

Leon Cornforth
LIVING A LIFE OF
LOYALTY,
GENEROSITY
& KINDNESS

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PRINCIPAL'S REPORT


A Refuge in Times of Trouble

On more than one occasion, I have picked up the phone, read an email or talked face-to-face with a parent wanting to send their student to Gem State Adventist Academy. At a time in this world's history, when our young people are bombarded with temptations that many of us consider unimaginable, I understand and feel their anxiety and pain. In many cases, after reviewing their circumstances and having the student meet with our Admissions Committee, we accept these valuable young people and bring them into a safe, Christian environment where they can learn, grow and see God working.

I'm reminded that once there was a group of men in a small boat in the middle of a big lake who were caught in a fierce storm. Most of the boat's occupants were seasoned sailors and fishermen, and they did everything they could to save their boat and their lives. Despite their efforts and expertise, they were overwhelmed with the task. In the moment of their deepest terror and despair, they remembered that the Son of God was asleep in their boat. God was

But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble.
Psalm 59:16

literally and physically with them and at that terrible moment, God rebuked the storm and the lake became perfectly calm.

Gem State Adventist Academy is so much more than just a school. Our Seventh-day Adventist schools are often the last safe shelter in a storm for our youth. Our school is a place where God can calm the storms in their lives. We will continue to strive to save every student that comes to us by introducing each one to the One who has the power to provide shelter during the storms in their lives. 

Peter J. McPherson

Fall Week of Prayer & Agape Feast

By Ellissa Nelson, a senior

The SA agape feast, a friendship-based thanksgiving dinner, took place on November 12. Students and staff members sat side by side as they enjoyed Miss Denise's delicacies including mashed potatoes, deviled eggs, and pumpkin pie. The tables were decorated with yellow, orange, and brown plates as well as leaves and candles.

Douglas Roe, Camp Ida-Haven's manager, was

the week of prayer speaker. He encouraged the students to tell everybody something they were grateful for. Student after student expressed their love of Gem State Academy as well as their gratitude toward staff and friends. "I'm thankful I decided to stay here," said Lashay, a junior. A wonderful evening of fellowship and appreciation ended with afterglow as kids crowded around a piano to

Leon Cornforth

Living a Life of Loyalty, Generosity & Kindness



There are many, many people who have been integral to the success of Gem State Academy, but Leon Cornforth may excel them all!

Leon Cornforth, '45, and his twin brother, **Lyle, '45**, were born to staunch Mormon parents. The boys learned a strong work ethic on the family farm near Aberdeen, Idaho and by the time Leon was a teen, he had muscles of steel from pitching hay and milking cows by hand.

When the boys were 14 they and some of their older siblings began studying the Bible. Eventually the twins accepted the Adventist message and became baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Suddenly the outgoing Cornforth twins found themselves having to say "No" to going to Friday night games and dances, etc.

So, when they heard about a school—Gem State Academy—where everyone kept the Sabbath and everyone maintained high standards, the boys determined to enroll. But their father needed the boys' help with harvesting the potato crop.

Thus it was that the boys started school in October, instead of September, with the rest of the students.

Leon loved Gem State Academy from the day he stepped foot on campus. Living in the dorm, eating in the cafeteria, classes, recreation—it was one great party! Forever after, Leon would sing the praises of Gem State Academy for it was there that he became grounded in his faith. It was there that he found lasting friendships. It was there that he heard God's call to ministry.

After graduating from Gem State Academy, Leon pursued a ministerial degree at Walla Walla College. When he met Betty Henderson, a petite cow girl from northeast Montana, he determined to win her heart. They began dating and the day after graduation he and Betty got married. He always said, "I got my Bachelor's degree one day and Betty took it away from me the next!"

Within a month the newlyweds found themselves
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sing the week of prayer theme song:

"Where you say go...we will go.
Where you say wait...we will wait
If you say 'step out on the water'
And they say it can't be done
We'll fix our eyes on you and will come.

Where you say go...we will go.
Where you say wait...we will wait
If you call us to the fire,
you will not withdraw your hand
we'll gaze into the flames and look for you."



Leon Cornforth

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moving back to Gem State Academy. Leon served GSA for three years as Dean of Men, Boys' P.E. Instructor, and World History teacher. The students loved their young dean and his pretty wife and they dedicated the 1950 Syringa (yearbook) to Leon with these words: "To a man of strong personality, who has a genuine interest in each student and who is never too busy to shout his cheery 'Hi' to all who pass or to sit down and listen ... During the past year we have found him to be a bank of credit from which we may draw supplies of cheerfulness, confidence and understanding."

In the summer of 1952 Leon began his pastoral ministry in the Idaho Conference. He later served in the Upper Columbia Conference, Georgia-Cumberland Conference, Arizona Conference and at the Pacific Publishing Association (when it was in Mountain View, California) before returning back "home" to Idaho in 1980 to finish out his career as Ministerial Director and Trust Services Director.

Leon was a possibility thinker, a visionary, and an eternal optimist. Wherever he went he instigated positive change and growth, and he always accomplished his goals through love, respect and kindness—never, by force.

Regardless of where he was living and serving, Leon made it a priority to come each year to Gem State Academy's annual homecoming. In fact, he was instrumental in initiating the Alumni Weekend tradition which began in 1958.

For Leon, life was all about relationships and he was careful to maintain connections with his



classmates. For six decades the great class of 1945 had a week-long class reunion every five years. The class published an annual newsletter, *Ye Olde Lamp Post*, and they were especially careful to include the members that



drifted away from the Lord. Leon was pleased because every class member eventually came back to the Lord and became active members in His church. Such is the power of love—unconditional, unassuming, generous love!

At the 1981 homecoming Leon decided to cast a vision for an Alumni Endowment Fund. He said, "If we raise \$1 million and invest it well, we can sponsor students to Gem State Academy every year from now until Jesus comes!" Now, thirty years later, more than 200 "worthy students" have had the opportunity of attending Gem State Academy because of Leon's vision. . . and this legacy will continue as long as time shall last.

Leon was tireless. If something needed doing, he was the first to volunteer. And, because he was fun to be around, others would willingly join in the endeavor. It didn't matter whether the task was raising money or fixing the fence, Leon was up to it! During the early 1990s, enrollment was dropping. For six summers Leon took it upon himself to spend a couple weeks on the road recruiting. He would drive his motor home to a particular area, contact the pastor, and together they would go visiting prospective students. His work was enormously fruitful.

Living a Life of Loyalty, Generosity & Kindness

One family whose life was dramatically impacted was the Mellish family. **Veronica (Mellish) Cenicerós, '94**, was ready for her junior year when Leon dropped by to visit. She says, "Leon convinced my parents of the importance of Christian education and we moved that year to Caldwell. Besides me, four of my siblings attended Gem State Academy and now my two sons are students at Gem State!"


Leon was also a passionate fundraiser for "the school that he loved in the hills of Idaho." In the late 1980s Leon began having conversations with an early GSA graduate, Dr. Robert G. Wirth, who by this time had amassed a fortune. The doctor was grappling with where to invest his money. As the two gentlemen talked, an idea began to take shape. Why not build an addition onto the music building at Gem State Academy? The result of those conversations: The Robert D. Wirth wing was built in 1990.

In 1993 Leon retired from his position with the Idaho Conference, but not from ministry. As long as he had breath, he must be about his Father's business! Leon finished his book, *Meeting the Mormon Challenge with Love*, and he and Betty took to the road to share its contents. He also conducted evangelistic meetings in Brazil and India. When he was home, he was always giving Bible studies. In fact, at the time of his death at the age of 83, Leon still had five Bible studies going.

When I (Linda Klinger) became Development Director at Gem State Academy in 2002, I found a ready ally in Leon Cornforth. While many people are reluctant to approach people to ask for a gift, Leon welcomed the opportunity to build up his school and always did it with

great sensitivity and wisdom. About once a month Leon would stop by the alumni office just to see how things were going. His visits were always such an encouragement.

On December 19, 2010, our good friend Leon Cornforth fell asleep in Jesus after a week-long battle following a heart attack and stroke. If he had had the opportunity to say goodbye to his Gem State Academy family, I'm sure he would have said: "Meet me on the first 4th of July in heaven at the Tree of Life!"—for these were often his parting words.

Regarding death, Leon often said: "When you're really tired, nothing feels better than a long nap." So, rest well, dear friend. We can't wait to see you at the great GSA Tree of Life homecoming! 



This photo was taken in 2005 at the class of 1945's 60th reunion. Front row L to R: June (Crisp) Colson, Ethel (Browning) Wall, Dorothy (Tollensdorf) Brown, Lela (Rathmann) Franzman, Aletha "Darlene" (Downs) Lawson, Phyllis (Brown) Potts. Back row L to R: Richard Brown, Al White, Boyd Bryant, Ben Colson, Leon Cornforth, Lyle Cornforth, Melvin Freund, Walter Sheer.

Flag Football Tournament

by JOSE LOPEZ, a senior

Gem State Academy held the 2011-2012 Winter Bowl Flag Football Tournament on November 19, 2011. It was a four team tournament. Three games were guaranteed, with a possibility of playing a fourth if you made it to the Championship. Kick-off started at 10:00 am. The four teams played in two different fields. Team "Lambs" played team "Cruz" in the main field, while we (Gem State) played against team "Dovich".

In game one our team played hard, fast, and relentless and defeated them. After the final whistle was blown, we lined up and shook hands. We soon found out that in the second game we would be playing team Cruz.

The guys on team Cruz were tall, strong and agile. Cruz was composed of two marines and a couple of Gem State alumni and friends university students, but we didn't back down. This was a tough defensive game. Both teams scored six points early on. The rest of the game was a battle about who could score next but none was able to and we ended in a hard fought tie.

In game three we played the Lambs. The Lambs played hard and we thanked them for it. The final score was 50-14, Gem State. Meanwhile, team Cruz played a tight game against team Dovich and barely lost. We had made it to Championship Game—Gem State versus Dovich.


"Captains!" the referees called as Jose Lopez and Willy Garcia jogged to the middle of the field to greet the captains from Dovich. We shook hands and wished them good luck. Our teams circled around the middle of the field as we prayed together, and then went to our respective sides to start the game.

We received the ball and ran it for good field position. Our game plan was run the ball hard and then surprise them with a passing play. So

we ran the ball three consecutive times in a row and gained good yardage. Then with Jose Lopez as quarterback, he faked the hand-off and rolled to the right and threw the ball to Willy Garcia. "As soon as I let go of the ball I knew that I had over-thrown him. I had a rusher in my face and I expected to see the ball bounce off the ground, but I didn't... and then I saw Willy stretch out to make the catch and run into the end zone! I was astonished he had made the catch as he came jogging back saying that



was a horrible throw! And I told him 'I know!'" But that was sick! And we both laughed. We converted the extra point with Jose throwing a perfect pass to Willy, making up for his last horrible throw.

