

The following was written by one of our past Presidents ( I am assuming it was written in 2004) marking the Fiftieth Anniversary of Greensboro Newcomers Club. There is no signature, and was given to me by Scott Kurtz.

## Celebrating Fifty Years!

**Today we have come together to celebrate the Greensboro Newcomers Club's 50th birthday.** Just think about it – for 50 years the Club has been fulfilling its purpose which is to welcome newcomers to Greensboro, acquaint them with the community and enable them to make new friends. When I became President I was told that there were some Club archives which had been put together by Sara Brintnall and that they contained the entire history of our Club from 1954 to the present day. I thought that it would be fun for me to look over those archives in preparation for this special birthday celebration. When I went to pick them up from Susan Ball I was almost unable to fit all of the large boxes into my car – believe me, 50 years generates a lot of memories! Sara had organized the archives chronologically, which was a tremendous help. Thank you, Sara, for preserving our club's history. I also want to thank Frances Neal, Mary Fran Schickedantz and Julia Hipp for sharing with me their memories of their years as President. Julia also volunteered to organize the photographs from the archives and they are displayed on the table for everyone to see. Thank you Julia. I can't tell you how much fun I had going through the archives and learning about the history of the club. For me there were moments of insight and moments of laughter. I would like you to join me now on a short and fun journey through the Greensboro Newcomers FIRST 50 years.

**The Greensboro Daytime Newcomers Club** was founded in March of 1954 and its first president was Mrs. Ralph Chandler (I noticed that for about the first 25 years all the members were listed by their husband's first names). In the beginning the club held its meetings at the Guilford dairy building. The reason for this was that the dairy was the source of the names of new people moving into Greensboro. For those of us who are old enough to remember, milk used to be delivered door to door. Therefore, the dairy was the first to know about a new family in the neighborhood and they would pass on the name to the Newcomers Club! Frances Neal, who was president from 1957-58 told me that she would dial her fingers "to the bone" (remember, these were the days of the rotary phone!) making phone calls to encourage these newcomers to join the club. When I asked Frances how many members were in the club she said, "Well, enough for 2 bridge tables!" This is significant because the monthly general meetings consisted of playing bridge and having lunch, which was a tradition which lasted for about 20 years! In the 1950's the club's **first Interest Group** was formed. This was a **gardening group called the Wandering Twigs**. The club also held a Holiday party with husbands. In those days the rule was that you could be a member of Newcomers for only three years and then you had to move on to the auxiliary called the Colony Club. I also had the pleasure of speaking with Mary Fran Schickedantz, who served as president from 1969-70. The membership at that time had grown to 15-24 people, enough for 6 tables of bridge! The monthly luncheons were held at the Women's Club and in addition to bridge there was also entertainment. The March Birthday Luncheon included a competition and prize for the most unusual hat worn to the luncheon. The interest groups now included bridge, book club (in which the entire club read the same book) and couples gourmet. And just to make sure that those newcomers would know that they had truly moved into the South, the club held a "pig pickin". **The rule was still "three years and out"**, but a member could remain in an interest group as long as a new group had been started for those who were brand new to the club. In 1969, the tradition of Newcomers support for nonprofits in Greensboro was in full swing and the Fall Auction was held to raise funds for charity. By 1974 the club membership had grown and the monthly meetings were now 3 rounds of bridge and canasta, plus a "talk table" where non-card playing members could socialize and do crafts. And, of

course, there was lunch. Anyone who is in the club today can tell you that lunch has become an important part of any newcomers event. **The yearly dues in 1974 were \$5** and the club year ran from June to June. I have to tell you that I think I would have loved being in this club 30 years ago—I got my biggest chuckle out of reading about the 1974-75 years. Now, you may think that we are being very creative holding a “Casino Night” this year, but 1974 beat us to it. And it must have been SOME party! Their “Vegas Party” was held in the American Legion Hall and included entertainment by Ruvolis Revolting Rockettes and Pat Bergen and Her Floosy Friends!! It was said of that night that any talent scouts in the audience would have said “Don’t call us, we’ll call you”. The chorus girls dance numbers were met with cries of “Take it off”, “More” and “Swing it, baby”! This group definitely had some fun. This, by the way, is also the year when one of the Tours sponsored by the club was to the Pinehurst Lingerie Factory Outlet in Asheboro. This was just not the image I had of the South when I was living up in New Jersey! During the 70’s the club needed 3 babysitters for the monthly meetings and the charge in the nursery was \$1.50 per day per child. Things have certainly changed! The auction was held in December and raised money for Urban Ministries, which was also our designated charity in 2003. The club also held the Snow Ball Dance, a holiday social event for couples which was held at the Howard Johnson's. The new member coffees were in full swing. The March birthday luncheon now also included a fashion show and was held in the Imperial Ballroom of the Holiday Inn at Four Seasons. The all inclusive cost for the event was \$5 per person.

