



The Hope Farm / Greer School
Alumni Association
Newsletter



Fall 2020
Volume 13 No. 4



Greer..... The road not taken..... and you!

I was never very appreciative of poetry (my loss), but there were two poems that I have always enjoyed, and they were written by the poet **Robert Frost**. The first poem was written for the autumn season and is called, **"The Road Not Taken"**, and the other poem was a winter season poem called, **"Stopping by woods on a snowy evening"**. In both of these poems, Frost is telling the reader about himself, but what makes these two poems so magical and universally applicable is that he is also talking about each of us and the decisions we have made and decisions we will still make in the future.

Here is the first poem:

"The Road Not Taken"

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, and sorry I
could not travel both and be one traveler, long I
stood and looked down one as far as I could to
where it bent in the undergrowth.*

*Then took the other, as just as fair, and having
perhaps the better claim, because it was grassy and
wanted wear; though as for that the passing there
had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay in leaves no step
had trodden black. Oh, I kept the first for another*

*day! Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I
doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh somewhere ages
and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and
I—I took the one less traveled by, and that has
made all the difference."*

Attending Greer (though not our choice) was nevertheless our "road not taken" because less than 5 % of students in grades 1-12 went to boarding schools in our country. The other "road not taken" was that we lived in cottages with 20-25 other students, and things learned through group living in a cottage was definitely a "road not taken" by most people.

How did these unique experiences make, as Frost says, **"I took the one less traveled by and that has made all the difference"**? How did some of the positive choices you made at Greer affect your life while at Greer and in the years since you left Greer? We would love to hear from you and share your insights with the rest of us.

John Hudnor, Class of 1963

Editor's note: I contacted many students and staff in June/July concerning this poem by Frost and received the following responses:

From Ingo Orlamunder, student, mid-1950's

Greer gave me the moral standards that I have today - honesty, pride and sharing. I still have very wonderful memories of Greer and the boys I grew up with. My brother B.O. stayed at Greer until he graduated, then moved home for a short time, went to college and eventually married and moved to California. He and his wife moved to London, finally settling in Paris, where he now lives. He has two grown children, Sarah and Max

My first road was chosen for me. Mother got remarried and decided that she wanted me at home, so I left Greer at the age of 13. Another road chosen for me was when Mother enrolled me in a private school in New York City, the McBurney School. My mother knew that I would never go to college, so she sent me to one of the best private schools in New York. How she knew I would never go to college is beyond me, but she was right.

The final road -the road less traveled- was my sexual orientation. I spent the next four years at McBurney School, then another eleven years walking the streets of Manhattan, taking in all the sounds and sights of a busy city. When I reached the age of 28, I got tired of Manhattan and longed for something I so enjoyed at Greer - the outdoors: trees, grass, and bright sunshine. I left for California – San Francisco, to be exact. Though it is a large city, I had easy access to trees, grass and wildlife.

When I turned 29, I meant the man that I spent the next 45+ years with. Greer taught me to be proud of my road less travelled, of who and what I am, so I felt very comfortable living with that man. We saw each other through some wonderful times and some very dark times. Again, Greer taught me to adjust and do the best I could during those dark times. When Tom developed prostate cancer, I stood by his side, and eventually he came out of that dark period. In 2008 or 2009 he started to develop dementia and within the next two years his memory almost completely disappeared. Again, the standards of good behavior I learned at Greer came into play. Was his caregiver 24/7, and fortunately I did not have to babysit him. He could still dress, feed, and cleaned himself. He just could not find his way home if he were only a block away from the front door and he did forget who I was many times. Sadly, he passed away on December 4, 2014. Fortunately, we had gotten married and there were no family members to dispute the estate that now became mine. One year after he passed away, I met Mark and sold my San Francisco home of 48 years. Mark and I bought a home in Oakland, where we now live. Again, my experiences at Greer taught me to resist possessiveness and trying to change him into someone else (not possible anyway!) As a result,

Mark and I get along great. We allow each other to be who we are and accept each other for what we are. Had I not been raised at Greer until the age of thirteen, I truly feel that I would never have become the person that I am today. I took the road less traveled as a gay man and have been rewarded with the fact that at 79 I have, with Mark, a partner to share the rest of my life with. Those of you at the reunion last year met Mark and, to my delight, welcomed us both.