The rest of the game was filled with joy, but we still played hard. We continued to attack using each of our other athletes such as Andrew Johnson, Jesus Rieke, Griffin Rice, Fritz Heid and others. Each member of our team was valuable and together we triumphed. We ended up winning 48-12. After thanking the alumni for playing with us we huddled up as a team and then chanted, "1...2...3 Jaguars!!!" 

It's Hard to Let Go & Let God!

A parent struggles to choose the best for her daughter

In January 2009, I moved to Colorado City, Arizona, to begin my quest of nursing school. It turned out that there were no Adventists where I lived and the first year there I found myself compromising my faith. Pretty soon I wasn't thinking much about my beliefs at all.

Then last summer, I began visiting with my good friend Karen Lifshay, and she started reminding me of my lost focus. I realized that I needed to get my family back on track. My daughter, Athena, was just finishing eighth grade and I could see that I didn't have much time. With no Adventist friends to support me, I felt pretty helpless, but told Athena that I was going to homeschool her for her high school years. I did not want her to attend the public high school.

Not too long after that I talked again with my friend, Karen. She said that Gem State Academy was a good school and suggested that I go to camp meeting and check it out. It sounded like something that would be wonderful for Athena, but I really never expected for things to come together so that she could actually attend. Still, we went to camp meeting. Athena quickly fell in love with the Academy. Now I was worried because I didn't have any funds for tuition. I also thought about how much I would miss her, she is my only daughter and imagining life with her not in my house was not something I wanted to do.

Then I realized that if I didn't send her to academy it would only be a matter of time before she got caught up with the local kids. All they do here is drink and do drugs, and I'm not exaggerating! Many of my acquaintances here teach their children about spiritualism and about the different "powers" that we have within ourselves. I didn't want Athena exposed to that!

When I thought about it, I knew that Athena would never gain the faith in God that she needs if she stayed here in Arizona, so we decided to give it a try. The day Athena was accepted at Gem State Academy was a very happy day! She would now have an Adventist support group. She would now have teachers that would teach her the right ways, that would say what I have told her, only she would listen to them because they weren't her mother.

When she left I cried as I am sure most mothers do.

Then, a few weeks after school began, she phoned to say that she had been caught shoplifting. I wondered whether I had made a huge mistake in sending her away so young. But I reinforced my decision to keep her at GSA by remembering all the miracles that had taken place to get her there. Now I'm glad I didn't pull her out—I have seen such improvement in Athena!

The true acceptance that she has found from the teachers and their diligence in challenging her to do her best has made her blossom in a way that she never could have here in Arizona. Her grades are improving and she is happier and becoming more self-confident.

I want Athena to finish high school at Gem State Academy, and I know that by doing this it is saving her—it is putting in her heart and mind the knowledge and the love of God. I can now see that it is absolutely God's will for Athena to attend Gem State. Thank you for helping make all this possible!



A letter from Sara Butler, mother of Athena Butler, a freshman, written to Tom Sherwood, Gem State Academy's Recruiter

Remembering Charles & Stacia Merickel



Charles and Stacia Merickel were teachers at Gem State Academy for 15 years—from 1965-1981. Charles taught History, Government, Bible, Bookkeeping and Driver's Ed. Stacia taught Home Economics and served as Librarian. This energetic, dedicated couple poured every ounce of energy and enthusiasm they could muster into their students. Mr. and Mrs. Merickel recently passed to their rest, but the values they championed are still being lived out every day in the lives of the several hundred students they interacted with at Gem State Academy.

*At Alumni Weekend (March 30-April 2) this fine couple will be awarded the 2012 Distinguished Service Award and their children, **Phyllis (Merickel) Wilson, '67, Donna (Merickel) Judy, '69, and Charles Merickel, '72**, will be present to receive the award. Friends and former students are encouraged to write out a special memory for the Merickel "children" to enjoy. Memories may be sent to Linda Klinger at lklinger@gemstate.org or mailed to 16115 S Montana Ave, Caldwell, ID 83607.*

Charles Rolland Merickel, IV, was born September 20, 1916. His earliest memories were of playing on an academy campus where his father was farm manager.

In 1934 Charles graduated from the Mapleton, NM high school. The following year he attended Union College.

Because of a lack of finances, he was not able to go straight through. He would go to school and then have to take a year off to work. Then he was back in school and when the money ran out, he would go back to work.

In December 1941 he was drafted into the U.S. Army. After he completed his physical the draft board lost his records. While he was waiting for the Army to get their act together he drove his cousin to Southern California and while there, decided to join the Navy. August 26, 1942 he was sworn in as a 3rd Class Pharmacist Mate. The Navy proved to be a highlight of Charles's life and ever after he eagerly shared Navy stories with family, friends and students.

In 1946 Charles met, courted, and married Stacia Alexanko. Two years later he graduated with a Master's Degree in Rural Economics from the University of Nebraska. Later that year he moved his wife and first-born to Laurelwood Academy where he served as farm manager and teacher. His next two children were born there. Then it was on to Portland Union Academy for a year before beginning a new job, in 1956, as an appraiser for the State of Oregon. After Academy work, this State job seemed like a vacation!

But Charles missed his students. Teaching was his gift. And so it was that in 1965, when he got the call to Gem State Academy, he eagerly moved his family to Caldwell where he remained until his retirement in 1981. Charles always regretted not having an opportunity to graduate from an Adventist school. Because of this, the GSA class of 1981 lovingly adopted him as an honorary member of their graduating class.

