

THE OAK LEAF

FALL 2013, Volume 1



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!

WELCOME ALUMNAE

THE OAK LEAF will be a celebration of friendships, memories, and stories, with pictures that pay tribute to who we are, where we have been, and where we are going. We encourage you to send pictures that we can share in our newsletter. Scan and email them! If you have comments or questions, write a letter to the editor! If you have an idea of something we can do to celebrate our Gulf Park heritage, please share it and be willing to serve on the committee to make it happen. If you can serve as a future officer, on the board, or on a committee, or as a class captain, let us know. We need volunteers to search for lost GPC girls, to write stories for the newsletter, to help plan an annual or regional reunion, to fundraise for the benefit of our Heritage Room, and to help with projects that memorialize Gulf Park. This is your alumnae association! It

will take contributions of time and enthusiasm to maintain an organization that serves women throughout the contiguous United States and beyond. All of us have talents and expertise that we can contribute, even if it's to call just 10 women listed on the roster to confirm that their contact information remains current. We need your input and your help to make our alumnae association be the best that it can be! (And discover the fun and rewards of working with your sisters to make it happen.)

It is important to understand how our reinvigorated Gulf Park College Alumnae Association, Inc. came to be. Henrienne Dorsey Hewes (C '63) was asked by the administration to assist with the formation of an alumnae association for Gulf Park in 1967. Henrienne had married Charlie Hewes of Hewes Department Store in Gulfport, and she lived on

the Coast. As president of the student body in 1963, and one whose kind and generous spirit always makes everyone feel at ease, "Hen" was the perfect candidate to found the organization. Nancy Mannino (C '61) and Cherry Rouse (C '65) became involved in the reunions in the mid 70s, and Cherry began to trace women who had gone missing. Soon she was devising a plan for a first-class organization. She set up a dues system, applied for incorporation, edited a quarterly newsletter, and produced the annual reunions on the Coast. Never desirous of a fancy title, she handled the maintenance of our alumnae group with grace and expertise. Indeed, without Cherry Rouse, there would be no substantial membership roster. She was humble and unassuming and, I am certain, would blush and protest to read all of the praise I am heaping

In this issue: ALL IN THE FAMILY • OUT AND ABOUT • GPC GIRL, 99, KEEPS ON KEEPING ON 50 YEARS AND COUNTING

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Cherry Rousse '65

on her, now! Everyone agrees that Cherry was a phenomenal Gulf Park girl!

In the late 70s, I volunteered to do the newsletter, and, for the next fifteen years, Cherry and I continued to track girls throughout the United States and beyond. The newsletters were filled with stories about girls we found, pictures from Gulf Park years, and stories with pictures of reunions that were held throughout the country as well as on the Coast. And during that time, we had two presidents, Judy Shafer Williams (C '64) and Judy Kennedy Boedeker (C '56). Both were proactive, hard-working, and strong leaders. The alumnae association thrived.

And, then, Cherry became ill and passed away. Nancy Mannino O'Fallon gathered the Gulf Park Alumni files and took them home with her to Dallas, Texas. Many of us offered to help—to write features for the newsletter, to maintain the roster, and plan the annual reunions. But there was no response.

Years passed. The newsletter became a basic informational sheet. Members sent updates on women

we found and changes of addresses for those who had moved. Most were never added to the roster. Many requested that we host the annual reunion in the spring or fall when the weather is cooler. The requests were not acknowledged. Pictures and stories of regional gatherings and milestone reunions were sent in but never included in the newsletter. Many of us became discouraged.

In the summer of 2013, Penny Shafer Wright (C '62), Sherrie Johnson Miller (C '63), Judy Shafer Williams (C '64), Jane Sidney Oliver, (C '65), Cinda Steenhof Morrison (C '66), and Sherrie "Jake" Jacobs (C '68) agreed that it was important to know if there were other women out there who felt, as we did, the desire to recapture the spirit that we once enjoyed in our alumnae association. Using the most recent roster, we sent out a questionnaire to every email address listed as well as to others we had found on our own. We also posted the questionnaire on the Gulf Park website and linked it to our Facebook page in an effort to reach as many women as possible. The questionnaire asked whether:

- We should change the annual reunion dates to spring or fall
- We should incorporate and seek nonprofit status
- Bylaws are important to provide structure for the organization
- Members are willing to serve as an officer or on the board
- Members want a newsier, more picture filled newsletter

Well over 100 women responded. As a result, Judy Shafer Williams, Penny Shafer Wright, and Sherrie "Jake" Jacobs, agreed to present the question-

naire results to the attendees at the annual business meeting in hopes of effecting positive changes. Sadly, this did not occur. There is a video of the meeting. And an audio tape is available through Dropbox should you be interested in listening to the meeting from your computer. Unfortunately, some 20 people would vehemently shout down all of the affirmations of 114 of their sisters, and this would be referred to in the September newsletter as a "vast majority" of the membership of 1300.

