceiling would start to rumble and shake; sometimes pieces of paint would fall off and come down onto the desks and floor, and the light fixtures would shake! Coach Joe Siegfert, the boys’ physical

education teacher, always started off the boys’ gym classes with calisthenics. While the boys were doing jumping jacks and laps on the gym floor above us, our math teacher, Mr. Gross, just spoke louder. We all adjusted to this daily rattling and shaking happening during math class!

Another memory I have is from the year the Akron schools were trying to pass a school levy (it was either 1969 or 1970). Students were asked to help pass the levy by going door to door to talk with voters and give campaign literature. We were called the “’59ers.” We were called that because at that time there were 59,000 students in the Akron Public Schools; and each one of us was “1 of 59,000 reasons to pass the school levy.” The levy did pass!

The last memory I have is a bittersweet one. During my senior year at Central, we knew we would be the last graduating class of “Wildcats.” The underclassmen, the classes of ’71, ’72 and ’73, were nominating and voting on a new mascot and school colors for their “new” school, Central-Hower. Of course, the colors chosen were a combination of the Central colors and Hower colors: red, white and blue. The mascot selected, the “Eagles,” was voted on after a contest to select a new name. I remember the excitement and the sadness felt by all of the students of an era ending and a new one beginning.

Thanks for the opportunity to share some great memories I have of the Akron Public Schools.

O Marie Kiehl

I remember when I was five years old, and I attended Miller School. This was many, many years ago. I was in kindergarten, and on May Day I remember we had a special program. There was a small stage in the auditorium, and everyone got to see the special program. I had been picked to dance around the Maypole with several other little girls. It was so much fun and the first time I had been picked to be in a special program! The other girls and I each held on to a pretty colored streamer that was attached to the Maypole and danced around it. We were all dressed in beautiful dresses. After our little dance was over, I got to sit in a front-row seat next to Mrs. Mercer, our principal! I don’t know what made me the happiest — dancing around the Maypole or sitting next to Mrs. Mercer in 1927.

“I had been picked to dance around the Maypole with several other little girls. It was so much fun and the first time I had been picked to be in a special program!”

—*Marie Kiehl*

O Joanne Girard

My grandmother and grandfather lived on East Thornton Street. I stayed with them and attended Leggett Elementary School when I was in kindergarten. Mrs. Eva Petty was my teacher. When I wasn't in school, I'd go to Leggett with the neighborhood children to play. One day, the custodian came down the steps in the front of the school and asked me if I would like some crayons. I loved to color and had many coloring books. I said “yes,” and he handed me a large green tin can filled to the top with bits and pieces of crayons! I was amazed. I had that tin box of crayons for years and years. I always looked for it when I visited my grandparents' house. Just recently we were cleaning out my grandmother's house, and I hoped my box of crayons would show up. It never did, but I'll always remember that custodian and the green tin of crayons.

O Dotti Elmore

I remember when Sally Webster taught kindergarten at Henry School, and Alice Green was my first-grade teacher. Never let primary-grade teachers believe they don't have impact on their students! I've never forgotten them, and I'm now a grandmother. Nancy Hanks, Mason Elementary School, fourth grade, gave me excellent math skills. In Mason School's LRC, sixth grade, Mrs. Emerich read us weekly “serials” of Greek mythology and left us in regular suspense until the next week's library period. I still know most of those stories. In the '50s girls could not wear slacks to high school, even in zero weather, at Central High School (the Central “Wildcats”).

O Sam Salem

One day I went to Crosby school, and they were giving out awards, such as “best student,” “best behaved” and “the most progress.” There was a little boy (I don't think he was more than kindergarten-age); and every time they gave an award he'd stand up to receive it, and it would go to somebody else. And he'd go “oh, darn.” The principal, Mrs. Rittenhouse, had cautioned the children, “We're going to have a school board member here, so be on good behavior;” and he was going “darn it.” So finally they said, “Now here's the best all-around award to the best student in the whole school in terms of grades, behavior and progress.” The little boy stood up — and they mentioned somebody else. He began booing. So the principal sent him to the office. On the way out, I saw him sitting there. I said, “You got yourself in trouble, didn't you?” And this little boy looks at me and says, “I can handle it, man.”

O P. J. Russell

I remember when Miss Grandville, first grade at Seiberling Elementary School, rapped my knuckles with a ruler for talking too much, and every report card through third grade having that comment. Now I have two grandchildren at Hatton, and they have the same comment on their report cards.

Mrs. Kist banged chairs on the floor to get our attention in second grade at Seiberling.

I remember waiting to be in sixth grade so that I could be in the Christmas play in the choir. But because of my voice, I was assigned to be one of three narrators. The play was presented in the auditorium on the third floor at Seiberling, which is now the LRC.

I remember being sprayed with a fire extinguisher by the chemistry teacher at East High School, just to see if we were still paying attention.

I remember Mrs. Janice Witherow was the girls' gym teacher at Goodyear Junior High School. We all thought we escaped her when we left for 10th grade at East only to have her transfer and become our gym teacher there. We said "goodbye" again only to have her show up as our 11th-grade health teacher. I went to Hower Vocational School for the 12th grade and was surprised she didn't show up there. She was a hard taskmaster. When my daughter went to Ellet High School, guess who her counselor was? She was great at all three jobs.

O Gary Phillips

I remember when:

- The only PTA fundraiser was the annual paper drive between the boys and the girls. The winner got a sucker.
- You had the boys' playground and the girls' playground, and the boys' door and the girls' door to go into the school.
- You needed a note to stay at school for lunch.
- Seiberling Elementary School had a real cafeteria with real cooks.
- Patrol boys, cafeteria boys and girl lunch-room monitors.
- Air raid drills.
- Students were afraid of teachers.
- Mr. Menesian's bullet passes during lunch.
- Swimming naked at Goodyear for gym.

O Nancy Carter

I started school at the age of five. I attended Seiberling school and had a wonderful kindergarten teacher by the name of Mrs. Monahan. That was back in 1945. Mrs. Monahan gave me a great start to my education. In first grade I had a teacher by the name of Mrs. Fairbanks. She continued that great start.

My father recently passed away, and I have been going through his house getting ready for an estate sale. I have been overwhelmed with the memories I have found. I found my first-grade workbooks from 1946, and they are still in good shape. They were called "The Companion Book for Day In and Day Out" and "Round About." They are what we call workbooks today. They went with the Alice and Jerry books.

I have fond memories of Seiberling School. One memory I have carried with me for a lifetime was in fifth grade. I had a teacher by the name of Mrs. Effinger. She tried to instill in us good penmanship. I liked to write with my pencil between my pointer and middle finger. She had corrected me repeatedly. The last time I ever wrote that way was the day she came up behind me and caught me again. She had a 12" ruler in her hands, and she cracked my knuckles with that ruler. It was a lesson I never forgot.

I attended Seiberling until after the eighth grade. I also found a spelling book I had in eighth grade. I then attended East High School, and my graduating class was the first graduating class to go to the new East High School all three years and graduate. At East I have a very fond memory of a teacher by the name of Mrs. Sturdevant. She taught math and algebra. She helped me understand what algebra was.

This has been a sad experience for me, but it has also brought back many memories.

O Junese Strickland (student)

I remember when I was in the fourth grade at Robinson with Ms. Beverly as my teacher. We were watching the Challenger go into space. The excitement was building; and all eyes were on the TV when they said 5-4-3-2-1, and they went into space. After about two minutes, the worst happened — the Challenger became fireworks of red and orange. There were many tears of sadness that day. Many could not believe what had happened on TV. Many

of us in class didn't understand then. But when I look back now, I understand how much of an impact it had on everyone that day.

O Dolores Bell

I remember in the 1970s, when parents were encouraged to “rap” with their children and communicate with them, not at them. I was fortunate to meet Mr. Brian Williams and Mr. John Yilling through a program they were implementing at Robinson Elementary School which encouraged family/child involvement in education. Parents were hired through the program, called RAP, and encouraged to “rap” with their children during their special times and times set up by them within their homes.

Fond memories of those days, and “rappin’” with my children, can never be forgotten. I must inform you that “rappin’” in the '70s was quite different than “rappin’” in the '90s. My morning rap was given during our daily drive to my school assignment, then as a classroom assistant at Robinson. All three Bell children attended the school, grew used to my morning drill, and were always eager to arrive and go straight to their classrooms.

My daughter still admires Mrs. Jackie Nevels, her sixth-grade teacher, who is now a principal in Worthington, Ohio. My son admired Mrs. Pittman who went on to become a counselor at Goodrich and is now retired. My youngest son fell in love with Mrs. Margaret Bell (deceased) and Mrs. Irene Adler (now teaching at Litchfield). Of course, they enjoyed Mr. Baird, in music, and Mr. Manzie Winters, in the gym. They still drop by on occasion to say “hi” to Mr. Winters at Margaret Park.

I can attest to the fact that the '70s “rappin’” paid off through the RAP program for my children and our family.

The program was a success, for you see, the Brian Williams I speak of is none other than the Mr. Brian Williams who is now at the helm of the Akron Public Schools; and many of the teachers who supported the program can be found in the classrooms in our school system today. As for me, I can be found reading some of the same stories that I had read to the children in the '70s now to the children of the '90s — at Margaret Park's LRC.

O Ruth Cochran Hagstrom

I started kindergarten in 1921 at East High School (now Goodyear Middle School). East soon became too crowded, and there was no elementary school at our end of east Akron.

The Board of Education rented the fourth floor in Goodyear Hall for school. We were transported every day on the freight elevator to our school on the fourth floor.

We were fortunate to be able to use the Goodyear gym for classes and the Goodyear Theatre for our plays. My sister June and I attended there until Hotchkiss was built.

I attended Hotchkiss for 8B and returned to East High School for 8A.

I graduated from East High School in January 1934. Otis Hatton was my principal.

Upon Mr. Hatton's suggestion, I applied for work at the Akron Board of Education. In 1935 I was secretary at Henry and Windemere schools and later the Business Office. I left in 1942 to raise my family (Roger and Janet). Janet is a first-grade teacher at Seiberling.

