

6-20-94

The SMU Library

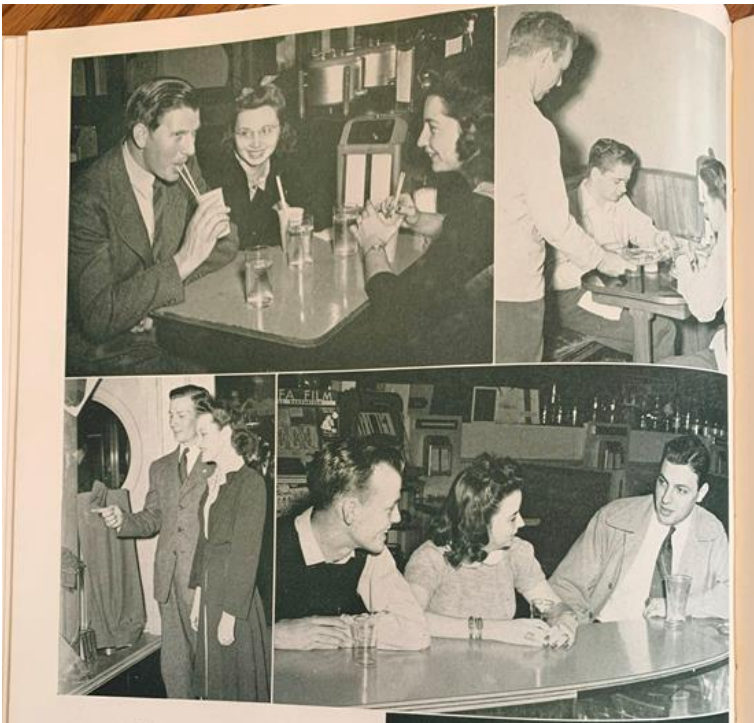
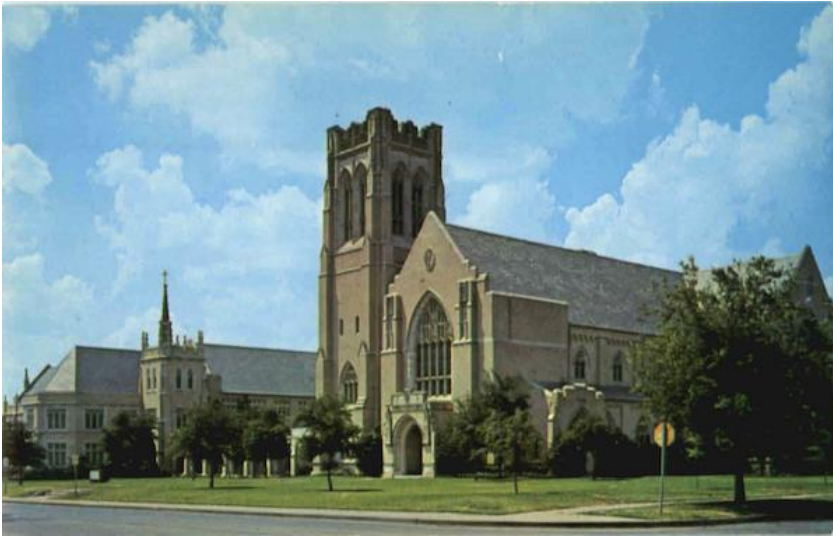
In 1939 Southern Methodist University was a small liberal arts school, with some eighteen hundred students divided among the schools of Arts and Sciences, Commerce, Engineering, Law, and Theology. Dallas Hall, the first building, was and still is the centerpiece on the central quadrangle. It housed most of the classrooms and offices of the School of Arts and Sciences, the Law School, and the library, which had closed stacks on the ground floor and a large reference room on the main floor. I was a junior and a serious student, but a new element entered my life that year in the form of Paul Minton, another serious junior.



Paul had returned to school after a two-year absence while he earned enough money to continue his education. I had met him in the summer in Trinidad, Texas, where he had been working for Texas Power and Light Company. We didn't become well acquainted until the second semester, but I heard a great deal about him from my sorority sisters, including Margaret, Caroline, and Bea Smith. It appeared he was systematically dating most of the Sigma Kappas, with the exception of the Smith sisters, but it was they who kept singing his praises. Paul and I had talked casually, generally in the rotunda of Dallas Hall between classes. At the urging of Margaret and Caroline, I asked him to go to our January sorority dance at the Dallas Athletic Club. I was a bit bewildered on our first date when he asked my advice about a girl he was engaged to. It seems he had just discovered that she had a wooden leg, and he wondered if he should break it off. Before the evening was over, I had decided the girl and the leg were fiction, and anyway we had far too much fun that evening for me to worry about any of his girl friends, real or imaginary.

After that first date, we saw each other often on campus and off. Both of us spent a great deal of time in the library, usually studying at one of the large tables in the reference library. The library was run very strictly by Lois Bailey, whom we thought of as an old traditional librarian because she kept the room quiet and conducive to studying. In addition to a full course of study, Paul had two jobs - one waiting tables in the women's dining room, the other keeping books for the Highland Park Methodist Church at the far end of the campus. When it was time for him to go to his church job, I frequently would walk with him across the quadrangle and down the long stretch of Bishop Boulevard to

the church, where I could catch my streetcar to return home. That winter we attended most of the basketball games, which were held in the old gym on the campus, after which we would go across campus to the "drag" where we'd linger over hot chocolate. The football stadium was on the campus opposite the church, and the next year we would walk down for the home games after our Saturday classes. But, most of our time for our junior and senior years we spent together in the library - studying. Because Miss Bailey was likely to descend upon us if we whispered more than a few words, we generally sat on opposite sides of the table, our toes touching. We thought we were pretty subtle.



The SMU *Rotunda* yearbook 1941: "the drag: there's where real sessions flow over strong Coca-Colas."

We were married after we finished school, and after the war (World War II, that is) we returned to SMU as graduate students and teaching assistants. By that time, the school had grown to over ten thousand students, and the library was housed in a fine new building of its own. The reserve library study room, where we did a great deal of our work as students or graded papers from the classes we taught, wasn't nearly so cozy as the old reference room on the first floor of Dallas Hall, but we still studied together, frequently sitting across the table with our toes touching. Nice old habits are hard to break.

By this time Miss Bailey, who, it turned out, was scarcely older than we were, had become head librarian and was our friend Lois. One day when she saw us studying together, she confided that she had been the first to predict that we would get married because she had observed and approved of our study habits and was glad to see that, married, we still were playing toesies (her word).