

THE OAK LEAF

SUMMER 2015
Volume 3



The Gulf Park College Alumnae Association, Inc. is an incorporated, nonprofit, member-driven organization that honors the memory of our beloved Gulf Park by-the-Sea!

REUNION 2015: SOMETHING OLD AND SOMETHING NEW

Alums and guests at this year's reunion were treated to sunshine and cool temperatures as we enjoyed dining from one end of the Gulf Coast to the other. We visited some old favorites: Lil Rays, Steve's Marina and Chimneys. New dining experiences included the Mixed Nuts luncheon in the Hardy Hall dining room, where place cards with the names of former faculty hostesses were used to designate table assignments and smaller nut cards were drawn to randomly assign dining tables, facilitating an opportunity to make new friends. Friday night we had dinner at a new-to-us restaurant called Salute located only a few steps from our hotel.

In between meals, we enjoyed walks on the beach, reminiscing around the hotel's fire pit, a trip to Diamondhead

to visit a needlepoint shop, a shopping stroll along the quaint shops in Ocean Springs and a visit to the Walter Anderson Museum. Following a delicious dinner at Salute on Friday night the old tradition of a beach bonfire was resurrected with the addition of tiki lights and 60's music.

As in the past, the business meeting on Saturday morning was followed by a solemn reading of the names of deceased alumnae under Friendship Oak as a tribute to our sisters who have passed on.

The mood changed by evening, however when gourmet banquet at another new-to-us restaurant called Bacchus on the Beach in Pass Christian provided a fitting end to our four-day reunion. We are eagerly looking forward to a very special

2016 reunion and hope to see you there...and there...and there! Make sure your passports are up to date!



From left: Sherrie Butz Shumack ('64), Judith Shafer Williams ('64), and Penny Shafer Wright ('62) enjoy a lunch in town.

In this issue: REUNION 2015 • IDEAL GIRLS... • 2015 BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT • 2016 REUNION • TREASURER'S REPORT

The opinions in this newsletter are those of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Gulf Park College Alumnae Association, Inc.

© 2015. Gulf Park College Alumnae Association, Inc.
All rights reserved.

Ideal Girls: Where Are They Now?

When Judith Shafer Williams ('64) saw this picture on eBay, she knew it was a piece of Gulf Park history and proceeded to buy it. The New York Museum of Science and Industry had presented GPC with a Certificate of Merit for educating "Ideal American Girls", and six were chosen to accompany President Richard G. Cox to receive the award.

They are: Mary Belcher of Birmingham, Alabama; Norma Jean Wood of Jasper, Texas; Margie Osgood of Glen Ellyn, Illinois; Heiskell Kemmer of Crossville, Tennessee; Peggy Holtz of Springfield, Illinois, and Carolyn Alert of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

It's no surprise that Judy wondered what happened to these "Ideal American Girls" after they left GPC, and being the super-sleuth that she is, began tracking them down. She found five of the six. (*If anyone knows anything about Carolyn Alert, please let us know, but for now she is missing in action.*)

1. **Mary Belcher Abernathy** and her husband settled in her hometown of Birmingham, Alabama and ran her family's lumber business until they retired. She is deceased.

2. **Peggy Holtz Dunn Dobbins** came to GPC from Springfield, Illinois, but spent most of her life in Brownsville Texas. She and her first husband, J.B., ran a ranch. After his death, she married Rich Dobbins and they traveled the country together searching for antiques for their store in Bryan, Texas. She died March 18, 2011.

3. **Heiskell Kimmer McCall**, an East Tennessee native, stayed on the Gulf Coast until her death on August 3, 2003. She is buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Gulfport.



America's Ideal Girls in 1946 were (from left): Mary Belcher of Birmingham, Alabama; Peggy Holtz of Springfield, Illinois; Margie Osgood of Glen Ellyn, Illinois; Heiskell Kemmer of Crossville, Tennessee; Norma Jean Wood of Jasper, Texas, and Carolyn Alert of Tulsa, Oklahoma

4. **Margie Osgood** is still alive, but her failing health prevented an interview at this time.

5. **Norma Jean Wood** is alive and well in Brownsville, Texas, bright as a new sequin and still sassy. We'll let her tell her story in her own words.

Our Trip to the Big Apple

Six GPC girls—three seniors and three juniors—were chosen in connection with the New York Museum of Science and Industry's search for "America's Foremost College for Young Women." Gulf Park was chosen, after researchers found that the college had not only the regular courses, but also an aviation class, a journalism class, and some girls were competent skippers of sailing vessels. Riding stables with

jumping bars, diving classes, commercial classes and various physical education classes such as basketball, archery, softball and golf were available.