I was president of Fraunfelter and vice president at Central High School. I returned to the Akron Board of Education during the '60s and worked in the Personnel Office and for Eugene Dominic when he came to the Akron schools. I retired in 1978.

“I graduated from East High School in January 1934. Otis Hatton was my principal.”

—Ruth Cochran Hagstrom

O LaVerne (Daisy Croley) Harris

I remember when I lived on Sanford Avenue and attended George Barber School. I started in kindergarten and graduated from the eighth grade. I loved my school and my teachers, especially Miss Harry, Mrs. Blake, Mrs. Boyle and Principal Janet Morrison.

They taught us true values, morals and manners; and I respected them. After graduating from Barber, I went to East High School. As we went half-day sessions, I always worked the other half day. The first two years I worked in a restaurant;

the last two I worked in east Akron at Hower Department Store. After graduating from East High School in June 1943, I started working for Goodyear Aircraft. A lot of the boys in my class went into the service.

I still live in the same neighborhood as Barber School. I have taken my grandchildren to Barber's playground. All six of my children have gone to Barber and to East High School. In 1998 we will have our 55th reunion!

O Mary Jane Cummings Chandler

I started in kindergarten at Seiberling in September 1923 and graduated from the eighth grade in January 1932. Then I graduated from East High School in January 1936 and from the University of Akron in June 1940.

When I talk with my peers about their school days in other schools in Akron and elsewhere, I find they were quite different from mine. It seems that Seiberling must have been somewhat of a pilot program. The so-called "platoon system," marching single file from class to class, was used. We had a homeroom but went to music room, art room, nature study, gym, auditorium, library, etc., for various extra studies. The "leader" for the day in each class (to lead the line) was determined by behavior, etc. and was a cherished honor. One wore a red and navy "beanie" for the occasion.

The kindergarten was large with a cork floor for quiet and also warmth. There was a large indoor sandbox in an anteroom and a huge outdoor sandbox for nice days. Some children went in the morning and some in the afternoon, and I recall having visitors often to observe.

According to my classmate, Martha Foster Shepherd, whose parents were very active in Home and School League during the construction of Seiberling, the original plan called for a large auditorium to be built at the opposite end from the gym; but the money was not available for this, and the auditorium was on the third floor instead.

We went on a regular basis at least twice a week to the auditorium where Miss Norman held sway. She taught elocution, which amounted to early training in public speaking. Each of us had to recite poetry, tell stories, act in plays, etc. It gave many of us a self-confidence that stood us in good stead in later years. We had been onstage many times and

found it painless. I think this is an area that has been neglected in our schools today. In the auditorium we also had a movie projection booth. As a **special** treat once in a while, Miss Norman would show us an "Our Gang" comedy, travel movies, etc.

Penmanship was stressed heavily. Mrs. Matz, the penmanship teacher, came to our homeroom for about 20 minutes at least three times a week and taught us the Zaner Blosser method of writing. We won certificates — grade school, high school and advanced — for our writing; there was a competitive spirit to excel. I can still identify our writing when I receive letters from friends. I can spot a Zaner Blosser envelope at 50 paces!

Our library was well-used and, like the kindergarten, had a cork floor to absorb sound.

We had two dedicated principals while I was there — Miss McVean and Miss Gladwin — and a staff of caring teachers. In those days married teachers were not allowed unless they were widows, and the only men in the school were the janitor and the boys' gym teacher.

I could go on and on, but at least you get an idea that Seiberling was ahead of its time. I'm proud to say I went there.

"I can spot a Zaner Blosser envelope at 50 paces!"

—Mary Jane Cummings Chandler

O Tammy Gott (student)

I remember when I was a sophomore, and it was my first year playing varsity volleyball. I started on the line-up and received honorable mention all-city. That year the East volleyball team won the city championship, and that was so exciting.

O Mary Lou (Sturm) Verheyen:

I went to Robinson School from first grade in 1944 through eighth grade in 1952, our class being the last class to "graduate" from grade school (eighth grade). We had our graduation at Arlington Street Evangelical United Brethren Church at Arlington and Fifth Avenue.

Mary Helen Bowers began her music teacher career when I was in first grade and retired from the

Akron Public Schools when my youngest of five children was a senior at Central-Hower, and roses were presented to Miss Bowers at the May Festival. I was in the May Festival at the Akron Armory from fifth grade through high school as were three of my five children (at Firestone High). When the city tore down the Akron Armory, I was doing jury duty downtown so I took a brick as a souvenir of very memorable times of singing while I went to the Akron Public Schools.

Mr. Bill Sudak was our gym teacher — young, blonde, handsome — and I'm sure every girl at Robinson had a crush on him!

O Dexter Woodford

I remember when I failed 9A Algebra, and it was a good thing. I took it over in summer school and got 95s and have been good in math ever since. I was on the East High School swim team under Coach Larry Ricker. I graduated from East High School in June 1931. It was in the depths of the Depression — no jobs, not enough money to go to college — so I went back to East High (post-graduate) and took mechanical drawing, typing, two years of German, chemistry, woodworking and a little electricity.

I was on the YMCA swimming team for those two years; the coach, Bus Gladwin, urged me to go to Columbus to see the Ohio State University coach, Mike Peppe, to show him how I swam and to ask if he could give me a job to help me through school. He gave me a job in the towel room at the pool, two hours a day. In the summers I lifeguarded at Virginia Kendall Lake to save money for school (Ohio State University).

In 1935 I went with Coach Ricker and four East High School swimmers to Lake Ariel near Scranton, Pennsylvania, to swim in the National AAU five-mile-long distance race. I won it. Red Woodling was second. The other East High School swimmers finished close enough to the top to win the team trophy — the first time a high school won the team championship in the **national** long-distance meet!

I graduated from Ohio State University in 1937, went back for two years and got a master's in physics with a minor in math. I am in charge of the yearly reunion of East High School graduates for the years of 1925 through 1935 (at Tangier's).

“I remember when I failed 9A Algebra, and it was a good thing.”

—Dexter Woodford

O Delores Stanley

My experiences with our Akron Board of Education began in 1926 when I attended kindergarten at Goodyear Hall. From there it was Mason School, and then we moved to Willard Street in East Akron where I went to Kent School on Arlington Street. It was really an old building — all the floors and stairs were wood.

The other thing I remember is that you never had to flush the toilets — they were automatic. I have a picture of my eighth-grade class taken in front on Arlington Street in 1934.

From there I went to East High. My favorite teacher was Miss Mostnick, and the principal was Mr. Dillahey. I graduated in June 1938. Our graduation was held in Goodyear Hall where it all began.

This was not the end of my time in that building. A new East High School was built, and the former East High School became Goodyear Junior High School. I went back to Goodyear Junior High as a cafeteria worker, and became a manager there until I retired in 1986. All together, I spent 21 years in that wonderful building. My children and grandchildren went to East High School. I still have one granddaughter there now.

O Rebecca Gurnish

I attended the “Haunted School House,” Thomastown Elementary School, from 1959 to 1966. To get to the school, I had to walk up the steep hill on Triplett Boulevard. In late fall, prior to the winter snows, the city street department would dump piles of cinders along the hill for use during the winter weather. On our way home from school, we delighted in running down the hill, up the cinder piles, leaping into the air and then running to the next pile. Sometimes in the spring, we would ring the bell at the Kesselring Dairy; and the nice workers would give us an ice cream or a cold carton of milk.

I remember my kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Knight, telling us we were the noisiest class ever in room 13. I did not understand what room 13 meant! Mr. Coch, my sixth-grade teacher, read from the Bible in the morning prior to saying the Pledge of Allegiance. He also made us stand when we would recite. Our music department was a little lacking; I was chosen to play the bass drum because I could read music and count time. The bass drum had a rip in one side, and my mallet was a wooden spoon!

The Thomastown students were divided for junior high; most students went to Roswell Kent and Garfield, but my little neighborhood went to Goodyear and East. It was easy to lose track of many of my elementary school friends. Imagine how delighted I was, though, at my first open house at Ellet to discover one of my students was the niece of one of my Thomastown buddies!

O Reverend Ronald J. Fowler

As I thought about the ancient Philistines, they only had one giant — and his name was called Goliath. But in my educational experience in the Akron Public Schools, I came across three over at East High School. Those giants were called Krino, Chapman and Dominic. They were great men — men who knew how to take young people and motivate them and help them become what they had a potential to be.

At Robinson Elementary School, there were some other giants by the name of Joy and Duffy and a very wonderful person who followed me throughout all of my career, Barrow. I loved Miss Duffy — she taught me so much, and so did some of the others.

But there was one very important giant in my educational experience — the custodian, Andy Gobilek. He was the educational leader at Robinson. He took many of us and gave us our first job. You talk about school-to-work — well, he understood work-to-school. Because we came at 5 in the morning in the winter and shoveled the sidewalks all around the school. He gave us 50 cents an hour which was big money in those days. Then we got a promotion — Andy made us assistant custodians. After school, Tom Dingle and I swept floors. We were promoted to \$1.10 an hour, I think; and that was great money.

Andy did something else, too. He organized a recreational program for kids in the community. Every Tuesday and Thursday night we played dodgeball and basketball. The gym was opened late in the

evening. What a tremendous thing Andy did for so many of us. Gene Michaels and Gene Woodling also came through this school.

I'm grateful that I met these giants, especially Andy. I'll always be grateful that he believed not only in helping kids to learn; but he believed in helping kids to find character and competence.

O Mrs. Kathryn (Croley) Bennington

My parents moved to Sanford Avenue in 1929 when I was 11 years old. Because there was no nearby public school, I walked to Seiberling Elementary School until George Barber Elementary School was built. We were all delighted with the new school because it was close and because of the lovely teachers. Among them were: Mrs. Blake and Mrs. Helwig, a home economics teacher. Mrs. Helwig had posted in her room a slogan: "A place for everything, and everything in its place." I've tried to stick to that slogan in my life, but haven't always been successful.

After graduating from George Barber, I attended East High School from which I graduated in January 1936. We just celebrated our 60th class reunion in September 1996. I loved school and was very fortunate to have had great teachers.