Charles was a Christian seven days a week. Though he led a very active, busy life, he was never too busy to share his love for Jesus with anyone and everyone who would listen. On March 17, 2007, Charles passed peacefully to await the resurrection call of his best Friend, Jesus.



Stacia (Alexenko) Merickel was born on January 17, 1918. She was the fifth-born child of Russian immigrants. At the age of eight she lost her mother due to childbirth complications and within a year her father remarried.



Stacia walked two miles each way to grade school. For lunch she would have a dry jam sandwich. How she wished for a peanut butter sandwich like the others. After walking back home, there

was always a list of chores to be done before homework. Even during the summers she would hire herself out to the neighbors to do housework, mowing and raking hay, milking cows and hauling water—all for \$10-\$15 per month. There was very little time for play. These tough experiences impacted young Stacia deeply.

Stacia began high school at Sheyenne River Academy, but in the spring of her freshman year she was asked to leave because of lack of money. Early the following summer she decided to write a letter to the new principal to ask if she could come work off her bill. She was ecstatic when he invited her to come help prepare the dormitory for the coming school year. Of that experience Stacia later wrote, "I was learning that I could pray and the Lord would answer."

But the challenges continued. Later that summer her brother, who had been helping finance her schooling, wrote that due to crop failure he would be unable to help—she would have to come home. With heavy heart she reported the news to Principal Fowler. R.W. Fowler went home and asked his wife if Stacia could stay with them and she said, Yes. Thus began a lifelong, meaningful friendship.

Toward the end of her senior year Stacia got a stinging letter from her step-mother, "You have not left anything here, you need not come home when school gets out." What should she do? Where should she go?

Once again God put it in the heart of a staff member to help. This time it was the food service director who loaned her the money for a train ticket to Chicago. Once there, she found a job in Hinsdale working for a family as



maid and nanny. The Jones family was good to her, even buying her a sewing machine so that she could develop her sewing skills. She worked for the family for three years and another close lifetime bond was formed.

By then she had saved enough money to begin college and headed off to Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. In




March 1946 Stacia met Charles Miracle at a birthday party. "It was love at first sight!" Stacia graduated two months later with a BS in Home Economics—the first of her family to get a college degree and that very evening she became engaged to Charles. The couple was married on August 7, 1946.

Stacia was a devoted wife and mother. Her children remember playing at her feet as she was busy sewing, baking bread, working in the garden, etc. And she passed on to them the strong work ethic she had learned during those difficult growing up years.

When the family moved to Gem State Academy, Stacia began teaching Home Economics, serving as librarian, and directing the sewing work program that made Pathfinder uniforms and accessories. During those years she helped prepare many young ladies for the realities of life. Some students were intimidated by her "call to perfection." But what seemed critical and direct was only a loving heart veiled by life's harshness.

Even her own family didn't always realize the richness that lay beneath the surface of this fine lady. Charles recalls his surprise when, after heart surgery, the doctor asked, "Stacia, how do you feel?" Stacia replied, "I feel with my fingers, sir"

Charles and Stacia spent their retirement years first in Florida and then in College Place, Washington. Stacia closed her eyes in the sleep of death on May 22, 2011, strong in the hope of Jesus' soon return. 

4th Annual Gem of Gems Auction Nets \$17,000

More than 100 eager supporters gathered at BSU for the 4th Annual Gem of Gems Auction Gala on Sunday evening, November 13, 2011. The cause: renovations and technology updates for the GSA Library.

As the silent auction came to a close, competition for the Child-size Wheelbarrow, the Salmon



River Adventure and the Designer Clock was “fierce” as bidders playfully handed the pen back and forth, each hoping to be the last signer when the auctioneer called SILENT AUCTION CLOSED!

Then it was time for a delectable dinner and friendly conversation. At the close of the meal the auctioneer invited guests to make their selections from the dessert table. The Chocolate Tuxedo Cheesecake and the Pecan Crusted Pumpkin Pie each sold for \$300. The fresh Berry Torte sold for \$150 and the Red Velvet Trifle sold for \$115.

The fun continued during the live auction. Mrs. Morrison of the Morrison Center for the Performing Arts donated her box seats and they sold for \$1,000; a guest cabin in McCall sold for \$800; and the Vitamix sold for \$375.

Why did folks bid so enthusiastically? Because they love Gem State students! And they want to assure the students have every opportunity to succeed. They understand that a school library must be more than just a place to “hang out.” It must be a source of inspiration. It must spark



GSAA Library Estimated Renovation Costs

DESCRIPTION	COST
RENOVATION	
REMODEL OF OFFICE SPACE	\$2,000.00
SURFACE RENOVATION (CEILING AND WALLS)	\$4,000.00
RECONFIGURE ELECTRICAL	\$5,500.00
NEW LIGHTING BUDGET	\$5,500.00
PAINTING OF ENTIRE LIBRARY	\$3,000.00
INSTALLATION OF NEW WINDOWS AND DOORS	\$4,200.00
RENOVATION SUBTOTAL	\$24,200.00
FURNITURE	
CUSTOM BUILT CIRCULATION DESK	\$4,300.00
NEW FURNITURE BUDGET	\$10,500.00
FURNITURE SUBTOTAL	\$14,800.00
IT BUDGET	
4 NEW I-PADS	\$2,000.00
4 LAP TOP COMPUTERS	\$4,000.00
NETWORK INSTALLATION	\$3,000.00
IT SUBTOTAL	\$9,000.00

TOTAL ESTIMATED COST \$48,000.00

imagination and creativity. Our Gem of Gems guests were determined to provide tools so that Gem State’s technology savvy students can conduct valid research and learn critical thinking skills.