From Daniel Simonds, Greer Staff, 1960-61

It was nice to get your note and hear that **Mary Lynn** is doing well. Thoughts that come to mind about Greer and my decision then to take a different path may be a bit wordy for your purposes, but for what it is worth here they are. With luck, many of us get to make many important path choices in life. For me, one made at Greer as a young man might be seen as especially significant, though not as with Robert Frost "because it (the path) was grassy and wanted wear".

That significant life road fork appeared for me at Greer in the spring of 1961 when I received an unanticipated notice of a job posting for a newly created position at my hometown high school. That fork-in-the-road situation resulted in a decision which has certainly "made all the difference" in the trajectory of my life. I cannot say the options appeared much like Frost's paths though - "the other, as just as fair".

At my "fork", my wife Nancy and I had been at Greer for something over eight months. We'd begun our time there as house parents at Daisy, myself additionally having responsibility for being a Guidance Counselor and History teacher (as well as being a somewhat lame assistant for coach **Ken Lynn**). After welcoming our first child in early November, the demands of being a house parent at Daisy became impractical for Nancy and brought that part of our Greer activity sadly to a close. I have many clear fond memories from those few months. Though I continued happily with my activity at the school, I deeply missed the interaction and sense of contribution I'd felt as a houseparent. As a consequence, comparing the

chance to begin a new school counseling program with a substantial increase in income at Melrose to a diminished role at Greer made that 1960 path choice more obvious than Frost's "less traveled by" path. And so, we moved from Greer after that single year.

While it is "ages and ages hence" (now sixty years), it still remains clear that my path choice was for the best. I still feel a lingering guilt at having left Greer where I might have made more of a contribution. It also remains reasonably clear that my time and effort for thirty-seven years in Melrose, if not earth-shaking, did make a difference.

"Knowing how way leads to way"? There is really ever only one path. Hopefully, our choices can be well informed and free from unreasonable constraint (not the case for too many). I suspect however that most "paths" bend pretty quickly "in the undergrowth" making the long view pretty obscure. Without the mystery, where is the adventure?

From George Sievers, class of 1959

Because I was a child, I had no choice in which road to take. That choice was made for me.

But I wouldn't have made any other choice had I known ahead of time where this road would lead.

From Tony Vaz, Class of 1961 (honorary)

In late 1961, when I was a young Navy Construction Apprentice stationed with Mobile Construction Battalion One (MCB-1) in Davisville, Rhode Island, my company commander, or a subordinate, approached me with an opportunity. My combined ARI/GCT scores (Google it) in boot camp the year before qualified me to attend Annapolis Prep School in Newport, Rhode Island. The Catch-22 was that if I flunked out, I would be obligated to serve six years active duty in the Navy.

Seeing how I was not too fond of Navy life at that time, I begged off. Had I accepted and gone on successfully to Annapolis, I would have either studied civil engineering or aeronautics, hopefully leading to a commission as a Seabee civil engineer or a flight officer with further training at NAS

Pensacola (in reflection, not that bad of an assignment.) It is very possible that a few years later, I would have found myself in the jungles of Vietnam or the skies above it dodging Migs and SAMs.

I might have even become one of John McCain's hooch mates or killed while leading a Seabee STAT team rebuilding a hospital the VC had destroyed.

As it was, I took the other road and stayed with the enlisted ranks, transferred to the Antarctica Summer Support Unit and spent two summers at Antarctica's McMurdo Base and one winter in Christchurch, New Zealand before marrying my first wife (not allowed in Annapolis), nearing the end of my Navy enlistment; and went on to a moderately successful career with an oil company, retiring comfortably with my second wife, Jo Ann after 27 years (1970-1997) at 54 years old. Along the way, I rejoined the Naval Reserve for ten years (1967-1977), learned to fly and received my Commercial Pilot's License with the help of the G.I. Bill. I stopped personal flying when my health said, "quit it!"

That was another fork in the road. So many other road forks have crossed my path that could have led to more happiness or gloom, but I am O.K. where I am at.

From Bertie and Wistar Wood, Greer Staff, 1953-1956

Your invitation to let you know how taking the road not usually taken looked in our life at Greer (and since then), got me into a successful search for my Greer-and-post-Greer writing. Thank you. The search has been fun.

I found this bit from April 20, 1954:

"Why should these leaves be crushed and broken?

