MISS PICKING DIES AT AGE 99

While each of us will treasure our own memories of her, here is her obituary as printed in her hometown newspaper:

On Sunday, July 12, 2015, this earthly stage went dark for Helen Alice Picking Neff (age 99), though her spirit remains in light. She was born in Bucyrus, Ohio on October 17, 1915 to Ella Maude Colter Picking and Robert Baltzly Picking. She was the granddaughter of Lillie Baltzly Picking and Charles F. Picking, a former mayor of the City of Bucyrus, and the great-granddaughter of Mary Myers Picking and Daniel Picking, the founder of D. Picking & Company, which continued to operate until Helen’s passing. Helen was also the great-great-granddaughter of Rebecca Deardorf Picking and Samuel Picking, early citizens of Bucyrus.

Helen graduated from Bucyrus High School in 1933, attended Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri from 1935-1937, and was awarded a Bachelor of Science in Speech (1935) and a Master of Arts in Theatre (1939) from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Thereafter, Helen began her career teaching at Portsmouth High School (Ohio) from 1939-1941, and continued teaching under the direction of stage lighting pioneer Prof. Theodore Fuchs at Northwestern University from 1941-1943, where her students included Charlton Heston. Thereafter, she served the American Red Cross, first as a field representative from 1943-1946, and later as Director of College Activities in the Eastern Region from 1946-1949. Following her Red Cross service, Helen taught and served as head of the Speech and Theatre...
Department at Gulf Park College in Gulfport, Mississippi from 1949-1969, where she forged a lifelong friendship with fellow faculty member F. Nels Anderson, Professor Emeritus, Theatre Department, Louisiana State University. Following her teaching career, Helen returned home to Ohio, first to Mansfield where she served as managing director of The Mansfield Playhouse from 1969-1973. Upon her father’s death in 1983, she became owner and head of D. Picking & Company, the fourth generation of her family to do so since the company’s founding in 1874.

In 1975, Helen married Robert Clark Neff, who predeceased her in 2007. With that marriage, she “got her family the easy way” as she was fond of saying, and she is survived by her stepdaughter, Cynthia Lee Neff (Steven) Schifer; stepson, Robert Clark (Mary Jo Allan) Neff, Jr.; and step-grandson, Alexander Clark Neff.

Helen’s abiding passion in life is summed up in the line from the play, Children of a Lesser God: “The ability to communicate is everything.” Pursuit of this passion included fostering interaction with and between all she met and included service on the board of directors of the Bucyrus YMCA, the Bucyrus Little Theatre where she directed nearly three dozen plays, Oakwood Cemetery Association, and the Second National Bank and Society Bank (Bucyrus). Helen was an active and life-long member of The First Presbyterian Church, where she served as both a deacon and an elder. She also served on the planning committee responsible for the development of Bucyrus Area Community Foundation (now known as the Community Foundation for Crawford County), the Bucyrus City Schools Strategic Planning Committee, the Committee for School/Industry Participation Planning, Twig #1 of the Hospital Auxiliary, and was a member of the Crocus and New Era Clubs and the Friends of the Library.

A memorial service will be held at 2:00 p.m. Saturday, July 18 at The First Presbyterian Church with Rev. John Cory officiating. Her family will gather with friends one hour prior to the service from 1-2 p.m. and a private burial will take place in Oakwood Cemetery.

The family suggests that in lieu of flowers, those who wish to make memorial contributions do so to any of the local charities with whom Helen was associated, or to HomeCare Matters, or to any charity of their choice and these gifts may be given through the Wise Funeral Service, 129 W. Warren St., Bucyrus, Ohio 44820. Memories are encouraged in the Memorial Guestbook below.

Those of us who were her students will never forget her.

Message from the President

Your Board has been very busy working towards reaching the goals they set for 2015 of planning a reunion based on your suggestions, trying to repair the rift between the two associations and working towards a Tax Exempt status and GPC Alumnae Assoc., Inc. Scholarship Fund.

