

Greenville Local History Group Newsletter

March 2025, Issue 333

Garth/F May Shaw — Ricky Miller/Breezy Knoll

Is Winter Gone?

I am hoping the deepest of winter is behind us. I, who find most winter weather enjoyable, was found to mutter to myself several times this winter. And if I read the statistics correctly, this used to be the average winter, with perhaps a little less snow than aver-

age. At least March threw in some gentler reminders.

This marks the third newsletter of this winter season. You have been the fortunate recipients of good stories that fell my way and this winter format allowed it to happen.

GLHG 2025 Program Schedule

Second Monday of month

April – Greenville Cemetery (GCA Board)

May – canceled

June – Hay Press (Palmer & Hilscher)

July – Greenville Canvas: East (Flach)

August – Ingalls Homestead (P Ingalls)

September – tentative - A Real Slide Show (Teator)

October – 2026 Calendar (Teator)

November – tentative - Adriance Scrapbook (Teator)

If all goes to plan, this is the schedule for this year. As sometimes happens, a tweak will be, or can be, made. Space is available for an alternative for September and/or November.

A fuller description of April is found later in this newsletter.

An apology for May: After careful consideration that I will be gone for three weeks in Europe and just getting back the night before the May meeting, it was not the jet lag effect in front of all you that worried me. Rather, I felt I could not do the proper job of promoting any program that was scheduled in the three weeks leading up to that date – no pr, no support, etc.

Corrections

Remembering May Shaw, GCS Math Teaching Legend

By Garth Bryant



F. May Shaw—GCS Yearbook 1970

In the fall of 1968, I met Miss Shaw who was to be my 8th grade math teacher. She was 62 years old that year and was in her 37th year of teaching at Greenville. She was born in Jersey City, New Jersey in 1906 to James and Florence Shaw.

When she was four years old, she moved to Greenville. There she attended and graduated from the Greenville Free Academy. This prestigious institution was located in what is now the Greenville Public Library Building.

Upon graduation she applied to and was accepted by the New Paltz Normal School in New Paltz, New York. This oddly named college would morph over the years into first The State Teachers College at New Paltz and today The State University of New York at New Paltz.

After graduating with a teaching degree, she returned to Greenville and started her lifetime work of teaching Greenville's children. In those days the local one room school houses were still the primary means where students were taught. Miss Shaw would teach in both the Gayhead Rural and the King Hill Rural schools.

In 1930 the citizens of Greenville voted to centralize the school system. Greenville was the first Township in the county to take this step. Miss Shaw became an Employee of the Greenville Central School System in 1930 even though it would take two more years to build and open the school.

By the time I met her, she had not only taught in Greenville every single year the school had existed but had been witness to unimaginable changes in public education. She was part of that amazing first day in 1932 when she and the rest of the staff left their one room school houses and went to work in the majestic new school building for the first time. It's hard to imagine what was going through their minds on that day.

In addition to her professional career, Miss Shaw was also an active member of the Greenville Center Baptist Church. There she taught Sunday School to many of the same kids she would later teach math at G. C. S. As I walked through that classroom door, I wasn't aware of any of this. To my thirteen-year-old eyes this 62-year-old woman seemed very old. I remember thinking "I wonder how this is going to work out?"

The group of students in this class was a typical mix for 1968 in Greenville. Absolutely lacking in racial diversity, it was diverse in other ways. A couple were juvenile delinquents already on their way to a lifetime of

GCS 1940 Yearbook



run-ins with the law and other problems. A few were self-motivated overachievers.

These were the most dangerous group in the class as far as I was concerned. If you had too many of these kids acing every test and completing every homework assignment, the chances of any grading on the curve went right out the window. Another group were truly terrible students. Many of these kids were suffering from then undiagnosed learning disabilities or terrible home-life situations. For these students every class was a painful experience.

The great majority were in the middle. Doing the work, getting decent grades, and hoping for a bright future. I was a ninety percenter. I found school quite easy. I was prideful enough that I wanted to get good marks but at the same time I was not motivated in any way to be the best student in the class.