O Kerry Titcombe (student)

I remember when I was at Seiberling Elementary School, and my favorite thing to do was going to art. Art is the only time when you are allowed to make a mess and get an "A" for it.

O Tammy Weimer (student)

I remember when I woke up late for school and was rushing to get there. I ran to the bathroom, brushed my teeth, combed my hair and pulled it back. I put on my shoes, rushed my brother; and finally we got to the car and left. When I arrived at the school, the parking lot was quite clear. When I arrived at the door, the police officer told me we didn't have any school. I asked, "Why not?" He replied, "Don't you watch the news?" I replied, "No." He said, "East High School had an electrical fire, and there is no school today." I felt really stupid.

O Kathleen Elliott

I have many happy and wonderful memories of my school days at Seiberling School. Mrs. Bendyl, my fourth-grade teacher, stands out as my favorite! I

fondly recall her cheerful smile and sparkling eyes. She included in her teaching extra activities that stimulated interest in learning. The girls made dolls from a white sock. We each fashioned hair from yarn and hand-sewed outfits for our doll. The boys made wooden boats. In one corner of our class stood a large loom where each and every student designed and wove their own hand towel. I still have the one I made in her class. Many other special activities were part of her agenda. How many hours did dear Mrs. Bendyl spend reweaving towels and adding an extra stitch to a doll, as she pondered the needs and ways to give special attention and help to her yearly group? My thanks and appreciation for this special educator have only multiplied through the many years.



O Roger McKissick

I remember in the late '40s Betty Jane School had portable buildings for the two sixth-grade classrooms and a portable for the gym and music programs. Desks were all connected together with wooden runners, and the seat of one was connected to the top of the next desk. We had ink wells in the top of our desks for liquid ink bottles; there were no ball point pens. During recess we had marble tournaments. Everyone went home for lunch; there was no lunch room. Class size was 30 or more.

I went to Betty Jane during all of my grade school years, student-taught there, and later became a part-time teacher in the primary art classes.

“We had ink wells in the top of our desks for liquid ink bottles; there were no ball point pens.”

—Roger McKissick

O Mary Ann Hanes

I remember all my elementary teachers at Ritzman. Mrs. Rubright taught kindergarten, which was held in the school next door because the main building was overcrowded. I was lucky to have the same teacher, Mrs. Cartwright, for first and second grade; and I remember that she would shake the stuffings out of you if you did something wrong. Of course, I never did. For third grade Mrs. Shear was always very strict but fair. Mrs. Frye, my fourth-grade teacher, needed new curtains for the classroom; so naturally I volunteered my mother. For fifth grade we had to study poetry because that was Miss Grant's favorite subject. But sixth and seventh grades were different. Our classroom was in an old portable in the back of the school. Mr. Boxler and Mr. Welch had an honest-to-goodness “black” chalkboard to write on, a cloakroom for us to hang our coats in or to stand in when we were less than agreeable, and an old potbelly stove to fill with coal so that our room was warm. Oh, those were the good old days.

Well, they finally built Hyre Junior High School; and I was in the first eighth-grade class to attend. We picked the Hawk, the school colors and the alma mater.

Then on to Ellet High School where I earned a good education and met my husband, Ernie. We are both 1965 graduates.

Our two sons, Steve and Nate, began their education experience at Windemere, then Hyre and graduated from Ellet in 1994 and 1996. As parents, we were involved with Akron Public Schools even more. My husband worked with the computer club at Windemere for eight years. We both worked in the PTA at all three schools. Our family spent 15 years volunteering with Odyssey of the Mind, Mock Trial, Steel Drums, textbook selection committees, band, musicals and many other activities. Our motto became “Music Makes the Difference.” I had the privilege to serve the Akron Council of PTAs as president, which gave me the opportunity to meet and work with parents, teachers, administrators and school board members from all over the city.

I owe a great debt to the Akron Public Schools for all the lessons (both positive and negative) that shaped my life and that of my family. Thanks to some very special teachers at Ellet High School — Mrs. Baltrinic, Mr. Redding, Mr. Grom, Mr. Terjung, Mrs. Jawyn, Mr. Young and Mr. Pozu — for the lessons.

Oh, yes, my new relationship with Akron Public Schools is as an employee. I can be found in the LRC at Central-Hower, home of the Eagles. Here at Central-Hower, I have found another dedicated staff helping young students to become the leaders of tomorrow.

O Becky Taylor

I remember in the first grade at Windemere having my good friend Maryanne Crimaldi die from kidney disease. My teacher Miss Lynn was so caring and kind as she tried to tell a room full of 6-year-olds that our sweet little friend had died. She held me on her lap because I was so upset.

Today I am working as a Chapter One tutor in the Akron Public Schools and am very proud that I attended the Akron Public Schools for 13 years.

O Joan Gipson

I remember kindergarten at Windemere Elementary School with Mrs. Kenimooth. I remember kindergarten as rows of huge wooden tables with cubbyholes. I remember the paint easel that always had promises of beautiful rainbow colors only to find

them all mixed together when it finally became my turn. How devastating! I remember once she would not let me go to the restroom because the class had just gone. She soon found that she really should have let me go. She never denied my request again.

I remember my first-grade teacher at Hatton, Mrs. Williamson. She encouraged my love of writing. She used to ask me to read my stories to the guests that came to our room. This is a very special memory.

I remember I.T.A. — do you? Remember those strange letter combinations that were supposed to help you read better? It had something to do with writing a word the way it sounded.

I remember Miss Abdoo (who later that summer became Mrs. Hromco). She read us “Charlotte’s Web.” I read it to my own students every year now.

“Remember when ‘ladies didn’t wear slacks?’”

—Joan Gipson

Remember when “ladies didn’t wear slacks?” I was in fifth grade before the policy changed. Mrs. Herlbert, my fifth-grade teacher, didn’t believe in ladies in slacks; so it was sixth grade before I wore slacks to school. (And pantsuits — remember them?) Gym class in grade school was a ritual of “go to the restroom, put your pants under your dress, go to gym, go back to the restroom, take off the pants, go to the classroom.”

To Herr Tittle, Herr Frank, und Frau Schmidt ... danke shon. I can still hear Herr Tittle saying, “Die fergel fliegen und tanzen und Coca Cola trinken.” (Forgive my spelling — it’s been years.)

I remember Miss Redovian and our trip to eat crepes — a fancy word for flat but tasty pancakes. Merci!

I remember Mr. Monroe who was the only

“I remember always getting stuck playing the rhythm sticks when everyone else got to play the cymbals or triangles.”

—Jane Petersen Miles

teacher in my 12 years of school who gave me a detention (for getting in my locker between classes). How devastating!

I remember the late Tony Okolish and his extra credit. I remember Mr. Singer and his flashlight arrow in biology class. I remember Mrs. Ellet’s journals. I remember Mr. Shellenberger giving extra credit on his tests if you spelled his name right. I remember playing cards in Ellet High senior study hall.

I remember a group of us used to call ourselves “Rachita’s Bananas” because we would hang around then-assistant principal Alex Rachita’s office. It was the only way we ever saw the office.

I remember school plays and speech competitions with the late Dan MacLachlan. He went from teacher to friend to family friend. He was at my house when I brought my newborn daughter home five years after graduation. He will be greatly missed.

It seems that every time I left a school, they got a new addition. Hatton got a library, Hyre got a community center, and Ellet got a vocational wing.

From the teachers who handled the day-to-day grind, to the secretaries who handled the bureaucracy, to the librarians who saved us from study halls, to the custodians who saved us from ourselves, I thank you!!

O Vanessa Casteel (student)

I remember when I was at Hatton, and I could go up to my first-grade teacher and give her a hug. She would look so pleased and be so happy when you showed her you cared. Mrs. Ondack retired after I had her, but the memory is still strong.

O Sylvia Deming Kling

I went to Betty Jane School. I started there when I was six. That was so many years ago. My granddaughter goes there now. I remember walking to school every morning, then home for lunch and back again. We got 1-1/2 hours for lunch. It was 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., but we walked home and back in that time only to walk home again at the end of the day. I still have cinders in my knees from falling down the path.

In third grade I remember the cold portable buildings we had class in. Miss Dobbins was my principal.

O Pat Shepard

I remember when in the fourth grade at Ritzman Elementary School during recess from Miss Juanita Luke's fourth-fifth split class, I had a very sticky experience. Each spring the Ritzman playground became a pit of thick, gooey mud that you could easily sink at least 3" into. Miss Luke made sure that we had put on our rubber boots, but the mud was like glue! I was going to master those dreaded monkey bars before the others got out on them. Approximately 3-1/2 ft. away from the monkey bars, my boots got stuck. I tried to pull out of the mud, but the boot and shoe remained while my sock-covered foot went right into the mud! I then tried to reach for the step bar but fell face first into the sticky mess. My mom was called to bring me clean, dry clothes; this was when little girls only wore dresses to school — she wasn't very happy with me. That day she had permitted me to wear my new Easter dress and shoes!

“I remember when in first grade we all traveled in single file to the basement gym at Ritzman Elementary School to receive our smallpox vaccinations.”

—Pat Shepard

I remember when in first grade we all traveled in single file to the basement gym at Ritzman Elementary School to receive our smallpox vaccinations. The doctors sat at tables ready for us; they looked like the men on the Luden's Cough Drop box — beards and all. They held out these extremely long needles that each of us cringed at while waiting to be “shot.” Afterward, our teacher would walk us single file back to the classroom having us spin our arms around like helicopters — something about helping the medicine work???



O Nancy Schneider

In the early '60s I was a third-grade student in Mrs. Betty Watts' class at Case School. That was the time when we could still walk home from school for lunch if we lived close enough. I was lucky that I did. There was a small group of us, close to the same age, who would walk back and forth faithfully together every day. We would have "pickle parties" occasionally on our way back from lunch. We would get from our mothers a big Polish gherkin wrapped in a paper napkin to nibble on during our walk back to school. I had the bright idea one day that I would save mine in my desk all afternoon until it was time to go home at the close of the school day. Needless to say, that pickle put an interesting fragrance in the classroom; and I was distracted all afternoon. Of course, at the end of the day, Mrs. Watts told me not to do it again! I wasn't surprised.