We asked for your help in planning our 2016 and you responded. Activity choices and hotel accommodations were chosen based on a variety of surveys. This included electronic, newsletter and surveys completed by members at the reunion. Thank you for responding with your suggestions. We listened and hope you will agree that we have included something for everyone based upon your request including a modified schedule. This includes a spring reunion at the fabulous Beau Rivage, the number one hotel on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, at a substantially reduced rate due to the revised Sunday – Wednesday schedule, a wide variety of activities and dining choices, in addition to an opportunity for a trip to Ship Island or New Orleans with transportation if needed. We think we have a winner and hope you will agree when you attend our Reunion Spectacular and complete our Reunion Report Card.

For more information, please see the Reunion Schedule included in this edition of the Oak Leaf.

As promised, we reached out to our sisters in the other Gulf Park Alumnae Association hoping to begin the journey toward healing the rift between our two groups. I had a cordial lunch with their president, Carol Craven Krupke and presented her with embossed GPC highball glasses, tote bags, optional Caribbean Cruise information brochures and an invitation for members of their group and families to join us on the cruise. There has been no response to our invitation at this time, but our door remains open.

We are working with USM to establish a Gulf Park Alumnae Association, Inc. Scholarship Fund and obtaining Tax Exempt status (501c3) for our organization.

I look forward to serving you in the future and please feel free to call me with any questions or comments at 504-329-0092.

Virginia Kerth Roper ('62)
We are pleased to announce that the 2016 Reunion Spectacular will be held on May 1- May 4 at the number one hotel on the Gulf Coast, the Beau Rivage Resort, in Biloxi for $109.00 per night with tax and fees $132.00. The rooms are smoke free and include Gulf view if available at check in. Parking in their enclosed garage is complimentary. Please see beaurivage.com for hotel details and amenities. A block of 25 rooms have been reserved. Reservations MUST BE MADE by APRIL 1 with a 24-hour cancelation policy. Be sure to book early.

**Telephone Reservations**

Reservations will be telephoned directly to Hotel Reservation Department at 888-567-6667. In order to receive the group rate, callers must identify their affiliation with Gulf Park College Reunion Spectacular 2016.

**May 1 President’s Welcome Reception on Sunday from 5–6:30 PM**

The award winning Shed BBQ and Blues Joint, featured on the Food. Network Channel will cater the complimentary reception at the president’s home on Fort Bayou in Ocean Springs. Please see the shedbbq.com for their menu and awards

**May 2 is Sit and Visit Day**

This day is for those who enjoy sitting and visiting in one of the many gathering places in the hotel and over dinner at Aunt Jenny’s on the Bayou as seen on Good Morning America’s “Best Bite in America Challenge” for seafood. You can also visit the quaint town of Ocean Springs and the Walter Anderson Museum.

Aunt Jenny’s  
www.coastseafood.com/jennys.html

Walter Anderson Museum  
www.walterandersonmuseum.org

**May 3 is Gulf Park Day**

Spend the day at Gulf Park starting with the business meeting, followed by the Mixed Nuts luncheon in Hardy Hall, Serenade and Memorial Service.

The Annual Banquet will be held in the evening at the Beau Rivage.

**May 4 is Your Day**

You can decide “should I stay or should I go,” Take a trip to Ship Island. Spend the day at the SPA and take in a stage show in the evening. Visit the casinos including a totally smoke free casino with an excellent buffet that includes a variety of seafood. You might decide to take a day trip to New Orleans for lunch in the French Quarter. The day will end with a farewell party on a rooftop in the Garden District.

Ship Island http://www.mssshipisland.com

Transportation to Gulf Park and New Orleans will be available if needed.

Go to www.gulfpark.com and click on Bulletin Board for further information and updates

**Cruise reservations must be made by OCTOBER**

Call Isaac Maya (954-514-4543) to be included in the GPCAA, INC. group and eligible for the group amenities package.

Please send your RSVP or Regret plans to Virginia Roper at vaesl@mac.com As Soon As Possible to ensure sufficient activity and group accommodations.

We are eagerly looking forward to seeing you on the Optional Cruise and OFFICIAL 2016 REUNION.

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**ATTENTION**

If you are taking the Caribbean Cruise and need a room in New Orleans, please be aware that Saturday, April 23 is part of the Jazz Fest weekend and rooms are scarce and some restrictions apply to length of stay.

Contact the Hampton Inn and Suites Worldwide (1-800-HAMPTON) to make a reservation at The Hampton Inn on Causeway Boulevard ASAP to reserve a one-night stay at the present rate of $189.00 and up.

