

THE OAK LEAF

FALL 2014
Volume 2



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

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

October, 2014. “Why are you looking for women who were not even in your class?” This was a question posed by one of the women we found from the later years of Gulf Park when a member of our search team contacted her. The question wasn’t posed as a negative, but simply one of curiosity. While flattered that someone cared enough to find her, she was somewhat bewildered. “When we were at Gulf Park, many of us had our own automobiles, spent our weekends in New Orleans and had few ties to the other students on campus,” she explained. That got me thinking. What is it, I wondered, about our little college-by-sea that has kept so many of us bonded closely in sisterhood for a lifetime?

Gulf Park girls of earlier years experienced a totally different Gulf Park than those who attended during the

last three years of its existence. With no-nonsense rules and regulations, and only local taxis and the coast bus service to transport us to and from the campus, our off-campus activities had a much narrower radius. Sometimes, three or four of us shared a cab into town for lunch and a movie on Mondays (our day off from classes.) On rare occasion, a parent came to town and took a small group of girls out for dinner or to New Orleans for the weekend. As a result, the majority of us spent most of the school year on or very near the campus. If that sounds somewhat restrictive, imagine what it was like for a girl in the class of ’62 (who shall remain nameless – but whose initials are G. H.)—who laughingly admits that she was “campused” for a whole semester of her junior year—mostly for extending her beauty sleep through daily breakfasts!

Trips to the Naval Station in Pensacola, Mardi Gras, the spring cruise and other special events along the Coast were anticipated with great enthusiasm. Strangely, I don’t remember that I felt deprived. In fact, I loved everything about life on the Gulf Park campus, and I will be forever grateful to my wonderful parents for having given me the opportunity to transition into adulthood at Gulf Park. I loved my roomie. I adored my suitemates, and I felt so blessed to be a part of the class of ’63. To this day, we remain strongly united and lovingly close. Because of the cherished traditions that were shared with us by the stellar Senior class of ’62, we came to understand that Gulf Park was a school like no other. Think about it. Did you ever try to explain Gulf Park to your friends back home? I did. It was impossible to describe

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GPC GIRLS HELP THEIR NATION DURING WWII

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it! I wouldn't have wanted to miss a single day on campus. My own daughters, all graduates of large southern universities, are amazed that I didn't have a car until I saved enough to buy one in the second year of my career in Atlanta. They can't imagine ever having been without their "wheels!"

I have never been able to put into words what it was that made Gulf Park College one of the most treasured times of my life. But I do know this: Those of us who were blessed to be a part of the earlier Gulf Park want our sisters who came later to share the bond of friendship with us. We want to find as many girls as possible who are "lost" and include them in our reunions. That's what the Gulf Park College Alumnae Association, Inc. is all about! We are a group based on friendship, and we encourage everyone to participate in whatever way you can.

During these first two years, our volunteer board has worked diligently to get everything set up and running smoothly. We have bylaws and a rapidly growing mailing list (right at 2800 girls at last count – up from 1200 when we began!) The newsletter is going strong. Our first spring reunion was a roaring success with over 70 girls in attendance! The next board will surely have new ideas and goals, and we look forward to that.

It has been thrilling to connect with so many of you, and I have been honored to serve as your president. But, in the interest of spreading the joy, sharing the responsibility, introducing new, fresh ideas and personalities, and to avoid "ownership syndrome" or burnout, we ask that you volunteer to help move our alumnae association forward. Brainiacs are not required! You don't have to have been an award-winner or community leader to help write fun stories for The Oak Leaf. What is needed is the desire to help so that our alumnae association can continue to thrive. Volunteers should represent a wide range of classes – from the 40's through the final year of 1971. There are so many memories to share with one another. I remember a reunion back in the 70's where some ladies from the late 30's were in attendance. We spent the entire reunion – listening to the on-campus antics of those darling women! In the follow-up newsletter, I commented that we girls of the 60's had nothing on those delightfully mischievous girls of earlier years!

