

**WALNUT**

**HAPPY 100<sup>TH</sup>**

**BIRTHDAY**





# In the beginning. . .

As Grand Island was growing, it was decided to change from an arrangement where grades Kindergarten through 12th grade were all in a single building, to one with Kdg-6th grade elementary buildings, 7th grade-9th grade junior high schools, and a 10th grade-12th grade high school. In 1924, Barr Junior High opened. The idea of a junior high school modeled after a high school was a new concept. Barr is believed to be the FIRST junior high in Nebraska.



# A Fact from the Past. . .

- One junior high wasn't big enough for all the kids in Grand Island so when Barr opened, Walnut was being built.
- Walnut Junior High came to be the very next year. . .in 1925.



## Happy 100th Birthday, Wildcats!



# Wildcat Pride Came to Be. . .

- Senior High chose **PURPLE** and **GOLD** as their school colors.
- With Grand Island having two junior high schools - the decision was made to take Senior High colors and divide them between the two junior high schools. . .the Barr Bulldogs were **PURPLE** and Orange and the Walnut Wildcats **BROWN** and **GOLD**.



# A Fact from the Past. . .

The very first Walnut was built on land located at 10th and Walnut Street.

That's why "Walnut" is called WALNUT!







## Trivia Challenge: What is located there, now?

Howard Elementary is now located on that site - in fact, next time you go by Howard, look for a section of the building that's a little taller and made up of old bricks. That's what's left of the very first Walnut Junior High.



# A Fact from the Past. . .

One again, in 1955, Walnut was on the move. The school district was growing. . .the “original” Barr was becoming too small, as was Walnut. A new and bigger school was needed for Walnut.



**Trivia Challenge:** Walnut moved from Walnut Street to 5th and Elm Street. What had been located there before Walnut moved in?





**When the “new” Senior High was built in 1955, Walnut moved into the “old” Senior High at 5th and Elm.**



# Life In the Junior High



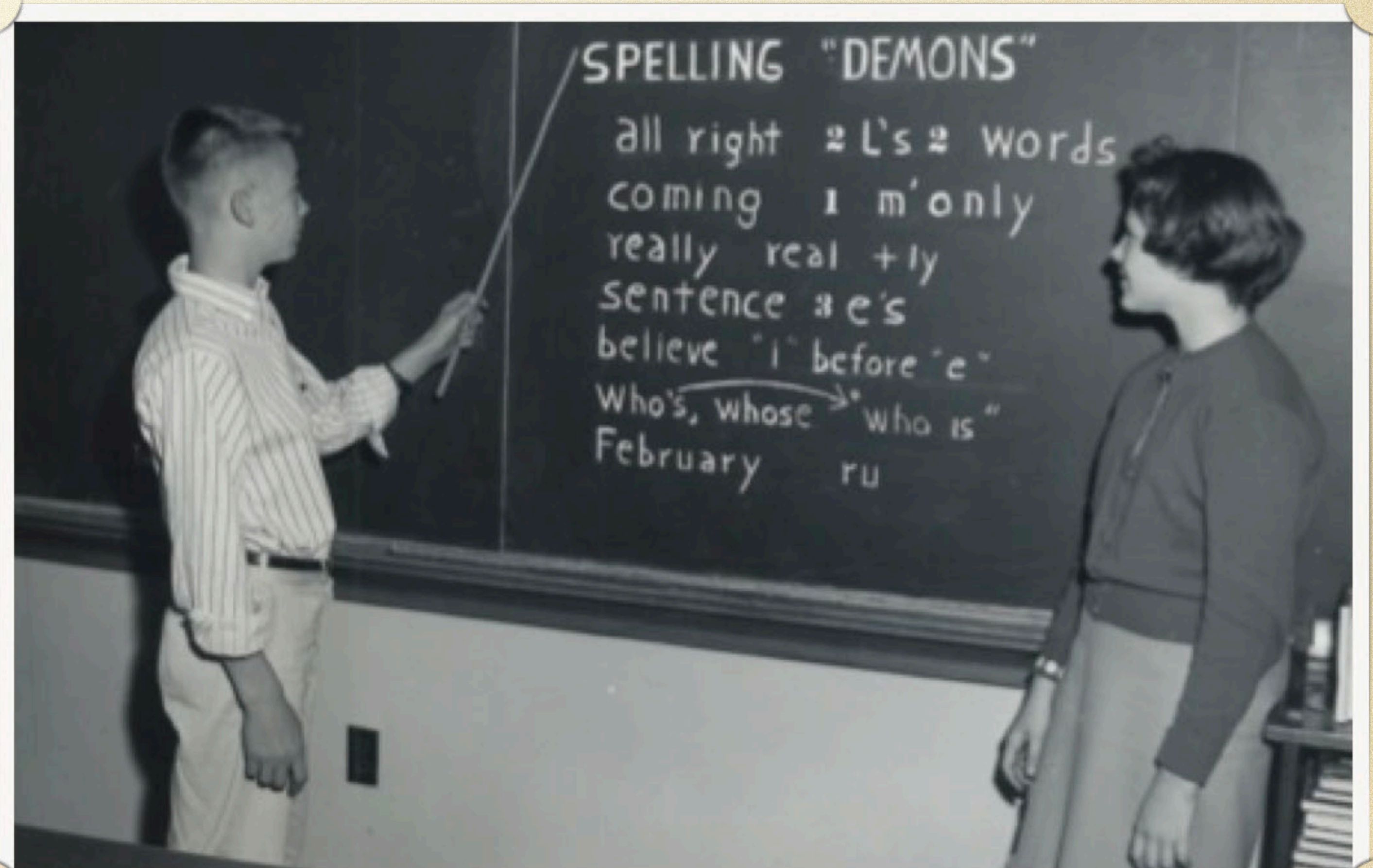
- The schedule was a mini-high school schedule with a bell ringing and classes changing every 45 minutes. Students were assigned a locker for their books, coats, PE clothes, etc.
- You carried your books for your morning classes with you, stopped at your locker before lunch and exchanged your morning textbooks for the ones you needed for your afternoon classes.
- Backpacks didn't exist!