Please call Virginia (504-329-0092) if you have any further questions.
Editor’s Notebook

My phone is silent; my e-mail box is empty; cobwebs festoon the mailbox outside my door.

This only applies to communication from my GPC sisters. We want to know about you – what you’re doing, where you’re going, where you’ve been. All of us have had a life after Gulf Park. What about yours?

Read the obituary for Joan Miller Lipsky in this issue. We would have loved to interview her and written a major feature on her accomplishments. Sadly, now it’s too late. If you know of a GPC sister who has made – or is still making -- significant contributions, let us know…please. We’re always in need of ideas for articles.

I’m about to head for the hills, so my address will change soon. For the immediate future, you can reach me by e-mail at tishtalbot@sbcglobal.net; by phone at 501/766-3433, and by snail mail at 224 Vernon Avenue, Little Rock, Arkansas 72205. After November 1, my address will be 2544 North Hampton Court, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72703. I plan to keep my e-mail address and my phone number the same.

In the last issue of the Oak Leaf, we announced that we were beginning a Letters to the Editor column. None came in. Do you like what we’re doing? Do you hate what we’re doing? What do you want to read about? We need suggestions, and will try to accommodate.

We do plan to limit the Oak Leaf content to news about alumnae and faculty. Although we are interested in what your family members are doing, space does not permit including that, but we welcome pictures of your 50th wedding anniversaries, milestone birthday parties, etc. We will publish all that space allows. Finances limit us to eight pages per issue.

“But what about the obituary for Tom O’Fallon,” you might ask. Because he was such an instrumental part of the original alumnae for so many years, we decided that substance trumped policy.

In other words, we’ll break rules whenever it’s warranted. After all, it’s more fun that way!

We’re Begging–But Not For Money

Please let us have your change of address as soon as you move. This is critical. Even if you move across the hall from your existing apartment, and your address changes. Because we have requested “Return Service” on our newsletters, your Oak Leaf will be returned at a cost of $0.49. When we get a corrected address, it will cost an additional $0.71 to remail that newsletter. This extra postage effectively doubles the cost of printing and mailing these returned newsletters.

The summer Oak Leaf return due to a change of address or an incorrect address was in excess of 50. The cost of receiving the returns and remailing them represents the dues of four women.

Cinda Steenhof-Morrison (’66) is in charge of maintaining our mailing list and roster. It is a time-consuming, thankless job that she does without pay for the love of Gulf Park and her GPC sisters.

Please get those changes of address to Cinda Steenhof-Morrison by calling her, e-mailing her or sending by mail your changes in demographic information. You may contact Cinda by phone: 206.349.4231. By email: cinda.gpc66@gmail.com. By mail: Cinda Steenhof-Morrison, 8805 SE 13th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97202-7111
Webbing—the GPC Way.

Some of us are techno-wizards. Then there are the rest of us. We may have a computer or a smartphone, but haven’t really gotten beyond the basics. However, if you want to keep up with your GPC sisters, there’s an easy way to do it – on the web.

Several years ago, Sherrie “Jake” Jacobs (‘68), one of our techies, developed a website, www.gulfparkcollege.com. It covers all things Gulf Park, even the hat lines! Check the Bulletin Board often for updates on the upcoming reunion and cruise. Our President, Virginia Kerth Roper (’62) posts new information regularly.

Do you miss the sessions in the GPC smokers? Well, you can recapture that on the GPC Facebook page, Gulf Park College for Women.

Susan Melanie Levy (‘66) began the page and still serves as its administrator. Some 343 alums are members as of this writing. To join, you can send Susan an e-mail at susanml47@yahoo.com and she’ll walk you through the process.

Don’t let the fact that it’s a “secret” page scare you. It is set up that way to keep salespeople from trying to sell us things and to keep non-GPC people from cyber-stalking. It was changed after an old boyfriend of an alum tried to reach her through the page. Both she and her husband were pretty offended.

If you are willing to receive the Oak Leaf by e-mail, just let Cinda Steenhof-Morrison know: cindagpc66@gmail.com is her e-mail address. Cinda works very hard to keep the mailing list accurate and up to date, as well as keeping a roster of all GPC alums. Receiving it electronically helps save the environment and saves money on postage.

If you need help moving into the electronic age, don’t be afraid to ask your children to help you. After all, you taught them to use a spoon!

