



The Hope Farm / Greer School  
Alumni Association  
Newsletter



**March 2013**

Greetings!

Happy Easter!

This is the second installment of the alumni newsletter published by Tony Vaz and Peggy Mathewson Sparks, former residents of Greer School. We hope you are enjoying or looking forward to the coming spring. Hopefully, the past winter has not been too harsh on the area where you live.

Our son, Tom, head of the Art Dept (for the Port Aransas, TX High School) did it for us.

Sincerely, Jack.

**From Peggy's book,  
"Hope Farm /Greer School, Memoirs of  
Childhood"**

**From John E. McHenry \* Principal \* 1953-1957**

Hi Tony:

Your 1<sup>st</sup> Alumni Newsletter finally caught up with me. The mail has crossed by going to Florida and back. We have a little home in Venice, Florida and we have usually been there by now, but some medical problem needed some attention here, and now plan to leave on Nov. 17<sup>th</sup> for the winter. We'll be back in Pa. by next May if everything works out for me.

The first picture machine was installed in 1923. Of course it was motion without sound, but a thrill to see on a big screen. When the equipment for the first talking motion pictures was installed in 1933, it remained another tradition before **Easter** vacation to see the old silent "**King of Kings**" movie with the dramatic makeup and subtitles.

I'm so glad you and Peggy have taken over from Sandy and John, they certainly did a wonderful job as I know you and Peggy will.

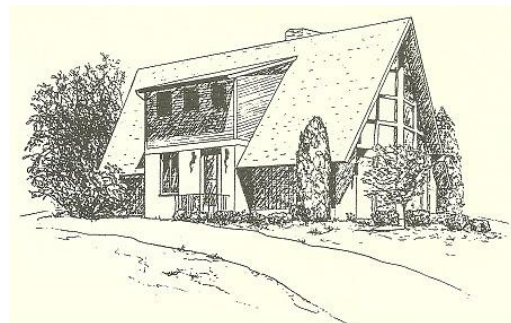
"I was the dumbo-eared 'czar's kid' over at Rap. I got to sit in the balcony, where the privileged few could, and watch the Friday night movies. Pretty soon I was in the booth, learning how to operate those two ancient carbon arc projectors; I'm the guy who for several years threaded film through the rollers and synchronized the end of one reel with the beginning of the next."

Enclosed is a check for \$110.00 to cover my Alumni membership and a \$100.00 contribution to the Greer School Alumni Association. The newsletter means a great deal to me. The \$100.00 contribution should be used as you and Peggy see fit. Use it to cover membership that need help, or use what you need for unexpected expenses to put out the newsletter (no strings attached). Lots of enjoyment in keeping the newsletter going.

– Jack Wesdorp, [1954-1959], Spring 1993,

**The Hope Farm Quarterly – March 1, 1928  
To Our Friends**

This is a sketch of our Pa. house.



It is a great pleasure to me to be able to present to you the first issue of our new paper "The Hope Farm Quarterly," a paper in which the articles have been selected and written by the children of our Junior High School.

I hope that it may convey to you, in the words of the children themselves a conception of the nature and extent of the activities and life of those at Hope Farm – activities made possible through the generous support of our subscribers.

Hope Farm, as you will recall, is a cottage community and school accommodating 170 children between ages of six and sixteen Here, in the hills of Dutchess County near Verbank, and situated near the center of a thousand acre farm is our village of children. It is almost self contained. We have our own church, school, library, infirmary, water system, fire department, telephone system, dairy and farm. The children live in small attractive cottages scattered picturesquely about the grounds. Each cottage has its own dining room and its own comfortable living rooms. And in each of these cottages is at least one large open fire place in which on winter nights cheery fires burn as the children read, play games, or study. The atmosphere of the entire community is that of a normal village composed of happy homes.

The children living with us at Hope Farm are the sons and daughters of parents who have met with misfortune of some sort, many are half-orphans, some are orphans. Hope Farm exists for them – to contribute toward their happiness and to train them to be self-reliant, self-respecting, self-supporting men and women capable of taking their appropriate places in life.