Trying to be the valedictorian or carrying a perfect 4.0 GPA didn't interest me in the least. I was perfectly content hanging out in the lower half of the top ten percent. Just

good enough to not screw up my future and keep my school teacher mother off my back.

So, the start of every semester required me to figure out how much effort was going to be required to reach this goal in each of my classes. Math was by far my worst subject therefore it was the most difficult one for me to maintain this careful balance.

The very first day any questions I had about Miss Shaw's ability to handle this group were answered. The 1960s were a turbulent revolutionary time. Classroom behavior had slipped badly.

This was not to be in Miss Shaw's class. The first kid that yelled out some idiotic inappropriate comment was met by her with a thunderous, almost Biblical response. I don't even remember what she said but myself and every other kid in the class decided that minute that none of us ever wanted to be on the receiving end of that. She let us know, in no uncertain terms, we weren't going to mouth off, pass notes, fall asleep or even stare out the window. We were there to

learn math, so let's get started. I don't believe there was another discipline problem the entire year.

At the end of every class Miss Shaw gave us time to start our homework. She used this time to give individual instruction. This was perfect for me. I was already going to work at our family supermarket most days after school. There I would work a couple of hours, helping my family and making a few bucks. My mom would pick me up and take me home after she got out of work. The last thing I wanted to do was haul my math book home with me.

So, I rushed through my assignment in class. Having paid close attention after the earlier blow-up, I knew most of the answers. The few I didn't know how to do I didn't bother to look up. I just guessed at them confident that I was well within my 90% target zone. The second day I did the exact same thing. The third day the roof fell in.

On that third day, as I handed in my second day's homework, Miss Shaw handed back my day one work. It had a number of red pencil marks and notes on it and on the top was a number written in red inside a red circle. This was the number of problems I had gotten wrong. Let's say it was 5. That was fine with me, just about what I was shooting for.

Well, it may have been fine with me but it wasn't fine with Miss Shaw. She then told us these were corrections. We would all be required to correct the ones we got wrong in addition to our new assignments. This woman wasn't grading on any curve. She expected every single one of us to get every single problem right on every single assignment. On top of that she had a ledger book that documented the status of every one of our assignments. You were not going to discard any of these papers and claim you had done it. Until it was marked complete in the ledger you owed her the work.

This wasn't good. I had just handed in my second assignment and I knew I had guessed

wrong on some of them. I realized that by my fourth day of class I was going to be three assignments behind. Sure enough, that second assignment came back with I think a red four circled on top. Even worse, my first correction sheet came back and the circled 5 was crossed out but next to it was a circled 2. I had gotten two of those problems wrong again.

Disaster loomed; things were quickly starting to back up. In just these couple of days, Miss Shaw had gotten my undivided attention. It immediately became obvious that my normal 90% goal was completely inappropriate for her class.

Shaken by this new reality I was forced to shift to a new system of actually trying to get everything right the first time no matter how much effort it took. If I didn't understand something I asked in class and Miss Shaw would explain it again until I got it. If I didn't know how to do a homework problem, I'd look it up. My math book became a constant companion back and forth between home and school.

In other words, I started to learn. The number of corrections I had to do soon trickled down to a very few. Indeed, when I got something back, I would be angry with myself for getting it wrong. Quite quickly her demands of perfection seemed to become reasonable to me and I can say without doubt that my results in her math class were the best I ever achieved.

Miss Shaw was always willing to spend her free time for any student that wanted extra help. But with the improvements in our effort level, the need for this extra help for myself and most of the class decreased noticeably.

This is where Miss Shaw's empathy and kindness really came to the fore. There were some kids that were buried in corrections. Their folders were full of papers with a series of crossed out circles with a set of declining numbers none of which had gotten to zero. I noticed that on most days while we were

working on our new assignment Miss Shaw would sit and do at least one student's corrections with them. Not to just get them done but to ensure the student learned the material.

It was as if by a combination of her iron will and outstanding teaching ability, she intended to drag each and every one of us over the finish line. Once she worked with the student through their corrections to her satisfaction, she would remove them from their folder and sign off on their completion in her ledger. The look of relief on the faces of the students who came to class hopelessly behind and left that same day with perhaps only one or two correction sheets left in their folder is something I will never forget.

When the year finally ended Miss Shaw had indeed dragged most of us over the finish line. But dragged was by that point the wrong word because we had all happily gone along. Even though she had been the strictest and demanded the most it seemed like she was almost universally liked and admired.

Miss Shaw taught only one more year after my class. She retired in the spring of 1970. Sadly, she died May 17, 1971, less than a year after her retirement.

In looking back, I am struck by a few thoughts. By demanding perfection, she piled an incredible amount of extra work on herself. Every single day she corrected multiple papers from every student she was teaching. Interestingly, her insistence on proper behavior never seemed to carry over in any meaningful way to any other classes. These same students that never acted up in her classroom reverted right back to their normal behavior as soon as they walked out of her door. It was only Miss Shaw that had demanded and earned this respect.

Also, while researching this story I found out that May was not Miss Shaw's first name. Her real name was Florence like her mother. To some she was known as F. May Shaw. I never



GCS where Shaw taught until winter 1968
When HS classes moved to new school

heard of anyone calling her Florence and I wonder if this started as a child to distinguish her from her mom in the day-to-day activities of the family.

Regardless, it made no difference to me as I would have never presumed to call her anything other than Miss Shaw. Lastly, since I myself have already left age 62 far in the rear-view mirror, I have arrived at an understanding that all opinions about age, including my first ones about Miss Shaw, are truly a matter of perspective

It has been 56 years since these events, yet I remember them and her quite clearly. I still think of her more often than you would imagine. Most importantly what I remember is Miss Shaw truly caring about each and every one of us and doing everything in her power to help us succeed. During her career she interacted with thousands of students. For many of us she taught us much more than just math.

We all meet many teachers during our lifetimes. Some are good at it, some not so much. Some are memorable, some are soon forgotten. Some we liked, some we couldn't stand. Only a few truly made a real difference in our lives. For me, May Shaw was one of those few. She was truly special.

Other notes:

Thank you to this month's writers. Once again, for about the twentieth time, Garth has charmed us, this time with a memory of a teacher familiar to those of us in our later 60s or older.

And Ricky Miller gives some background of Breezy Knoll. Flash back to the excellent Chuck Jesse program (<https://www.dteator.com/glhg/glhg%20317pdf.pdf>) and his account of the operation of Elm Shade by his parents, and many of us wanted to know more about Breezy Knoll.

Thank you, Garth and Ricky.

This newsletter, #333, for the math minded, is one-third of the way to one-thousand. Good trivia but do not hold your breath waiting for that big number.

April 14 Program (7:30 at Comm Room)

The 2025 GLHG season will start with a presentation from the Greenville Cemetery Association Board about one of our local history gems—the Greenville Cemetery.

New leadership is spearheading a drive to upgrade cemetery infrastructure and to provide a financial basis for the continuation of private operation.

Photos of the current setting, interspersed with a dose of cemetery history, will remind us of the treasure we have. (Note: the cemetery is operated by an Association, not Cunningham's Funeral Home.)

Next, this Board will demonstrate the need for upgrading, with a dozen slides of problem areas and types.

A winter visit to Heather Bizanos, Librarian at the Vedder Research Library in Coxsackie on the grounds of the Greene County History Society, allowed me to update the calendar website. It is now up to date, thank you to Heather, and I feel mighty proud of this asset. You can link: <https://vedderresearchlibrary.org/greenville-resources>.

Generous and thoughtful community members, whether current or former, sometimes consider contributing to the GLHG Treasury with wishes to further local history research or activities that would further our cause. A sizable contribution came from both Marla Stevens and from Terry & Garth Bryant. A thank you goes to each of you and I promise to find a good cause.



Board members will present an overview of the cemetery finances and budget, leading to a justification for a community support that is now needed.

And the Town Historian will intersperse more historical tidbits.