If you would like to host a regional reunion in your city or town, let us know! We can help you connect with the girls in your area. If you have a story to share, jot it down and send it to me, or call me – I can interview you and see that the story gets into the newsletter. If you

have old GPC pictures, scan them or send them to me for inclusion in a future issue. So many ways to contribute... please do your part to keep us going! And on the subject of keeping us alive and well, don't forget that we depend on your dues and contributions to keep the newsletter and annual reunions going strong! Haven't paid for 2014? You are running out of time! And, don't forget that our fiscal year runs from January to December. 2015 dues are requested in January. We appreciate your support! Additional donations are always gratefully accepted!

Reservations are now open at the Marriott Courtyard for Spring Reunion 2015. Please call the Marriott directly —228-864-4310—and tell them you are with the Gulf Park College Alumnae Association Spring Reunion. 50 rooms have been reserved and the earlier you reserve a room and request a Gulf view, the better your chances are of getting one! The rate is \$119.00 a day and the reunion dates are Wednesday, April 22—Saturday, April 25. Check out time on Sunday is 12:00 Noon. Don't procrastinate! Last year, we ran out of rooms by the end of February!

One more thing: And, this is very important! Attached to this newsletter is the ballot that includes the board slate for 2015 – 2017. Please read the instructions carefully, place your votes accordingly and mail the ballot back immediately. You may include a write-in vote if you wish. Deadline for voting is Friday, December 12, 2014.

Blessings to all of you during this Holiday Season; and may 2015 bring you laughter, love, and good health.

In friendship and Gulf Park Sisterhood,

Sherrie Johnson Miller, '63
President

Reunion Reminder

Thinking about joining us for Reunion 2015? Keep in mind that we are saluting all classes that end in "5" or "0." If you fall in that category, call or email all of your classmates and see how many roomies, suitemates and sorority sisters you can gather! Everyone is invited! If you need help tracking your friends and classmates, Judy Shafer Williams is our "go to" lady! She will get you started! Contact Judy at judithswilliams@aol.com

A Tribute to One of Our Favorites!

Most of us remember Helen Picking Neff as a cheerful, energetic woman whose rollicking laughter was nothing short of contagious. She was also a tough taskmaster who demanded the best from her students. She knew exactly what she wanted from any production she directed and produced. She made certain we understood her vision, and her commitment to its success inspired us to make sure that she was pleased with the results. The most difficult project I ever had in college was to produce and direct a stage production for my certification in Speech and Drama. I chose to cut the musical "Gypsy" down to a one-act musical. I had no clue how to reduce such a lengthy script down to a few words with lots of music and dancing and still keep the story line intact. She commented only once that I was out of my mind to take on a musical. I've never worked so hard in all of my life or been so thrilled with the wonderful performances of all my student actresses, singers and dancers on the day of the show! It was an amazing learning experience.

Helen was an only child, beloved by doting parents. She graduated from Stephen's College and went on to graduate school at Northwestern University. Both Nels Anderson and Helen Picking held the same job at Northwestern as graduate assistants. They worked for the same man - just 30 years apart. A mutual friend introduced them, and a lifelong friendship was forged.

Helen Picking was a true favorite among the students at Gulf Park College from her arrival in 1949 until she retired in 1970. It should come as no surprise to learn that Nels Anderson was hand-picked by Ms. Picking to fill her position when she retired. They kept in touch and Nels has continued to visit her throughout the years. It was gratifying that Nels responded quickly and enthusiastically when I asked



Ms. Picking and Ms. Schrieber riding mules out West during summer vacation



Picking/Neff wedding

if he would help us to pay a birthday tribute to the lady who captured the hearts of all of us who were privileged to know her at Gulf Park College!

Following is Nels' account of his memories of Helen Picking.

