

*In The*

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TLIGHT



**Oh my, how time flies!** This group picture was taken in the mid 1940's. The man in the picture is Father Henry Waldhaus who founded St. Rita School for the Deaf in 1915. The young girl hanging from his arm is Barbara Sweeney back when she was about four years old. The school recently celebrated its 87<sup>th</sup> birthday on October 17<sup>th</sup>. Staff and students ate cake in the cafeteria as they viewed a slide show compiled of pictures from St. Rita School's interesting past. One of the slides shown to students was this picture of Barbara Sweeney looking up to Father Waldhaus. It seemed only fitting that an old-timer named Patrick introduce such a historic picture to the students. Patrick has seen the school through many changes. He has worked at St. Rita School for 44 years. His full name is Patrick Sweeney and this cute little girl, Barb Sweeney, has been his wife for close to 40 years.

Barbara grew up in Cincinnati, Woodlawn to be exact. She was born to hearing parents and is the oldest of three children. It wasn't until Barb was 2 ½ that she lost most of her hearing after contracting the German Measles. She began her education at St. Rita when she was 3 ½. Looking at this picture of herself and Father Waldhaus brought up many memories. She said she remembers him as a hard-working man who had a good sense of humor. She enjoyed her time at St. Rita and is happy she attended the school, even though the rules back then were terribly strict. Some will be shocked to hear that the boys and girls were rarely permitted to socialize or even talk. She said Friday nights were movie nights. But since this was one of the few times all students were allowed to be together, she and her friends used this opportunity to secretly sign back and forth to the boys. And Patrick wasn't even one of them. Seven years her senior, Patrick didn't enter into the picture until soon after Barb graduated from St. Rita in 1960. Patrick was a basketball coach at St. Rita while Barb was still a student there. They knew of each other but never formally met, although Barb said Patrick had an eye for her. At a mutual friend's wedding Patrick finally got Barb's attention, and after two years of dating they married in 1963. Today they have five children and eleven grandchildren all of whom are hearing. Their youngest daughter, Julie Hauck, is a speech language pathologist at St. Rita School. This past August Barb retired from the IRS after working there for 23 years. She is unsure when Patrick will retire but said they were both looking forward to traveling the country in their big Winnebago (she makes Patrick drive). Until then she will stay busy sewing, doing word puzzles, painting, and spending time with her grandchildren.



Barbara Sweeney Class of 1960

Barb has remained a constant supporter of St. Rita. She has volunteered on many occasions, attends special events, and served for two years on St. Rita's Governing Board. It has been a long time since she was a student here, but still feels a strong connection to St. Rita every time she visits. A speaker at St. Rita's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner ten years ago, Barb shared something personal that made it very clear just how much St. Rita meant to her. "When my mother dropped me off I cried because I didn't want to stay. When I graduated I cried because I didn't want to leave".