We understand that there may be confusion about why we decided to move forward with incorporation, professional bylaws, and nonprofit status. The reasons are simple: profound differences in vision and management style. We ask that you not assume that we are a "gang of 6" rebels with ill intent just because you've been told to think so. Nor have we "hijacked" the Gulf Park Alumni Association. Our goals are simply to return the original organization to its membership, and to establish professional order in its management. The Gulf Park alums with whom we have talked agree—as we know you will—that we are bright, competent women who can manage our own association, and they look forward to having a voice in its future.

The spring reunion (May 28-June 1, 2014) will be great fun, and we welcome all of you to join us. Renew old friendships and make new ones! Reminisce! Walk with us on the beach! Indulge in great seafood! Work with us as we move forward together to create a lasting legacy for our college by the sea.

Fondly,
Sherrie Johnson Miller, '63

Out and About

Meet Susan Melanie Levy (C '66), from Atlanta, Georgia! Susan created the Gulf Park College for Women Facebook page, a fast and easy way for us communicate. An airline retiree, she loves to visit GPC friends throughout the country and will share her adventures with us in future issues! Keep traveling, Susan!

A little over four years ago, I created a Facebook page for Gulf Park College for Women, hoping that our alumnae would use it to reconnect and find long-lost college friends. Little did I know the wonderful adventures I would have as a result!

As an airline retiree, I have standby flight privileges. My adventures during 2012 began with an email from Cinda Steenhof Morrison (C '66) inviting me to Portland, Oregon, for the 4th of July. Of course I hopped on a plane! My wonderful host showed me the Portland area from the shore to the mountains. The bonus was that Joan Reznichek ("Chuckles") Fleming (C '66), visiting in the area, was able to join us for a dinner party. Cinda found out on our Facebook page that Chuckles was in Portland. Until then, Cinda had never known that Chuckles' family lives within blocks of her home.

2008 was also a very special year. That was when Nels Anderson, our beloved speech and theater instructor, rounded up many of his students to honor the wonderful Helen Picking Neff, chair of the speech and theater department. In 2012, I visited her for a third time. Now 98, Helen is still the ultimate hostess—loves to entertain and remember Gulf Park and "her girls." Having had Helen in my life is a blessing. She taught me so much at Gulf Park and is still teaching me today.

Tillie Thompson (C '65, HS '63) has become a very good friend since 2010. I didn't know Tillie very well at Gulf Park—though I certainly knew her name and where she was from! We first got acquainted when I was locating her classmates for the 2011 reunion. At the time, Tillie was flying home every other month to visit her mother. Tillie mentioned that she would be passing through Atlanta and asked me to fly home with her to Newport, Rhode Island, for a visit. Since that trip, Tillie and I have met up several times. The bonus during an October, 2012 visit was seeing Coco Gratz Wellington (C '67) in North Falmouth, Massachusetts. Coco and her husband, Ben, were wonderful hosts. They took me around the Cape. Coco even took me to the curling arena and gave me a lesson in curling! (I didn't get out on the ice.)



*Top: Chuckles '66 and Susan '66 during Susan's travels
Lower: Helen Picking Neff and Susan*

I have visited many of our sisters since 2008, but I just don't have the space enough to do them justice. I do want to mention, however, that Chrissy Jacobson Ralston (C '66) and I visited GPC Dean Audrey Napp in Ft. Pierce, Florida. This was particularly special since Dean Napp has since passed away.

I write this in hopes that all of you, when traveling, will find out whether a Gulf Park sister is in the area, and visit with a classmate or a new friend, perhaps for coffee, lunch, or dinner. You won't be sorry.

Susan Melanie Levy, '66

All in the Family

The Hardwick Girls Take On GPC and Win

Sisters. Sistahs. Sistas. It's how we Gulf Park girls define our GPC friends. We may not see each other for years and years, but we are as close as family members and hang together during good times and those not-so-good times that bite us in the fanny now and then. It's one of those things that make Gulf Park special to us. It's the pledge we made under Friendship Oak that we can't help keeping.

We've shared our secrets, our memories, our makeup, our term papers. Sometimes, though, Gulf Park sisters even share DNA.

Take the case of the Hardwick girls—Janet and Suzy. "We always knew we would go to Gulf Park," Janet said recently in a phone interview. "We just didn't know we would be there at the same time."