In 1970 Helen moved back to her hometown of Bucyrus, Ohio to take care of her elderly parents. It wasn't very long before an old high school suitor was knocking at her door. His wife had passed away a few years before, his daughter, Cindy, was newly married and his son, Rob, was still in high school. The families had known each other for many years so Helen wasn't surprised when he asked her out. "I visited Helen during the courtship and stayed in an apartment in a building she owned downtown. I was standing at the window when Mr. Neff pulled up. Helen jumped in the car and slid across the seat to snuggle right up to him like a teenager, and off they went. The very courtly Mr. Neff did not get out and hold the door for her, which he most certainly would have done under ordinary circumstances, because they were on the busy main street and he was blocking traffic. Mr. Neff, for the record, was a lawyer, the city lawyer to be exact. His son, Rob, whom many met at the 2008 reunion, now holds that same position and works out of his father's old office."

Helen, Nels wrote, has led a charmed life. She was nearly 60 when she and Mr. Neff married, and they had 35 wonderful years together. She got two very nice step children out of the deal, a husband who was prominent in the community and they had a wonderful life together. It is interesting to note that Mr. Neff was an avowed conservative and Helen obviously was not. She introduced him to travel and they often visited New York City, toured the Orient and

enjoyed a trip or two to England. He gave her a family, a lovely home and his complete devotion.

One of the reasons Helen kept her old apartment in downtown Bucyrus was to provide her guests a private place to stay. It is also the place where she kept the liquor! Mr. Neff was very anti alcoholic beverages and didn't want them in the house. Helen played an occasional trick on him, however. One Thanksgiving the whole family was around the table and Helen asked young Rob to go to the basement and bring up a bottle of "sparkling grape juice" to have with dessert. Mr. Neff reported that it was the best grape juice he had ever tasted. Of course, it was actually a bottle of red wine!

Sadly, Mr. Neff's final years were spent as an Alzheimer's patient. "As I saw them at least once a year," Nels said, "It was very difficult to see this once brilliant man decline. Helen was wonderful with him. She always said she would keep him at home as long as he knew who she was. She had help most of the time from three experienced caregivers, but she never stopped speaking to him in her usual cheery way. In the later years of his illness, he occasionally referred to her as, 'that woman who sleeps in my bed with

me.' At the very end she had to put him in a nursing home and it was very hard for her. Fortunately, she had the support of the whole family."

Lest you think that she gave up theatre work when she left Gulf Park, think again! Her work with the Bucyrus Little Theatre is legendary.

She directed dozens



A birthday tribute to Ms. Picking.

of shows there until she officially retired about ten years ago. She still attends all of the theatre's shows, always on a Sunday afternoon, with one of the four ladies who serve as her caretakers.

Today, at age 99, Helen still goes to the office most work days to see the "boys" who work in the shop. She says that the shop keeps her focused and still connected to the business. She occasionally gives a tour to the many tourists who visit the historic copper shop run by her family for close to 200 years. The hand-hammered pots and kettles, etc., are still made the way they were when the shop opened in the 1800's. The shop welcomes hundreds

of visitors each year, and one can still order a kettle or a pot if one is willing to wait about five years! They are that far behind in orders, which is not unusual considering the care with which the items are made. They also still make hand-hammered timpani kettles, and D. Picking & Co.'s timpani kettles are used in many of the world's orchestras. "One day when I called," Nels said, "they were in the process of packing up a dozen kettles to send to Stockholm!"

I am fortunate to have the opportunity to tell Mrs. Picking-Neff how grateful I was to have been chosen to play "Rosie" for the 1962 production of "Bye Bye Birdie" at Gulf Park College. Of all the amazing memories I have of my career and of the family that would bless my life as an adult, my time in the Drama Department with Miss Picking is one of my fondest memories. She was an outstanding mentor.

Happy 99th Birthday, "Miss Picking" from all your girls of Gulf Park College!

Is your contact information up-to-date?

We are working hard to locate everyone in the 50 Gulf Park College Classes. Look for an asterisk (*) by your name on the address label. This is an indication your contact information IS NOT VERIFIED. What does that mean? It means some information is missing or there is a question about your class.

EXAMPLE

Cinda Steenhof* Morrison
8805 SE 13th Avenue
Portland OR 97202

For Updates: Contact Cinda Steenhof-Morrison at cinda.gpc66@gmail.com or (206) 349-4231 to assure you will receive your newsletter on time.

Want to receive your Oak Leaf Electronically?