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.
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“Mr. Gulf Park” Dies at 73

Thomas Edward O’Fallon, the husband of Nancy Phillips O’Fallon (61) passed away June 28, 2015 after a several-year battle with prostate cancer. He was just shy of his 74th birthday. The couple lived in Plano, Texas.

He served the original Gulf Park Alumnae Association tirelessly for many years, serving as its treasurer, keeper of the roster and mailing list, helping Nancy (and Cherry Rouse before her) plan and carry out reunions, and handle all electronic communication. He prided himself on being “Mr. Gulf Park”.

Tom and Nancy were delivered by the same doctor and graduated from Mason City High School in Iowa in 1959. Tom went on to graduate from Iowa State University where he was a loyal member of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity. He graduated in 1963 with a degree in Aerospace Engineering and then accepted an offer from The Boeing Company in Seattle, WA, where he worked for 36 years until his retirement in 1999.

Although they had graduated from the same high school in Mason City, Iowa, Tom and Nancy met again at their 30th high school reunion. They were married the next year, 1990.

For his dedication to the school, members of the Board of GPCAA, Inc. made a donation to the Make a Wish Foundation on behalf of the organization in his memory. The Make a Wish Foundation was the designated charity for memorials.


We have recently learned of a number of deaths of Gulf Park alumnae. Some passed away several years ago, but we are only now learning about them. We are including their names because news to us also may be news to their GPC sisters and friends. Although we deeply regret hearing of the death of one of our GPC sisters, we are sincerely grateful to those of you who notified us of their passing.

Joan Miller Lipsky, high school class of 1936, died August 18, 2015, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. In November 1966, was the first woman elected to represent Linn County in the Iowa General Assembly, where she served six terms from 1967 to 1978, specializing in women's issues. During her final term in office (40 years after her graduation from college), she began to attend law school at the University of Iowa. She began practicing law and in 1986 ran for Lieutenant Governor of the state of Iowa.

Francis Woodruff, class of 1938, died February 25, 2015. She was the mother of Dean Dubose.

Martha Ludwich Hughson Webb, class of 1944, passed away May 31, 2015, in Waukesha, Wisconsin.

GPC faculty member Helen Eva Stephenson Fathauer, died September 29, 2000, in Mesa, Arizona. She taught piano at GPC from 1945-1949. She received her BS in Music from Phillips University in Enid, Oklahoma, and her master's degree in music from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

Marie Whisnant Shipman King, class of 1945, died August 6, 2011, in Morganton, North Carolina.

Mary Catherine Hanson Ward, class of 1945, died May 31, 2015, in Pass Christian, Mississippi.

Julia Inez "JuJu" Daigle Jacobs, class of 1948, died December 26, 2014, in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Margaret “Tinky” Thibalt Watson, high school class of 1947, died November 9, 2014. After her graduation from GPC, she became a cheerleader at Sophie Newcomb College in New Orleans.

Mary Knotts Perkins, class of 1951, died August 8, 2004, in Lufkin, Texas. She was a former member of the Texas Board of Education.


Patricia Harrison Webb, class of 1953, died June 2, 2015. She was from Gulfport.

Terry Allen Landeck, class of 1953, died March 29, 2015, in Prairie Village, Kansas. She was a noted interior designer.

Ann Russell Castleberry, class of 1955, died July 4, 2015, in Plainview, Texas.

Lynn McFarland Bratton, class of 1956, died July 2, 2014, in Riverside, California.

Allison "Chris" Thomas Johnson, class of 1966, passed away June 20, 2015. She lived in Jonesboro, Georgia.

Marsha Heefner Childs, class of 1966, died January 22, 2015, in Arlington, Texas.

Frances Smith Green, class of 1967, died July 10, 2015, in Dixon, Kentucky. She was co-founder and past president of the West Kentucky Saddlebred Association and owned and operated Green Hill Stables in Dixon for many years.

* * *
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.

- **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 Steehof-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 Steehof Morrison at cinda.gpc66@gmail.com.

- **DON’T FORGET THE REUNION SPECTACULAR MAY 1-4 AT THE BEAUTIFUL BEAUVAGE!**

- **CRUISE IS COMING UP APRIL 23-MAY 1!** You can still get a reservation with our group, but you must hurry!