I do not know how we were selected, but I was thrilled beyond dreams to be one of the lucky girls.

Leaving Gulfport, we travelled by train to New York City. We went straight to the Hotel Astor on Times Square. We arrived about 9 a.m. and were sent immediately to Rockefeller Center, where we spent the day touring the building, being interviewed, and having our pictures taken. Later, we were taken for a tour around Central Park.

That evening we went with Mary Belcher's parents to Billy Rose's Diamond Horseshoe for dinner. When we entered, an international news photographer recognized us and

wanted to take our pictures. Later, the waiter came over and announced that we could order anything that we wanted "on the house."

The GPC presentation at the Museum was on the second day with a private luncheon for 25 people. The comprehensive exhibit, prepared by the Museum, showed many views of the campus as well as students engaged in various activities. It was on exhibit for one year.

The photographers kept us busy and took us all over the city -- from the top floor of the RCA Building, Rockefeller Center (new at that time), to the top of the Empire State Building. One of the purposes was to send photos of girls from home to the various military newspapers. I received letters from Servicemen from all over the U.S.A. and the world!

We had lots of fun and were entertained royally. Among the big names of the time that we saw was the play "The Red Mill" by Victor Herbert; Billy Rose "The Toast of the Town" (at the Diamond Horseshoe), and we slipped out the last night to hear Gene Krupa, the famous drummer, at the 400 Restaurant. (WOW!)

These are the highlights for those who could not be there in 1946 and perhaps wondered what all the hoopla was about. We truly wished that everyone could have experienced this dream trip with us.

Norma Wood Ferguson ('47)

Mem'ries...1945-1947

When I first arrived at Gulf Park and was waiting for a roommate, they told me that she was from Kentucky. As you all know, our room was about the size of a double closet. She came a day late with 10 pieces of matched luggage -- all in pink, and pitched them into our room. Needless to say, she didn't last a week. My next roommate came from the Midwest and had allergies so bad that she left after the first quarter. My next roommate came from Hawaii and finished the year. Later, my husband and I visited with her on Maui and had a good time.

Freshman (junior) year was an exciting time. Our English classes were often held in Friendship Oak; biology classes and field trips were sometimes along the Sea Wall; art classes sometimes on the pier or on the beach. The instructors taught us to view life with a broader, more open mind and helped us to attain ideals and become better educated, more cultured young women.

For sports, I especially like learning to ride horses with an English saddle. What a change from Western! Also, we had field hockey.

The train tracks were behind GPC and at night the engineer blew the horn. It was the most mournful sound in the world to me, and one I have never forgotten.

One of our first "girl's school" lessons was in the dining room. I think it was once a month -- I'm not sure -- but we were exposed to about a 10 to 12-inch spread of silverware on both sides of our plate. We soon learned each and every knife and fork made for the "proper table". When my husband and I married, we went to the Broadmoor in Colorado Springs. We walked into the dining room, and he nearly fainted. I said, "Never fear. I will guide you." Thanks to GPC!

Riding the local bus into Gulfport to see a movie or to shop was a thrill! No one had a private car. The Second World War was still on, and Keesler Air Force Base was a big training field. The pilots knew about Gulf Park and would fly over and dip their wings while we were sunbathing on the roof. Also, for fun, we had exchange dances with the boys from Gulf Coast Military Academy on the other side of Gulfport. That was the highlight of the "social season."

Once we were treated to a possible once-in-a-lifetime experience! Dr. and Mrs. Cox were members of an exclusive Mardi Gras private club in New Orleans. The members of this krewe held a big private costume ball each year at Mardi Gras. Each year the Senior class at GPC was invited to sit in the balcony and watched, in awe, the costumed regality of the ball! Also, we had seats in private stands to watch the parade the following day. It definitely was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for most of us.

I remember the faculty, in general, as having a close relationship with the student body that did not exist in all schools. Dr. Cox seemed to have especially chosen each faculty member to help us as a student to become a better educated and more cultured woman. We received our diplomas in "the old oak tree."

I personally believe that Gulf Park College had a major influence on making me the woman, wife, mother, and citizen that I am today.

Norma Wood Ferguson ('47)

Message from the President

It is an honor to be chosen as Board President. I am eagerly looking forward to working with Sherrie Butz Shumack, VP.; Penny Shafer Wright, Treasurer; Sidney Oliver, Secretary; and Members-at-Large Georgia Tuttle Frady, Non-Profit Tax Consultant; Jan Bettencourt Fox, and Judith Shafer Williams. I had the pleasure of working closely with Judy, Penny, Sid, and Cinda Steinhoff Morrison preparing for our reunion and transitioning into our new roles as your Board. I am grateful for their knowledgeable help, but most importantly, for their positive encouragement.