# 7th Grade Schedule - 6 Period Day

- Block - the same teacher for English, Social Studies, and Reading (E/O)
- Math
- Life Science one semester / Health one semester
- PE (E/O) / Art (E/O)
- Vocal  
Music/Band/Orchestra (E/O)





# 8th Grade Schedule - 6 Period Day

- English
- World History
- Earth Science
- Math or Algebra 1
- BOYS: Wood Shop one semester / Metals one semester
- GIRLS: Home Economics - Cooking one semester / Sewing one semester
- PE (E/O)
- Choice of: Art (E/O), Vocal Music/Band/Orchestra (E/O), Communications (E/O)







Woods & Metals Shop



Home Economics:  
Cooking & Sewing



# 9th Grade Schedule - 6 Period Day



- English or English/Journalism for High Ability Learners
- American History through Civil War Reconstruction
- Physical Science or Biology for High Ability Learners
- Math or Geometry for students who took Algebra 1 in 8th grade
- PE (E/O) and then a choice of electives:



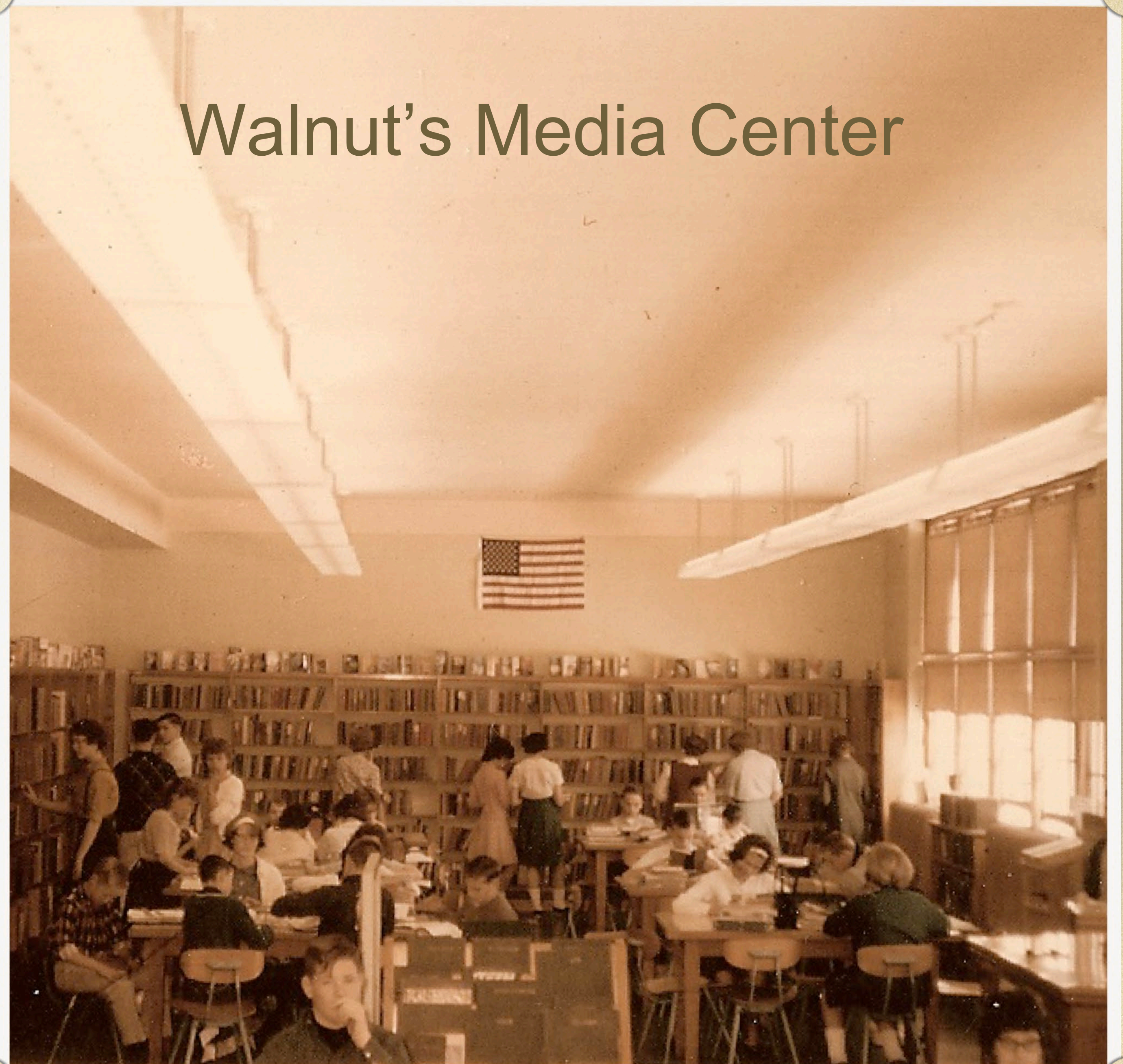
# 9th graders also had their choice of electives. . .

- BOYS: Shop or GIRLS: Home Economics
- Foreign Language either Spanish or French
- Choice of: Art (E/O),, Band/Orchestra (E/O), Typing (E/O), Communications (E/O), Vocal Music (E/O) and Drama (E/O)



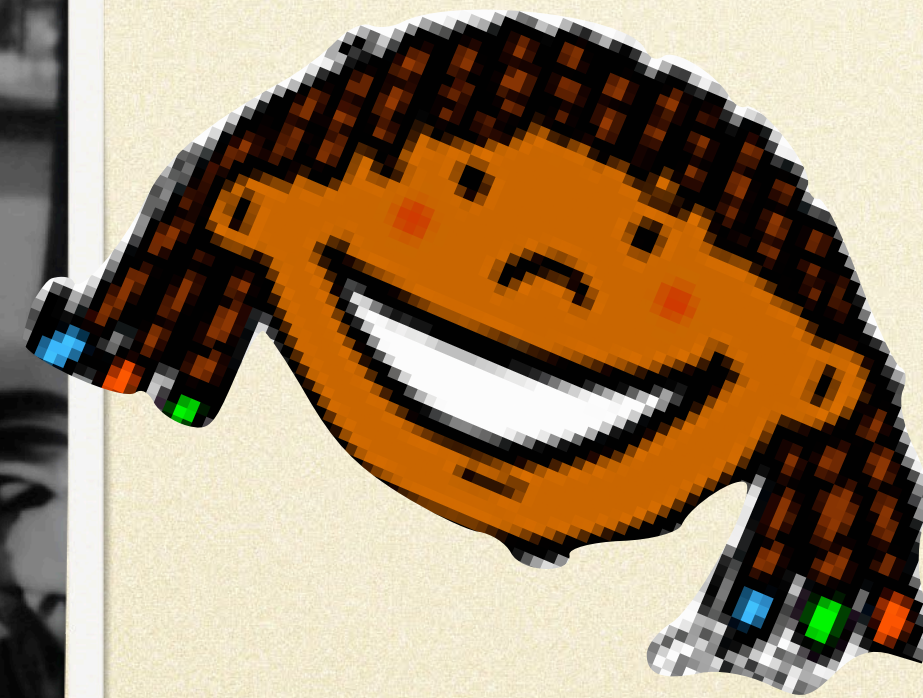


As enrollment increased - in the 1970's. . .Walnut moved to a 7 period day, providing students with the chance to take more classes.