A good time was had by all and proceeds, less expenses, amounted to \$17,000—not enough to implement the entire vision, but certainly enough to get a good start!

The Gem State Academy administration, board and faculty wish to express appreciation to the Gem of Gems Planning Committee, the 158 individuals and businesses who donated items for the sale, and the guests who “bid from their hearts!”



Reminiscing
with

World War II Veteran, Jay Munsey

Fifteen-year-old Jay Munsey was driving a load of vegetables to market when suddenly a familiar car roared past. He knew immediately that one of their farmhands had gotten hurt and was being rushed to the hospital. Jay remembers that day as if it were yesterday for it was at that moment that Jay first glimpsed his future. He said to himself, "Someday I'll be the man they see at the ER."

World War II began while Jay was a student at Gem State Academy. After he graduated he enrolled as a pre-med student at Walla Walla College. But, as he says, "I was not the brightest light on the street and when the draft board got my grades they said, 'You're not making it, go home and either work on the farm or get drafted!'"

Jay went home and worked on the farm for a couple of years. Then his conscience started bothering him and he went down to the draft board and told them that he didn't need a deferment anymore. Within a few days he was drafted into the Medical Corp of the U.S. Army.

After completing basic training at Fort Lewis, Washington, he shipped from Oakland, California with about 5,000 other soldiers in a convoy of ships across the Pacific Ocean. After 32 days at sea (and sea sick all the time), they arrived in Manila, The Philippines. After being there a few days in a replacement depot, he was assigned to the 155th station hospital on the Island of Morotai in the South Pacific.

In route there on a troop ship with another 5,000 to 6,000 troops, the ship was grounded on a coral reef in the South China Sea. The war was still on and in a short time Jay became aware of "planes flying overhead and lots of ships in the sea about us. In the

morning a ship from behind shot lines to our ship and after about 24-36 hours, we were pulled off the reef to continue on to Leyte, Philippine Island. Gratefully, no enemy attacked while the ship was stranded on the reef!"

From Leyte Jay went by plane to Morota where he served 6-8 months at a station hospital on the Dutch East Indies Island of Morotai. He was present to watch as the Japanese officers landed on the runway there and surrendered their swords to the Australian government officials. Eventually he was transferred to Clark Field, north of Manila where he served as a ward technician in the 248th General Hospital.

After his honorable discharge, Jay, with the Lord's help, completed college and medical school and became a family practice physician. While he is proud of his 45-year medical career, he is equally proud of his military service. Dr. Munsey says, "My service days were a bright spot in my life. Every day I tell myself, 'You did the right thing.'"



Jay Munsey, GSA class of 1942, and his wife **Nadine (Gish) Munsey, '47**, attendee, pose following a special Veteran's Day celebration at the McCall Adventist Church. Photo courtesy of **Dona (Bentz) Fulmore, '54**.

Student Residence Renovated!



Remember the little booklet—Creating Memories—that we sent to you in December 2010 inviting you to help us purchase new lobby furnishings for the dormitory? You responded by sending in over \$14,000. That outpouring of love inspired one successful businessman to ask the question of our Head Dean, “Will that amount permit

you to do everything you need to do to complete the conversion of the Girls’ Dorm into a fully functioning, beautiful Student Residence?”

We pulled together a few people—a builder, an architect, a couple of interior decorators, the dean, and the development director—to analyze the dormitory and to envision how things could be changed to function better and to keep our kids safe and happy. The outcome was this multifaceted renovation plan:

- 1) Put large windows in the Owyhee Room (formerly a conference room) and use that space for a rec room.
- 2) Build a pergola over the back patio to provide shade so that the patio becomes an extension of the lobby.
- 3) In the Dean’s Office, add a built-in storage cabinet and a door that opens into the reception area.
- 4) Build two storage areas at the end of “short hall”—one for the dean and one for the students.
- 5) With the remaining area at the end of “short hall,” create a Lady’s Exercise Room.
- 6) Convert the Luggage Room near the fire escape into a Men’s Exercise Room.
- 7) Divide the lady’s laundry room into two rooms and move the dean’s laundry into his apartment to create space for a new kitchenette that can be used by both guys and gals.

- 8) Replace all the old mattresses with new mattresses that are made especially for dormitory environments—durable and easily cleaned.
- 9) Replace the dilapidated chairs in the students’ rooms with durable, comfortable chairs.
- 10) Replace the glass entry doors and add a second set of glass doors to create a vestibule—to help maintain temperature control in the lobby area.
- 11) Add a set of glass security doors at the entrance to girl’s hall.
- 12) Create three self-contained rooms for the Task Force Deans—including full restroom, built-in storage, etc.
- 13) Replace the bath & shower room metal doors that are rusting out.
- 14) Install a gas log in lobby fireplace (fire code does not allow a wood fire, thus the fireplace had not been used for at least a decade).
- 15) Replace the furniture in the main lobby and also in the two second floor lobbies.
- 16) Add beautiful accessories throughout—mirrors, pictures, lamps, etc.
- 17) Expand the dean’s private quarters so that he can more easily entertain students and guests.



When the furniture arrived, the junior class unloaded the truck and carefully carried each piece into the dormitory



The way it was!

Extreme Makeover!




Creating this vision took months. Beginning in the spring of 2011, the committee got together dozens of times. Finally, by the end of July, we had a clear enough vision that we could share it with our successful businessman friend. He was thrilled and wrote out a check to help make the dream a reality.