Just under a 100 alumnae and former staff are signed up to receive the Oak Leaf electronically. This saves time, money and is better for the environment. You can always print out your copy if you prefer an "in hands" read. Send your request to cinda.gpc66@gmail.com

Gulf Park College Alumnae Association, Inc.

Ballot for Board of Directors: 2015 - 1017

Nominating Committee: Jan (J.B.) Bettencourt Fox, College 1967, Ginny Klinke Raths, College 1963

Instructions:

To vote for the seven (7) candidates of your choice, please make a cross "X" in the box to the left of the candidate's name.

To submit a write-in vote, fill in the candidate's name in the write-in space; then, place an "X" in the box to the left of the name. In order for your vote to be counted, please omit one of the members of the slate and replace it with your write-in name.

Fold the page three ways as you would a business letter. The address is provided on the back. Affix a stamp in the top right corner. Deadline for voting is Friday, December 12, 2014.

Overview of the Candidates:

Jan Bettencourt Fox C'67 – BAE University of Mississippi, taught 1st grade for 37 years, Unitarian Universalist Board, volunteer for Habitat for Humanity, Enjoys making "stick" and Adirondack furniture for children and adults.

Sherrie Butz Shumack C'64 – Studied Interior Design and worked as a decorator, Sales & Marketing Manager for a pecan company, Currently organizing an all-classes high school reunion, three children and three grandchildren

Virginia Kerth Roper C'61 & C'62** – Auburn University – BS in Elm. Ed, taught grades 1-3 and EDSL to children and adults, Vice President of her condo board, hospitality & organizations committee for National Association of US Magistrate Judges' conference and Fifth Circuit Judicial Conference, one son and one brand new grandson

Susan Melanie Levy C'66 – University of Tennessee '68, 31 year career with Delta Airlines, creator of the GPC Facebook page, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Associates Board, Volunteer of the Year for Cobb Energy Performing Arts Center, Emory-Adventist Hospital Foundation Board

Sidney Oliver C'65 – Current member of the board for GPC Alumnae Association, Inc., responsible for incorporation and by-laws for same, 30 years in government affairs – PR, freelance writing and editing, founder and board president of Arizona Doberman Rescue, led rescue organization through incorporation, by-laws and IRSA 501c (3) tax exemption

Kathi Tontz Ash C'67 – Served on board of Girl Scout's, Inc., president of United Methodist Women, volunteer advisory council, Junior League sustainer advisor, Executive Director – R.E. Reed Gastrointestinal Oncology Research Foundation, 2 daughters and 2 grandchildren.

Georgia Tuttle Frady C'63 – Practicing CPA for over 30 years, served on board of directors at all four levels of Parents Without Partners, a 501c(3) not-for-profit organization, served on Parents Without Partners International board for 5 years as International Treasurer (2 years) Parliamentarian (1 year) and Chairman of the Board (2 years), fund raising chairman for Aggie Moms Club, one daughter, 2 grandchildren.

- Jan Bettencourt Fox - College 1967, Provincetown, MA
- Sherrie Butz Shumack - College 1964, Gulf Breeze, FL
- Virginia Kerth Roper-College 1961* 1962**, New Orleans, LA and Ocean Springs, MS
- Susan Melanie Levy - College 1966, Smyrna, GA
- Sidney Oliver - College 1965, Phoenix, AZ
- Kathi Tontz Ash - College 1967, Birmingham, AL
- Georgia Tuttle Frady - College 1963, Arlington TX

_____ (write in)

Jerry Wear Mason
9 Crescent Lake Blvd.
Anniston, AL 36207-4270

GPC Girls Help Their Nation During WWII

“Scenario: Ann Allison (now Eisenwinter) and her classmates from the class of 1941 are on the roof of Hardy Hall, staring out at the Gulf. Perhaps she turns to her friend and they have exchange a few words, maybe laugh, then their gaze returns to the sea. The warm sun and the sounds, smells, and rhythm of the waves work their magic on any teenage angst they may have. Whether you’re in the Class of ‘41, ‘61 or ‘71 – or any of the classes in between – you’ve probably been in the same place and done the same thing. Right?”