They lay on a spot no different from a host of others that I might have chosen.

They were high, but not on top. Level, but not really flat.

Clear of sticks, but not so clear as some,

They lie now smashed because I chose to come—

Not here, but only somewhere, and these bits of brown were somewhere.

Now, crushed, they disappear in wind and ground, Lost?

Yes, sooner but not differently, and no more lost than others lying unchosen."

Related to that recorded bit of my diary are the following facts of our life at Greer (1953-55), which were really two years of a Road Less Traveled:

Wistar worked at Greer to serve his two years of military service as a conscientious objector to the military.

While pregnant and delivering our first child, I was serving as the Crest Cottage houseparent for 20 teenage girls.

In 1956 we moved from Greer into the only house we ever owned until we bought this one. It was a \$15,000 home in Livingston, New Jersey.

In 1960, Wistar left the world of business and we moved onto the campus of a private school. School campuses provided our homes until we moved to Torrance 15 years later.

During the 1980s and 1990s, I traveled 6 times to Estonia as a teacher of English, a fresh American breath for these reluctant Soviets. I was teaching not in government schools but with independent groups, who paid me by serving as my hosts. Then I spent a year as a secretary at USC, where I discovered Adult Basic Education and knew that it would be the place for me.

With very best wishes, Bertie.

From Gary (Greer 1959-1960), and Cherri (Abrahamsen) Wood, Class of 1962

We wanted to share our thoughts on this subject, and it turned out to be more difficult than imagined. Our (Gary and Cherri's) whole life has been about choices and taking chances on the unknown. We are not known for taking a long time to take action – we decided to get married on a Tuesday and by Saturday we became husband and wife. The road not taken – school and working in NYC, lost to moving to England and beginning our family. You might think that was the biggest fork in

the road but over time we made so many other "out of the box" choices that it was only a beginning. Over a span of 50 years we moved 21 times including 6 residential stints in overseas locations.

Possibly the biggest "road taken" was our move to Guam. We had just gone through the coldest winter in Maryland in many years. The Chesapeake Bay froze over and had to be cleared by Icebreakers to allow arriving ships to head to Baltimore. Gary had a good job in Government service and Cherri was managing a busy data entry operation in Maryland. Gary had a casual interview about a job and suddenly a job offer that sounded tempting. He called me at work and said, "Do you want to move to Guam?" I said "OK" without even thinking about it. Later that day we pulled out the Atlas to see exactly where Guam was located. We knew it was tropical and that our love of scuba diving would be the best we could imagine. Within 6 weeks, we packed up our house, sold our motorcycles, motor home and 7-year-old American Motors Hornet (stop laughing). Our kids were flexible and adventurous. They jumped in as we bought a big Dodge Ram charger and drove to Guam. Actually, we drove to Long Beach, California to ship our car and then boarded the airplane headed to Guam with a stop in Truk Lagoon to do some wreck diving. That was the beginning of our happiest adventures and possibly had the most impact on our kids and our own future. As we look back, we have no regrets.

50th Anniversary Greer School Student Guidebook

By John Hudnor

Among my Greer School files I found a copy of the "Student Guidebook for the school year 1956-1957. This guidebook was made up during Greer's 50th Anniversary (1906-1956).

Before I go over some highlights, keep in mind that any school, workplace, or any other organization is going to state the Ideal rules of expectations. No organization ever completely reaches the ideals presented in a guidebook, but its intention is to provide guidance and structure. Coming from an

unstructured family, Greer's rules and values were exactly what I and many of us needed.

We will begin with some of the guidelines for cottage life (and I will add some comments along the way). One of the traditions at Greer was for the older students to have the responsibility of helping to set standards of behavior for the students in the younger cottages. (Louise Manz when I was at Marcy cottage and Mike Ennis when I was at Daisy were positive role models for us.)

Do you remember the weekly Citizenship Grades? One had to earn 65 points to pass and you were graded on such things as: dining room conduct, language, personal appearance, tidiness, punctuality, cottage work, dependability, cheerfulness and consideration of others. Do you remember the consequences for not earning at least 65 points? The main penalty was detention during part of, or all, the weekly Friday night movie in the auditorium. I must confess to having had my share of detentions through my years at Greer.