It was just four weeks before school was to begin, but we started making the changes. The furniture was ordered, holes were cut in walls where windows or doors would go, the pergola was ordered, etc.

Now, six months later, most of the work is finished. The work that remains will be completed next summer when the dorm is empty. On January 14th the GSA Student Residence "family" opened their doors and welcomed the community to come and see the many changes. About 70 community friends joined in a festive open house celebration.



On behalf of all of us at Gem State Academy, a heartfelt Thanks to everyone who played a part, large or small, in the Student Residence renovation. The Student Residence is now a truly great place for Creating Memories, and we hope and pray that over the next decade hundreds of young people will enjoy living in the beautiful home-like environment that you helped create. We also pray that every young person who lives there will be deeply impacted for good by the friends they make and the activities they engage in here at Gem State Academy. 

Yvonne Iwasa and Jeanette Kattenhorn were the driving force behind the Student Residence Renovation. They volunteered countless hours planning, shopping, painting, and arranging.

Alumni Notes

1940s

Lloyd Baum, '41 attendee, died July 25 in Loma Linda, California. He was a passionate dental instructor and researcher. He made significant contributions including: helping to establish the dental school at Loma Linda University, inventing several dental restorative materials and instruments, and establishing a dental school that bears his name at the University of Montemorelos, Mexico. He is survived by his wife, Alma.

Thelma (Kessinger) Capporeli, '42, died September 4, 2011. She married Carmen J. Capporelli in 1943 and the couple made their home in Boise. They had one child, John. She was a stay-at-home mom and later cleaned homes and worked at Idaho Power. She belonged to the Collister Extension Club and was a lifelong member of the Adventist Church.

1950s

An Anonymous individual from the Class of 1957 recently made a unique donation to Gem State Academy's Worthy Student Fund. This individual made an investment through Edward Jones whereby Tax Free municipal bonds were purchased and Gem State Academy was designated as the beneficiary. The investment will generate annual income in the amount of \$4,750.00. The funds will be distributed through the regular Worthy Student process, and at the death of this alum, the ownership of the investment will transfer to Gem State Academy. Thus, this investment will continue in perpetuity—Long Live Gem State Academy!

Thank you, dear anonymous friend. We appreciate your ingenuity and generosity. May the kindness you've shown GSA and its students come back to bless you!

1960s

Don Drury, '64, and **Doreena (Rickard-Schwartz) Drury, '66**, write from Walla Walla, WA: "Happy New Year! This has been a special year for us. We married in August and have been "living happily ever after" ever since! Here's hoping that this has been a year of good health, happiness, success and blessings for you, and we pray that the coming year brings you continued blessings along with bringing us closer to each other and closer to our Lord's return!"



Elder Walt Meske officiated at our wedding. (Walt Meske served as GSA's principal, 1966-1969 and 1984-1985).

1970s

Nancy (Keto) Walker, '70, died August 19, 2011. In December 1970 she married Joseph Keto, Jr. of Boise. The couple enjoyed 40 years together, despite the fact that she had Multiple Sclerosis for 30 of those years. Joe's work as an RN allowed Nan to live peacefully in their McCall home until his untimely passing in January of 2011. They had three children, two of whom preceded her in death. Nan was a lifelong member of the Seventh-day Adventist church. She loved to sing and often provided music for church, weddings, and other functions. Among her survivors are her mother, **Betty Walker, '47**, her brother, **Rand Walker, '66**, and her sister, **Debbie (Walker) English, '73**.

Eugene J. Wesslen, Driver's Ed Teacher & Maintenance Director, '71-'74, died July 3, 2011 in Grand Terrace, CA. After serving at Gem State Academy, Gene worked at Loma Linda University until retirement.


Connie Downes, '72, died on September 4, 2010 after a very brief illness. Her sister, **Christy (Downes) Cooley, '73**, writes, "The calendar says it's been over

a year, so why does it seem like yesterday that my precious sister passed away?" If former friends and classmates would care to share a memory, it would be deeply appreciated. Write to Christy Cooley, 9619 County Road K, Montpelier, OH 43543.

Donna (Albertsen) Lang, '78, died on December 27, 2011, following a 16-month struggle with brain cancer. Teaching was always her passion and her goal was to teach at the university level, but she put off getting her degree until after she had finished raising her children and her step-children. In 2008 Donna got her BA in Communication and in 2010 her Master's degree. She was headed to teach her very first class as an adjunct teacher at BSU when she stopped at the emergency room because she was feeling dizzy and weak. The diagnosis was a malignant brain tumor. She missed teaching that first semester, but she later

taught at both BSU and the College of Western Idaho, though she had to use a cane to get around. Among her survivors are: a sister, **Linda (Albertsen) Gault, '83**, two sons, **Ben Leake, '05** and **Matthew Leake, '08**; two step-children, **Tyler Lang, '06** and



Bethany Lang, '08. The family established a fund at the BSU Foundation to perpetuate Donna's passion for teaching. Classmates and friends may acknowledge Donna's life by sending a gift to The Donna Jean Lang Memorial Scholarship Fund, Boise State University Foundation, 2225 University Drive, Boise, ID 83706. 

Let's Ride!

The Sunday before Labor Day dawned bright and clear for the first annual Gem State Academy Biker Rally. Headed by Jeff Kluchesky, GSA's 2011-2012 Alumni Association president, this tobacco and alcohol-free event was designed to create new friendships and to help the school raise unrestricted money.


