



The Hope Farm / Greer School  
Alumni Association  
Newsletter



Spring 2016  
Volume 9 No. 2



**"Desirable Difficulty" and . . . Greer**

Recently I read an article which, by its title, appears to be a contradiction of terms. It was called "The beauty of inconvenience" by Eric Weiner. His main premise is that while we all enjoy the benefits of conveniences in our lives, the reality is when we face, and overcome, the obstacles in our lives, we are far better off. Psychologist Robert Bjork talks about "desirable difficulty", or in plain English, when we break a sweat, we learn more. He further states that on some deep intuitive level, we know we have to work hard to attain what we are seeking, i.e., an **earned happiness**, not just something **dispensed to us**. Last of all, Bjork makes it clear that

desirable difficulty does **not** mean **impossible difficulty**: obstacles to be useful, he says, must be **surmountable**.

I immediately began to think of all of you and the "**desirable difficulties**" we dealt with throughout our years at Greer and how much better off we all are because of them. In fact, we had very few services, "**dispensed-to-us**". The obstacles we were expected to deal with began in the younger cottages as we had to make our beds, keep our sleeping areas straightened and cleaned, have an assigned cottage chore to do each day, and even more challenging, to get along with 15 - 25 other students in the cottage we were living in. In my years of being a public high school history teacher, most of my students had some siblings in their family; however I never met a student who had more than seven or eight siblings, and that instance was rare. In contrast, we lived with over 15 other students and we were expected to get along with all of our cottage mates: no easy task at times, especially when you consider we all came from different families with much different backgrounds.

When we reached high school age, we had additional tasks along with academic, athletic, and other extracurricular activities we enjoyed participating in. Those vocational training jobs ranged from working on the wait staff in the younger cottages to getting up at 6:00AM on cold winter mornings to deliver hot cereal in the food truck to all of the cottages. In between, all of us had numerous vocational assignments throughout each school year. Do you remember some of the vocational jobs you held? In short, each of our days were full, and on some of those days, we could hardly catch our breath in trying



to keep up--phew!!! For sure, we didn't have most things at Greer, as Bjork says, "dispensed-to-us." The larger question is did these inconveniences help to make us better off? **Absolutely!** Overcoming the obstacles at Greer laid the foundation for a positive work ethic which has lasted throughout my entire life and as a result, I have enjoyed some of the successes which would not have come if I did not have to deal with inconveniences that we all dealt with at Greer. Thank you Greer Administrators for not just dispensing services to all of us: in so many ways we are far better off.

John Hudnor, Greer"63" and BYU "67"

### **Reunion News**

The process of planning for the October 22nd, "Thanksgiving-in-October" celebration has been started and in the next newsletter, I will send you the registration form and final details of our day. The administrators at the "Fountains" have been very helpful and welcoming of our October gathering, and this sure makes the process flow very smoothly. The tentative schedule which we are in the process of finalizing is:

Friday, October 21st: Decoration of Auditorium with a Thanksgiving theme during the afternoon and then after dinner, a movie in the high school auditorium.

Saturday, October 22nd: Registration and socializing in the morning and just before noon, a Thanksgiving memorial service in the Chapel-of-the-child. We will sing the Thanksgiving songs and then give whoever would like, an opportunity to share memories of this special Thanksgiving tradition and/or any other Greer memories you would like to share. An optional activity would be a donation of one item of non-perishable food to give to a local food bank agency from our Greer School Alumni Association. The Thanksgiving meal will follow at around 1:00 PM and then an afternoon program centered around Thanksgiving day activities. Supper, for those who can and want to stay, will

be in the early evening in the auditorium, followed by a showing of the slide show narrated by Jim Morton. We will give you more specific details in the next newsletter as plans should be finalized by that point. There will be something fun for all of you at this gathering, and I am very excited for our gathering and seeing all of you.

We have been in contact with Don Sizemore, the manager of the Millbrook Inn at Gate House. He said that there are rooms available for Friday, October 21 and Saturday, October 22nd. He said that September/ October are his busiest months of the year (foliage season), and that he will charge Greer alumni the minimum rate which is \$250 per night. Because he depends on September/ October business to make up for the slow times of the year, he cannot really do better than the \$250 at that time of year.



You can reserve a room for the reunion by contacting Don at 845-605-1120 or by e-mail to [Info@TheMillbrookInn.com](mailto:Info@TheMillbrookInn.com).

### **We get Letters**

Since our last Alumni Newsletter, we have heard from several of you, and it was great to hear updates from your lives. What follows is a summary of these updates.

**Vera Lee Jones Coutant (Class of 1955)** is



recovering from some health issues (and we wish her a speedy and successful recovery). Vera Lee has many positive memories of Thanksgiving and remembered writing the "thank you" notes to the Bennett Junior college girls, some of whom sponsored Thanksgiving meals for Greer students. She loved the afternoon hikes to the ravine after Thanksgiving and said it was a good thing there were some young teachers to



go with the hikers. She concluded by saying the ravine was deeper each year. Currently, her church feeds a local men's shelter on the 4th Thursday of each month, so Thanksgiving is a special treat for the men who are so grateful.