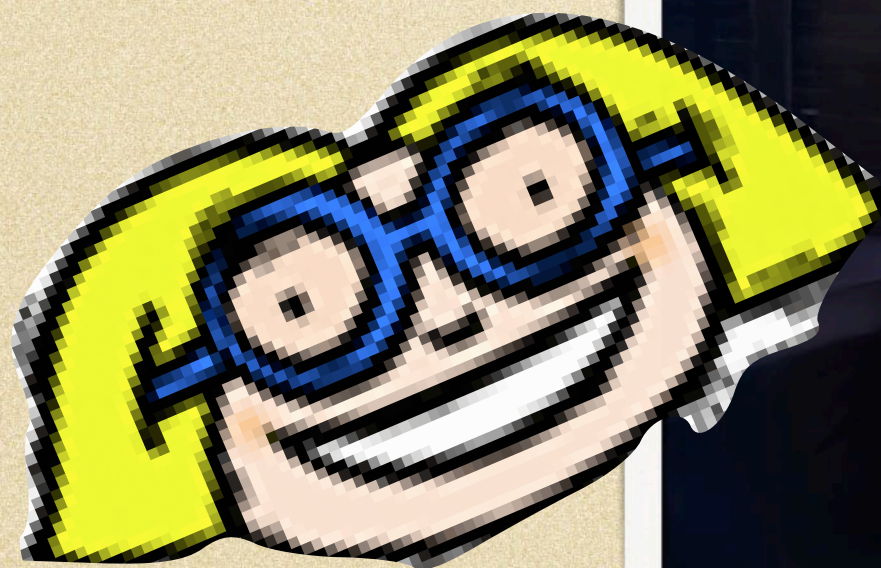




# Dressing for Success

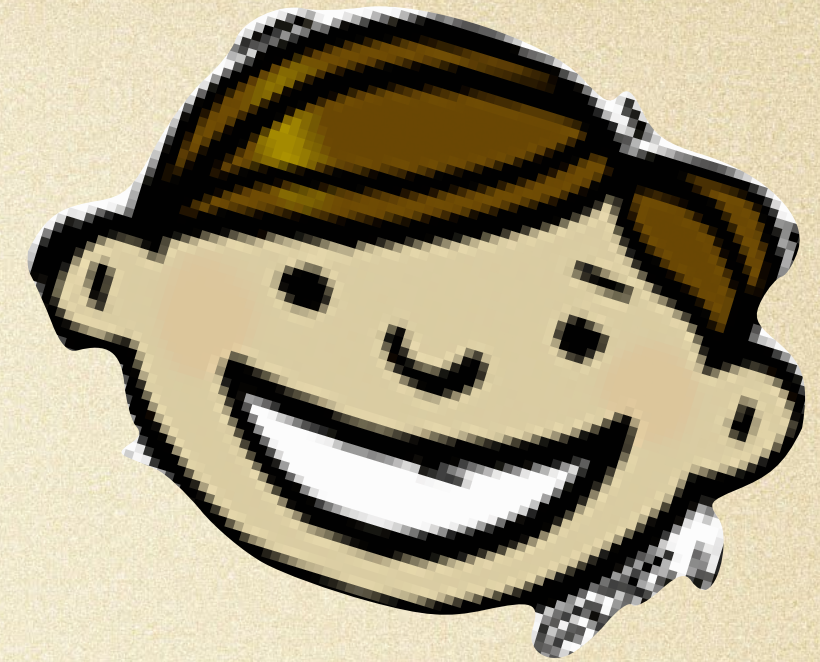


- In the early years. . . girls wore ONLY dresses or skirts - no pants, shorts, jeans, slacks, etc.
- Skirts had to be long enough that, when kneeling on the floor, the hem of the dress needed to touch the floor.
- In the early 1970's, dress codes changed and girls began to wear jeans or slacks to school. Skirts also got shorter.



