

I attended Southwestern Seventh Grade Center: I remember entering school on the very first day, I was so excited. As I walked into Mrs. Connor's math class (math being my favorite subject) she took attendance. My name at that time was Gretchen Wyche. After she completed taking attendance she said to me in a very firm voice "young lady I will not put up from what I did from your sister, you will not disrupt my class, you will come prepared to work, and you will not be disrespectful. On top of being embarrassed, I had no idea who she was talking about being that my sister was 12 years younger than I. Once it was handled and we found out that she was talking about my cousin Brenda Wyche ... I was OK with Mrs, Connor.

Although I loved to sing, I knew Mr. Dandridge from church so I decided to take band instead. There I played clarinet with Mr. Wolf. Mrs, Fisher was my PE teacher who seemed to take an interest in me right from the start. We had a bonding relationship that I will always treasure. Ms. Shannon was the head lady in the office. She ran things and was very lovable. You know all of us that coach D was soo cute; of course we were only 7<sup>th</sup> graders.

Our food in the café' was nothing like today's food. We had those good yeast rolls and homemade pizza and grits for breakfast. Boy those were the days!

What most of my classmates would remember is every time my grandma would say I was going to get a whooping when I get home, I'd take all of my friends home with me, Althea Ross, Sophia Gibson, Peggy Graham, Katrina Cazminski, Gayle Miles, thinking "OK, she's not going to do it if I bring them home." WRONG!

As a little girl I remember Southwestern High School as an all black high school. The cheerleader coach was Betsy Carol Marshall (aka BC.) I was a little cheerleader. To mention a few that I cheered with, or shall I say spoiled me was Jay Rutha White, Gail Williams (aka French, Cuda,) Fitzgerald Lewis, and Pearl Lawson who is the sister to Audrey Taylor who works in the cafeteria now at SMS. I had so much fun. My mom always made my outfits like theirs. My grandfather coached right on the field which we lived across the street from. He wasn't hired by the district but he sure could fix those injured football players with his famous red clay and vinegar.

The coach I remember was Mr. Buddy young; the band was the best. Their director was Mr. Middleton. I remember one of their majorettes was Lawanda Zow and the drum major was Arnold Lewis.

My sister, Alvarae Robinson, attended SMS and her children Ryan Poole, Cameron Poole, Ariauna Rawls, and now attending is Curtis Rawls III (aka Tre.)

I've come full circle at Southwestern because now I am a 6<sup>th</sup> grade Language Arts teacher working in the same neighborhood in which I grew up. There have been many changes such as street lights, paved roads, fenced in school field and upkeep. It's a beautiful school to be 50!

I'm proud to be a part of SMS but more importantly it's great to know that Ms. Oatis our principal loves this school as if she put those 50 years in herself.

Thanks to all who took the time to make this a very memorable moment.