O Jane Petersen Miles

I remember when I was a kindergartner in Mrs. Krahl's class at Fairlawn School in 1950. Our classroom was an attic. She had a wooden birthday cake I always wished was real. I remember always getting stuck playing the rhythm sticks when everyone else got to play the cymbals or triangles. We made clay ashtrays, grabbing big, wet handfuls of gray clay out of barrels.

In first grade, Miss Miriam Clouse ruled with a no-nonsense hand. We were told to keep our hands folded, and we obeyed completely. She had a small bathroom in the back of the class and washed mouths out with soap (not mine!).

I was a second-grader when Fairlawn School was adding on. My class went to school in the Fairlawn Civic Center across the street — literally a one-room schoolhouse. Mrs. Madeline Foust taught us there. I had a picture taken for the *Beacon Journal* standing on a ladder in the apple blossom trees on the property. Miss Beatrice Singer, the Fairlawn principal, used to walk over and beam at us. We made vegetable soup and planted a tree on Arbor Day.

In third grade, back in Fairlawn School itself, I had a wonderful young teacher (Miss Scott) who later became Mrs. Russell. We made samplers, candles, soap, tom-toms — we even had a store inside

the classroom made of 2x4s and clear sheeting. Miss Scott was a very hands-on teacher. On a weekly basis, Ralph Gillman used to speak to us on the P.A. about music. Martin Essex, the superintendent, used to talk to us, also.

In fourth grade, Genevieve Spring (later, Yanke) let us make a huge mural on Egypt. She wouldn't tolerate any misbehavior, and I remember her shaking a redheaded boy so hard for talking "baby-talk" that he turned as red as his hair!

In fifth grade Mrs. Sarah Caldwell was a benign presence — until I **copied** a report. That made her very angry, and I had to rewrite it in my own words. It was a fine lesson. She took some of us to the cafeteria in the basement and worked with us until we understood what fractions were. She had a cardboard pie, and it suddenly dawned on me what she was trying to teach! She kept a poster on the cupboard door of the complete multiplication tables through the 12s — all year long I familiarized myself with it. I'm forever grateful!

At the sixth grade "graduation" from Fairlawn, we were lined up to march into the auditorium for the ceremony. A group of us girls felt we had finally grown up enough to wear lipstick. Someone produced a tube of fire-engine red; and we all cut into the girls bathroom and smeared our lips crimson, then got back in line. When our teacher came back and saw us, she was **horrified**, and proceeded to marshal the other women teachers and moms to scrub our mouths so the ceremony could begin!

I have lots of memories — of Simon Perkins and Buchtel High School, of white gym suits, fingernail and collar inspections, strict and orderly classrooms where teachers sat and students worked and girls wore skirts everyday and boys wore dress slacks and tucked-in shirts. I had many great teachers, and I got a **fine** education. We did what we were told, didn't question authority at school, tried to meet high expectations, and learned and grew intellectually. I am so glad I went to school then.

O Alisha Bretzfelder

I remember when it was 1982. I was in the ninth grade at Litchfield Junior High School, and my persuasive speech was about "why everyone should be a preppie." I delivered that speech on the stage of drama room 107. It catapulted me to a mini-popu-

larity status resulting in my winning the “preppiest girl” award for the year (soon thereafter I went into my all-black/new-wave stage that nearly killed my father).

Now, sometimes when I am teaching my sixth graders at Litchfield in room 107, I catch myself occasionally glancing at the stage and grinning. The more things change, the more they remain the same!

O Linda Kersker

Portage Path School was my first school in Akron. I believe I started there in 1952. I think that my years there were formative of my life presently. When I started out there in kindergarten, my teacher was named Miss Winter; and at the Christmas pageant there were only three talking parts. There was Mr. Claus, Mrs. Claus and the talking pixie. I was the talking pixie. It sort of started me in my talking career.

Also in kindergarten we had a school carnival where the kindergartners each entertained on the stage, and I was the hula dancer. That was also formative because for some reason when I sang the Hawaiian war chant off-key and in a very loud tone, I got fan mail from the school. So I got reinforced for performing in public.

I had a great time at Portage Path also because I had a very progressive mother. She allowed me as a first-grader to go down to Mary Coyle’s with 30 cents to buy hamburgers. Only four boys and I were allowed to do this. We had passes to leave and go down to Highland Square. I think it gave me a feeling that I was trusted by my parents, and I also learned not to fear the world. This was a great place to start.

After Portage Path, I went to Case Elementary School, then Litchfield, and then Firestone. I was among the original group of baby boomers to go through the Akron Public Schools’ system. I will be 50 on my next birthday, and I was in the graduating class of 1965 at Firestone High School. Before I was at Firestone, I was at Litchfield where I was a cheerleader. I’m telling you that because I’d like to tell you how Firestone High School got its colors and how it became the Firestone Falcons.

Having been a cheerleader in junior high (we called it junior high back then) and having written the ninth-grade graduation address, I had said in there “how exciting it will be to establish traditions

that will be followed many years after our graduation from senior high. We, being the first class, will have the privilege of setting patterns for the future.” What I meant by that was that having been at Litchfield and having been the Litchfield Argonauts, I’d had enough of being “highfalutin’” and it was very hard to spell Argonauts. My sisters both went to Buchtel, and they had been the Griffins. I got myself in charge of the committee to pick the colors and the school mascot. I was determined to have a bird like the Griffins. So we ended up the Falcons. And I thought that I looked good in green, so we ended up with green and gold.

When I came to Firestone, I continued in my career in having very little pride when I performed in public. Testament to that fact is a picture in the yearbook. It says “Linda ‘Morticia’ Kersker mesmerizes the audience at the senior talent show.” I can’t imagine how I could have worn a bathing cap with yarn glued to it.

I had a wonderful start to my life through the Akron Public Schools, and I’m glad to be on the Akron Board of Education now and to be able to give something back to those wonderful schools.

“Before I was at Firestone, I was at Litchfield where I was a cheerleader.”

—Linda Kersker

O Barbara Roduner

Two distinct school memories stand out for me. One was at Fairlawn Elementary School. My teacher, Mrs. North, was absent. I was very curious as to the reason since Mrs. North was never absent. At that time I worked in the school cafeteria. My classroom was directly across from the school office. As I left class early for my “job,” I passed the office just at the moment that the secretary, Mrs. Bone, told a parent that Mrs. North’s mother had died the night before. This was the first time I had considered that teachers had families and lives of their own. It was a revelation!

“My second memory was my fear of leaving elementary school to enter junior high school.”

—Barbara Roduner

My second memory was my fear of leaving elementary school to enter junior high school. One of my best friends was Judy Resnik, who was the same age as me but one year ahead of me in school. I told her of my fears of the “hoods.” Judy told me to just stay away from the kids with long, greasy hair, Cuban heels and turned-up collars; and I’d be fine. She was right, and I made it through!

O Janet Lippincott

I have many fond memories of my K-12 years in the Akron Public Schools. Recalling and writing this list is like playing “Do you remember when ...” Some are very distant memories, but some things will never change it seems.

King School — row tag, Christmas plays, reading contests, spelling tests, putting on plays in the LRC, stained-glass windows, a *new* wall gym (that we got to demonstrate during Open House), the doll corner, the haunted tunnel at the carnival, lunch boxes and 5-cent milk.

Litchfield Junior High School — water fights in the hall; running the track; vocabulary lists; diagramming sentences; dissecting cats; the A, B and C teams (seventh grade); study hall in the library; fighting with lockers that wouldn’t open; lunch money and eating in the cafeteria.

Firestone High School — reading aloud in Mrs. Europe Smith’s class, avoiding “The Pit,” championship basketball games, state swim meets, ninth-period release, French fries, Mr. Bob Hatherill, smoke in the chemistry lab, HIRC (it was new then), plays and gymnastics practice at 6 a.m.

O Diane T. Hartong

I fondly remember Mr. Hammett, my seventh-grade math teacher at Litchfield Junior High. He was a wonderful teacher with a great personality, and everybody in the class liked him. For several days at the beginning of class, we would joke around with Mr. H before checking math homework and starting

the next lesson. We tried to stretch out “joke time” for as long as we could, figuring that there wouldn’t be much time left in the period for math. Well, it didn’t take Mr. H very long to discover what we were up to! Finally, he said, “It’s time to draw the line; this has gotten out of control!” The next day we arrived for class, but Mr. H was not yet there. One boy went up to the chalkboard at the front of the room and drew a horizontal chalkline from one end of the board to the other. Above it, he wrote the words: “We have drawn the line, Mr. Hammett!!” When he walked into the room, Mr. H laughed, realizing that we had gotten the message. We got down to business right away from that day forward.

O Celisa Clift (kindergarten student)

I remember when I first saw a little Ronald McDonald house in the housing part of my room. I will never forget I played with my first Ronald McDonald house at David Hill School.

O James Bradford

I attended McEbright grade school on Cole Avenue from 1948-1954. I started in the half-day kindergarten and attended most of the way through fifth grade. We then moved to the suburbs, and I was broken-hearted to leave McEbright and all my friends.

Some of the experiences I would like to share are some of my fondest memories. It seems the playground was paved with asphalt around 1950, a big improvement from the previous dirt playground; but it was rough on the hands and knees. Since Akron was the “Rubber Capital,” I guess one of the rubber companies came up with a plan to cover our playground with shredded rubber. The rubber pieces were a gray-black color and in small pieces like shredded cheese. The rubber was spread all over the playground and was especially thick under the playground equipment. To a six- or seven-year-old, it seemed as if we could jump off moving equipment and bounce when we hit the ground.

My next great remembrance was the “airways” that provided air to the basement area, which as I recall housed the gym. These airways were about 8’ deep x 5’ wide x 8’ long. On the weekends and in the summer we would drop down into this pit, with hearts throbbing, thinking how will we get out! By the end of the summer, we were able to get a running start, bounce off the end wall, get a fingerhold on the top edge, then proudly pull ourselves out. It didn’t matter how many times we did this, and it was hundreds; there was still the excitement of “I wonder if I can do it this time,” especially when it was no longer cool to have the board in place just in case.