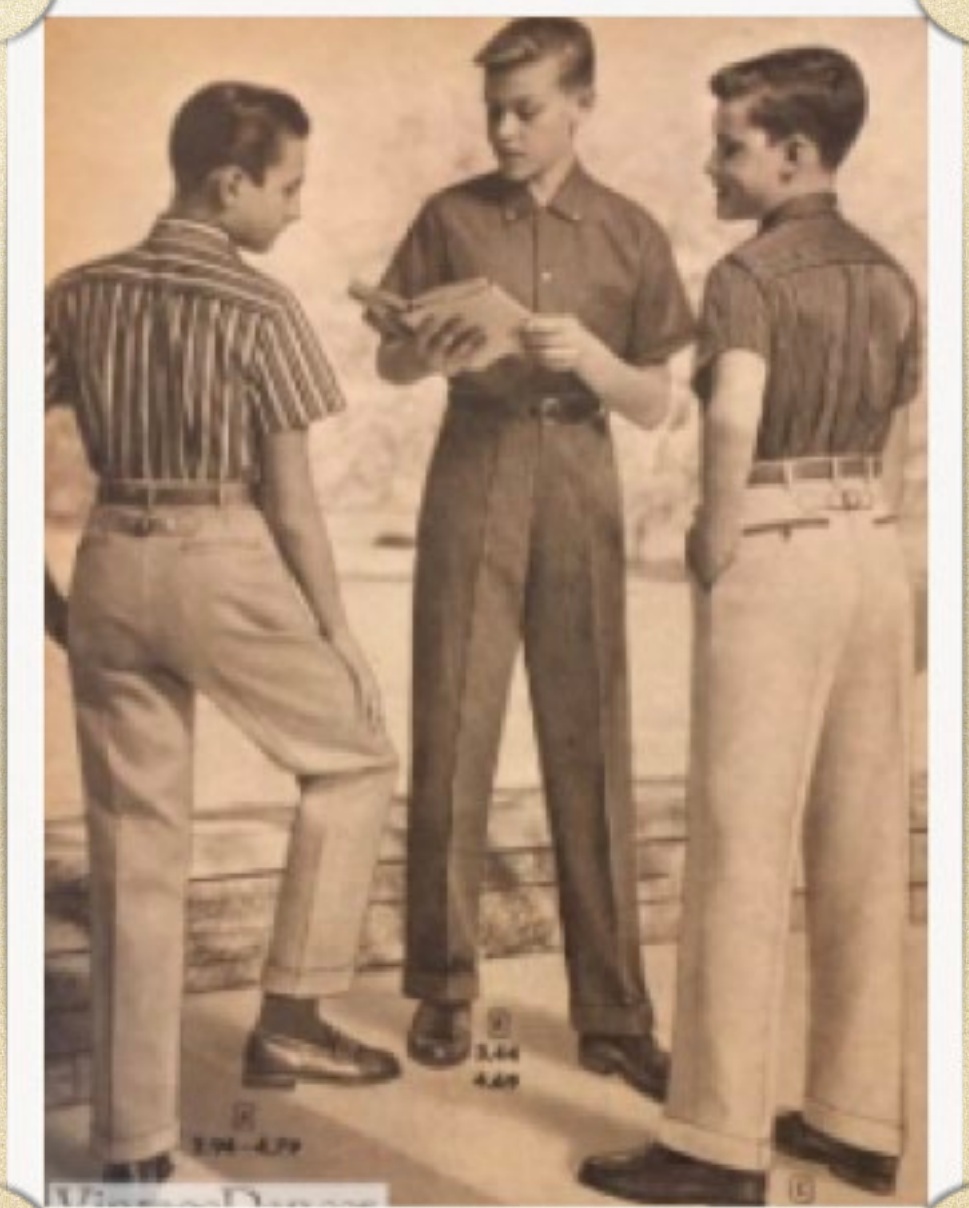


# Dressing for Success



- In the early years. . .boys wore slacks or jeans. Belts were required on any slacks that had belt loops.
- Shirts had to be tucked in and t-shirts had to be worn UNDER the shirt. Shoes were hard-soled, no tennis shoes except in PE.

- Long hair was forbidden. . .it had to be short enough that it couldn't touch your shirt collar.
- In the early 1970's, dress codes changed, jeans and t-shirts became more of the normal school wear,





**Ms. Thomas and Ms.  
Lewis have students who  
are dressed for success.**



**A snapshot of the school dress  
code in the late 1950's / early  
1960's.**



# Teachers Also Dressed for Success



Male teachers had to wear suits or sports coats and a shirt with a tie. Women had to wear dresses and nylons. Shoes for both men and women had to have hard soles.



**Just like students, the 1970's saw some changes.**



Male teachers still had to wear a shirt with a tie. Women still had to wear dresses and nylons.



