FROM THE ARCHIVES

Mothers' Board

BY JOCELYN SHERMAN-AVIDAN AND SUSIE DAVIS

Before there was the Greenwich Academy Parents Association (GAPA), there was the Mothers' Board of Greenwich Academy. Members of the board formed a talented army of volunteers that planned teas, dances, and dinners; decorated for all occasions; and raised money to benefit the school—all the while meticulously tracking their activities in fountain pen and with manual typewriters. GA's archives hold 15 years of handwritten Mothers' Board meeting notes, programs, photos, and other mementos from 1955–1970, documented in three-ring binders.

With a relatively small budget, Mothers' Board members would often volunteer their time in service to the school. In the 1950s and '60s, for example, mothers would volunteer to be servers at the annual dinners. Often, mothers would bring table linens from home. One year, the mothers purchased material and made the table linens themselves!



Barbara Howe '68

In 1955, Chauncey "Toddy" Howe, mother of three GA girls and then-president of the Mothers' Board, took it upon herself to put vases of flowers, cut from her own garden, in every room of RWC to welcome the incoming head of school, Katherine Zierleyn. Toddy's daughter, Barbara Howe '68, recalls her mother cutting peonies from their gardens at home to line the aisles at graduation. Barbara also remembered Upper School students singing with the Greenwich Choral Society at Christmas. "The girls wore their winter uniforms and sang from the balconies at Second Congregational Church. They wore red bows with bells that Mom and a couple of other women made at our house. They made 200 or more of these bows!"

In the 1960s, an annual GA highlight was the benefit luncheon and fashion show which raised necessary funds to support the school. One Mothers' Board binder is dedicated to five years of place settings, menus, lists of mothers who volunteered as hostesses, and students who qualified to walk the fashion show runway—they had to have excellent grades. The fashion show was usually held at Greenwich Country Club, and featured clothes from Saks Fifth Avenue or B. Altman. A three-piece orchestra provided music.

Polly Arnoff '73 remembers the fashion show in 1965. "I was 10 years old and remember being asked to hold a Brunswick student's hand as we walked down the aisle," she says. "It was a little uncomfortable at the time, but I remember he was cute with brown hair and freckles. I remember dressing in pretty but uncomfortably new crisp clothes."

In 1965, the Mothers' Board raised money for a "discretionary fund" for Head of School Katherine Zierleyn, who used it for much-needed equipment. The Mothers' Board notes read: "Miss Zierleyn reported that the $2,000 was gratefully and effectively spent. Three overhead projectors were ordered for each division of the school. A table and projector were ordered for the science department, and two typewriters for the office." In addition, "A research project studying the synthesis of the arts in control groups in Group III and Group VII was undertaken." With a little money left over, Ms. Zierleyn arranged for the Upper School girls to attend parties at some of the boys' prep schools and hosted some dances at GA.

In 1967, the mothers changed the spring benefit up a little, hosting a ball instead of a fashion show. Ingrid de Cholnoky, who had three daughters at the school, was the benefit's chairwoman that year. One of her letters to the mothers reads: "Last spring, as you may remember, brought the arrival of our Academy May Ball sponsored by the Academy mothers' group for the benefit of the scholarship fund. The brainchild of a delightfully spirited Academy mother, it was a







1. Left to right: Ingrid and Dr. Tibor de Cholnoky P '69 '74 '83, Dorothy and Albert Preston P '65 '67 '69 '73, Mr. and Faye and J. Gilbert Fates P '67 '70 Photo printed in the *Greenwich Time* following a Mothers' Board benefit planning meeting, 1969 **2.** Pamela Gordon Schall '65, Patricia Larkin '66 walking the runway at the benefit luncheon and fashion show organized by the Mothers' Board **3.** Father-daugther dance organized by the Mothers' Board, c. 1960

"The brainchild of a delightfully spirited Academy mother, it was a most happy and enjoyable event. Untiring efforts of a group of enthusiastic parents made it a successful affair on all accounts."

Ingrid de Cholnoky

most happy and enjoyable event. Untiring efforts of a group of enthusiastic parents made it a successful affair on all accounts. Preparations for the second May Ball have begun." She spoke of procuring the popular Lester Lanin Orchestra and introducing a "treasure chest," where a guest would win a key to the chest and choose a surprise gift donated by Greenwich merchants.

In time, the Mothers' Board evolved into GAPA, which today works toward the mission of "enhancing school activities and facilities through service and fundraising." Thirty-nine parents now serve as GAPA board members, with countless others engaged as committee members and volunteers, class representatives who act as liaisons for faculty and parents in each division, and host families who welcome new students to the school community. While there are differences between the two organizations in terms of size and scope, one thing remains unchanged: both groups represent a parent community that is dedicated to supporting Greenwich Academy in every possible way. ■