



The Hope Farm / Greer School
Alumni Association
Newsletter



**Summer 2021
Volume 14 No. 3**



A Celebration of You!

This issue marks the **60th** Greer School quarterly newsletter that I have been involved with since joining the Greer School newsletter committee in 2006. That year marked the 100th anniversary of Greer's founding in 1906, and we had a special reunion to celebrate 100 years of Greer. Your contributions of articles through the ensuing 15 years have helped our alumni newsletter flourish, and the enthusiastic response to our requests for articles you sent in for the Alumni newsletters. I would also mention that there were other alumni newsletters through the years prior to 2006 which kept our association alive and thriving, and the alumni association thanks all of those who worked to keep things going during those times. **Jim Morton, Doug and Mitzi Berry, Wayne Holton, Tony Vaz and Peggy Mathewson Sparks to name a few alumni who kept the Association alive during those years. To state the obvious, there would be no alumni/staff newsletters without your sending us your perspectives about Greer and your life. Personally, it has been a great ride for me during these past 15 years to serve and correspond with you.**

Recently I went through all the 60 issues and found there were **175 staff and alumni** who have sent in at least one article for publication in our newsletters ...and some have sent in numerous

articles through the years. To all of you, an enthusiastic thank you!!!

What of the future of our staff/alumni newsletters? No one knows for sure, but I would like to keep our newsletter going as our Greer life and experiences were too important to let them die, and our children and grandchildren will be grateful to know about you and your memories of growing up. So here is an invitation to keep your correspondences coming!

John Hudnor, Class of 1963

September 23, 2021, Gathering (TBD)

As of now we have no final place for our September 23rd gathering as this newsletter goes to print. However, we are still working to make final arrangements for our get together and those who are interested in attending, contact me via:

tonyvaz@greerschool.org

We look forward to seeing you in September!

Greer's Vocational Training and Guidelines.

Editor's note: In previous newsletters, I wrote about the student life guidebook of 1956-1957 concerning cottage life and academics. In this third and last entry, I will cover the vocational section of the guidebook.

The guideline book stated if you were 14-15 years old, you would be assigned to "pre-vocational job and group work projects" to help you learn how to work successfully and discover what your natural vocational interest could be. The idea was to find out what jobs you liked and did best at and advise you on possible adult long term vocational plans.

Ages 16-18 years old participated in Greer's full-scale vocational program. You were to be assigned "on-the-job" apprentice training with Greer's

carpenters, painters, plumbers, electricians, farmers, cooks, nurses, assistant house parents, childcare supervisors, cottage stewards and vocational office managers. In addition, many of the students learned to drive in doing some of these jobs.

In reflection, I feel Greer did a good job in this “on-the-job-training” in many of these areas in their apprenticeship programs. (JDH)

Most vocational jobs were changed four times a year beginning at each academic marking period. There were some exceptions (assistant house parents, for example, which was for the entire school year.) Three-times-a-day work like stewards/stewardesses received \$2.00-\$2.50 per week. All other jobs were 10 cents/hour for 14–15 year-olds, and 15-25 cents/hour for 16-18 year-olds. If you had a 7 day/week job, you did receive one day a week off *. For students under 14 years of age, you received a monthly allowance from 20 cents to 60 cents depending on your age.

* Not sure how they pulled that off (TV)

Last of all, to instill responsibility in each of us, if you had an unexcused absence, not only did you not get paid for that day, but you had to pay the vocational department the amount of pay you would have received for that day.

Greer’s vocational training did not prepare me to be a public-school teacher as there was no teacher mentoring program, but it did very strongly instill in me some very positive work habits that directly applied to my teaching career and my role at home with my family. Which of the vocational jobs that you held help you in your life later? We would love to hear about your perspectives and lessons learned about work habits at Greer which benefitted you later in your life.

From Pat Hilsinger, Class of 1950

I was at Greer for my high school years of 1946-1950, and some happy times and memories include: dances at the high school auditorium—these dances always ended with the playing of Glenn Miller’s, “Moonlight Serenade” to signal that the dance would be over. I enjoyed hikes to

Millbrook on Saturdays to buy goodies. Cheering for the sports teams was fun and I remember services at the Chapel. At harvest time, we canned veggies in Greer’s cannery. Last of all were special memories of Thanksgiving and Christmas traditions at Greer.