Thirty riders revved their engines as they headed to the first rest stop at Horseshoe Bend. Their destination was Camp Ida-Haven in McCall where they enjoyed a sumptuous lunch. The return trip was down US Hwy 95, through New Meadows and Cambridge. At every rest stop the bikers were

given a Rook card, and at the final stop, a prize was given to the Rook Run winner. When they arrived in Payette, the bikers were delighted to find a delightful spread of tasty hors d'oeuvres, lovingly prepared by Muriel Brenneise, and "doggie bags" so that the bikers could enjoy the refreshments as they rode home.



Cliff Martell, '73

All thirty bikers agreed that the GSA Biker Rally must become an annual event! And the majority said that the Sunday of Labor Day weekend works well. So, bikers, reserve September 2, 2012 for the second annual GSA Biker Rally.

Bikers are encouraged to identify themselves to Linda Klinger so that they can be included in future Biker Rally mailings (lklinger@gemstate.org or 208-459-1627 ext. 158). 





A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's amazing how far off course we can get when we're not watching our steps. Have you ever wondered, "How did I get here?"

Travel back to your time at Gem State Academy when you first opened your eyes to life as an adult. The world was your oyster and the possibilities, endless. The chaos of life had not yet stripped away your clear vision of what a healthy, happy, Christ centered life should be. These and many other pursuits of life are easily diluted or completely forgotten as time slips away. So it is with great importance and urgency that we open our eyes and take an honest look around us.

If we find that our intended path is nowhere to be found, we must re-center our minds and re-focus our hearts on the vision we once had. Are you still making choices in your life that follow Christ's intentions for you? Or is it time to open your eyes and start making some life changes? Either way, what better place to do that than with friends and loved ones at Gem State Academy on Alumni Weekend?

The Alumni Association officers are hoping you will Find Your Way back to Gem State Academy for the March 30-April 1 homecoming where we can renew friendships and begin again to support, encourage, and uplift one another.

Jeff Kluchesky, '95
Alumni Association President

Find your way Alumni weekend

March 30-April 1

**Honor Classes: 1942, 1952, 1962, 1972, 1982, 1987,
1992, 2002, 2012**

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Friday, 12:00 noon | Flag Raising Ceremony by USAF Col. Patrick Francisco, '73 |
| Friday, 7:30 p.m. | Vespers by Class of 1962, speakers: Marjorie (Jones) Brown, '62 and Charles Brown |
| Sabbath, 8:00 a.m. | Prayer Breakfast by Class of 1987, Bert Logan, '87 , organizer |
| Sabbath, 9:30 a.m. | Sabbath School by Class of 1972, speakers: Merlin, '72 & Cheryl (Drake) Knowles, '75 |
| Sabbath, 10:30 a.m. | Roll Call & Awards Ceremony |
| Sabbath, 11:00 a.m. | Church by 1982 & 1992 Classes, Sermon by Kameron DeVasher, Chaplain & Bible Teacher 2000-2007 |
| Sabbath, 1:00 p.m. | Complimentary Luncheon by Class of 2012 |
| Sabbath, 4:00 p.m. | Concert by Belko Brass |
| Saturday, 8:45 p.m. | Girls' Volleyball and Boys Basketball Games organized by Benji Mellish, '01 |
| Sunday, 9:00 a.m. | All-You-Can-Eat Pancake Breakfast & Alumni Association Meeting |

VOLLEYBALL & BASKETBALL

Benji Mellish, '01, is organizing the Saturday night games. If you would like to play, contact Benji at (208) 546-9204; Benjimellish@gmail.com; TWITTER: @binyaminmellish; FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/BenjiMellish.

HONOR CLASS ORGANIZERS

- 1942 Jay Munsey
- 1952 Louie Johnson
- 1962 The alumni office is still looking for a volunteer. Call 208-989-3221 if you can help.
- 1972 Tricia (Cawdery) Mace
- 1982 Lynn (Levis) Maine
- 1987 Kathy (Kohfeld) Bierwagen
- 1992 Jennifer (Hansen) McConnehey
- 2002 The alumni office is still looking for a volunteer. Call 208-989-3221 if you can help.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Free RV Parking –

Electricity, water, and sewer is provided. First come, first served.

guest to take advantage of the discount.

Dorm Rooms

Furnished guest rooms, \$20 per night (only 6 rooms, first come, first served).

Unfurnished dorm rooms, \$10 per night (bring your own linens, towels, etc.).

Call 208-459-1627 ext. 143 to reserve a guest room or unfurnished dorm room.

Fairfield Inn at I-84, Exit

33 – We have reserved 10 rooms at the discounted rate of \$79 each. Any rooms not reserved by March 9, 2012 will be put back into hotel inventory (but you can still get the discount if a room is available). Call 208-467-5888 and identify yourself as a Gem State Academy

Meet the Presenters . . .



VESPERS - Charles and Marjorie (Jones) Brown

Charles Brown is the founder and president of Adventist Reconciliation Services (ARS), a professional service that provides mediation and arbitration services for individuals, "Congregation Conflict Intervention" services for churches, and training in Christian conciliation. Marjorie has also taken the reconciler training offered by the Institute for Christian Conciliation and she serves as office manager and secretary-treasurer of ARS.

Charles and Marjorie will share the story of Marjorie's deliverance from demonic harassment on Friday evening of alumni weekend. It is a story that will convince you that the great controversy is real and that Biblical principles will equip you for the battle.