F.G. Behrends, Director

### A Different Perspective

My wife & I (and 3 of our 5 kids live in a small town in northern NY a couple miles from the Quebec border, but I have managed to get down to two of our reunions. Although there weren't many there from my era (my brother Don & I were there from 45-51) I thoroughly enjoyed meeting many of the folks. After speaking with some of the more recent *inmates* I was amazed at how much the school changed starting a few years after we left. After leaving Greer & getting through Rutgers Univ., I put in a little over 20 years with the NY State Police. One of my first assignments was the old Millbrook station on Rte. 82 in the Village of Millbrook. Quite a coincidence when you consider the many, many stations scattered around NY. It felt like going home but this time *I was on the other side of the law.*

Jack Miller 45-51

### Greer's Prom

During my high school years at Greer, I attended three proms as a spectator and one prom with a date. I was thus able to view the prom from two perspectives: seeing it as an observer from the gym balcony and as a participant with my date, **Jane Morgan**. As I



look back at the prom, I have a much greater appreciation for the work on transforming our gym into a

beautiful springtime paradise, which **George Groh** directed unselfishly each May. It always looked fantastic, whether seeing it from the view of the gym balcony or from being on the gym floor as a participant.

Because I attended quite a few proms during my career as a high school teacher, I have a basis of comparison. While the gym in the high school where I taught was always attractively decorated, what George Groh did was never duplicated. He would make booths from birch bark saplings and then place evergreen branches and other vegetation bushes to surround the booths. I have an especially vivid memory of these decorations because during my Senior year at Greer, I took many pictures of the prom decorations, and I would occasionally see those pictures when I searched through my pictures in preparation for publication of the quarterly newsletters.

Thank you, Mr. Groh for the many unselfish hours you gave to the students at Greer and the wonderful memories of the fantastic proms that you created with your decorations.



John D. Hudnor, Class of '63

**A Greer Success Story**  
**Georgia King – Greer Student 1943-1957**  
**Malibu Times Citizen of the Year**  
**Dolphin Award Recipient**

Georgia has lived and worked in the Malibu, CA area for more than two decades doing what she loves best; i.e., working with horses. At a stable in the Malibu Retreat, she leases space and facilities to provide riding lessons, horse training and riding services for both adults and children of the local area.

In March, 2012, Georgia was one of several Malibu residents given the Malibu Times Citizen of the Year Dolphin Award. The awards recognize contributions made by individuals or groups to the Malibu community. Those recognized are in many ways more than contributors; rather they help make up the backbone of the community.

Georgia was described as a horsewoman, teacher, horse whisperer; horses are her life 24/7. A legion of parents and former students recommended her for her gentle caring manner and the influence she's had on their children and animals.

Based on an interview by the Malibu Times, the following article was run in the newspaper as a lead-up to the awards ceremony:

Georgia King has spent a lifetime working with and loving horses, and spreading that love to others around her. She has lived in Malibu for more than 20 years, and works at Sycamore Farms teaching horse riding.

"She teaches her students how to behave as a sportsman and keep a happy face even when you don't want to. Georgia herself always has a smile on her face and a positive vibe, "says Cassandra Karaziss."I wish only there were more teachers like her."

Ironically, Georgia was born in New York City and grew up in Harlem, far away from the sound of stomping horses.

"It was a very unhorsey situation," she says. "But I got the bug really early with the life I wanted to lead."

As a teenager, Georgia spent time in upstate New York and started to work with horses.

After an ill-fated three years working a desk job in New York City, she departed for greener, horse-filled pastures. She spent time working all over the country, ending up in Pebble Beach near Monterey, CA. She worked at an equestrian center there for more than a decade, where she met the actor George C. Scott.

Scott hired her to take care of his and his wife's horses, which she did for a number of years.

In the early 1980s, she took a year off and traveled through Africa, teaching riding and judging horse shows in Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Kenya. Upon her return stateside, she moved back to California, soon ending up in Malibu.

"I love California so much," she said. "I've been lucky to do what I love and live in nice places."