# Life really changed in the mid-1970's. . .



Male teachers could wear polo shirts or a casual shirt without a tie. Women could wear slacks. Jeans were NEVER allowed!



# Wildcat Sports





# A Fact from the Past. . .

With both Barr and Walnut having junior high athletic teams, they needed a few more schools to compete against. The “Great Plains Conference” came to be with teams from Hastings, Columbus, Kearney, and Barr filling out our sports schedules.

**Trivia Challenge: What sports were there for boys to play?**

Boys’ sports included football, basketball, and track. In 1970, wrestling became another athletic opportunity for boys.





# A Fact from the Past. . .

Today's Wildcat athletes are extremely fortunate to have the facilities they have.

**Trivia Challenge:** Think about this. .  
.where is the football field for those  
Wildcat football players from the mid-  
to-late 1920's to 1984, when the  
Wildcats moved to their current  
home?





From the mid-to-late 1920's until 1947, football games were played at Ashley Field, on the corner of Broadwell and Capital Avenue.





# A Fact from the Past. . .

When Memorial Stadium was built at Senior High, Walnut football (and track) moved from Ashley field to GISH Memorial Stadium.

**Trivia Challenge:** How in the world did football players and coaches and the track team get from 5th and Elm to Senior High for practice and games/meets?

Once the dismissal bell rang, football players would head to the PE locker room to put on their football practice pads or uniforms then jump on a school bus for a quick ride to Senior High. This was the very same routine for the track team.





# A Fact from the Past. . .

In both the Walnut Street and Elm Street locations, basketball practices and games were played in the school gym.





# A Fact from the Past. . .

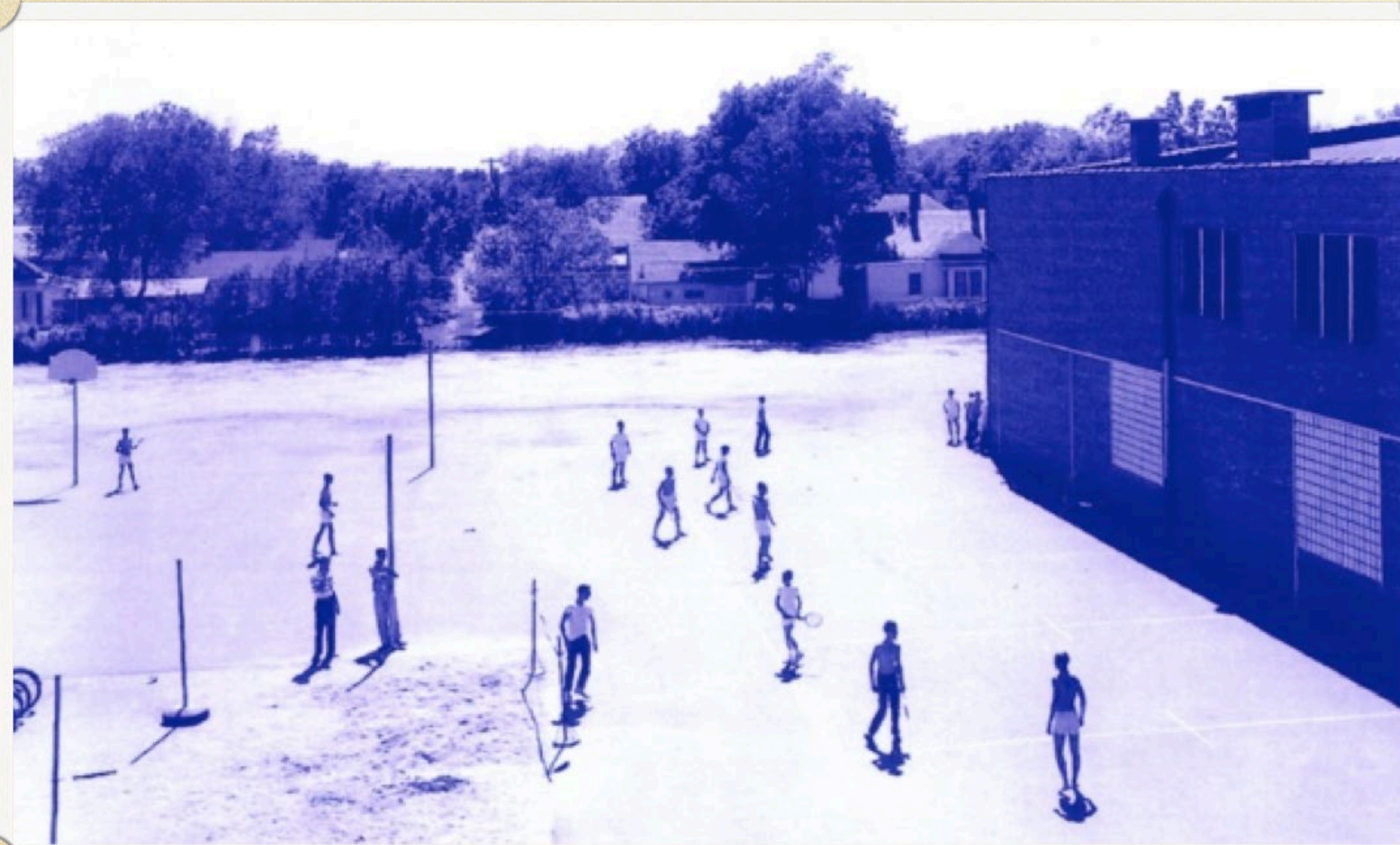
You need to remember, that the “old” Walnut gym was **NOTHING** like today’s gym. It was smaller and divided in the middle by huge oak doors that could be closed to separate the gym in half so girls’ and boys’ PE classes could be kept away from each other.

