



## Greer Reunion 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration August, 2006



Joan Caprariello, Gwen Elliot, Joe Austin, Alice Austin

### **Dear Fellow Alumni;**

In a word the reunion was wonderful! Personally, it was my favorite one and I'm not really sure why, but I thoroughly enjoyed the weekend experience. The following is a summary of the three-day gathering of former alumni and staff.

On August 25<sup>th</sup>, the day before the reunion activities, quite a few of the former staff and students gathered at the various hotels near the site of where we were going to hold the banquet on Saturday and there were several informal get-togethers that evening.

Registration on Saturday morning was scheduled for 9:00am. To my surprise, there were already quite a few people gathered before the start, and after each one registered, staff and students

enjoyed the initial greetings and a chance to sit and talk. Close to 100 former staff and students came.

At about 10:15 we went to the "Chapel-of-the-Child" for a memorial service in memory of Jim Morton. The chapel was full. After the liturgy was given by the Reverend Trudy Codd of the Verbank Church, she encouraged members in the congregation to express their feelings about Jim and anything else about Greer.



Jim Morton Memorial Services

Many people spoke about Jim and also about special feelings that they had about the Greer experience. I wish all could have spoken, because all of us have a story to tell, and I enjoyed listening to some wonderful comments from those who felt inclined to speak. It was a very special part of the weekend for all of us.

We arrived back at the auditorium just in time for lunch. During lunch, there was lots of catch-up talking,

perusing of picture albums of Greer and people busy taking pictures of each other. felt very much like the Thanksgiving celebration in the auditorium. There was plenty of time to walk the campus during this time after lunch, and some took advantage of that.

Dinner in the evening at the Peekskill Holiday Inn was a positive event. Everyone dressed up quite formally and I must say that as a group, we were a sight to behold! After a pre-dinner social hour in the hotel lounge, we had a buffet-style dinner.



Fred Trommsdorff

Then Fred Trommsdorff (our permanent MC) once again did a wonderful job mixing in just the right blend of nostalgia with his good sense-of-humor. We had some speakers throughout the program including Peggy Sparks who told us how she wrote a book about Greer, and Peter Caram reminded us about



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some of the positive values that we learned from our experience at Greer. Peter's talk was excellent and well-received as he spoke with emotion and touched us all. Peggy's book is called, "Hope Farm/Greer School, Memoirs of Childhood". She had over 100 copies printed and it sold out on Saturday. It's a good read and there will be information on it later in this newsletter. We also recognized alumni for such categories as: the "oldest alumnus" (Deeb brothers-class of 1941); the youngest (Judy Wallace); the one who had gained the "least" amount of weight (Phyllis Campesi); and the one who had come the farthest to be at the reunion: Hildi Walton who traveled from England.



John Blass

In summary, this reunion weekend was a happy event. We have had between 7-9 reunions since 1980 and I look forward to each one of them. I am proud to be associated with all of you and hope that you find our gatherings to be rewarding to you. There were quite a few people who made this reunion possible, but the Greer Association is especially

grateful for Doug and Mitzi Berry for their tireless work in making each of these reunions possible. The importance of their efforts on all of our behalf cannot be overestimated; these reunions would have not happened if it had not been for them. **Thank you, Doug and Mitzi!**

Sincerely,  
John Hudnor  
"Acting" head of the Greer Alumni Association



Doug and Mitzi Berry



Ed Deeb and Alex Deeb

The great weekend ended with a breakfast at the school auditorium followed by a service at the chapel conducted by alumni John Blass, who is a minister. John delivered a spiritual message and then sang, with an excellent voice, beautiful gospel songs for us.

### We need your input:

How often would you like to have Alumni Reunions:

- A. Every year!
- B. Every 2 years!
- C. Every 3 years!
- D. Every 4 years!
- E. Whenever!

Please indicate your vote with your submission of dues.