Their mother was a Gulf Park girl in 1938. She had loved being at the school, but back in Indiana the August before beginning her studies there, she had eloped with her boyfriend, Janet and Suzy's dad. After a year at GPC, the couple made their year-long marriage public, so of course she didn't come back to continue her studies. "But she loved Gulf Park so much that there was no doubt that her girls would go there," Janet said.

Janet, whose surname is now Brown, lives in North Carolina with her husband Phil. As with the rest of us, her black hair is lighter (okay, gray-er) and her waist is thicker, but her wit is rapier-sharp. And her heart is pure gold. I can say that with cer-

tainty since she's been my friend for more than 50 years. She graduated from high school in Indiana, where the family lived, and, like most of us, came to GPC as a junior.

The yearbook lists all her résumé facts—clubs she joined, Fashion Show model and the like—but her real claim to fame came in her junior year. She, along with two or three others, obtained several big bags of marbles and rolled them down Senior Hall in the middle of the night, causing a great commotion throughout Hardy Hall. Most of us juniors pretended to be asleep, but according to the GPC jungle drums (rarely accurate but always working), the scene in the junior smoker was really scary after the noisy villains were caught by the Seniors. I do remember Janet walking around with a book on her head for several days after that. It's possible that her posture improved from the punishment; it's also likely that her chutzpah didn't. She graduated from GPC in 1963.

Suzy and Janet came to Gulf Park at the same time. Janet said the two came together because of their closeness as "blood sisters." Now they're also GPC sisters. The Hardwick family closeness didn't end with the two girls, though, and continues to this day.

Janet says it best: "Our Dad always wanted to find and thank the men who saved his life during WWII in the mountains of France: men from the 442nd RCT, a group of Japanese-American soldiers, many of whom volunteered from internment camps here in the US. These men fought for days, saving him along with 200 other men. After his death,

Suzy and I decided to honor that dream, so we searched and finally succeeded in locating these men. During the past five or so years, we have spoken at several of their reunions and thanked them for their sacrifice. The highlight of our journey came when we traveled with them to France in July of 2009 and stood at the exact location of the rescue of 'The Lost Battalion' with six of the men who had actually participated. "We had thought about a day like that for so long. We were humbled just to be in their presence—and still are at a loss to find adequate words to convey our deep gratitude for their gift to us."

Suzy, who now is a real estate broker where the girls grew up in Martinsville, Indiana, was in the high school both of the years Janet was in the college. Suzy then went on to the college. She is a 1965 graduate of GPC.

Both say they didn't see very much of each other, even though they lived just a few steps apart. Janet was busy with activities in the college and Suzy was busy with her high school friends, activities, and studies. It was difficult for Janet to visit Suzy in Lloyd Hall "because all those high school girls had to stand up when I would come in the door and some would always forget," Janet said. Suzy couldn't visit Janet during her Senior year because Janet lived on Senior Hall, which of course was verboten for anyone but Seniors. "If we saw each other it was usually out on campus somewhere," Suzy said. "Of course we traveled together to and from school."

Suzy also has her stories to tell. Ask her about walking onto campus

wearing a trench coat with the clanking contraband in her pockets. Maybe she'll tell you, or maybe the statute of limitations hasn't run out and the Juicy Board will reconvene just to hear that case.

When asked if she ever sneaked into her sister's room during vacation and tried on her Senior hat, Suzy refused to comment. Again and again she refused. That's probably a secret she'll never share. I know that in her place, I wouldn't.

Tish Talbot, '63

Tish Talbot was a staff reporter for the Arkansas Gazette for ten years. Her bylines have appeared in the New York Times, the New Yorker and Rolling Stone. She is the ghost writer of two books. Tish is an award-winning journalist and writer with credits in both national and international publications. She graduated from Gulf Park College in 1963, and we are honored to have her on our Oak Leaf staff.

GPC Girl, 99, Keeps on Keeping On

Her eyes sparkle and her handshake is firm. She's smart and savvy and her smile shows that she knows more than she's telling. Of course she's a Gulf Park girl. Genevieve Sallee Jackson graduated from Gulf Park College in 1934. At 99, she may well be the oldest living alumna of the school.



In an interview at her spacious and comfortable home in Pocahontas, Arkansas, Genevieve recalled her days at Gulf Park. Her son, John, had found her yearbooks a couple of days before, so she had time to look them over and organize her reminiscences before the interview. After the interview, she was able to take the reporter to lunch at a local Italian restaurant.