Wrestling practices took place on Walnut’s auditorium stage.





# A Fact from the Past. . .



At the “old” Walnut, there was absolutely ZERO grassy space. When the weather was warm, PE classes went outside and played on the asphalt surfaces that surrounded the school.



# A Fact from the Past. . .

**Trivia Challenge:** The boys had football, basketball, wrestling, and track. . .what sports were there for girls?

Even in the very beginning, there were sports for boys to take part in, but not girls. Girls “got” to participate in activities such as cheerleading and pep club - their “job” was to cheer for the boys!





# A Fact from the Past. . .



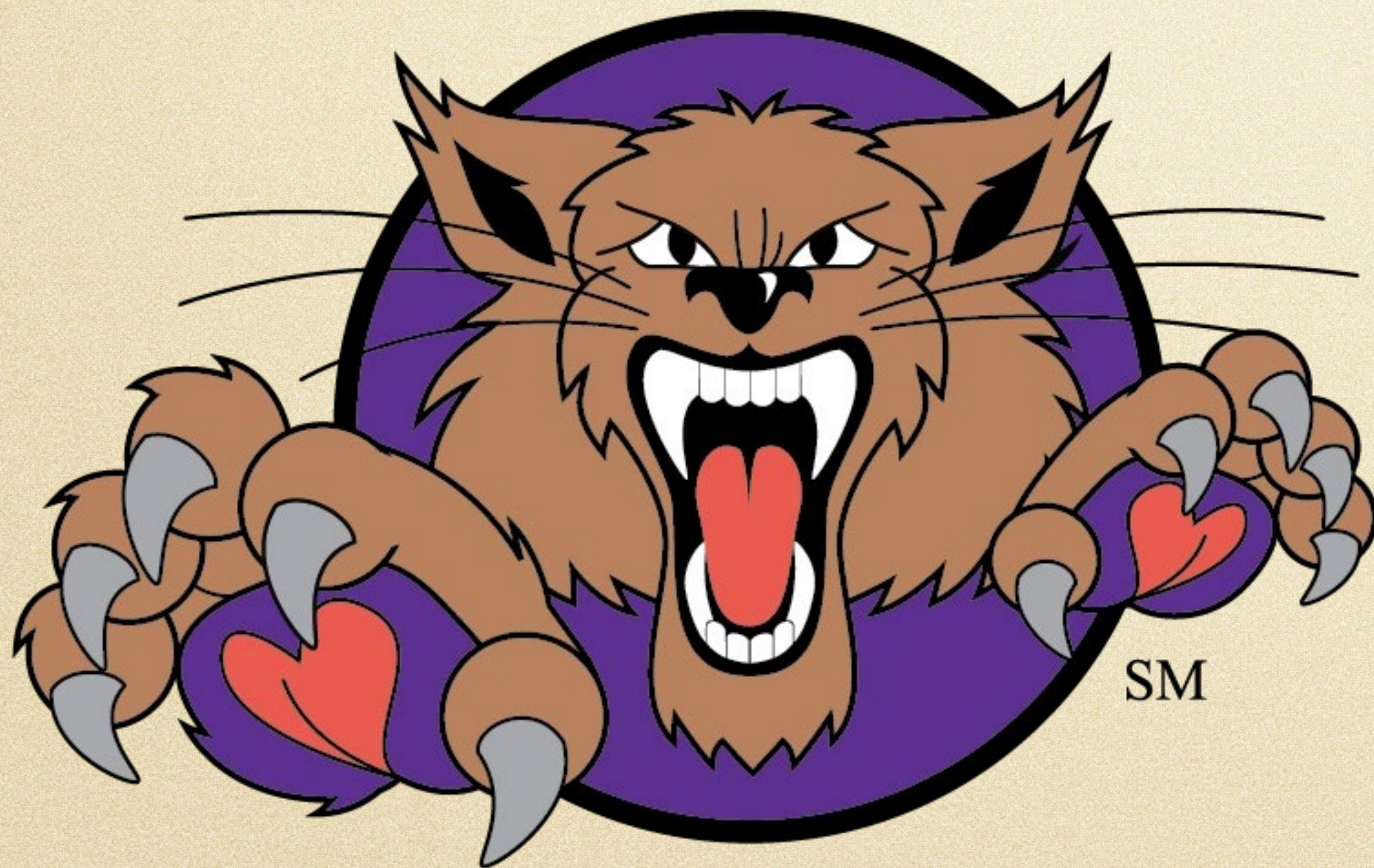
Girls basketball, volleyball, and track came into existence with the signing of Title IX by President Gerald Ford. Title IX gave schools three years to make girls sports a reality. So. . .by the mid to late 1970's, girls' sports became an alternative to Pep Club and Cheerleading for girls.