I took my wife, Mary Ann, to McEbright last summer in hopes of showing off while she watched as I dropped into the airway and sprang back out like a cat! Thankfully, the airways have been topped off with heavy chainlink fence; and I didn’t have to prove myself.

My final fond remembrance was the summer games set up for the neighborhood kids. It seemed wonderful to get up in the morning and walk to

school to play but not have to go into the school. My favorite game was the “KARAM TABLES,” placed under the shade trees on the grassy areas. Maybe they were named for Elias Karam, our retired marketing teacher.

McEbright was a great school to attend; however, I never did find out for certain if Mrs. Clinger, our principal, really did have an electric rubber paddle. In the early ’50s we still had air-raid drills at school marked by the piercing sound of a siren. It was right after World War II, and Akron’s rubber industry was a strategic target for the enemy. I remember being worried when I heard the siren, and we all went into the halls for the air-raid drill. I can’t forget the smell of the rubber as it poured into our classroom when the windows were open, but we were told that it was a good smell because it meant jobs for our dads.

“I can’t forget the smell of the rubber as it poured into our classroom when the windows were open, but we were told that it was a good smell because it meant jobs for our dads.”

—James Bradford

O Juanita Watson

I started going to Glover Elementary School in 1935, then I went to Garfield High School. At that time, school furnished all supplies; and classes were large enough so two children sat together at one desk. The teachers were stern but very caring and loving. As at home, we were taught respect and discipline. It didn’t enter our minds to sass or be unruly. We never questioned why we were there or what we were expected to do. Most of the time, we walked back and forth to school with no thought of the word “molester.” We were naive and trusting of everyone, and this continued through most of the coming years. Yes, those were the “good old days.”

O Jennifer Gulley

I remember when teachers were your friend. They were your mom or dad away from home. I re-

member when it was okay for a teacher to hug you or pat you on the back while saying “Good job!” I remember when it was okay for teachers to invite you to their homes or for you to invite them to yours.

I remember when it was okay for teachers to give you a lift home because you weren’t feeling well or because you had a lot to carry. Or maybe just because she was going that way.

I remember when it was okay to be scolded by your teacher as she was simply trying to keep you on the right path of life.

I look into my children’s eyes, and I shed a tear because they won’t have the fond memories of the Akron Public Schools as I have.

(I attended Robinson and Glover elementary schools, Goodrich Junior High School and Garfield High School.)

O Cheryl Uplinger Rankin

I attended Hill, Goodrich and Garfield. I remember when girls had to wear skirts every day. Pants could only be worn underneath your skirt to and from school (during the winter). Also, your skirt had to come to your knees (this was checked by getting down on your knees and your skirt touching the floor). I also remember that the cost of school lunches was 35 cents a day in the 1959-1960 school year (the Johnny Marzetti and macaroni ‘n’ cheese were very tasty!).

O Shirley Elliott

For first grade at David Hill, I had Mrs. Lewis. I thought she was WONDERFUL. I don’t think there was a mean hair on her head. I can remember sitting in my reading group one day when it was my turn to read about Dick, Jane and Spot. This was our first time in reading group. As I was reading, I was also thinking, “Wow! I can really READ these words. How did that happen? How did I know these words?” It was a very exciting moment to realize that words can make a story. I’ve been an avid reader ever since.

O Carol Hendrickson

I remember the day that I learned to read! I was sitting in Miss Ramey’s first-grade class at Voris School. All of a sudden, I knew the words that she was placing in that old wooden pocket chart stand. I feel very fortunate to remember that moment because now I’m teaching children to read in my new

kindergarten class.

Just as vivid a memory was the day I was sent to the corner for talking. I remember saying, “Who? Me?”

First grade teaches us a lot.

O Gloria Terry

I remember attending Goodrich School in the early ‘40s. In the first and second grade I cried through the whole school year. Goodrich was the only school that had a multi-handicapped class at that time. I had never seen or been around handicapped children. When I would see them; and I did occasionally, they made a great impression in my little mind — not a very good one, since I would cry and cry.

Today, I am working with multi-handicapped children here at Goodrich Middle School and guess what? I love the job! I love the children and would not want it any other way!

P.S. I also remember once a month Goodrich had an ice cream bar sale. If you got an ice cream bar with a “pink” center, you were entitled to a free ice cream bar. That was fun. ...

“In the first and second grade I cried through the whole school year.”

—Gloria Terry

O Elzona Humphrey Bufford

I remember when all of the children went to the school in their neighborhood. Catholic children went to their parish school. I attended Goodrich, when it was an elementary school, from kindergarten through third grade. I went to McBright for two years, then back to Goodrich when it was a junior high. I graduated from Garfield High School.

When I went to school, all of the children came home for lunch; it was a red-letter day when you got to carry your lunch to school. Lunch to school was usually a peanut-butter sandwich on bread my mother made and an apple. You drank water for a liquid or, if you were lucky, milk in a fruit jar. Drinks were kept on the windowsill to keep them chilled. We ate in the classroom because there was no cafeteria.

Now children have a red-letter day when they go home for lunch. What was a red-letter day then is just the opposite now (67 years later).

O Nancy Randall

I am a member of the three “Gs” (Glover, Goodrich and Garfield). I have many wonderful memories of my time with those Akron Public Schools. My memories include my mom’s involvement with PTA and volunteering at those schools. I was always proud when my mom was doing something at my school! It is a tradition I began myself over 12 years ago.

When I was at Glover I remember our auditorium, complete with stage (now the LRC), where we performed for students and parents, and the multi-purpose room on the ground level (now classrooms) which served as our cafeteria and kitchen. “Real” meals were prepared there daily. I was a cafeteria helper in the sixth grade and assisted with serving the orthopedic students as well as rolling silverware every day!

At Goodrich Junior High (grades 7-9), I remember being there a year before the addition was built. Our cafeteria and kitchen were on the ground floor, Coventry side of the building. They are classrooms now. I thought it was so neat to change classes! Our auditorium is a computer lab now. When I went to school, there were more windows in all my schools.

Garfield were awesome — it was so huge! We were grades 10 through 12. I remember fantastic pep assemblies, driver’s ed. training, and the time my biology partner and I thought our equipment was going to explode! We were proud to be Golden Rams.

In 1998 I will celebrate my 25th class reunion, our oldest son will graduate from Garfield, and our youngest son will become a freshman. By the way, they are members of the 3 “G’s,” too!

I was blessed to have been positively influenced by wonderful educators, not only teachers but support staff, and PTA parents. I am proud to be an APS graduate, employee and volunteer!

“My memories include my mom’s involvement with PTA and volunteering at those schools. I was always proud when my mom was doing something at my school!”

—Nancy Randall



O Nancy F. (Waybright) Adams

I remember when my mother was a teacher and the schools of Akron played a major role in all of our lives.

It is with joy in remembrance that Mrs. Paul G. Adams (Nancy Waybright) steps back in time to tell of my mother, Adella Waybright, her past association with the Akron Public Schools and the legacy she passed on to daughter and granddaughter. If living, she would be 100 this year, 1997; but she passed away at age 86.

Four years before I was born the legacy began. In the school year 1931-1932, my mother was president of Rimer School Parent Teacher Association when my brother, Dennis C. Waybright Jr., was student there. When I was six and starting first grade at Rimer, he was 18 and graduating from Kenmore High School as president of his class of January 1941. Yes, we were 13 years apart; and we had some of the same teachers.

I can't pass over my Rimer School years without recalling a few wonderful teachers — Mary Spicer, Betty Heepe, Florence Crano, Miss Elliott, Miss Irwin, Grace Connally, Agnes Hannig and Mrs. (Blasco) Tarr. Jenny Adams was principal when I attended.

The fondest grade school memories and my love of music were nurtured by our school music teacher, Mary Hough. The highest point of each year was singing in the May Festival of Music held at the Akron Armory. The combined choirs and orchestra were under the baton of Guest Philharmonic/Symphony Orchestra Conductor Guy Frasier Harrison. Awesome experience! I'll never forget, though, how terrified I was playing a piano solo, Chopin's "Polonaise ('Military') in A, Op. 40, No. 1," at my grade school graduation! I got through it.

On to Kenmore High School, where R. L. Fouse was principal for both my brother and me. In my sophomore year my father had the first of three strokes. Mother had graduated from the Normal School for Teachers/Madison College in Virginia. The old brass school hand bell she used to call her students to class rests today on the mantel above my fireplace. She began to substitute teach in the Akron public grade schools.

My mother's ability was greatly respected and much sought after in the Kenmore schools. Many principals, teachers and students from Rimer, High-

land Park, Smith, Colonial, Heminger, Margaret Park, Lawndale, Pfeiffer and also many other grade schools in the Firestone Park district would remember her. In many instances she was a long- or extended-term substitute. She did this for 17 years, stopping in her early 70s.

Of all my school years, high school was my favorite — in music ... choirs, singing with a group of 13 girls called the "Cardettes" with Miriam Haynes our terrific director; in physical education ... a four-year member of K-Club (girls' athletic club) with Ruth Hickox, teacher and leader. Today I still sing and play the piano, but I'd rather not see me try a backflip into a split or swing to any position on the parallel bars!

A few other teachers I fondly remember are Miss Sprenger with whom I took four years of Spanish. Harry Daitch taught Senior Problems and Career Planning and was in guidance. He and his wife, Hilda, remained our friends until they passed on. Mr. Bauman, a very kind Christian man and history teacher, taught both my brother and me. If you were fortunate enough to have Olive Davis for math, you had the best. It would take too long to mention so many others.

I remember also being terrified at my high school graduation. Being one of the top four scholastically in the class of 1953, I was asked to write and give a speech on the topic "Youth Today in Politics." I got through it! You'd think after 12 years I wouldn't get so uptight.

On to the University of Akron, Alpha Delta Pi Sorority and marriage to Paul Adams, who also graduated from Smith School, Kenmore High School and the University of Akron. After moving around, we settled in Bath Township to raise our three children.

In the school year 1968-1969, 37 years after my mother, the legacy was passed on to daughter when I was president of Bath School Parent Teacher Association.