Her presence has been Malibu's gain, as a generation of children and adults have learned how to ride and care for horses under Georgia's watchful eyes. Never far away was her beloved horse Wazuri, which means "perfect horse" in Swahili, and was born into her arms 23 years ago.

Georgia's style of instruction emphasizes the responsibility of the rider to the horse, respect for its strength and power and ultimately love for the animal.

"I watch Georgia daily nurturing young children and teaching them respect and understanding of these powerful, intuitive and sensitive creatures," says resident Michele Maher. "She's a 'horse whisperer' in her own right."

Submitted by Thomas M. King, Class of 1955

Original article copyright Malibu Times.

You can read it here:

[http://www.malibutimes.com/malibu\\_life/article\\_f39737bd-9678-5d72-a992-5af813b437c5.html](http://www.malibutimes.com/malibu_life/article_f39737bd-9678-5d72-a992-5af813b437c5.html)

Ed. note: It should be obvious that since Georgia entered Greer in 1943 and graduated in 1957, she did not spend a lot of time "growing up" in Harlem.

## They Have Gone Ahead

Gwendolyn Mae Jones Sidney {1935-2010}  
William Lewis Herbold {1924-2013}

### A Special Request

Last January I misused the Greer Alumni emailing list. I used the header "Can I ask a favor?" I did not address it to my Greer family, so you may have deleted it without looking. I may have deleted it as well if I didn't know the sender. Fortunately, many of you did not.

Drake's class was doing a project on the post office.....trying to get as many post cards from as many postal codes as possible. My thought was that, since Greer, we have all relocated all over the country (and possible the world) and the results could get interesting.

I did not tell you that he is Autistic because I didn't want the sympathy vote. I also did not tell you that my son-in-law hates foster kids (just to show him up even though I knew I could). After all, we former foster kids must be guilty of something evil, right?

But I did ask that you identify yourself as part of PaPaD's Greer family.....just as I did to PaPaD's sister, aunt, cousin, etc.

I won't have the final count until the end of the school year and the cards are taken off the wall and returned to the parents. But I'm told over 3 dozen came from you guys. About 15 of you responded to me personally and said you would send one.

You have no idea how impressed I am with you...all of you. I want to thank you so sincerely for your response. I can't express what that meant to me...and maybe even to Drake some years down the road as he gets to know me better and learns more about PaPaD.

So, again.....THANK YOU VERY MUCH

Dean Miller

Attended Greer '59 - '63 Class of '67

## Financials

### Recent contributions

Diane Hawkes Johnson	\$ 30.00 *
Lawrence Dent	\$ 25.00
John Boltja	\$300.00
Anne Goldizen Joe	\$ 10.00
Harold Kovak	\$ 30.00
Justine "Susie Murray" Scott	\$ 25.00
Roger Russoman	\$ 50.00
Anonymous	\$100.00
Elizabeth Rivera	\$ 25.00
John Miller	\$ 25.00
William Seeley	\$ 10.00

\* check lost, replaced

Contributions to date:	\$1620.00
Balance of reunion funds from JDH	\$ 538.17

Cost of letters and news- letters mailing to date.	\$ 297.14
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At some point, we may have to limit hard copies to those that have made contributions and/or have been selected as complimentary recipients (i.e., former staff members). This will be determined by remaining funds and number of hard copies needed.

The cost of newsletter publishing will come down as more of you state that you only need the electronic version (PDF). For those of you that have already stated so...thank you. If you do receive a hard copy and have previously stated that you don't need one, please send a gentle reminder to [tonyvaz@greerschool.org](mailto:tonyvaz@greerschool.org) ...thanks again.

### An Easter Tradition Long Forgotten

In the spring of 1912 at Easter, every child received an Easter plant from Mrs. Mary Dickey Varnum, the widow of James M. Varnum, founder of The Fulton Trust Company in New York City.

Mrs. Varnum continued this tradition up until shortly before her death in 1941. At first, these plants were almost drowned by over-watering, but if they survived, they were set out and planted in the spring to make the cottage gardens colorful all summer.

An excerpt from Peggy's book