Thanks! ☺

### From Donald Brown:

Greer Alumnus '47-'54

Mr. Adamson was a tall, lean, bald-headed man who looked old to me from the perspective of a teenager looking at his lack of hair. As I found out later, he was around 30 years-old and was the national collegiate fencing champion while a student at NYU. While a student in his 11th grade history class, I never did my homework and was inattentive in class. However, I had a reputation of keeping my word, so he



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challenged me to a best of five ping pong shootout. If I won, I would get a "B" without doing any homework. If he won, I would promise to do my homework and behave in class.

With the brashness of youth and being the current student ping pong champion, I gladly agreed to his terms. A table was set up in the gym, with many students in the balcony to see this battle. As soon as he served the ball I knew I was in trouble. Mr. Adamson was not only a superior player, he was also intelligent enough to keep the score close so I would not lose face in front of my peers.

The result was that I did my homework for the rest of the course and behaved in class. In the New York State History Regents that year, I was the only Greer student to ever get a grade of 100. To top it off, I became a history major in college and never got less than a 98 on an exam in the field.



Mr. Adamson's class

Mr. Adamson was only at Greer for a year or two, but he

was an example of the fine teachers that did such a great job preparing us for the outside world.

## From Judy Wallace:

Greer Alumnus '66-69

## A tribute to Claribel Luthardt:

I spent my first overnight and the following week at Greer quarantined in the basement of Main House with a mild case of the mumps. And, then experienced another prolonged stay on the upper Main House floor when I had bronchitis. I can't recall the exact year but I remember feeling sad that The Sound of Music was playing at a movie theater in town and that I couldn't go because I was bedridden. Mrs. Luthardt helped me get through this disappointment by reading the entire book of Heidi by Johanna Spyri aloud to me. I had never had anyone read aloud to me an entire book, chapter by chapter, and she was the perfect one to do this, with her Scandinavian name on a topic so closely related to both her heritage and the movie I was missing. I still think of Heidi and her grandfather roasting cheese over their fireplace as a perfect image of happiness.

I arrived at Greer in February or March of 1966--so the movie was already out for about a year and it may have been 2 years later when this happened. The music room photo was taken a month or two after my arrival (with my sisters Sharon and Rose) in April, 1966. These memories should show some of the old timers that we sixties kids had fond experiences too.

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- WE NEED YOUR HELP! If you
- would like to contribute to the
- next newsletter, please mail me,
- John Hudnor, care of:
- 
- [tonyvaz@greerschool.org](mailto:tonyvaz@greerschool.org)
- 
- Articles of remembrance,
- tribute to staff, current life
- stories, obituaries, information
- about alumni or former staff are
- all welcome. I will try to include
- all that are sent. If you sent
- something for this letter, and do
- not see it, send it again. My
- email is usually good, but I had
- a few weeks during which the
- service had a few hick-ups.
- Thank you in advance to all
- who will be sending to the next
- newsletter.
- Thank you to all contributed to
- the completion of this
- newsletter. John Hudnor
- 
- • • • •



Katrina Bolcher, Kristen Bell, Judy Wallace, Betsy McCarriger, Vickie; Mr. Rosenthal is at the piano.

## **From Judy Wallace:**

Greer Alumnus '66-69

### **Musical Memory:**

I see that you are a keeper of the clocks. A timekeeper. A rhythm man. A melody maker. Your practiced fingers find their way so adequately across the keyboard: ivory, then black; all keys sounding out a melody that is tempered and even--even enough for our small class of five giggling girls all wanting to know about harmony and the Sound of Music and Mary Poppins songs and Swing Low Sweet Chariot, too. Just a Spoonful of Sugar Makes the Medicine Go Down and Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious!

We improvised White Christmas, doo-wop style: Just like the ones I used to know, bote---dee-oh-dee-oat-doe, and

I hear those sleigh bells ringing! The Beatles may have been the best band there ever was, according to you, dear Mr.

Rosenthal, but we still rank the Four Tops right up there alongside the four mop tops, along with the Temptations, the Supremes and all of Motown's magic sounds.