**The first Greensboro Newcomers Cookbook was published in 1975** and included member’s recipes from the club’s Holiday Cookie Exchange and the “Tasting luncheons”. The cost per cookbook was \$1.00. In **1976 Newcomers formed a community outreach singing group which was called Newhummers**. By 1980 the chorus had 40 singers – and must have sounded wonderful! In addition to performing in the community, the chorus traditionally performed at the Newcomers Holiday Luncheon. Their final performance was in December of 2000. What a wonderful tradition and how I wish I could have heard them sing. Julia Hipp, in addition to being President from 1980-81, was also the accompanist for Newhummers and she shared with me her fond memories of the club. Julia and her husband Larry started a fun tradition in the club – western square dancing! According to Julia, the “ladies of the club” were a little reluctant to hold a square dance, but Julia brought some music to one of the meetings and demonstrated how much fun it could be. Julia arranged for a caller and the First Annual Newcomers Dinner and Square Dance was held at Kepley’s Barn off of Route 68. There was beer on tap, BBQ, fried chicken, slaw – and, of course, square dancing. This became an annual Newcomers event for many years and in 1986 it included a “pig pickin”. I have done some square dancing in the past and I think that the club should look into reviving this tradition – along with the “pig pickin” of course. **In the 1980’s the yearly club dues were raised to \$10** and the interest groups had expanded to include all of our present day groups, plus Dieters Anonymous, Couples Bridge and Couples Bowling, Coupon Exchange, Photography, Racquetball and Tennis. Another club cookbook was compiled which included recipes from an event called “Pastry Tasting”, which took place at the September meeting where members joined and paid their dues for the year. All of the pastries were provided by members of the board. In 1982 Marie Scotto was President and the club had grown to 400 members. Monte Carlo Night was held at the Blandwood House and guests could try their luck at blackjack, craps, roulette and something called “Chuck-A-Luck”- One can only guess what that means! However, nothing was said about entertainment, so we must assume that Pat Bergen and her Floosy Friends had since retired! The Annual Bazaar was the year’s only fundraiser and was called “Tokens and Treasures”. Included were arts and crafts, baked goods, used books, the sale of the club cookbook called Holiday Treats, plants and a silent auction. All items were donated by members of the club with the proceeds going to local charities, such as hospice and Urban Ministries.

**By 1986 inflation had taken its toll and the club dues were raised to \$15.** In the year 1987, when Dottie Maurer was President, several important changes took place. The Newcomers Club was divided into neighborhood divisions called Grids. The intention was to introduce members to their neighbors who were also club members. Over the years the Grids have been very active and they continue today as another method of socializing within the Newcomers Club. The Interest group called Adopt-A-Family was started as part of the club's charitable giving. During the 1990's it became part of the Salvation Army's Christmas Clearing House. Over 30 organizations in Greensboro submitted referrals of families in need. The collection of food, clothing, toys and money for utilities was organized by Grids and was ongoing throughout the year. In the late 1990's the length of the project was reduced and centered only on holiday giving. It was called Fulfill a Wish and was just one among many of the club's community outreach efforts. The 1990's also saw the beginning of another of the club's service groups called Evergreens. This group today is headed by Faith Hill and it provides a little sunshine to the residents of Evergreens Senior Healthcare. Throughout the 1990's the club continued to reflect the changes in the overall society at the time. **In 1994 the Interest group called Working Women was formed. The club dues were increased to \$20 and the membership was 277.** 1995 saw an increase in activities offered for singles, such as bridge and movies and the increase in the members who were employed brought about more evening groups. The first Winter Tea was held in 1995 from 1-3 in the afternoon, but by 1996 there were actually two shifts, from 10-12 and 6-8 in an attempt to accommodate all of the members. In 1998 it was from 10-12 only and this event continues to be one of the loveliest and most well attended events of the year. I have to say that I wish the Interest Group called "Sip, Dip, Chat and Chew" was still going as it sounds like it was a lot of fun for members and their husbands.

**In 1996 the Greensboro Newcomers Tour of Homes was held in September.** Eight of our club members opened their homes which were decorated for different holidays and events. The funds raised from the Tour supported the club's Adopt-A-Family program. The Club published two more cookbooks, in 1995 and 1998. We are continuing this tradition this year and our cookbook is being published to celebrate of 50th birthday. By reading the newsletters from 1999 I discovered that Grid 4 had taken over the "Pig Pickin'" and was holding its 10th annual event – although there was no mention of square dancing. In Dec. of 1999 the club had an interest group for computer users and another for young marrieds. Also, they were looking for a chairperson for the interest group called Home Brewing and Winemaking – unfortunately, I guess there were no volunteers! In the years since the start of the new millennium the club has continued with monthly meetings, interest groups, grid activities, special events, community outreach and support of local charities. Currently Newcomers has 334 members ranging in age from the early 20's to 86! We hail from many different states and several foreign countries. The one thing we all have in common is that each of us has been touched by this wonderful club. When I spoke with Frances Neal, Mary Fran Schickedantz and Julia Hipp about their memories of the club, I could feel their smiles coming right through the phone. This club does that! When we extend the hand of friendship to a new member we are saying that Greensboro is a welcoming place and that they have indeed found a new "home". **The yearbook from 1983-84 is titled "Bloom Where You Are Planted".** Many of us have already put down firm roots, while others are brand new. As a member of Newcomers you will be nourished by new friends and new experiences which will help you to "bloom where you have been planted". Thank you, Greensboro Newcomers Club.

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY**