



The Hope Farm / Greer School
Alumni Association
Newsletter



Summer 2022
Volume 15 No. 3

A story of Love about a Greer Staff couple
from “The Greatest Generation”

Editor’s Note: Joe and Bea Fischer were on the Greer School staff from 1947 to 1957. They were adored by everyone. Their son Rick was kind enough to send me their story, and I am leading off this newsletter with their story. Greer was blessed to have the Fischer’s and many other good staff to serve us all at Greer.

My parents LOVED Greer School---plain and simple. Whenever they would talk about Greer, it seemed that they were describing a Shangri La-like experience. My parents went to Greer right after they got married, so they were just starting their lives together. Everybody was still in a post WWII mood that was largely positive. At Greer, they were embraced by the fellow Faculty and Staff--all of whom seemed like they were honestly good and decent. (Obviously, there would have been some Staff friction secondary to the hierarchy and organization, but I never heard them mention any issues at Greer). Dad was a big kid at heart, and at Greer socializing with Jack McHenry or Ruth Freitag, or other staff was natural for our parents.

At Greer, in the 1950’s, education, coaching and being a houseparent were “fun” for Dad. Dad knew how to coach, teach and relate to kids and young adults, and I feel these are the reasons why he and Mom would reflect on Greer, smile and sigh about the good old days.



The Fischer Family: Post-Greer -1964 – Joey, Joe, Bea, Ricky

I never really heard Dad initiate a conversation about his coaching experience at Greer, or

anywhere. However, if somebody else specifically asked about it, he would tell stories. This was very clear to me in November 1963, when **Ed Baker**, one of Dad’s former players, came to visit for the weekend. I heard so many stories about those players and teams because Ed was there asking questions and telling his own stories. The reason I remember it so well is because that was the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday of the JFK assassination. We all basically sat around the TV and all the Greer stories were interjected between the incredible images and news from that weekend in 1963.

Joe and I, as well as Mom, never knew much about Dad’s WWII experience; everything I knew was from Mom telling me what little she knew. He was halfway through getting his Master’s in Education at NYU when he decided to enlist in the ARMY, just BEFORE Pearl Harbor in 1941. He dropped out of NYU and went to the South Pacific. He was at Guadalcanal, the Solomon Islands and Fiji. He contracted Malaria and was in and out of the hospital in the Solomon Islands for the better part of a year. After almost 4 years, he returned stateside and had lost so much weight that when he got to the front door of his parent’s house in Monroe NY, his mother didn’t recognize him; she watched a tall thin man walk up the front driveway and was afraid something had happened to Dad, and that this man was a messenger....then it turned out to be her returning son! So, we knew about those stories. After Dad died in 2013, we found a metal lockbox with all these letters of commendation from top military brass. They were addressed to my grandparents in Monroe, New York, and had been sent home during Dad’s tour of the Pacific. There were several firefights on Guadalcanal and elsewhere in which Dad apparently exhibited exemplary acts worthy of commendation. I didn’t see that any medals were

conferred, but there were 3 separate incidents with letters from numerous officers and top brass. I am sure that he never told Mom because I can guarantee that she would have framed them and would have told Joe and me all about them. She never knew. We displayed those letters at Dad's memorial service, which included a full military flag folding ceremony.

Mom was essentially a genius; Dad ABSOLUTELY hit the lottery when he met and married her. She skipped 2 years of High School and got her RN degree at age 19 at New York Hospital/Cornell School of Nursing. Back then, it was rare for young women to go to Medical School, but she would have been a phenomenal physician. She was a wizard with any subject in school. After leaving Greer, she was the head nurse in the ER at the local hospital where they lived. She was also a Cub Scout Den Mother, Music Teacher (Self Taught), and a de facto Guidance Counselor.

They met at a Summer Camp near Monroe, New York at which Dad was the Lifeguard/Swimming Instructor and Mom was the new Camp Nurse (around 1946-7). Mom came from a very privileged, affluent French/English family on Long Island's North Shore (Oyster Bay, Glen Head, Old Brookville, and summers at Sag Harbor, etc.). The men in her family went to Harvard. Her Grandfather was close with Teddy Roosevelt. Her older sister held the highest rank in the US NAVY WAVES during WWII (I think it was Lt Commander - women weren't allowed to reach Admiral back then, I think). She worked side by side with Admiral Nimitz. Later she dated the actor Robert Stack as well as Governor John Connally of Texas, who was in the JFK Motorcade car in Dallas when JFK was shot. Mom's younger sister, also an RN, married a very prominent Cardio Thoracic Surgeon out of Yale. Mom fell for the Lifeguard who came from a very blue collar, German family. This caused a lot of consternation in her family, but Dad totally won them all over. When Mom and Dad first met, Mom didn't drive, and Dad incorrectly assumed that she didn't know HOW to drive. The master's in psychology that my mother was asked, "Maybe you could teach me?" Dad fell for that hook line and sinker and their first date was a driving lesson.

Mom already had her license and didn't drive simply because she didn't have a car. She didn't tell him the truth until later. When Mom was a freshman in HS in Glen Head, Long Island, her parents separated/divorced, and her father left. A few months later Mom got sick and was in bed for about a week. One bright sunny day, while Mom was sick and in bed, her mother drove to the store to buy Mom some ice cream for her sore throat. Tragically, her mother's car was struck by a train about a mile from their house; apparently, she was blinded by the sun and the lights marking the intersection with the tracks were difficult to see. So, Mom and her sisters were raised by her Grandmother. I think that experience gave my mom quite a bit of empathy for her role as a Houseparent at Greer.

Asst. editor's note: Rick didn't mention it and maybe he didn't know about it, but when Bea was the housemother at Daisy Cottage, she always said one of her cousins was John Payne, the actor. Whenever a John Payne movie came on the television, it was mandatory viewing.

My brother Joe went to Springfield College for Physical Education; same school as Dad, became a Captain in the Marines, got his "Master's in Education" from the University of Vermont, and ultimately got his "Doctorate in Physical Education" from Springfield. He was a High School PE teacher for 2 years, and then became the Assistant Swim Coach at UVM in Burlington, VT. He became the Head Swim Coach there, as well as Assistant Athletic Director (19 years). They named the annual swimming award at UVM the "Joe Fischer Award".



He was the Chairman of the NCAA Committee on Swimming and Diving. He also became the NCAA Chairman for both Nordic AND Alpine Skiing while he was at Vermont. He is an avid Pedal Steel Guitar player.

You asked about me so here is the story. I went to HS at Vermont Academy in Saxtons River VT. I went to UVM for undergrad (Zoology) then Medical School at UVM (1980), then General Surgery Internship at The University of Arizona in Tucson. By the way, while in Med School (4th year), I did a 6 week Orthopedic Surgery rotation at The

University of Utah and LOVED it. I stayed on campus in the SAE Fraternity House as a boarder for 6 weeks-the SAE house was a 10-minute walk from the University Hospital across the golf course. It was in the fall of 1979 and was a tremendous experience, and place. I did my Orthopedic Surgery Residency at Vermont. My first job was in Tampa Florida in a Sports Medicine practice. My partners were the team Docs for the Tampa Bay Bucs professional football team, as well as some other pro soccer and football teams. After 3 years there I had an opportunity to specialize in Shoulder Surgery at Columbia Presbyterian /New York Orthopaedic Hospital in Manhattan (Fellowship for 1 year). From there I took the job as one of the Team Physicians at Ohio State University (1991). John Cooper was coach then. OSU had >950 athletes on 33 teams with 8 training rooms and 20 Athletic Trainers and 57 student trainers. It was great. Lots of stories. I was also a team physician for the Ohio Glory, (pro football in the World Football League). After 9 years of the politics of a gigantic institution like Ohio State, I switched to a private job at OrthopedicOne in Columbus (65 Orthopedic Surgeons) where I could still teach Residents and Medical Students, but didn't have to be under the control of the University. I am still at OrthopedicOne (21 years). I have played the guitar for 52 years-rock, blues, country, slide, Flamenco, classical....my basement looks like a guitar/music store. I have been married to my wonderful wife, Jan, for 30 years. She is an RN and works in Oncology for the Ohio State medical center.

I SO appreciate the Greer Newsletters-Thank you. You mentioned Dad being Scoutmaster-I know he loved that. Joe and I both became Eagle Scouts, and I know he really loved that. Neither Joe nor I have any children, so there is nobody to tell these stories too. John, I appreciate your interest and all of your kind words. I apologize for transforming this email into the second coming of "War and Peace"!!!

Thanks again, Rick Fischer.

In memory of John A. Travlos, 1937-2021



John was born in Athens, Greece and attended Greer for his high school years. His stated ambition in his senior year



was to become an engineer, and after leaving Greer, he did just that as he earned two degrees in aeronautical engineering from NYU. His life's work was in a manufacturing/construction company, and he was also involved in many civic organizations. He lived his life to the fullest as he enjoyed getting to know people from all walks of life.

Through his later years, I enjoyed a regular correspondence with John, and he was an enthusiastic supporter of the activities of our Greer School Alumni Association. Just as important was John's financial support as he always made contributions and enthusiastically made it known to me to let him know if there were other financial needs to keep our alumni association alive—which he did more than anyone else. His support was done quietly without fanfare. **We will miss you, John!**

Catching up with letters from Last year!

From Jim Mathewson, Class of 1954

The best teacher I ever had was **Ruth** Freitag. Mr. Clifford Cronk for all his oddities was also very good. I had him for 7th and 8th grades. He was my Latin teacher when I was in high school, when he was a houseparent at Gate House. Mr. Cronk and Mr. Mac taught me how to chop wood. I remember Mr. Cronk's compact swing and Mr. Mac had been a wrestler. Mr. Cronk, by the way, was a very strict disciplinarian in the classroom. If you were out of order, you got to endure the "squat" with arms extended. After a couple of these sessions, I was no longer out of order in his class. By the way, I still have good thigh muscles! I would say in general that all our teachers and staff had the best intentions for us, and their attempts to help us along by and large worked.

From Syd Nesbitt, class of 1961

Life at Greer was at first scary, and I missed my friends from my former school in Westchester county when I was in 9th grade. Once I made some friends at Greer though, and got into a routine at Greer, and saw all the girls, I was O.K. The small classes, good teachers, and all of the social activities were good for me later on in my life. Plus, a little religion at Greer helped keep me more disciplined. One of my best friends at Greer was **Lance Curley** who was so funny and interesting. I guess that my happiest time at Greer was when we were winning so many football games, and when I learned to sit down and study.

Syd said that he eventually became a “jack-of-all-trades” worker after life at Greer and enjoyed working for himself. Last of all, Syd heard a guy back in Boston back in the 1960’s who finger-picked guitar like Merle Travis, whom he later learned who he was, and playing banjo like Earl Scruggs finally helped me to get it. Timing is everything they say, and currently Syd plays banjo, guitar, and dobro in 3 different bands: bluegrass and country music. He likes to fly RC airplanes and he has been to every state except Maine. His daughter is a Ph. D living in California. Last of all, traveling to Europe remains one of Syd’s goals in the future.

From Scott Ledbetter, Greer, 1960-1963

I so remember being an altar boy—could do Bullwinkle’s voice from the pulpit. I also remember dice baseball when listening to Yankee games on the radio. I enjoyed my 7 cents per meal and 10 cents per hour for working out of doors. I was small enough to help replace the VW trucks engine with a crashed Beetle’s engine. I still have a scar from the fence we hit when we were running away from the girl’s cottage and remember running away with Claudia—darn, the road was dark. No clue how we got back to campus, but it was my duty to protect her. Enjoyed the upper classmen taking me under your wings for varsity sports—someone had to be the equipment manager. I recall these same upperclassmen scaring us on the long dark road on the way back to our cottage after seeing a horror movie in the auditorium. Several of us tried our hand at making wine from the berries on the side

of one of Greer’s roads. Ate rhubarb out of the dirt, played with snakes and bats and survived it all. When I left Greer at the end of 8th grade, I did bring home a cat and a 48-star American flag—still have the flag, but the poor cat died long ago. I do look at the last high school yearbook (1963) ever so often and remembered that Senior Doug Skipworth died suddenly less than two years later while playing basketball in the Navy.