Breezy Knoll Acres
Recollections of a Greene County Resort
By Ricky Miller

Shortly after World War II, with the aid of the G.I. Bill, Breezy Knoll was purchased. Four WWII veterans from Bergen and Passaic Counties in New Jersey bought the resort from the Jesse family during the late 40s. Sitting on a knoll located on Route 81 mid-way between Greenville and Norton Hill, New York, Breezy Knoll became a popular Greene County establishment. In a few short years Breezy Knoll would become one of the most active Greene County resorts.



Early-mid century Breezy Knoll

Joe Dadulak, Al Kozick, Joe Nicolassi and Mr. Scobbie, all four original investors, would arrive in mid-April each year and work long, diligent days to ready for Friday night dinner of Memorial Day weekend. This was considered opening season for most resorts of the area. For the first weeks in June and the ending weeks of September and early October a handful of older guests would stay through the week. Families with children would need to reserve times to vacation in late June, then July and August as to work around their school calendar year.

Once school was out for the summer there was no let up through Labor Day. Seven days a week, three meals a day were available for the guests. My Uncle, Lenny McAneny, worked as chef for the first eighteen years of operation. My grandmother, Anna McAneny, would assist in the kitchen dishing out bowls and platters of food as meals were served family style. Ella McAneny/Miller, my biological mother, and Linda McAneny/Sutton, a cousin, both waited on tables. Aunt Betty McAneny, who raised me, and my Aunt Edna McAneny were chamber maids for many summers throughout the 60s. Uncle Freddie as well as Uncle Lenny would work the

clam bakes scheduled there on fall weekends. Another cousin, Lenny McAneny, would work the grounds. Our families made lasting friends while and after we worked there.

In the late 1950s a motel unit was built at the southeast corner of the resort. In the early 1960s a small building referred to as the “barn” was converted into fourteen guest rooms. The main building was torn down and replaced with an office including a six additional guest room motel.

One of my earliest memories of Breezy Knoll was when our family would pass by late on a Saturday night returning from the Drive-In or the Altamont Fair. Both shoulders of Route 81 would have been lined up with cars as the parking lots to the resort were already full of vehicles. Orchestras such as Joey and Petie Emma, Tommy Ippolito and Ralph Purificato as well as Johnny Costas would draw guests from other resorts as well as locals for dancing and socializing. Especially on a Saturday night, over capacity crowds would frequent the bar and dance floor.

In the spring of 1966, I began working there as a dishwasher like so many other teenagers did at like resorts in the area. Greene County kids were eager and able to work the summers. As a high schooler, at the time, I remember Muriel Wooster, a teacher at Greenville Central High School, reminding us of how fortunate we were to have full time employment during the resort season.

Like so many of the county resorts, Breezy Knoll offered amenities such as swimming pools, shuffleboard, tennis, and handball courts, as well as baseball fields. I recall an activity director being employed who could provide activities for both children and adults alike. As an added benefit, these amenities were often provided to the employees and their families. In addition, many of the local resorts were open to provide the community Red Cross swimming lessons.

It is easy to understand why so much of Breezy Knoll's history remains with me. Working there gives me pause to consider how it positively influenced my career choice for the hospitality industry.

The following is a list of family and friends who I remember working with or told had worked, in some capacity, at Breezy Knoll:
 --- Family members: Anna McAneny as kitchen aide, Lenny McAneny as chef, Edna McAneny, Betty McAneny, Marge Von Atzingen, and Eleanor McAneny as chambermaids, Fred McAneny as clambake operator, Ella McAneny/ Miller and Linda McAneny/ Sutton as waitresses, Ricky Miller as dishwasher, Lenny McAneny Jr. as grounds keeper and dishwasher.
 --- Friends: Sandy Chesbro as a chambermaid, Roy Gundersen, Tommy and Robert Mirabelli, John Harr, and Tommy Hull as dishwashers, Howard Adriance as bartender, Nancy Adriance as cocktail waitress.



Above: Resort Theme Song

Below: View of reputed Longest Bar of the Catskills; classic outdoor pool