"It was the beginning of the Depression when I was there," she said. "But we had a good time." The Senior traditions hadn't begun yet. They didn't have hats, or rats, or Senior serenades. The Seniors did, however, take a three-week cruise to the West Indies, including several days in Havana. "We took our books and were supposed to study, but there wasn't much studying done," she said. Girls in her class also went to New Orleans on the bus.

When asked if the rumors of early girls having to wear long formals to dinner every night were true, she said they weren't. They did have to dress for dinner in church dresses, heels and hose—just as the decades of girls who came after them.

After Gulf Park, Genevieve attended the University of Arkansas and pledged Pi Beta Phi. She didn't get a degree, however, because she met her future husband at Current River Beach, outside her hometown of Pocahontas, an attractive and sleepy town on the eastern edge of the Ozark mountains.

She kept up with some of her Gulf Park classmates, including exchanging visits with one from Chicago, for a few years, but hasn't been in touch for some time. "I doubt if any are still alive," she said. After "bouncing around," as she put it (including a fellowship to Yale University), she moved back to Pocahontas with her family, where her husband joined her father in his successful business: making handles for hand tools from the hardwood that was plentiful in the area. Years later, after power tools replaced hand tools in the building trade, her husband went into banking. Her son John has retired as president of the local bank.

The couple had four children. "Being a mama was my career," she said. John added that she never missed a little league game, was active in the PTA, and was involved in her church and community. "Yes, I did all that, but not lately," she added. Besides her four children she has seven grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. An eight-year-old great-grandson had called her recently just to talk to his Gee-Gee. "I was really flattered by that," she said. "Boys that age aren't usually that thoughtful."

Her husband died in 2011. They had been married 74 years. Although the change to widowhood has been unpleasant in many ways, she has adjusted. "We do what we have to do," she said. "We just have to make the best of whatever we're handed."

Tish Talbot, '63

**Visit the new GPCAA, Inc. on-line!
See our website at
www.gulfparkcollege.com and the
Gulf Park College for Women page on
Facebook! Have fun!**

50 Years and Counting: The Gulf Park Class of '63

The email messages flew back and forth! The GPC Class of 1963 had set the date for its 50th reunion, and I am convinced that we generated enough energy and excitement to provide power for the entire United States!

Just one problem. Girls were missing. We had to find them and let them know about our upcoming 50th reunion! Fortunately, technology has come a long way. The Internet would turn out to be our best friend.

Janet Hardwick Brown, JoAnn Basalyga Turner, Susy Porter, Faith Farenzena Bull, Glenda Moon Piasecki, Kay Field Lester, and Tish Talbot lit up Google as they searched frantically for old friends and classmates. Ultimately, we found Sherry Cameron Worth, Charlotte Gailmard Carr, Henrietta Dierks Blackmon, Anna Royer Dykes, Cornelia Hammond Fletcher, Sally Huntoon Szilagyi, Ginny Meiners, Melinda Stivers, and Madeline Brol Griffin. Later, Judy Shafer Williams said to me, "Gosh, I wish we had talked. I could have told you that Carolyn Wallis Cooke lives in Bend, Oregon!" I realized even Google isn't perfect!

Here's what I love about the class of '63: Everybody pitches in to help! Planning our celebration was no trouble at all! Kay Field Lester reserved our block of rooms at the Marriott in Gulfport; Henrienne Dorsey Hewes designed the welcome reception; Susy Porter planned the memorial to those whom we have lost; Faith Farenzena Bull was in charge of the Saturday evening celebration; Sherrie Johnson Miller created the agenda, and Ginny Klinke Raths had the class directory and the agenda printed as a "sussy" for every attendee!

We kept the four-day agenda loose. The chief goal of our reunion was to sit and visit and catch up on 50 years of living. And so the 50th reunion of the Class of '63 began as girls poured into the lobby of the Gulfport Marriott throughout the day on Thursday, April 18th.

Henrienne Dorsey Hewes and her husband, Charlie, welcomed all of us to their home on Thursday evening for a lovely dinner! From their lovely and inviting home to the scrumptious seafood buffet, we thought surely we had just peaked out and the rest of our time together couldn't possibly beat this. But the fun continued!

On Friday, we shared stories about home and family and careers, ate po' boys at a tiny restaurant and enjoyed



Seniors '63 celebrate 50th Reunion

dinner at The Chimneys, next door to the Marriott. Clearly, a lot of this gathering was about grazing our way from one end of the Coast to the other!