After graduating from high school in 1967, I joined the Navy and became a RADAR technician. Eventually I went to an advanced electronics school at Treasure Island in San Francisco and met my wife while there. I was later stationed at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.



Throughout his Navy and later civilian career, Scott worked and learned many interesting jobs in addition to being stationed in many areas before retiring in 2017. As a side note, some of the officers Scott worked with went on to become Astronauts. Scott and his wife have a son and a daughter.

From Mike Stolting, Greer, 1950’s

At one point in my childhood—probably on board the small boat my father had bought and slaved over to make it seaworthy in the middle 1950’s—John, my brother, and I were probably talking about the White House and Pop mentioned that he and our mom had spent the night in the Lincoln bedroom once. I never questioned him again on that subject. However, from time-to-time I would be curious about when that event took place; I had no doubt that it did take place because my father was not one given to make things up. A couple of years ago I did some investigating and found that they were on the White House list of names as guests who were leaving. The only thing I do remember is Pop having mentioned is at dinner he was seated across the table from actress, **Lana Turner**. **Eleanor Roosevelt** was a friend of my mom’s side of the family which is probably why they were invited to the White House.

From Kristin Beskeen, Greer, 1960-1968

My older brother and I came to Greer in the winter of 1960, and I was put in the care of Mom Mac with four other girls as we were too young for the

big cottages. Next was a move to Greer Cottage and the Shays were houseparents. **Mr. Shay** was jovial and kind. **Mrs. Shay** ran a tight ship and kept things in order. The last cottage I moved to was one of the new buildings built in the 1960's, and **Charmi Neely** (Ms. Charmi), was our houseparent. Greer gave us a stable and secure place to grow up (even though the emotional support of a stable family life was lacking.)

After Greer, I went to college and obtained my MA in Special Education at the University of Pittsburgh. My first teaching job was in New Orleans, Louisiana and it was while there that I met my husband Mark (we will celebrate our 40th anniversary this August and will be celebrating by taking a cruise on the Mississippi river.) Mark taught 8th grade history for 30 years and I worked in Special Education for 32

years. We have two children and two granddaughters who live close by so we can visit with them. I am busy with my hobbies: reading,



jogging, playing organ and piano, crocheting, and knitting. I also volunteer with a cat rescue organization, and with adults with special needs. My only unusual experience was that I have survived two strokes and have become fully functional in recovery. We have lived in Elk Grove, California most of our adult life, and now, after having raised our children, we abide with six cats, a golden, two guinea pigs and two tarantulas. Oh yes, I love spiders!

Annual Greer Gathering

Our annual gathering will be on Saturday, September 24, 2022. We look forward to seeing you at the Greer high School auditorium. From 8:00 am to 11:00am will be breakfast foods for you to enjoy: Coffee, juices, water, donuts, bagels, and fruits, etc. These will be provided by the Greer School alumni association.

We will begin our luncheon at Noon, and I have enclosed the registration form for you to fill out to pay the cost of the luncheon per person. Please make check out to **"John Hudnor"** as I will pay the

Fountains-at-Millbrook out of my bank account funds to cover the cost of the luncheon.

After two years of not being able to meet on campus because of the pandemic, we are looking forward to seeing all of you again. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at:

newsletter@greerschool.org

Sad News



We have learned of the passing of Michael "Mike" Neil Ennis (1940 - 2022). He was a 1958 graduate, The 1958 Talisman said his nickname was "Little Man", but that was totally inappropriate in sight of the man he grew up to be.

Greerschool.Org Web Site Update

The Spring 2022 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 or a521@bellsouth.net

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