SABBATH SCHOOL – Merlin and Cheryl (Drake) Knowles

Merlin and Cheryl Knowles have been active in pastoral ministry since 1979 and have been involved with family ministry the past 25 years. Merlin received a BA in Theology from Walla Walla College, a MDiv and a DMin in Family Ministries from Andrews University. Cheryl has a BS in Child and Family Studies. They have been married to each other for 34 years and have two married children and two grandchildren. In 2010 they accepted a call to be president and first lady of the Montana Conference.

The title of Merlin and Cheryl's special feature is: *Jacob, Rachel, Lea & the Cross*. Like it or not, we are all members of a family system and we are all broken. The Bible characters were no different. Come hear what God's amazing grace did for Jacob's messed up family as well as reconnect with His amazing grace for you.

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CHURCH – Kameron DeVasher

Kameron DeVasher believes that by God's grace all people, including youth, are far more capable than we often assume. "Twenty-one-year-olds and 81-year-olds can converse as peers. Young people can think, speak, write, and carry serious responsibilities as much as adults when rightly trained. We need to raise our expectations of them and their expectations of themselves!"

This past December Pastor Kameron spoke to more than 5,000 youth and young adults about the need and promise of Christian character development. The venue was the Generation of Youth for Christ conference in

Houston, Texas. His topic at GSA's homecoming will be: "The Great Object of Life"

After leaving Gem State Academy where his focus was young people, Kameron served as Associate Pastor of the Avon Park, Florida Church where he interacted with many senior citizens. Now he and his wife, Emilie (Wilson) DeVasher, are serving in a rural area of Michigan and he is excited to see what he can learn from yet another group of people. Kameron and Emilie have one child, Henry, who is 18 months old.

CONCERT – Belko Brass

In the mid-1970s Ivan Belko and his brother began performing with Ed Wagner, an accomplished pianist. Their style of blending the trumpet-trombone-keyboard was unique and they became known as Belko Brass.

Trumpeter Mark Johnson joined the group in 1990. Then when Ivan's brother died in 2002, it seemed the group was destined to disband. But the following year Mark's father, Louie Johnson, (GSA's class of 1952) joined Belko Brass enabling the group to continue sharing their inspired hymn arrangements.

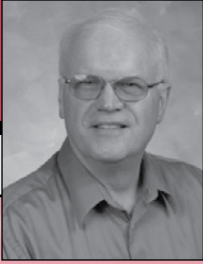
Belko Brass has performed in Europe, Siberia, Asia and Africa, as well as across North America. Their hymn arrangements cover a wide variety of styles from high energy to meditative. The Gem State Academy handbell choir, Soundwave, will do the opener at this fine musical performance.



Caption: Ed Wagner, Louie Johnson, Mark Johnson, Ivan Belko

USAF Col. Patrick Francisco, '73, is helping Gem State Academy create a Veterans of the Academy association. He will lead a Flag Raising Ceremony which will be followed by an All-American-Lunch on Friday of Alumni Weekend. The event will begin at 12:00 noon on March 30 and all Veterans of the Academy and supporters of Veterans are invited.

Veterans who wish to join the Veterans of the Academy association are encouraged to identify themselves by contacting Linda Klinger and letting her know which branch you served in and your years of service (lklinger@gemstate.org or 208-459-1627 ext. 158).



GSA FINANCIAL REPORT

Winter 2011 – 2012

Each year Gem State Academy's financial records are audited for accuracy, internal controls and policy compliance. For the 10th consecutive year, GSAA has received an "unqualified opinion" of its financial statement. This opinion is the highest level opinion given by auditing firms. You can be assured when you pay tuition or make a donation that your money is used for its intended purpose.

ENROLLMENT:

Opening enrollment September 5, 2011	95
Current enrollment January 18, 2012	98
Ending enrollment May 2011	105

2011-2012 STUDENT AID:

Number of students receiving financial assistance	51
Average amount per student	\$4,854

COST OF SCHOOL OPERATIONS:

Idaho Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, governed by its constituents, owns and operates Gem State Adventist Academy. It requires significant resources to operate a boarding school, but it is an investment in our children's future.

What is the investment amount? Our current operating budget is balanced at \$2,207,116. Our average daily cost over the last 8 years is \$5,719. Tuition, room and board, generally funded by parents and worthy student donations, covers about 60% of the total budget or \$1,324,270. The Idaho and North Pacific Union Conferences subsidize the academy at approximately \$527,402 or about 24%. The amount needed to complete the budget is about \$358,444 or about 16%. It is because of the generous support of alumni and friends that we are able to continue to provide quality Christian education at GSAA. God blesses when we partner together and trust in Him. Thank You.

Stephen Bergherm
VP Finance

Gem State Academy now accepts donations online at gemstate.org

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His Teaching
His Compassion
His Intellectual Acuity
His Creativity
His Leadership
His Example
His Sacrifice
His Grace

Gem State Academy
16115 Montana Avenue
Caldwell, ID 83607-8365
www.gemstate.org

coming**UP**

Jan 28	Alumni & Friends Reunion in College Place, WA
Feb 3, 4	Senior Recognition
Feb 9–11	WWU Friendship Tournament
Feb 18	Alumni & Friends Reunion in Spokane, WA
Feb 19	Dinner Concert
Mar 14–26	Mission Trip to Peru
Mar 30–Apr 1	Alumni Weekend
Apr 15-16	Academy Days
May 11	Art Show & Spring Concert
June 1-3	Graduation Weekend

GEM STATE ACADEMY is an accredited day and boarding high school, owned and operated by the Seventh-day Adventist church. Admission is non-discriminatory for race, color, ethnic background, or religious belief. For more information, call 208.459.1627.