After Greer, I went to the New York Teachers College at Albany (now the university), and taught juniors and seniors in high school English class and directed the Senior Play for two years in Jamesville, New York (near Syracuse). After raising four children, I went to law school at age 48 at Temple University in Philadelphia, and had a 20-year legal career, the last 18 years with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. I retired in 2004, and now enjoy spending time with my children. My oldest daughter passed away in 2016. Daughter Leigh is an OB/Gyn. My son Doug is a talented musician, and my daughter Ellen is a psychiatrist and recently has protected me from Covid by food shopping for me. I’m counting my blessings.

From Liz Rivera, Class of 1960

Many of us have gotten used to being alone during this recent pandemic. This aloneness never occurred at Greer. We always felt safe as we had each other, the staff, and as we got older, we were assigned our own personal jobs which we went to before reporting to our morning classes. We did get a small check which we spent on goodies. We were so involved with our daily living that there was not time to dwell on anything other than meals, homework, sleeping, and our wonderful sports activities. Sports had such a big spot in so many of our hearts. I played in every sport we had and cheerleading. One year I received the Sportsmanship award, and that was a big thrill. Greer provided everything for us—the absolute best house parents, a beautiful church, roommates you never forget. The school really helped me, and I will always have the memories.

From Roger Russoman, Class of 1963

I remember sneaking down to Camp Barbey to see the girls (do you remember this, **Jim Anderson?**) One other time a few of us boys from Daisy Cottage went sled riding down the main roadway

on the hill by Daisy late one night. **Mrs. Freitag** let on to us at the cottage the next day that although she did not know the perps, it didn't go unnoticed to her. I also remember coming to the farm during the summer after I finished my lunchtime runs on the food truck to help the farm workers throw hay into the wagon: farm work was good conditioning for the football season. One last memory I have was the time I was caught retaliating by throwing a spitball in **Mr. Packer's** class. I do not remember who threw it at me, but my punishment was to make 1,000 (no exaggeration) spitballs in detention during the Friday night movie. I do not recall what the movie was, but because I wanted to see it, I rushed to finish. Don't you know I didn't finish until about 5 minutes from the end of the movie!!! My takeaway from the whole episode parallels a football game: The guy who throws the first punch never gets caught. It is the one who retaliates that gets penalized. I also learned how stupid I was for trying to make 1,000 spitballs—I should have just made a few hundred at best!

I would also like to address the recent newsletter request for how the **Robert Frost poem, "The Road Not Taken"** had an influence on my life. In my senior year at Greer, I applied to an Engineering School in New Jersey. Because my application was not submitted in time, I was told to re-apply in time for the following year's Spring Semester. Given the extra time made me question if I wanted to follow that route, and I choose not to apply. Having always liked to work with my hands and mind led me to ask my uncle, who was an electrical contractor, to help me get into the electrician's union that he was a member of. I was accepted into the union, and it ended up that not going to college was a positive influence on my life. I completed 4 years of night schooling and on-the-job training to become a journeyman electrician. Over the years I became a foreman on both large and small jobs in many areas of the profession. It gave me a profession in the electrical construction industry that was both successful and fulfilling, and a career that I enjoyed as much on my last day as on my first day 40 years earlier. How many people can say that? It also allowed me to retire at the fairly young age of 58.

Editor's note: Roger also included information on some of his non- work adventures during his life that I will include in a future newsletter.

From Vicki Elms Altroggen

I have relatives entering Greer School in 1942: **Richard V. Elms, and Jean P. Elms.** Jean graduated in 1946 and I believed Richard graduated in 1948. I am their half-sister and both Richard and Jean spoke very fondly of Greer.