Wake up time was 6:30 am with breakfast at 7:00 am. I am still at 6:30 am riser each morning, but I must confess that my wife always makes the bed because I am up before her. After breakfast one had a cottage responsibility before leaving for school. Do you remember some of the cottage jobs you had? The guidelines also spoke of daily and weekly inspections of beds and dressers and/or closets? Roll call would be taken before each meal, and in the younger cottages, you would line up to have your hands inspected as you entered the dining room. For the high school age boys, one had to wear jackets or sweaters at mealtime each evening.

One hour of study hall was mandated on Sunday through Thursday evenings. A student could be excused from the cottage study hall for campus activities such as dramatics, glee club, choir, YPF, yearbook meetings, etc. (Former student Bob Tate told me he was very active in these activities so he could get out of study hall!!! Unfortunately, my grades in 9th and 10th grade were not good enough to be excused from cottage study halls.)

Lights out at Gate house was at 10:00 pm. I do remember some students would still sneak out to

meet members of the opposite gender!!! (Alas, I must confess to this behavior a few times during the summertime.) How about you? Did you ever sneak out? Get caught?

Smoking! (Remember, these smoking rules in the 1956 student's guideline book were 9 years before the surgeon general's national report on the definitive dangers of smoking which came out in 1965. This report became a game changer for smoking in many places). For those 16 years old, 4 cigarettes per day were allowed—one after each meal and one after study hall. If caught smoking illegally, the penalty was from \$1 to \$5 dollars depending on how many times you got caught. (This rule was tough for the staff to enforce, and smoking in secret places was commonly done by many high school students).

Cottage Dances. One dance per month in a cottage for grades 9-12. (This was much better than in the high school where I taught as they only had one or two yearly dances other than the prom.) The middle school students at Greer could attend the high school dances in the auditorium but had to leave right after refreshments were served around 9:00. (This rule was enforced, and I remember the disappointment of having to leave the dance early when I was in junior high.)

To be continued in the next issue.

Now the bad news

Joe D'Ambrosio, husband of alum, Angela Oliver D'Ambrosio has written to us, asking to spread the word that Angie has been placed in a Nursing Rehab Center!

He further writes: She is 13.8 miles from our house in Lake Carmel, NY, so I am very close by and see her all I can!

HER ADDRESS IS:

Available from Tony Vaz at tonyvaz@greerschool.org

SHE CAN READ AND CONVERSE AND MISSES YOU ALL SO MUCH.

PLEASE SEND HER LETTERS, PICTURES, JOKES, ANYTHING AT ALL.

I WANT HER TO FEEL THE LOVE YOU GUYS SHARED AT GREER!!

PLEASE HELP!

SHE'S NOT GIVING UP, I'M NOT EITHER. SO,
PLEASE KEEP HER IN YOUR PRAYERS AND
THOUGHTS.

MY CELL: Available from Tony Vaz at
tonyvaz@greerschool.org

My Email : Available from Tony Vaz at
tonyvaz@greerschool.org

My Address: Available from Tony Vaz at
tonyvaz@greerschool.org

Now more Bad News!

We have learned that Richard Norman Devaux,
Class of 1953 passed away on April 15 of this year.
He was six months shy of 87 years old.

We heard from Alban Richey that his brother,
James Richey passed away on June 16. Alban now
lives in Montpelier, VT. James' age unknown.

We have learned that Warren Olsen has passed
away in Fergus Falls, MN. He died one day after his
93rd birthday on April 11. He was a Greer School
English and History teacher and an Assistant
Principal from 1954 until 1963 and he will be
remembered fondly by many alumni.

You can see his personal Greer-time photo albums
at <http://greerschool.org/persalb.html>



Be Safe, Wear Your PPE!!!!!!

Greerschool.Org Web Site Update

Nothing new to report currently.

Tony Vaz – Webmaster Greerschool.Org
Greer Class of '61 (Honorary)

In addition to reporting any change of address to
Peggy Sparks, you can contact me at
tonyvaz@greerschool.org

Send newsworthy articles to:

John Hudnor - Available from Tony Vaz at
tonyvaz@greerschool.org

Sandy Hudnor - Available from Tony Vaz at
tonyvaz@greerschool.org

Peggy Sparks - Available from Tony Vaz at
tonyvaz@greerschool.org

or "snail mail" them to the return address on your
hard copy envelope.