**Pam Rogers Tooke** (at Greer, 1958-1961), and her husband have moved from their Connecticut home to Santa Paula, California to be closer to family and friends. What was truly amazing to Pam was that it was took only **two days** for their Connecticut home to sell when they put it on the market this past May! You must be living right, Pam!

**Roland Herwig (Class of 1961)**, and his wife **Cary** helped serve Thanksgiving meals at the community dinner in the ballroom at the University of Central Oklahoma where hundreds of people come each year. Roland bussed tables and Cary served drinks. They both reported it as being a great event, and stated that after two hours on their feet, they had earned their own dinner! Incidentally, Cary is a full time writer and has written several books, short stories, and anthologies. She has been doing this for years, and continues to write and be published. Congratulations, Cary.



**Linda Wilson Cavanaugh (Class of 1961)** spoke very proudly of her daughter **Julie's** involvement in the Special Olympics as an athlete and a Global Messenger. Julie helped raise over \$4,000 for the Special Olympics last year: great work Julie!



**Karen Venetian Green (Class of 1954)**, enjoyed the DVD that was sent to her which was shown in the August, 2015 reunion. She reported that her husband Bill enjoyed watching the Greer DVD with her as he feels he knows Greer almost as well as Karen does. He remembers that



on their first date at the Sigma Nu Christmas party during their Sophomore year at college, Karen spent much time talking about Greer and her experiences over the ten years Karen was at Greer. As they watched the DVD, Karen reported how lovely it was to see the old buildings and faces of many of her teachers at Greer. She mentioned a memory of teacher, **Clifford Cronk**, who gave her a 99 1/2 on her final geography exam, because, he said, no one was perfect. He was a teacher who made students who chewed gum in his classroom stand in the front of the class with gum on their noses! But, added Karen, I liked him.

**Pat Jordon Picco (Class of 1963)** remembers decorating the Thanksgiving baskets with Crape Paper as being fun. Helping those in need, she remembers, taught her that there were people in the world much worse off than we at Greer were. Singing the Thanksgiving songs and having the staff serve us were both special memories for Pat.



**John Rogers (Class of 1941)** spoke highly of all the annual traditions of Greer including the Friday movies, walks to Verbank and its' candy store, Camp Barbey, and attendance at church as also being special to him. John was at Greer for all 12 years of school and mentioned he had a brother Douglas who graduated in 1940, and his sister Dorothy who left Greer when she turned 16. Lastly, he reported that Hope Farm (Greer), "helped me throughout my life". It built character, discipline, taught him fair play in athletics, and that we are indeed our brothers' keeper. He looks back at Greer with fondness.





## Alumni Profiles

### Theresa Giarrusso Elbe

Theresa attended Greer from 1936-1946. After finishing her schooling, she worked for the former Headmaster at Greer, **Mr. Boyles**, as a Nanny for a year and then worked as a Nanny at other places. Other jobs included a waitress at White Cliffs restaurant in Northboro, Massachusetts for many years, and she also owned and operated an apple orchard. In between, she married Stan Elbe in 1951 and raised three children. She currently has two grandchildren and two great grandchildren. Currently, she enjoys gardening and cooking.

### Janet Schaefer Berry ("Mitzi")

#### (Class of 1964 – MHS)



Janet (Mitzi) Berry attended Greer from 1962 until 1964, and was very active in extracurricular activities during her high school career. She was in the chorus for two years, taught Sunday school during her Sophomore year and was a leader in the Senior YPF during her Junior year. In addition, she was a recreation assistant during her last two high school years. She was in first Greer School class that graduated from Millbrook high school in 1964, and after graduation, she went home to Long Island, New York where she enrolled in nursing school in Brooklyn, New York. Later, she married former Greer School student Doug Berry. While raising her family in the Millbrook area, she worked for Greer for many years before working for the Fountains-at-Millbrook, which is located on the former Greer campus.

Janet enjoys reading, crochet, and decorating cakes as a business. Her memories of special

events at Greer were its' traditions, and she especially enjoyed the Memorial Day Parade and picnic that followed. The teacher she especially enjoyed was **Mrs. Freitag**.

Janet and her husband, Doug have been one of the driving forces of the Greer School Alumni Association for many years.



### Tony Vaz

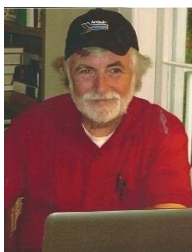
Tony attended Greer from 1952-1960. After graduating from high school in Texas, he spent four years in the Navy and served in many places, which included Naval Construction Electrician "A" School in Port Hueneme, California, Rhode Island, New Zealand, McMurdo Base, Antarctica, Mobile, Alabama, and Langes, Iceland. Tony was quite the world traveler!