It's one o'clock, or one thirty; half-past the hour: half way through music class and we aren't wanting to leave. Show us how you do that with your fingers: how you combine them to make such a full sound. It's warm in here and snowy outside so we're in no rush to cross the cold pavement between school buildings. Besides, mid-day is creeping toward late afternoon and soon enough we'll be heading back to house parents and homework; we boarding school brats. So, let you entertain us now, keeping us enthralled with music that's simple enough, but not too simple either (no babies' nursery rhymes, please).

How did you end up here in the middle of the 1960s? What made you want to teach us way out here in the hills of Dutchess County? Is this your first teaching job? Are we your first little girl pupils? Do you have our attention? Or maybe the cameraman is asking us to hold really still because the

photo doesn't show your fingers at all. It's as if your music is a private joke shared amongst ourselves.

Katrina, Kristin, Betsy, Vickie and me: we're all gazing at you as if you were the god of music--Orpheus and Bacchus combined. The other girls don't seem so sure, but me and Betsy know exactly what you mean when you say, "Listen to this," or "What does this sound like to you?" We are in love with the listening. For us, time stands still, right now in this

I would like to know how many of you are interested in helping to preserve the Chapel of the Child. We would need alumni who will contribute (large amounts of) money, those who will work with The Fountains, those who will research the procedures, and the paperwork.

We have heard from many of you who are interested, but before we actually begin, we need to know exactly how many of you are in favor of this objective.

Please mark on your alumni fee form if you would like to help contribute to the restoration of the Chapel of the Child. Thank You!

John Hudnor



second story room up over the gym where bouncing basketballs create distant percussion.

Katrina's eyes wander: what a day for a daydream! Kristen holds a pen as if she intends to take notes on the notes you are playing. Betsy smiles shyly, pinching her thumb inside of a small fist, looking like she wants to curl up somewhere alone to call back the days when she was in her mama's arms, sucking her infant thumb after she'd outgrown the breast or the bottle. Vickie is indifferent; unsure of where this is going, she gazes off to the side. Both she and Kristin wear eyeglasses and both gaze sideways so you can only see their down-turned eyes (or just the right eye in Kristin's case). But you and I, dear Mr. R., we are making direct eye contact. Your light reflects in my eyes, for all to see, our common love of music and the shared sense that certain songs will always allow time to stand still, even as The Beat Goes On.

## From Cheryl Montaigne Crawford

Greer Alumnus '52 - '58.

I think one of the things that prepared most for life were great work ethics. At a young age, Greer asked us to be responsible for certain chores and the responsibilities grew as we did. We didn't complained about doing those chores because they were expected of everyone. We were expected to do a good job. We had to pass the "white glove test."

Mrs. Sutton had the biggest impact in my life. She was the house parent at Plum Cottage. Those years at Plum were some of the most volatile years when I was growing up. She was strong, firm and loving. Like most of us, I came from a broken home and my mother had a very difficult time making ends meet. There were many times Mom came to visit me and hadn't eaten. Mrs. Sutton always made sure Mom had a good meal before she left from her visit.

I use to wake up early in the morning and Mrs. Sutton had me enter her bedroom and rest on her couch and read or play until everyone else awakened. She taught me to knit, to plant a garden, she read stories to us, taught us how to respect each other and get along. I loved her dearly and stayed in touch with her after I

left Greer for another Children's Home. She never had children, but didn't need to. She had all of us who loved her and appreciate the impact she had on our lives.

I have always had a full plate and enjoy staying busy. I do real estate for a living and it is non stop. In an industry that sometimes isn't always looked upon with great respect, I feel I have given it that service of reliability, dependability and a quality of service that is appreciated by those I work with and for. Those values came from my upbringing at Greer.

*Cheryl Montaigne Crawford*



## From Cherri Wood:

Greer Alumnus '56-62

One thing I always think about that came from my life at Greer is my work ethic and professional success. It wasn't just the fact that we were responsible for some of the many housekeeping jobs that it took to keep our home in order, as well as having to prepare for those weekly room inspections! The biggest thing



Merry Christmas to all  
Greer Alumni and Staff.  
May the New Year bring  
you happiness!



I brought into my outside life was the ability to hold a job and perform it well. The first jobs I had when I arrived were the typical jobs at the younger cottages - helping the kids get dressed for school, scrambling a big pan of eggs for 20 hungry kids, setting tables or washing dishes. Those seem unimportant, but my life before arriving at Greer didn't necessarily include any of those tasks and they were more of a learning experience for me than they may have been for others.

The first "real job" I held was at the student bank. It involved keeping track of the payroll, counting the money and putting it in those little envelopes and depositing half of the pay into the student's bank accounts. On payday, the students would line up at the window to pick up their envelopes. I thought I was a very important person with a real office job and I was expected to keep the books accurately and to accept complaints if I made a mistake.

I also worked at the Infirmary, a job that was highly desired by the girls, and for one dreaded round I served dinner to staff members at the Main House Dining Room - a job I never mastered but still completed. Through Greer, I was able to get a summer job working for a legal office in

New York City as a substitute while the secretary was on vacation. That was a true introduction into the working world into which I would enter when I graduated from school. Even though I was inexperienced and only 16 years old, the lawyers in the office expected me to act professionally, show up on time, dress neatly and complete the work they assigned to me every day. I believe I can attribute the success I had in my working life to that early training. Regardless of the level of work, I understood that I should perform to the top of my ability and not spend time whining or complaining about the job or the people who paid my salary. And, the team-work concept that we all experienced at Greer was something you can't teach in a seminar or classroom - we lived it full time.

### **From Tony Vaz**

Greer Alumnus '52 - '60

Hi guys! I would like to create a special segment of the Greer Hope Farm/School web site as a tribute to Jim Morton. I am looking blurbs of 100 words or less - your favorite memories of him. You can send a current or old photo of yourself with the blurb. All entries should be emailed to me at [tonyvaz@greerschool.org](mailto:tonyvaz@greerschool.org) Thanks in advance for your articles.



Jimmy Morton

### **From Liz Rivera**

Greer Alumnus

Hi, I can say that being at Greer probably saved me from the streets of New York. After Greer I went directly into the United States Army Wacs as they were called back then. I did three years active duty. Then came back to New York and worked for the City of New York, total of 25 years. During this period I joined the Army Reserve and did 21 years. So now as a senior I'm able to take care of myself financially through Social Security, City Pension and Army Pension. So I spend my free time (the whole year) traveling around.

We should start a travel club, we're probably all retired and available for travel. Let me know if anyone is interested.  
Love Liz



## From Peggy Sparks

Greer Alumnus '47-'59

This is the speech I presented to the alumni at the dinner on August 26, 2006:

My name is Peggy Mathewson Sparks; I went to Greer in 1947 graduating in 1959. I grew up at Greer. My older brother Jim went to Greer also, he graduated in 1954.

I have written a book called, "Hope Farm/Greer School, Memoirs of Childhood", which I started many years ago, and then my husband Ron, 4 kids and a career took priority. I put the few pages I had written away in a manila envelope, which moved with us from house to house.

I thought once more about writing the history of Greer, and contacted Jimmy Morton. He said he heard someone said they were going to write the story, but that was all he had heard. So again, I put my pages back in the manila envelope. Then through an Alumni Newsletter, I read where Rod Hilsinger planned to write a book about Greer. Rod had written part of a draft and sent it to Jimmy Morton when he found out he was very ill, hoping someone could use some of the material he had gathered.

After the last reunion in 2002, I emailed Jimmy again reminding him that I still had an interest in writing my story of Greer, so he sent me all Rod's material to look over. Rod's interviews were very helpful, as by the time I started writing in detail, most of the people connected to Greer had passed away. I am very grateful to Rod for those interviews and many times, I have thanked him.

My book started out very small. I had no idea it would blossom to more than 300 pages with the photographs.

When I sent the first 30 pages to Charmi Neely to review, she wrote "Elaborate," and that's when my research dug deeper. I joined the New York Genealogical and Biological Society and quickly became addicted to the site.



I owe special thanks to my husband Ron, for his attention to detail, and his patience these last 4 years, helping me and relieving me from cooking

duties. He had to listen to: "Not now, pleeeeeeze"..... "Can't you see I am busy?"..... "Just a minute"..... "I was just in the middle of".... so I could make my deadline for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Hope Farm. Those 4 years were very trying as I had multiple surgeries and Ron had a hip replaced. Sometimes I forced myself to the keyboard trying to get enthused again as my deadline approached. I made it!

Thanks go to many of you and those who have passed on, for sharing your memories. They are all very different; some are funny, some are motivating and some just pull on your heartstrings.

Thank you for sharing, I could not include all the stories, because some of you shared just a little too much which I keep in the confidential file drawer in my head in scrambled code! As I told the dinner guest, my book is rated-G.

My book is historical, filled with memories and photographs and you may perhaps learn part of Greer's history that you never knew before or it may help you to recall people, places, and events you have forgotten. And of course it is my hope you find it pleasurable reading.



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The price of the book is \$30.00. This includes shipping and handling in the United States.

Sorry! The book has been sold out and is no longer in print.

### Contributors to my book:

Ana Andino, Paul Bassett, Ida (Farley)Bove, Dr. Donald Brown, Violet (Smalec) Byszynski, Peter Caram, Victor Carlson, Betty (Burr) Clarke, Norma (Jarvis) Clayton, Robert Constantine, Alphonso Corillo, Cheryl (Montaigne), Crawford, Edward Crump, Herbert Cuevas, Alex Deeb, Barbara (McGiffin) Derrey, Jack Edmonds, Gwen (Crawford) Elliott, Esther (Woods) Fenton, Helen (Christmas) Fink, Anne (Meyrowitz) Foster, Chip Fowler, Herta (Taussig) Freitag, Raul Gandara, Karin (Venetian) Green, George Hanson, Richard Hawkes, Rod Hilsinger, Robert Hougasian, Robert Irwin, Pearl (Farley) Jarvis, Diane (Hawkes) Johnson, Joe Kaiser, Agnes (Slewick) Kraker, Jim Mathewson, William McKinley III, Marie McKinley, Virginia (Smith) Miller, Clarke Moffitt, James 'Jimmy' Morton, Hoover Mountcastle, Diana Munzer, Thomas Oliver, Bernard Orlamunder, Ingo Orlamunder, Louis Paul, John Rogers, William Seeley, Richard Smith, Peggy (Mathewson) Sparks, Tony Voight, Mary Ann (Packer) Webster, Jack Wesdorp, Helen Zarakovitis,

### Thank You,

Peggy (Mathewson) Sparks

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\* Please send your Greer Alumni Dues (suggested amount \$25.00) check made payable to: \*

\* Greer Alumni Association \*

\* Contact [tonyvaz@greerschool.org](mailto:tonyvaz@greerschool.org) for address information. \*

\* Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ \*

\* Address Changes: \_\_\_\_\_ \*

\* Email address changes: \_\_\_\_\_ \*

\* Your vote for Reunion: \_\_\_\_\_ \*

\* I would like to have reunions \_\_\_\_\_ (frequency). \*

\* Chapel of the Child: \_\_\_\_\_ \*

\* I am interested in helping with the Chapel of the Child in the following way(s): {Circle all that apply} \*

\* Contributions in the form of a one time cash gift.      Contributions in the form of yearly cash gifts. \*

\* Contributions in the form of time and research.      Contributions in the form of supplies needed for refurbishing. \*

\* Contribution in the form of expertise in refurbishing and renovating the chapel. \*

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