In this school year 1996-1997, 65 years later, the legacy is passed once again from grandmother to granddaughter and mother to daughter as Jodi Adams Tucker (Mrs. Peter J.) is now president of Firestone Park Elementary School Parent Teacher Association. Jodi, with her three children all in school, plans to return to the University of Akron for re-certification to once again teach music in the public schools.

“Of all my school years, high school was my favorite ...”

—*Nancy F. (Waybright) Adams*

We noticed that the PTA pin/pendant given to each president has changed very little over the years. Each of us has been proud to have served our children and their schools in this way. I plan to put the three pins on a bracelet for Jodi. Someday, she just possibly might pass it on to one of her daughters to add a fourth pin to the bracelet, carrying on mother’s legacy to a great-granddaughter.

Thank you, Mom, for giving us a desire for knowledge and teaching us the importance of a good education! This we have achieved through the schools of Akron!

O Paul G. Adams

I remember when we put magnesium chips in the drinking fountains at Kenmore High School. Between classes when everyone got a drink, the water and magnesium reacted with noise and vapors emptying the school. Pop Callahan (Physics) and Jerry Brown (Chemistry) were very upset.

I remember when, at Smith School in fifth or sixth grade, R.D. jumped onto the window frame inside on the “third” floor (really the second floor) and threatened to jump. Mrs. White (Math) called his bluff. He jumped with an agonizing scream. Mrs. White almost had heart failure. What she did not know was a high delivery truck was just below. R.D. jumped down 3-4 feet to the truck top, to the truck hood, to the ground. His “dying” yell was perfect. The class laughed. Mrs. White fumed.

I remember at Smith School we all decided to climb the steep retaining stone wall for a spring suntan. We must have had 50 kids on the wall. The principal had to get the police to get us all off.

O Joyce Eden Wagner, R.N.

I remember when, in 1938, I was going to start school! First grade at Lawndale School (kindergarten — what was that?). I had to know my “letters,” colors and numbers (1-10). We had registered in May, so I had **all** summer to learn what I did not know.

We were taught phonics — sounds to the let-

ters now — “Dick saw Jane,” etc. At the end of first grade, I was reading the comics and most of the newspaper — I was so proud. In math I learned to add in first grade. Once a week we had music and art.

In winter it was so cold to walk to school. We were lucky — Dad had a car, but he drove it to work. Children walked to school — all (boys and girls) wore boots with metal fasteners, snow pants, coats, hats, gloves and scarves. There were no antibiotics yet. We had to “bundle up” to keep warm and well. My first-grade teacher was Miss Cope who became Mrs. Louis Bauman that year (1938-1939). Mr. Bauman was my history teacher at Kenmore High School in 1948. Both were at our 40th class reunion and both were retired from APS.

O Sharon Frounfelker

I remember when we went home for lunch every day from Heminger School. In first grade in 1966-1967, the PTA would have a sloppy joe luncheon once a quarter. We thought that was a **real** big deal because no one ate at school back then.

I grew up in Akron schools, and I’m proud to still be a part of this fine system as a teacher.

O Becky Taylor

I remember in the fifth grade having Mr. Stroll as my teacher at Pfeiffer. He was also one of the football coaches at Kenmore High School, and he would reward us for good behavior with tickets to the games. He also brought other prizes for our Friday rewards. He was a wonderful teacher.

Today I am working as a Chapter One tutor in the Akron Public Schools and am very proud that I attended the Akron Public Schools for 13 years.

O Bryan Douglas Schall

I remember when I was almost 10, I went to my first school in the Akron Public Schools — Heminger. I met my first-grade teacher, Mrs. VanBelt. She was the best teacher I’d ever had because she had red hair like me; and she used to have to tie me in my seat because I would run around the room after my girlfriend, Kathy Kroski (I still love to!). The other reason I love Mrs. VanBelt is that she was the only one to show me why I love my Lord, my God, today! Thank God for all schools in Akron; and thank you, God, for Mrs. VanBelt.

O Linda K. (Moore) Messner

Wasn't it yesterday that I walked home from Pfeiffer Elementary School all bundled with leggings and boots, anticipating what my mother would be cooking me for lunch? Wasn't it yesterday she'd greet me, ever so eager to hear how my morning had gone and ever so lovingly resnap my coat, belly full of French toast or hot soup or homemade pie, and send me off for my afternoon at Pfeiffer?

In those days school would start at 9 a.m. We would leave at 11:30 a.m. to return to our homes where mothers would greet us, feed us and reassure us daily. Again, we would walk to school by 1 p.m. Dismissal was at 3:15 p.m.

You see, neighborhood schools were the magical havens of learning, totally supported by prideful communities and loving parents who knew education was the key to the future, its children the window to tomorrow. Surrounded in love we made our daily treks from one loving, respectful, safe place to another.

Mrs. Bey, my first-grade teacher, also my older brother's (of six years) and my younger sister's (of five years) first-grade teacher, knew Mr. and Mrs. Moore and their children. We spanned 12 years of carnivals and cake walks and sloppy joes and Little Bo Peep costumes. She loved us.

Those elementary years began with Mrs. Bey and ended magnificently with our sixth-grade teacher, Mrs. Friarson. Her daily Bible stories proved to be a strong and lasting and significant cornerstone of all of our lives. Maybe she was the one who taught me to "... do unto others as you would have others do unto you. ..." It has served me well as a single rule I used as an Akron Public Schools' teacher for almost eight years where I wrote the high school speech curriculum which mandated speech as a graduation requirement. Everything fits within that guideline she taught so well, so long ago. She captivated us with her stories.

Those walks to and from school, whether alone through new-fallen snow, or coupled with friends and laughter, were always a journey to the magical, safe, wondrous time of childhood. Sometimes during recess I recall feeling as if I were on top of a mountain on that Pfeiffer playground, and the world was mine.

The Akron Public Schools maintained such continuity. As a class we journeyed to Innes and joined others who would one day graduate from Kenmore

High School where my parents and grandparents before me had gone. Bob Moore, my brother, would be valedictorian and go on to graduate from Harvard. How proud my parents were. Dad, then principal of Central High School, as it was then, surely must have thought of his own son as Dad so eloquently addressed his seniors.

There were other times, treasured times, when Dad would address students. I recall one basketball championship game, when Dad went down to the locker room offering words of encouragement to those players and the promise that if they won they would be invited to our home in Kenmore where his wife, Mrs. Moore, would make homemade pizza for all of them. They won! Mother fed an entire basketball team, coaches and all. We had pizzas rising all over all of our beds and tables and couches. Mother borrowed pizza pans from everyone. That day, that magnificent team, that spirit, my parents, that pizza, all live on in the minds of all who entered there. Joe Siegfert, basketball coach extraordinaire, led Central High School to a state championship that year. The wide-eyed daughters and son of the principal welcomed those fine young men, including Nate Thurmond, into our home for that incredible pizza and fellowship.

It would be 30-plus years later when Nate Thurmond would return to what is now Central-Hower High School for Nate Thurmond Day, where my mother would address the student body and recall the magic of yesterday, the hope of today. Students were spellbound. Alas, Nate and his wife would return to San Francisco, but not until Nate gave due credit to Donald Leach, dear educator and friend and driving teacher of Nate.

Only last summer upon visiting Nate's restaurant in San Francisco did the entire life cycle come to closure as Nate Thurmond held Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Moore's first great grandchild. Dad would have been so proud to know that Nate, young basketball star, now held Dylan Moore — all two months of him.

There were Wildcat Feasts where J. Ray Stine would prepare sauerkraut for the male faculty. In those Martin Essex days "wannabe" principals would paint houses together during the summer; and, as fate would have it, Fred Weber would be named as principal with Dad shortly thereafter and Mardis Williams, too. Mr. Williams was principal at Kenmore, and Joseph Friedman was assistant principal.

I remember my senior year, Mr. Friedman called me to his office and asked me to “intone” the words of our alma mater for commencement to be held at the Akron Baptist Temple. Wasn’t it yesterday Krispy Kreme donuts were the size of saucers and every parent and teacher belonged to the PTA?

Time passes so quietly and quickly that it is only those moments that catch us off guard that truly enlighten us, and we know we touched a life. Exhausted after a 12-hour day at Disney World in Orlando, I knew someone was watching me. “Mrs. Messner,” he courteously called across the Mickey gift shop. “Yes,” I responded. “Iggy Castrasano!” “Yes, remember you were my teacher at Hyre Junior High School.” Language Arts was a double period in those days. Now, block scheduling is the ’90s term. There Iggy stood 1100 miles from Akron, children in his arms, my hair hanging ... what a gift!

Those Innes days, an almost two-mile walk from home brought a whole new meaning to leggings. You see in 1960 girls were certainly not permitted to wear slacks to school — ever! So we would wear slacks or leggings to walk in and then take them off over boots upon arrival. Some days my feet never did become warm. My heart did, though, as we journeyed through junior high school, obtaining a real locker and changing classes nine periods a day, having Mrs. Tenney as my cheerleading advisor and building the anticipation of going to Kenmore High School.

As a class, many of us still neighbors, we stood on the threshold of those incredible high school years. We continued to have nine periods which allowed for a period for Student Council and one for yearbook and one for cheerleading. Those magnificent classes taught lessons of leadership no other class could do. As president of Student Council, editor-in-chief of the yearbook and captain of the cheerleaders, the Akron Public Schools touched my life as significantly as anything or anyone ever has.

In those days school spirit reigned supreme; and most all students thought school was a good idea, and the Akron Public Schools were the best.

I recall as a child that Dad, then principal of West Junior High School which was located strategically across from Krispy Kreme Donuts, was able to be home summers. Principals, like teachers, were off summers. Elementary schools did not provide lunches. There were no cafeterias, although in junior and

senior high school we could actually eat at school — what a thrill. Still, there was no such thing as a free and/or reduced lunch. You could brown-bag it. Buy your own. Study. Talk with friends. Visit the trophy case. Think. Dream.

The Akron Public Schools ... they have been a true core of my entire existence. As a child, Dr. Martin Essex, superintendent, hired my dad who became principal and served the system magnificently his entire career until his untimely death in 1974 while still being principal. Conrad Ott, then superintendent, closed schools that afternoon so that hundreds might pay their respects. Harold Hanna from Central High School was my marvelous supervising teacher and gave me the tools to teach. Everyone I ever knew or ever loved was somehow linked to the Akron Public Schools.