Wrong. Ann and her classmates held binoculars and were scanning the waves for German U-Boats that could invade the United States from the Gulf of Mexico at the beginning of World War II. They had no training, and were not James Bond wannabe spies. After all, James Bond didn’t exist then.

“It was the school’s idea,” Ann said in an interview recently. “We just did what they told us to.”

Serious war business didn’t interrupt the hijinks that marked every GPC class, though. Ann recalled putting sardines into the housemother’s bed. “Mama T called everyone together and asked the guilty party to confess, so I had to,” she said.

“Is Little Man’s still there?” she asked. Sadly enough, I told her it wasn’t, although it was a traditional haunt more than 20 years after she graduated. She recalled walking down to Little Man’s for a hamburger before having lunch at GPC. When asked if wartime rationing adversely affected the wonderful food quality at the school, she replied that she didn’t remember if it did. She agreed that the food at the school was excellent. “Of course we were teenagers then, so we didn’t pay so much attention.”

She was impressed that Friendship Oak is still alive after so many hurricanes. “I remember that tree, though. I’m glad it’s still alive,” she said.

Ann married a B-17 pilot from Vermont. After the war ended, he worked as a NATO air traffic controller in Europe for several years and the couple lived overseas, primarily in Wiesbaden, Germany. “It was wonderful,” she said. “It was interesting.” He remained in the Reserves and finally retired as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Ann, like so many others, is a second-generation Gulf Park graduate. “I was the oldest daughter of a graduate,” she said. “Of course I went there.” Ann now lives in Alexandria, Louisiana. At 89 years of age and needing oxygen to breathe, her spirit has remained sprightly and young. She asked about some of her classmates and would welcome any contact from them. She doesn’t have an e-mail address, but her friends from that era can obtain her contact information from Cinda Morrison at cindagpc66@gmail.com.

Sisters of the Greatest Generation, we salute you.

Tish Talbot, ‘63

In Memoriam

We have learned of **Isabelle Charnock’s** passing. She was a long time resident of Gulfport and always welcomed us into her home when we came to the annual reunions. Born in Charleston, SC, Isabelle “Izzy” grew up on the Gulf Coast, graduated from Gulf Park College in 1951, and later attended the University of Alabama where she was a member of Zeta Tau Alpha sorority. She served as a legal secretary throughout her career and was lovingly devoted to the dogs who shared her life through the years. She is survived by 13 nieces and nephews.

Martha Ann Lodwick Hughson-Chambers passed away on May 22, 2014 at the age of 89 in Waukesha, Wisconsin. Martha Ann graduated from the high school division of Gulf Park College in 1942 and from Iowa Wesleyan College in 1946. Remembered by her daughter as a “fun” mother, Martha Ann taught Sunday School, doted on her children and grandchildren and loved to work in her flower garden. She is survived by two children, five grandsons and five great grandsons.



Did You Know?

Did you know that “Mama Holtane”, who was a dorm mother in Lloyd Hall, was a 1923 graduate of Gulf Park College? Judy Shafer Williams, ‘64 finds all kinds of interesting little tidbits as she searches for girls and peruses Gulf Park’s history!

THE OAK LEAF

Gulf Park College for Women Alumnae Association, Inc.
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Return service requested



This and That

- **Letters to the Editor:** Give us ideas and suggestions, news of classmates, memories of Gulf Park. Mail them to: Sherrie R. Miller, 642 Teal Drive, Winder, GA 40680.
- **Make Your Reservations Now!** The Marriott Courtyard in Gulfport is now accepting reservations for Reunion 2015. Call 228.864.4310 (Don't use the 800 number!) Ask for the special rate for the Gulf Park College Spring Reunion: \$119 + tax/night. Dates for the reunion are April 22 – 26, 2015.
- **Paid your dues?** If you haven't sent in your 2014 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, 2320 Flat Stone Drive, Cumming, GA 30041.
- **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, Sherrie Johnson Miller at sherriermiller@yahoo.com or 770.361.2221.
- **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