

## IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD

Submitted by Millie Matherne

Each episode of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, the children's educational TV series, began the same way: Mister Rogers is coming home, singing his theme song "Won't You Be My Neighbor?", and changing into sneakers and a zippered cardigan sweater. How well do you know your neighbors? Do they play any role in your life or in your social network? Do you know more than their names – where they moved from, what they did for a living, what they like to do for fun? Do you simply nod, wave, or smile when they pass by? Do you chat with them in the driveway or at the mailbox? Do you invite them over or vacation together?

In an effort to learn a little more about the folks in the Greens, I surveyed residents and asked them to reveal something about themselves by completing a statement. Here are their responses to WHAT MY NEIGHBORS MIGHT BE SURPRISED TO LEARN ABOUT ME IS \_\_\_\_.

- Greg and I, both teachers in Jefferson Parish, were on strike for six weeks in 1979 and actually walked the picket lines.--Peggy Slavich

- I can cook!—Janis Dugas Note: As proof according to rumor, Janis has indeed cooked three times in the last year.

- I was an extra on the TV show *Santa Barbara* back in 1991--Beverly Zarlengo

- I once had a surprise meeting in a Washington, DC hotel elevator with a young Louisiana state legislator from Houma. Noticing Louisiana addresses on our name tags, he asked, "Dr. Harms, do you know me?" I replied, "Why, do you know my children?" because he looked about the age of my kids. The young man answered, "I am your state representative." Oops, I apologized profusely and could not use senior moment as an excuse, that time.--Kathleen Harms Note: Kathy still doesn't remember his name!

- I have a small art business – Rosebud Artworks – with hand painted cards, wall hangings, birdhouses, and gifts for the home.--Leigh McGrew

- my dream is to be a 610 Stomper, the all-male dance group in New Orleans, since the Chippendales turned me down.--Mark Goetzl Note: Chippendales, Mark? Did you dream that part, too?

- I was lucky to graduate from the Catholic school I attended. A bunch of seniors, myself included, got the brilliant idea to lock a nun out of the classroom rather than take a test. We escaped out a window and stayed gone until the dismissal bell, thinking our parents wouldn't find out. The principal was out of town, so you can imagine what \_ \_ \_ \_ broke lose when she returned. And, of

course, by the time we got home that afternoon, we were met with very unhappy parents. Small town news always seems to make it home before you do. OUCH!--Gloria Callais

- I had five aunts on my dad's side of the family: Mary Elizabeth, Mary Agnes, Mary Frances, Mary Ann. The other was Rose Mary, so I guess my grandparents had to get Mary in there somewhere. Oddly enough, Rose Mary was the one who became a Catholic nun.--Linda Guerin Note: Linda is happy all the aunts had nicknames.

- I will always remember one summer night at Pontchartrain Beach when I was 12. There was Michael Landon, aka Little Joe Cartwright, standing on stage in his *Bonanza* outfit of green jacket, brown pants, guns on hips, hat, and cowboy boots. I was mesmerized but managed to get a black and white photo he was handing out. I still have it today in my scrapbook. What a "dreamboat"!!!--Cynthia Hahn Note: Ronnie, are you just a wee bit jealous?

- I was on the national TV show *Happening* '68. Our band traveled to Hollywood in 1968 to perform on the ABC network rock and roll variety show that showcased two bands vying for a chance to move forward and eventually win the competition. We didn't advance but spent two nights on the famous Sunset Strip. For a short time, this group of 16- and 17-year-old guys from Reserve, LA, were on top of the world.--Richard Oubre Note: When asked if he had his long hippie hair then, Derf replied, "No, we were still in high school." The long hair came later.

- recuperating from emergency surgery at home in the early 70s, I ventured outside to return a dish to a neighbor and noted the house in between us had smoke pouring from the windows. I went inside and discovered one of the children's bedrooms on fire. I pounded on the other bedroom door to wake a sleeping mother, who had worked all night. Incredibly, her first thought was "I need to get my robe!" --Mona Hull

- I want to jump out of a perfectly good plane. --Betty Marks

- in 1989 I was in Norfolk, VA, for my squadron's carrier quals and had the opportunity to board three Russian war vessels visiting the U.S. for the first time since WWII. By meeting the Public Affairs Officer in charge, I was able to "jump the line" ahead of thousands waiting their turn. As I stood on the pier after my visit, a group of Russian sailors dressed in black pants, old gold shirts, and white hats passed by. Handpicked for the visit, the Russians were multi-lingual to impress us Americans, as I overheard one sailor say in English, "It sure is nice that the President of the United States invited us to see his gardens." Bewildered by the comment, a fellow officer and I asked the PAO why were so many busses waiting nearby. She answered, "We're taking the Russian sailors to Busch Gardens." Well, needless to say, I just about fell down in hysteria.--Danny LaFrance

●I admit that I wasn't the best math student, so Daddy gifted my Catholic nun teacher at Mt. Carmel in Thibodaux with a four-slice toaster. No surprise, I passed 7<sup>th</sup> grade math.--Virginia Guidry    Note: The four-slicer may have sealed the deal, V!

●I taught yoga and art lessons. I also taught and competed in ballroom dancing, with the waltz and Latin American dances my favorites. As a single mom, I sewed most of the clothes for myself and my daughters. I even made Civic War reenactment outfits for my son-in-law, who's a history teacher.--Benita Swanson

●I once turned down a private invitation to a cocktail party with the President of the United States to go to the 7th game of the World Series in St Louis.--Fred Capdevielle    Note: Fred is not sure if the POTUS was Richard Nixon or Gerald Ford but definitely knows the Cardinals won!

● I love to dance, play pool, sing a little, and cook. I just moved to the Greens and can't wait to meet everyone!--Lydia Stanfield

Social connection at the neighborhood level has been linked to good mental health and physical well-being. Most Greens residents would probably agree that the friendly, caring neighbors are what make living in the 55+ community extra special. This may be especially true for those who connect socially and interact regularly at potlucks, wine nights, card games, billiards, water aerobics, prayer group, and other organized activities. So, if you have little or no interaction with the people who live nearby, you just might be missing out. In the words of Mister Rogers:

It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood,  
A beautiful day for a neighbor,  
Would you be mine?  
Could you be mine?  
Won't you be my neighbor?