On game days I can still hear the thunder of the band and the roar of the crowd at our neighborhood stadiums. Only a few high schools had lights so Saturday afternoon games were packed. Homecoming floats and great times reigned supreme.

The Akron Public Schools miraculously linked the past, present and future. Rivalries, good-natured and spirit-driven, lasted lifetimes. My husband of 27 years, a Buchtel graduate, still loves to remind me “... a fighting Cardinal ... is that a bird? ...” I’d respond, “... a fighting Griffin ... is THAT a bird? ...” Dad did not allow me to say “cake-eater.” It was a simpler time.

When graduation day came, students knew we were prepared for the future because we were linked to a past, a heritage, a caring, a community. Students always knew and sang their alma maters with pride and loyalty and love — so did every teacher.

I see my wonderful sister, Jan Bier, and dear brother-in-law, Bob Bier, dedicate their careers to the Akron Public Schools system and their classrooms to the purpose of educating precious young minds. The tradition lives on.

I see the young people of Central-Hower High School ever so respectful, pay honor to Nate Thurmond on Nate Thurmond Day which my cousin, Betty Zager, helped orchestrate. The past links to the future, and the traditions live on.

One hundred and fifty years and millions of lives touched by a school system steeped in tradition, respectful of its past and eager for the future truly is a monument to its leadership, its commitment and its promise.

Serving as a guidance counselor here in Tampa for the Hillsborough County Public School System, I am reminded daily of my past; and I treasure the gift of memories the Akron Public Schools' system provides me. As Guidance Department head, I try to instill so many ideas and thoughts, ideals and values from the Akron system into my daily work with education.

Loving, caring teachers at sporting events and plays and car washes and bake sales ... returning to the system as a teacher after being taught, relatives student-teaching now ... cherished Turkey Days ... game bus rides ... assemblies ... yearbooks published and principals who called you by name ... Christmas vacations and day-after-Christmas sales downtown at Polsky's and O'Neil's ... Dad mowing the yard in old suits because he believed principals should always look a certain way even after school hours ... Optimist speech contests and football games ... dances ... proms ... and graduations and the promise of bright futures ... study halls and bands playing ...

"I will study and get ready and perhaps someday my chance will come," said Abraham Lincoln. Those words remain etched above the stage at Central-Howe High School. The Akron Public Schools' system then, now and always gives that hope to each of its students. What a gift, what a system, what a lifetime of memories that touch us daily. Thank you Akron Public Schools for your tradition of excellence!

O Illona Aleman

"Memories ... like the shadows of my mind ... misty water-colored memories of the way we were."

We were happy. We loved school. We cared about each other. We were a family away from home. It was fun. We were safe.

Our kindergarten room at Margaret Park had a fresh shellac aroma over the squeaky tan cork floor tiles. It was so shiny I felt sad when the sand would spill out from the built-in sandbox onto the floor.

We made wooden match stick huts with real straw roofs in eighth grade. My parents let me light and blow out all the wooden matches at home. I felt so grown-up and trustworthy.

In art class we gathered together on the rooftop overlooking the water and shoreline of Summit Lake with our drawing boards, pencils and papers. What a magnificent view to learn perspective and a deep respect for nature.

Every day we would walk and talk together to and from school, rain or shine. Only a few students stayed at school during lunchtime. When I walked alone, my best friend was my shadow. We would jump high into the air to land on each crack between the cement sidewalk blocks.

When it was really cold outside, we were given extra recess to skate in the flooded baseball field bowl, or race our sleds down the ramp onto the ice. How exciting it was to watch the fire trucks come with their huge water-filled hoses to fill the bowl for us. We learned about patience waiting for the water to freeze so we could enjoy the ice.

At Thornton Junior High, Mr. Martin O. Chapman would chant, "Forward Ever ... Backward Never," as he glided through the crowded hallways. Standing beside him was like being under a mighty oak tree. He knew us. He cared. He encouraged me to be in the Talent Show, which was a step in the direction of me becoming a majorette. Once, my art teacher, Miss Allrutz, gave me money and told me to go to the 5-and-10-cent store to buy our supplies. Boy, did I feel important!

Our saddest day at Kenmore High School was when our teacher, Mr. Rice, sunk to the roller rink floor at our Senior Roller Skating Party. We all gathered together at a friend's home to mourn his passing. We felt he loved us so much that he wouldn't stay home even when he was really sick. We experienced a bonding that has lasted throughout the years. Marching in the Soap Box Derby parade and having my little sister, Monica, ride the band bus to the Rubber Bowl to perform with a hula hoop was very special to me. Twirling fire batons really didn't keep us warm on the football field, but it was thrilling.

Many special people and events fill my memories of my school days in the Akron Public Schools' system. Today, I am most happy to be a part of making memories with children in the Akron Public Schools as a teacher.

***"When I walked (home) alone,
my best friend was my shadow.
We would jump high into the air
to land on each crack between the
cement sidewalk blocks."***

—Illona Aleman

O Diane (Riedinger) Gansel

I was in the fifth grade when I started going to Forest Hill Elementary School. I really liked not having to wear a uniform! I liked the idea of “free dressing” and not having to stand up when giving answers in class.

I had a wonderful teacher named Mrs. Sokol. She taught us the states and capitals of the United States, and I memorized them all and could say them fluently. This was rather impressive to my parents, and I remember them always asking me to say them for their friends when they visited us. This also helped my self-esteem and ego!

I also remember when the teachers were allowed to spank children for discipline. I can honestly say that I never had to be spanked by a teacher, and I will admit that the sight of the leather paddle and the sound of it was enough to keep me in line!

I graduated from North High School in 1979. I was enrolled in the Cooperative Education Class, which has been beneficial to me because I got a job at Goodyear and am still employed there.

O Laurenthia L. Gurley

I remember when I was in the fifth grade (at Forest Hill Elementary School), and every day I went to the lunchroom to “assist” Mrs. Grissette (better known as “The Lunch Lady”). This was not a very exciting position, but I looked forward to it every day. I handed out milk to the students and helped to clean up after lunch; but the best part of it all was the conversation I’d have with Mrs. Grissette. We talked about everything (occasionally, I had to be reminded by a teacher that I had to return to class). She was truly a dear friend — and even remembered me when I graduated from high school.

Usually teachers get all the credit, but this one’s for “The Lunch Lady.” Thanks, Mrs. Grissette!

“Usually teachers get all the credit, but this one’s for ‘The Lunch Lady.’ Thanks, Mrs. Grissette!”

—Laurenthia L. Gurley

O Beverly Parker

I have many fond memories of my experiences in the Akron Public Schools as a result of having spent my entire educational career in this school district. Some memories have had elements of both a positive and a negative nature although I must admit that I have been blessed to have most be positive.

One of the blended memories that come to mind is an experience I had at North High School. I was a junior and a part of the drama club. I decided to try out for a role in the class play. This was a big step in my thespian career because the most that I had done in the drama club was to work in the technical areas.

Each person who auditioned had to read a passage that was given to them by the drama coach. This reading would determine the role they would have in the play. It was quite clear to me that there would be no second chances so I had to give all or nothing. Well, I gave it my all and won the lead role in the class play. I was ecstatic. My ecstasy soon turned to controversy because some people in the school felt as though the role should be given to someone who looked the part (I am African-American and the role was that of a 1950ish movie star who was described as blond).

My drama coach thought otherwise. She believed that the best actress should have the part regardless of race. She stuck by her guns and stood firmly upon that principle. I had the lead role, and the play was a great success. There was never any mention of what race the characters should have been by anyone who saw the play. It was this type of commitment and character which was exhibited by many of my teachers that allowed me to grow into an adult who firmly believes that, although you may have to go out on a limb, it is worth it when it comes to having a positive impact on a child.

O Marilyn Parks

It was December 1970, and I had graduated from the University of Akron. It had been a long road for me as a divorced parent going back to school in 1963. With only 1-1/2 years of college behind me, Joe Latona, a counselor at the university, had guided me into education courses. When at last I walked across the stage and received my diploma, it was a dream come true.

I began to substitute in the Akron Public Schools, but I longed to have my own kindergarten

classroom. Then it happened — I was hired in the spring of 1971. My first assignment was Harris and Bryan schools. At Harris I met Debbie Fickes and, at Bryan, Sally Hodge. They were such wonderful role models and mentors, and we are still friends today. I have now been at Harris for 25 years and have had several kindergarten split assignments. In the last few years I have begun to have children of children I had in kindergarten. This is absolutely so rewarding. It is as much of a thrill to enter the door at Harris today as it was that first day 25 years ago.

Our school system is the best — we have so much to be proud of. It is filled with dedicated, caring people making tomorrow a better place through today's children. I am grateful for having the opportunity to teach in the Akron Public Schools and most appreciative for the honor of Teacher of the Year in 1986-87.

O Tom Paolucci

I remember when I attended an EEI workshop four or five years ago. I saw the list of participants, and on the list was the name of the lady I had as my kindergarten teacher at Harris. Her name was Miss Fickes. Even though it had been about 28 years since I had seen her, I recognized her right away. I told her who I was, and we spoke for quite a while. Miss Fickes told me that even though she had taught for many, many years, I was the only student of hers, as far as she knew, who had gone on to become a teacher. I felt really good about hearing this from her and thoroughly enjoyed visiting with her on that day. My only time spent in the Akron Public Schools as a student was my kindergarten year. I am now a second-grade teacher at Portage Path Elementary School.

O Annette Alexander

I had a very rough upbringing, but I remember going to Findley School. Since there were problems at home, I had problems at school. I remember being in fifth grade. I don't remember the name of the teacher, but she saw a very hurting child and took time out for me. I began to improve in my grades and also my conduct at school. I received the best-improved student award. I remember going up and getting my award. It was wonderful. Thanks to Findley School for seeing good in me. I am now 39 years old and still remember that award.

“I received the best-improved student award. I remember going up and getting my award. It was wonderful.”