Vicki enquired about how much tuition Greer charged and whether there was state aid provided for some of the Greer students. Greer webmaster, **Tony Vaz**, answered her question by stating that tuition as we know it today was not charged, although he remembered his mother paying between \$25-\$50/month for he and his brother's room and board. Tony added that Greer depended mostly on donations (the Charles Hayden Foundation was a biggie), and possibly the Episcopal church. As far as Tony remembered, the state of New York did not help in the pre-1960's time period.

Greer Alumni Association committee member **Peggy Mathewson Sparks** added that it was **Bishop Greer's** desire to never ask the state of New York to be a contributor to Greer. He felt that if the state were to be involved, Greer would lose its independence as a private boarding school and be governed by rules and regulations of the state of New York. It turned out that Bishop Greer's concerns were realized as in the 1960's when Greer started accepting financial aid from New York state, Greer lost much of its independence, and the school changed dramatically as private donations fell off significantly, and Greer ended up closing in the late 1970's.

From Cheryl Montaigne Crawford, Greer 1952-1957

I did go back to one of the reunions and totally enjoyed it as it made me remember my wonderful times at Greer. Although I was sad to see that Plum, Greer and other cottages were gone, I did see Gate House and of course went into the high school where we had the luncheon and dinner. I

went to the cemetery where **Bruce Barton** is buried: he was like a big brother to me. I think **Peggy Sparks** mentioned in her book that Bruce had given me his good luck rabbit's foot a couple of weeks before he died.

Some of my other memories include **Ronald Cooper** and I were in the infirmary together for a couple of weeks after we had a collision. He and a couple of the other boys were riding bikes and some of us girls were walking to the area where we went swimming. He hit me by accident with his bike and he went flying in the air and we were both knocked out!

I also remember on some Sundays if my mother could not come and visit, she would call the office, and someone would have told me, and I waited in the office to talk to her.

I would love to hear how some of the Greer students got to Greer. I know my mother was a single parent that worked several jobs as a secretary and could not afford to keep me and did not want me in the city. That was a good choice on her part.

Last of all, I remember being at Plum cottage with the **MacGregor twins, Sheila Wilson, and Cherlyn Gieringer**. I remember climbing the apple trees, the Jungle Jim, planting gardens out back, and the cow pasture field nearby. "Lilly-of-the-Valley" were flowers that grew wild by the cow pasture. Our houseparent, **Miss Sutton** taught me how to spool knit. I really loved her. *

***Editor's note: Cheryl added more memories that I will include in a future newsletter.**

From Mark Speakman, Greer 1960-1962

Since I started attending Greer reunions in the early 1980's, I have come to really look forward to them, as my mom (on Greer's staff) also did. Honestly, I always wanted to gain friendships when at Greer in the early 1960's, but so many factors seemed to make this impossible. The annual Boy Scout jamborees were my favorite times, along with the festive seasonal meals in school, and the Friday night movies.

Not surprisingly, I bonded with **Mr. Tom Percy**, who gave me encouragement to contribute my work at 10 cents an hour. My first summer job was filling in the wet space (which became a student council sponsored small park) between the gym and main house. I learned so much from listening to conversations about life in general at suppers with staff, but really wanted to have conversations with **Charmi Neely** and other students who were serving the staff meals, but they never happened, because as a staff member's child, there was limited conversations with other students. That being said, every Greer staff member taught me something about life and how to live it well and fill my memories to this day. Those words have often guided my decisions over the past 60 years. Like so many, I am always grateful for the years I was at Greer, and the subsequent reunions I have attended.

Mark lives in Canada as has enjoyed family life with his children and kept busy with many hobbies and other family activities including making a 90 minute "YouTube film," professionally produced with his child Morgan.

Sad News

We have learned of the passing of Matthew "Matt" Andrew Coleman (Jan 31, 1942 - Feb 26, 2021). Cause of death unknown in Salisbury, North Carolina. Any survivors are unknown. He had a brother, James, at Greer, but we have no contact information for him.

Greerschool.Org Web Site Update

The Spring 2021 issue and this issue will be uploaded to the Newsletter page prior to the publication of this issue. That's all for now.

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 - \

Sandy Hudnor - > tonyvaz@greerschool.org

Peggy Sparks - /

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