**FINALLY. . .Girls had a chance to play sports!**



Walnut vs. Barr. . .Football, Basketball, and Wrestling.

Now those were some amazing memories!



VS.





# A Fact from the Past. . .

**But it's not just sports where Wildcats had an opportunity to excel. . .**

- Marching Band - Jazz Band - Pep Band
- String Quartets
- Show Choir
- Junior Congress
- Drama / Theatre
- Walnut Cracker
- Math Counts
- Quiz Bowl
- D.C. Diplomats (starting in 1999)





**Thanks to the community for passing a 1981 bond issue.  
In 1984, Walnut moved to it's current home on Custer Avenue.**





# 1997 - 1998 Saw BIG Changes

- That was the year that Walnut Junior High BECAME Walnut Middle School.
- 9th graders moved to GISH AND 6th graders came to Walnut
- Gone was the mini-high school scheduling - instead the schedule was built around teams. Where a group of 120+ students spent most of the day together, sharing the same teachers. Teams became like school families!





# Wildcat Pride Deep Inside. . .

In the early 2000's, Walnut students and staff made a **REAL** commitment to demonstrate **RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, and CARING** in everything they did. This resulted in Wildcats receiving national recognition for living life the "Walnut Way" in 2003, 2005, and 2007

- **In 2003**, ten schools were recognized as a National School of Character. Walnut was the only middle school in the U.S. to be recognized that year.
- **In 2005**, five schools from across the U.S. and Canada were recognized as Operation Respect National Model Schools. Again, Walnut was the only middle school to be recognized.
- **In 2007**, Walnut received recognition as the National Hands Project Partner in Peace.



# Wildcat Pride Deep Inside. . .

Wildcat kids grow up to do amazing things. . .

- Some like Mr. Max Noel go on to work for the FBI and help to capture the Unabomber and stop him before he killed more people.
- Some like Mr. Ray-Ray Chavez, Mr. Strinz, and Mrs. Barrientos come back to work with Walnut's current Wildcats.
- Some like Dr. Brad and Dr. Brian Kelly come back to provide dental services to Islanders.
- Some like Dr. Doug Kosmicki come back as cardiologists to help Islanders with heart issues.
- Some like Mr. Chad Zavala go on to be an elementary principal in other communities like Bellevue, NE.
- Some like Dr. Elizabeth Wegner Busch go on to play college volleyball before becoming a Physicians Assistant in Kansas.
- Some like Matt Vrzal play football for the Huskers and now own a pizza restaurant in Omaha.
- Some like Jeremy Buckner who, in 1991, set a state track meet record in the 300 meter hurdles that stood for 34 years and was finally broken in May.
- AND, there's so many more. . .



# Wildcat Pride Deep Inside. . .



Will you be the **NEXT**  
Wildcat alumni who goes  
on to be an amazing adult?

It's never too late to start  
to **DREAM BIG!**