Our founders did an amazing job of organization on our behalf. We will do our best to continue in a forward-thinking direction. This is a member-driven association and your Board is the facilitator. To be successful, we need your help. The www.gulfparkcollege.com web site Bulletin Board will post upcoming activities and welcome suggestions and feedback. Activity choices will be based on your suggestions to the survey posted in this Oak Leaf and on the website. We are listening.

The "Get on Board with the Board" 2016 theme is off to a good start towards finalizing our non-profit status. We are also establishing a Scholarship Fund to commemorate Gulf Park and to meet one of its requirements. Additionally, we hope to help repair the rift between our two associations this year. Finally, the 2016 Reunion Spectacular will be a big one with something for everyone. It starts with a Bon Voyage party on a rooftop in the New Orleans Garden District before the optional Caribbean cruise. Our official reunion will end with a farewell party on the same rooftop. Additional information on the cruise is in the Oak Leaf. Please mark your calendar and start packing your bags. You do not want to miss this one!

Virginia Kerth Roper ('62)

Reunion 2016 and Optional Gulf Park Caribbean Cruise

The 2016 "Reunion Spectacular" will be held from Sunday, May 1 through Wednesday, May 4, 2016. An optional Gulf Park group cruise from New Orleans to various ports in the Caribbean will precede the event, departing from New Orleans on Sunday, April 24 and returning on May 1 just in time for the official reunion! Members, friends, and families are welcome!

We are pleased to report that you will benefit from significant savings in hotel costs through our new Sunday-through-Wednesday reunion schedule, while air fares using www.Orbitz.com will be about the same or less.

To learn more about the reunion and the Gulf Park group cruise, please select the Bulletin Board tab on our website, at www.gulfparkcollege.com or contact Isaac Maya, with the Norwegian Cruise Line, at 954.514.4543. Future updates and travel information will be posted on the website Bulletin Board.

Itinerary and Pricing

April 24-May 1 departing from New Orleans

DATE	PORT	ARRIVE	DEPART
Sun, Apr 24	New Orleans, LA		4:00pm
Mon, Apr 25	At Sea		
Tue, Apr 26	Cozumel, Mexico	8:00am	5:00pm
Wed, Apr 27	Roatan, Honduras	9:00am	6:00pm
Thu, Apr 28	Harvest Caye, Belize	9:00am	5:00pm
Fri, Apr 29	Costa Maya, Mexico	8:00am	4:00pm
Sat, Apr 30	At Sea		
Sun, May 1	New Orleans, LA	8:00am	

\$669 Inside • \$759 Ocean View • Balcony \$1,089
Mini Suite \$1,309 • Suite \$1,439

For excursion information, go to NCL. Com put in New Orleans Departure, Caribbean Destination April 24, 2016 Norwegian Dawn.

Norwegian Cruise Group Benefits

Let Norwegian make your next group vacation one to remember. From booking activities, private parties and group shore excursions to getting staterooms close to one another, our professional Groups Department can make planning your cruise easy and fun.

Benefits

Every 16th passenger in the group cruises for free. (this fare will be distributed as a credit to the other members of the group booking in the same cabin category)

- Receive amenity dollars to spend on group activities.
- We'll help you find the perfect itinerary suited for everyone in your party.
- We'll assist in planning group activities onboard like dinner celebrations, and ashore the perfect shore excursion.
- You can book staterooms that are connecting or near each other.

Other Possible Benefits for your Group

- 1 hour cocktail party with hot hors d'oeuvres or 2 hour cocktail party with snacks
- Dinner at one of our specialty restaurants
- Soda packages
- Chocolate covered strawberries

Help Us Help You!

Please photocopy or cut out and return your answers to Virginia Roper, '62 at 631 Camellia Pointe Blvd., Ocean Springs, MS 39564.

Indicate your response either by highlighting it or by marking the answer of your choice. Return your questionnaire as soon as possible, please.

1. Are you taking or considering taking the optional Caribbean cruise from New Orleans in April 2016? Y___ N___
2. If you take the cruise, would you also attend the May 1-4 reunion on the Coast? Y___ N___
3. Alternatively, if you were going to participate in the cruise in April, would you prefer to attend a reunion immediately after the cruise or would you rather have the reunion later on – say in October? April-___ October___ Neither___ Other_____
4. Would you be in favor of a reunion every other year? Y___ N___
5. If you are not coming, the primary reason(s) are: *(circle all that apply)*
a. not interested; **b.** a schedule conflict; **c.** I went to a recent reunion; **d.** financial; **e.** frankly, it's how I look now; **f.** family obligations; **g.** other (please tell us)

6. What can we do to win your attendance?

Letters to the Editor

We really want to hear from you, so we're starting a regular Letters to the Editor feature in the Oak Leaf. Our mailbox currently is empty, though. Send us your news, your thoughts, your concerns, your ideas. We'll print every one we have space for.



Each year after the business meeting the group gathers to read the names of all our sisters who have passed away. Back row (from left): Lonnie Rogers McConnell ('68); Judith Shafer Williams ('64); Nita Menghini Sacco ('61); Francis "Frank" Crabtree ('67); Penny Shafer Wright ('62); Marcia Burnham Klosterman ('69), and Janis McKinnon Seraphine ('60). Front row (from left): Virginia Kerth Roper ('62); Anne Nichols Reynolds ('62 HS, '64C); Jane Whitley ('65); Sally Sockwell ('68); Suzanne Simpson ('68), and Sherrie Butz Shumack ('64)



Marsha Burnam Klosterman, Janis McKinnon Seraphine, Nita Menghini Seraphine, and Sherrie Butz Shumack were among the group that enjoyed a trip to Ocean Springs, where they visited the quaint arts and crafts shops there. Ocean Springs has become quite the arts community.



Jane Whitley ('65) shows off the rose she received as a token of her 50th anniversary from GPC graduation. She was the only member of the 50th anniversary class to attend this year's reunion

2015 Board of Directors

Roper, Virginia Kerth, President ('62)
1550 Second St, 6-F, New Orleans LA 70130
and

631 Camellia Pointe Blvd., Ocean Springs, MS. 39564
504-895-0232 cell preferred: 504-329-0092
vaesl@mac.com

Shumack, Sherrie(Sharon Kay) Butz, Vice President ('64)

1143 Crane Cove Blvd., Gulf Breeze FL 32563
850-934-5944 cell: (904) 625-6219.
sherrieshumack@aol.com

Oliver, Jane Sidney, Secretary ('65)
2844 East Weldon Phoenix AZ 85016
602-553-8433
54dobes489daze@gmail.com

Wright, Penny Shafer, Treasurer ('62)
3312 Cresswind Parkway, Gainesville, GA 30504
678-943-8220 cell: 205-563-5292
w_penelo@bellsouth.net

Fraday, Georgia Tuttle ('63)
1909 Sabine Pass Ln., Arlington TX 76006-5735
817-459-4812 cell: 817-235-7113
gfraday@tx.rr.com

Williams, Judith Shafer ('64)
251 Beachview Drive, Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32547
850-863-3330 cell: 850-621-5646
judithswilliams@aol.com

Fox, Janis (JB) Bettencourt ('67)
37 Bayberry Avenue Provincetown MA 02657
508-487-8937 cell: 617-549-1225
jtbptown37@gmail.com

Honorary Director

Sherrie Johnson Isgrigg (Miller), Past President ('63)
642 Teal Drive, Winder, Georgia 30680
770-361-2221
sherriermiller@yahoo.com

Oak Leaf Editor

Tish Talbot ('63)
224 Vernon, Little Rock, Arkansas 72205
501-766-3433
tishtalbot@sbcglobal.net

Taking Care of Business

The 2015 general business meeting of the Gulf Park College Alumnae Association, Inc. (GPCAA) was called to order at 10:10 a.m. by the Treasurer, Penny Shafer Wright, in the absence of Sherrie Miller, President, and Janet Brown, Vice President. The meeting was held in the ballroom of Hardy Hall on the USM Gulf Park Campus.

Dr. Steve Miller, USM Interim Vice President, Gulf Park Campus, was introduced. Dr. Miller gave a brief overview of the USM Gulf Park Campus student population and degrees currently offered. He also briefed us on upcoming and completed enhancements to the campus, including:

- New gateway entrance to the campus, which will not fell any trees. This \$400K project will begin this May
- The fitness center and clinic opened in 2014
- The nursing school has been expanded with expected completion in August, 2015
- The \$7 million Holloway Complex, which houses the colleges of business and science was completed
- A new pier is planned when money becomes available
- Two of the 3 tennis courts have been refurbished
- Following are additional salient points made by Dr. Miller:
- There are no plans to rebuild the platform in Friendship Oak. The university must consider the liability for the school AND the tree.
- There are no plans to dispose of the Huckleberry Hill property. In the future the 40+ acres might be used for recreation or research.
- Frances (Frank) Crabtree was thanked for her generous contribution to refurbish the chimney of the Y-Hut. Frank also asked that a roof be erected. Jason Bigelow, campus architect, will work on the project with Frank.

Approval of the agenda was moved, seconded, and adopted

Respectfully submitted, Penny Wright



The firepit at the hotel was a popular spot for sisters to gather and chat, reminisce, or catch up on their lives. From left: Nita Menghini Sacco ('61); Virginia Kerth Roper ('62); Marcia Burnham Klosterman ('69); Lonnie Rogers McConnell ('68), and Frances Crabtree ('67).



Everyone knows that calories disappear when you're eating with friends. Aunt Jenny's Catfish House is a case in point. Enjoying lunch there are (from left): Virginia Kerth Roper ('62); Judith Shafer Williams ('64); Janis McKinnon Seraphine ('60); Marcia Burnham Klosterman ('69); Penny Shafer Wright ('62); Sherrie Butz Shumack ('64), and Nita Menghini Sacco ('61).



Sherrie Johnson Miller, our immediate Past President and former editor of the Oak Leaf, and William (Bill) Isgrigg were recently married in Idaho. They have recently returned from a cruise to Australia and other points. The couple presently is at home in Winder, Georgia.

In Memoriam

Peggy Hill Clayton King, ('51), died February 16 after a lengthy struggle with Alheimers Disease. Born in Tahlequah OK, she spent her childhood in Ardmore Oklahoma and graduated from Ardmore High School, then Gulf Park College. She married Mr. Clayton and lived in San Antonio and Medina, Texas. After his death in 1988 she married Robert King and spent the rest of her life in Georgetown, Texas. The family requests contributions in her honor/memory be made to the Cure Alzheimer Fund. .

Joanne Renee Myers, Artist, C70, born on October 22, 1949 in Washington D.C. passed away on February 22, 2015 in Dallas, Texas. As in life, Joanne's passing found her surrounded by family and friends, bringing together new bonds and friendships and renewing many from years past.

Joanne was predeceased by her father, Joseph M. Myers. She is survived by her mother, Virginia Lee Myers; sister, Barbara Dacy (David) of Hernando, Mississippi; sister, Brenda J. Myers, of Dallas, Texas; niece, Erin Dacy Boles (Ben); niece, Brooke Vasquez Dacy (Horacio), and great nieces, Baylee Vasquez, Avery Vasquez, Ansley Boles, and Jillian Boles.

Joanne was reunited with her sisters from Gulf Park College during recent years, which gave her great joy and happiness. Condolences have been received from around the world from the vast number of her friends.

As a child she lived in many places across the country with her family. Along with her sister, Barbara, she was a child model in Chicago. She attended high school in Fort Worth, Texas and was a graduate of Gulf Park College in Gulfport, Mississippi and Brenau College in Gainesville, Georgia, with fine arts degrees. Her life as an artist continued her travels living in Mississippi, Georgia, California, Texas, and Florida. She traveled extensively and particularly loved her time in Paris and Hong Kong.

A contemporary abstract artist, Joanne discovered success working with designers and architects and enjoyed the many collectors who proudly display her work



THE OAK LEAF

Gulf Park College Alumnae Association, Inc.
251 Beachview Drive
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547



Return service requested



This and That

- **Paid your dues?** If you haven't sent in your 2015 dues, now's the time to do it! Just a check in the amount of \$25 to Gulf Park College Alumnae Association, Inc. in care of Penny Shafer Wright, 3312 Cresswind Parkway, Gainesville, GA 30504.
- **If you know of a Gulf Park sister who is ill** or has lost a family member, please send a message to JoAnn Basalyga Turner '63 at dipcdo@aol.com with the GPC girl's current name and address. JoAnn has volunteered to head a committee that will send cards to any and all GPC girls who could use our friendship and support.
- **Know of an alum or faculty member who has passed away?** Please notify The Oak Leaf editor, Tish Talbot at tishtalbot@sbcglobal.net or 501.766.3433.
- **Change of mailing address, phone or email address?** Don't let us lose you! Notify Cinda Steenhof Morrison at cinda.gpc66@gmail.com or at 206.349.4231.
- **Electronic Newsletter?** Many are opting to receive their newsletters electronically to help save costs of printing and mailing. If you are willing to receive your newsletter by email, please contact Cinda Steenhof Morrison at cinda.gpc66@gmail.com