On Saturday morning, we gathered on campus to visit the Heritage Room. We made contributions to the Heritage Room project. Many wrote checks to the Gulf Park Alumni Association, and Susy Porter sent them to the treasury. Together, under Friendship Oak, we paid tribute to the friends we have lost. Susy Porter acknowledged each girl, one by one, who has passed away. We sang "Pride and Honor." That evening, Faith welcomed everyone to a restaurant in Bay St. Louis where we enjoyed our 50th Reunion dinner. Henrietta Dierks Blackmon returned thanks for our meal and for the opportunity to come together to celebrate this very special time.

On Sunday morning, we shared breakfast and began to plan our next reunion for 2016. After all, we agreed, life is fleeting. Best not to wait another 50 years for a get-together as wonderful as this.

Sherrie Johnson Miller, '63

***Mark your calendar! Join us for the
SPRING 2014 Reunion
May 28-June 1, 2014 at the
Courtyard Marriott, Gulfport.
Plan for a blast!***

A Sistah Story

Back in the summer of 2000 when I was very ill, I was once again reminded how GPC sisterhood never goes away.

The first day that medical people let visitors other than family members into my hospital room, Betsy Snyder Harris (HS '62) sashayed in. Betsy sashays very well. She took one look at the IVs, the monitors, and all the lines running out of my body, then checked out my jaundiced, mustard-colored complexion.

"Damn, your legs are hairy," she said.

"Betsy, I've been here for a long time and I'm too sick to shave my legs."

"I know you're really sick, but you might get worse and I won't let you go to glory with hairy legs," Betsy replied. She then sashayed out. (Did I mention that Betsy sashays really well?) A few minutes later she came back with a razor and a bottle of lotion and shaved my legs for me. If things had taken a turn for the worse, I would not have had to meet Jesus with unshaved legs.

After Betsy's visit, my legs felt more comfortable; but more importantly, I laughed out loud. Thanks, Sistah!

Tish Talbot, '63

In Memoriam

Polley White Cress, 91, passed away on September 23, 2013. Polley was born February 2, 1922 in Hillsboro, Illinois. She graduated from Gulf Park College in 1942 and continued at the University of Illinois, where she graduated in 1944 with a degree in sociology. Polly married her high school sweetheart, Robert W. Cress, in 1947, and lost him in 1998 after 50 years of marriage. Polley is survived by three children: Polley, Robert, and Jan; six grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Catherine Ruth Donovan, 98, died September 1, 2013. Born in 1915, Catherine grew up in Chicago, Illinois. She graduated from Gulf Park By-the-Sea and continued at Northwestern University, where she received her master's degree in social work. She married Aloysius George Donovan in 1940. She is survived by three children: Catherine, William, and Karen; three grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

Louise N. Skinner, 69, passed away on August 31, 2013. Born in 1944, "Pinkie" as she was known to her Gulf Park friends, grew up in Peru, Indiana. She graduated from Gulf Park in 1965, and worked for the state of Oklahoma until her retirement in 2009. Pinkie was generous and loving, and shared her many gifts and talents with family, friends, and her beloved pets.

Florrie Margaret Guy Funk, 94, died peacefully at home with family on April 12, 2013. Born in 1919, she graduated from high school in Atlanta in 1936. After graduation from Gulf Park College and Agnes Scott College, she married Dr. F. James Funk, Jr., a marriage that was to last 67 years. She was preceded in death by her husband and her son, Jimmy. She is survived by four daughters, eight grandchildren, and ten great-grandchildren.





This and That

■ **Make your reservations now** for the SPRING 2014 Reunion at the Courtyard by Marriott, Gulfport, MS. Call 228-864-4310 (Don't use the 800 number!) Ask for the special rate for the Gulf Park SPRING Reunion: \$112 + tax/night.

■ **Paid your dues?** Please make your check for \$25 payable to GPCAA, Inc., and mail it to Penny Shafer Wright, Treasurer, 70 Lakeshore Dr., Birmingham, AL 35209 (and add a contribution if you can! Your gift will be matched up to \$1500!) Please remember: We can't do this without your support.

■ **Browse old Seagull yearbooks** and "Tammy Howl" newsletters online, thanks to the University of Southern Mississippi's McCain Library's Digital Library project. Visit: <http://archive.org/details/universityofsouthernmississippi> Choose American Libraries from the drop-down menu and enter The Sea Gull (three words) in the search box. Scroll down for the yearbook collection.

■ **Do you know of an alum or faculty member who has recently passed?** Please notify The Oak Leaf editor Sherrie Johnson Miller at sherriermiller@yahoo.com or 770-361-2221.

■ **Change of snail mail, phone, or email address?** Please don't let us lose you! Notify Cinda Steenhof Morrison at cinda.gpc66@gmail.com or at 206-349-4231

THE OAK LEAF

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