—Annette Alexander

O Rebecca Jaynes

It was the end of the school year at Forest Hill, 1987-88. I was the LRC technician. I had been trying to get all of the overdue books back for inventory. It came down to the last day of school, and we were holding a student's report card for two overdue books. After the final bell, he ran home (I think he lived right across the street) and returned with “Green Eggs and Ham” and another paperback book. He said, “Here, Mrs. Jaynes, I found ‘Green Eggs and Ham.’” I asked, “Where was it?” He said, “In my closet,” then added, “I don't know if you want this one,” handing me a paperback book. “My cat had kittens on it and it has, you know, that stuff on it.” It was an older paperback; so I said, “You're right, you can just pay \$1 for the book since it is unusable,” as I carefully picked up the paperback and deposited it in the trash can, avoiding the messy cover.

Since that time, at various schools, I've run across books chewed up by dogs, dropped in mud puddles, colored or scribbled on by younger siblings, etc.; but this was my weirdest excuse for overdue books and one I'm happy to report hasn't happened again!

O Brian G. Williams

My first year teaching in the Akron Public Schools was 1964. At that time the Akron School Board was hiring upwards of 300-400 new teachers annually.

One of the fall rituals carried out by Superintendent Martin W. Essex was to invite all new teachers to the Administration Building to be greeted by him. All of the new teachers would be lined up on the bottom floor at approximately 7 p.m. in the evening, march up the steps into the Office of the Superintendent, parade in one door, shake his hand behind his desk, and then retreat out the back door.

I thought this to be a thrilling experience for the new teachers and still find it hard to believe that I am now sitting behind that very desk.

I also remember the fall of 1966, when the Akron Board selected a new superintendent to follow Martin Essex. His name was Conrad C. Ott. My memory is that the first day of the new school year, all teachers and other staff gathered at Memorial Hall on the University of Akron campus for an opening-of-school meeting. The primary purpose in 1966 was to greet and meet the new superintendent from Kentucky.

When the appointed time arrived, Mr. Ott, accompanied by the board president and his assistant, Mr. Eugene Dominic, marched down the middle of the gymnasium to the podium to the applause of thousands. In a ceremonial manner, Mr. Ott was received as the 19th superintendent of the Akron Public Schools. It was a historical day in that Mr. Ott continued to provide leadership to the fifth largest urban school system in Ohio for 25 years — a record that will likely never be exceeded.

O Orpheus Nurches

In 1942, I was attending the University of Akron and was assigned to do my “practice teaching” at the old West High School. After completing the semester, I was drafted into the U. S. Army and served for 3-1/2 years during World War II. After I was discharged, I returned to the University of Akron for more graduate work under the G. I. Bill and completed my master’s degree with a major in psychology. I worked for eight years, 1947 to 1955, as a probation officer with the Summit County Juvenile Court; but I continued my college work toward certification as a school psychologist. I was hired by the

Akron Public Schools in 1955 to work as a school psychologist with the Child Study Department. This was the same year that Martin Essex was hired as superintendent of the Akron Public Schools. I recall that Mr. Essex was very strict about the teachers’ dress code. He required the men teachers and professional staff to wear suits. Not even sport jackets were permitted.

We had a student population of over 60,000 with only four psychologists. Each psychologist had to serve about 15 schools. The Child Study Department also consisted of six visiting teachers who worked with the psychologists on cases that required a home visit and a family history. The entire department was housed in the present Administration Building, 70 North Broadway. The quarters were very cramped, making it difficult for testing. Cubicle offices were erected that did not go to the ceiling. Therefore, you could hear conversations in the next office. I recall when two psychologists were testing in adjoining offices, one psychologist asked a question from the IQ test; and the student from the adjoining office answered. Presently, nearly all testing is done in the schools in more private settings.

The role of the school psychologist was not too well understood in those early years by either principals or teachers. I recall when one of our psychologists went to her assigned school to evaluate a student, the principal did not have a student ready for testing. Therefore, the principal got on the P.A. system and called a teacher’s room. “Mrs. _____, send down one of your slow ones — the tester is here.” This, of course, was heard by the entire class. We have come a long way from this approach.

The school psychologists have always worked very closely with the Special Education Department. In fact, it is now considered part of Special Education.

In the early years, the severely retarded (under 50 IQ) students were kept at home or placed in institutions. Gradually, classes were started for the severely retarded at Miller School (presently the Ott Building). Later, when Weaver School was built, those students were transferred there. They were referred to as TMR (Trainable Mentally Retarded).

Students with IQs from 50 to 79 were at the beginning referred to as “Slow Learners,” later as EMR (Educable Mentally Retarded), and presently as DH (Developmentally Handicapped). In those early

years there were very few classes for these students; and no transportation was provided. If a student was identified as a “Slow Learner,” the parent would have to provide the transportation if they wanted the child in a special class. Today transportation can be offered to all Special Education students who need it.

O Greg Coleridge

I am a product of the special education program of the Akron Public Schools. At 37 years of age, special education students of my period were among the first to be “mainstreamed.” I attended Glover Elementary, Roswell Kent and North High schools. In many respects, these were the first “cluster” schools — in these cases for students with physical disabilities.

We grew and evolved together — the school “system” which was committed to “mainstreaming” as many students as possible as quickly as possible and myself in acquiring the confidence of being with more “able-bodied” students in “regular” classes as time went on.

My experiences at Glover were composed of almost complete isolation from the “able-bodied” students. Special education students were isolated on the main floor with little contact with the rest of the school and rest of the students. We had separate lunch time, recess time, entrance, etc. We had no gym to play in for those of us who were physically active; so we were resigned during the winter to throwing balls around our classrooms and, our favorite places, the stairwells. As an attendance card collector for the floor (I was one of the few who could climb steps), I had the opportunity that few others of my friends had — to see the second floor with the high ceilings, huge windows and, of course, the principal’s office where the attendance cards were delivered! A mighty intimidating place. I always felt a little strange describing what I saw on the second floor to my friends on the bottom floor (which felt a little like a basement with the low ceilings and exposed pipes).

About the only instances when we came into contact with the other students were annual school-wide outdoor “fairs” and a few assemblies held near the end of several of the six years I attended. While our teachers, therapists and other support staff were, all in all, very supportive, the separation and isola-

tion was unfortunate and, in retrospect, too extreme.

Conditions improved markedly at Roswell Kent. While all the special education students were together in the same homeroom (regardless of grade, seven or eight), several of us were able to attend classes throughout the school building during the day. Study halls, however, were back in our homeroom. Once again, the special education teachers and aides were overall very helpful. While there was often a feeling that they were learning what to do as they went, their commitment was, I thought, sincere and compassion for us genuine.

“At North, we were on the whole treated more as human beings and less like ‘special ed’ students — with all the stereotypes and stigmas attached to that label.”

—Greg Coleridge

One time, however, my father had to speak up strongly on my behalf in attending an advanced math class on the second floor. Either my homeroom teacher or principal did not want me going up the steps at the same time that other students were moving between classes. This I felt was overly protective and simply not sensitive. In the end, I was able to attend the class and managed to avoid having a serious accident. Many accommodations were made, however, to integrate as many of us in as many classes as possible.

North High School represented the best effort in “mainstreaming” differently-abled students. While it was true that once more we were all, regardless of age, grade or physical ability, placed in the same homeroom, there was a serious effort to integrate many of us into classes, extra-curricular activities and to socialize with other students. The special education staff was very encouraging in pushing us into schoolwide activities, clubs and projects.

Maybe the best “mixer” for us was the ping-pong table in our homeroom complex. Like a magnet, that table attracted students, teachers and administrators who hung around (all on their free time, of course) to play a game with one or more of us. In the end, that table may have been more effective at

“mainstreaming” and helping us develop social skills with others than any other planned activity or strategy.

At North, we were on the whole treated more as human beings and less like “special ed” students — with all the stereotypes and stigmas attached to that label. By my senior year, the school “system” was more sure of itself in its treatment and approaches toward us — much as many of us had become more aware of ourselves.

In hindsight, conditions could have obviously been better. We could and should have been treated less “separately but equal” and more like everyone else from the start. However, most of the teachers and other support staff tried their best, learned as they went, at times asked us what we felt, and treated us with dignity and respect.

I consider my experiences within the Akron Public Schools’ system to have been overall good ones. I am firmly in support of public schools. And while it may not matter here or be relevant, as parents my wife and I now send our daughter to Margaret Park Montessori.

O Blanche McMullen

I remember when I was president of the Akron Council of PTAs at the May Banquet, and Gayle Callesen had just passed me the gavel. Well, I was so overjoyed and overwhelmed that the ceremony was finally over that I totally forgot our superintendent (Mr. Conrad Ott, at that time) was supposed to give some closing remarks. I took my gavel and attempted to close the meeting. Well, there were several protests and reminders that I had totally dismissed the superintendent. Needless to say, I was thoroughly embarrassed at the whole thing, made my apologies and introduced him. He was a very good sport about it and rewarded me with his “Polar Bear Award” for “bearing” up at a really embarrassing time in my life!

O Minnie Momah

I remember when the school day began with prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. The kids were much more pleasant and manageable than they are today. Although all parents did not believe that prayer should have been in the schools, things were a lot different. It was more peaceful and safe.

I also remember when discipline was different from just punishment. If you violated someone else’s rights by fighting, you were punished by a paddling and perhaps sent home for three days also. Parents were more involved than now. Things have changed tremendously in the system.

O Sam Salem

Akron has gone through a series of serious challenges over the past 25 years that I’ve been a board member. There was the turmoil of the ’70s and the unrest. That was followed by financial challenges. We even had a strike. Then there are all of the problems that are facing urban school centers. And some of them are going down the drain. We hate to see it, but it’s happening.

But here in Akron we’ve held our own — and we’ve held it very well. It’s happened, I think, because we have a dedicated staff of teachers and principals in our buildings. There’s been good, solid, responsible leadership. And the people in Akron did not lose faith with their city. They kept supporting it and doing the things that they have to do, including passing levies. Maybe school board members have played a minor part, too.

“... Here in Akron we’ve held our own — and we’ve held it very well.”

— Sam Salem