From 1965-1970, he worked in the seafood processing industry and later worked for Chevron as an operator, a refinery shift supervisor and was a quality assurance specialist when he retired in 1997 after 27 years in three different oil and chemical processing facilities. He travelled to England, France, Venezuela and Mexico during his time with Chevron. Since retirement, he and his second wife, Jo Ann have travelled to Belize, England, Scotland, Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Columbia, Aruba, Brazil, Tahiti, Singapore, Thailand and several Caribbean cruise stops as well as two transatlantic crossings on Cunard 'Queens' (QE2 and QM2).

Tony is married with one son and two granddaughters. He stated that two of Greer's teachers, **Warren Olsen** and **Ruth Freitag** had a positive influence on his development. His current interests are model railroading and home



built aircraft. He also, to all of our benefit, spends a huge amount of time as the **Webmaster of the Greer School website**. Lastly, he said that returning to England, trips to California, and some additional cruises are on his bucket list.



### **Maurice Neville**

Maurice Neville was a staff member at Greer in the 1950's and 1960's. He worked in the maintenance department, as his main job was to maintain the Vehicles used at Greer, but he told me he also did lots of other things to keep things running smoothly. As



someone who drove the vehicles that Maurice maintained, I can say that he did keep them in good working order! He worked at a few other jobs after leaving Greer, but his main career occupation was working for the telephone company for 30 years. While at Greer, Maurice met and later married **Virginia Swanson**. Virginia was the home economics teacher at Greer when they met. They raised 2 children and have 3 grandchildren. Sadly, Virginia was killed in a tragic accident in 2014.



Maurice enjoys model railroading in his retirement. Maurice mentioned that one of his children has worked in the state department, and has traveled extensively: he has learned to speak Chinese, and like Maurice, has become a "jack-of-all trades" in his years of working for the United States government, and in the private sector.

### **Calvin Cain (Class of 1965 – MHS)**



Calvin attended Greer from 1960-1965, and graduated from Millbrook high school in 1965. Following his graduation, he attended Central State University in Ohio. He then served in the Army

for two years and this included a tour of duty in Vietnam. After leaving the Army in 1972, Calvin worked for Hercules Inc., a chemical company until 1978. He then became a self-employed Chemical Distributor until 2007, at which time he started MAC Distributors until 2014. In addition, Calvin taught at a high school from 1992 until 2014, teaching history and business. He is currently working on a Doctorate in Business Administration at Wilmington University.

Calvin is married with two children and six grandchildren, and his leisure activities include playing golf and reading...especially World War II books. In reflecting back on his Greer days, Calvin mentioned how much he enjoyed athletics at both Greer and Millbrook. Two teachers who had a positive influence on him were **Warren Olson**, who Calvin said especially helped students focus on the subject matter. From his days at Millbrook, Calvin spoke highly of **Senor Fernandes**, his Spanish teacher.



### **Michael Lang**



Michael attended Greer from 1960-1967, and after graduation from Millbrook high school in 1967, he attended Dutchess Community College until 1969. He then joined the Navy and



her held Friday, March 25, 2016 at 3:00 PM at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Durham, NC.

That's all for now.

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

Leisure activities that Michael enjoys are golfing, motorcycling, and working on furniture. As he looks back at his time at Greer, he has fond memories of the Martin Play and he mentioned two staff members who had a very positive influence on him. One staff member was **Calvin Sewell**, who engendered a great interest in Carpentry on Michael. In the same light, **George Groh** taught him how to build things.

## Greerschool.Org Web Site Update

Nothing new has been uploaded to the web site since the last newsletter except the following deaths we have learned about and have been entered on the In-Memoriam page:

**Francis James Morrow**, Class of 1955, died February 25, 2009.

**Alexander Emile “Mose” Deeb**, Class of 1941, died December 15, 2015.

We learned from **Roger Wilson** who is a first cousin to the Wilkinson siblings (of Hope Farm, circa 1935), that they have all passed away.

**Thomas Harrison Wilkinson**, Class of 1935, passed away in 1991.

**Jean Wilkinson Adams-Acton**, Class of 1936,  
passed away in 2002.

**Barbara Wilkinson Burak** (did not graduate at Hope Farm), passed away in 2015.

[illegible]

Sadly, we have learned that **Mrs. Randle Elliott (Gwen)** passed away on March 11, 2016. She was 97 years old. There will be a memorial service for

Report any change of address to me at [tonyvaz@greerschool.org](mailto:tonyvaz@greerschool.org).

Send newsworthy articles to:

John Hudnor, Sandy Hudnor or Peggy Sparks or "snail mail" them to the return address on your hard copy envelope. I will forward your articles to them if you don't have their addresses.

