

USN

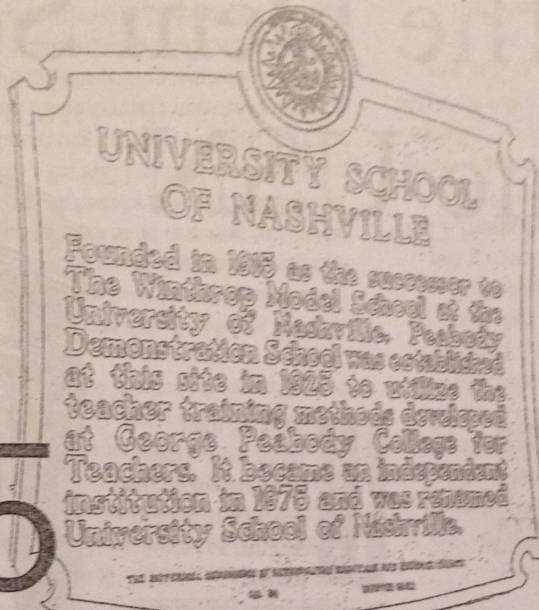


UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF
NASHVILLE

•
Summer 2000

A HOUSE FOR
USN'S DIRECTOR

MUSEUM DAY



1915

1974

75

76

**25 Years of USN:
The Transition**

1999

2000

Story Forum

How the Dem School Became USN

by Connie Culpepper, Editor

August 29, 1974

Peabody College announces that after May, 1975 it will no longer operate the Demonstration School.

September 2, 1974

A group of parents meets at the home of Bernard and Betty Werthan to discuss saving the school.

September 4, 1974

The PTA holds a special meeting in Vanderbilt's Neely Auditorium to discuss the possibility of continuing PDS as an independent school. With an estimated 1,000 people present, the Transition Committee is formed.

September 21, 1974

Transition Committee meets: Chairperson is Bernard Werthan, Jr., and members present are Jim Hays, Peggy Hays, Don Chappell, Ann Teaff, Gean Morgan, Ed Pratt, Heber Rogers, Bill Freeman, Martha Tanner, Harold Maier, Thelma Felton, Suzie Morris, and Harold Jordan.

October 5, 1974

5 names, suggested by students, are approved by the Transition Committee to be voted on by students: University Center School, Winthrop School, Nashville University Center School, University School of Nashville, Nashville Community School.

October 12, 1974

Student Martha Tanner reports that the 2 names receiving the most votes are University School of Nashville, 328 votes; Winthrop, 184 votes. Ann Teaff moves that University School of Nashville be adopted as the name of the new school.
(photo by Richard Lorch)



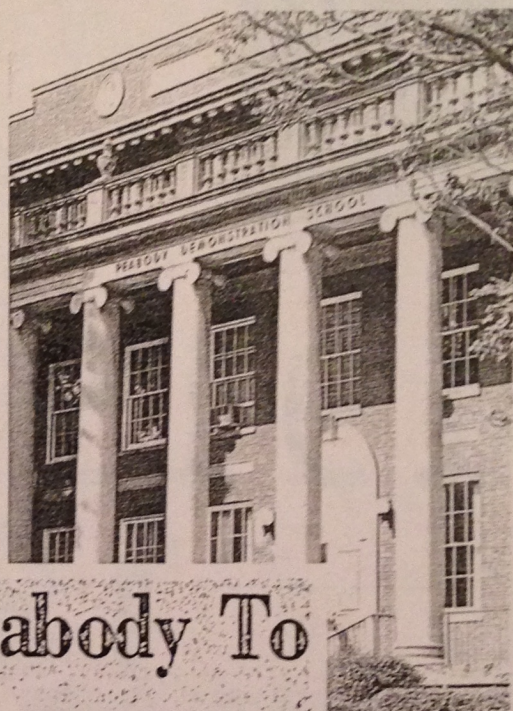
Unfolding their Tennesseans over morning coffee that Friday morning in August, 1974, Peabody

Demonstration School parents read that their children's school would close, news most of them had heard only the day before when they took their children to PDS to register for the beginning of school.

"Peabody College adopted a sweeping and visionary reorganization yesterday to make the school primarily a teacher education institution, including cutting or trimming peripheral programs and termination of Peabody Demonstration School," wrote Frank Sutherland, Education News Editor.

It's possible that some of those parents merely sighed in resignation and took a bite of the bacon and eggs most people had for breakfast in those days.

But it's not likely. By the following Monday afternoon, a group of parents, teachers, and students was gathered



Peabody To Go On With New Name

around the dining room table at Bernard and Betty Werthan's house, ready to "form a Transition

Committee which would bring about the end result that there would continue to be a school operated along the same lines as PDS had operated for 56 years, retaining the same philosophy and relaxed atmosphere in which children could study and learn." Bernard Werthan, Jr., whose four children attended PDS, was named Chairman of the Transition Committee.

By Wednesday evening, nearly a thousand parents, teachers, students, and "interested citizens" were crowding into Vanderbilt's Neely Auditorium to

discuss how to save PDS. This historic meeting began with brief remarks from PTA President Peggy Hays and from Bernard Werthan. Among the half dozen who spoke about the importance of continuing the school were sophomore Martha Tanner and senior Patti Watkins. Then Laura Knox, educator, author, and mother of two PDS students and of a recent graduate, addressed the crowd. Her first words could have been heard as a warning:

"If we set for ourselves the task of continuing PDS as an independent school, it occurs to me that we are discussing an undertaking of enormous proportions, one requiring the substantial and sustained efforts of every person in this auditorium." Then Mrs. Knox added, prophetically, "Though I am not denying the complexity of the job ahead, I am suggesting that we have been given an unparalleled opportunity to create a school which will continue and build upon the strengths of the Dem School, as it is now organized, but which can also embrace ideas, methods, and philosophies that are even more creative and fulfilling for faculty and students than currently exist."

That night the assembled crowd voted unanimously to empower a Transition Committee to begin the work needed. Everyone filed out of Neely Auditorium clutching a list of committees. "I would be willing to work on the following

committee(s) to bring about the transition of PDS to a private school: Finance Committee, Facilities Committee, Community Relations, Public Relations, Correspondence, Personnel, Mission and Purpose, Accreditation Committee, Legal

"...we are discussing an undertaking of enormous proportions, one requiring the substantial and sustained efforts of every person in this auditorium."

Committee, Other (you name it)."

They were to put a check mark by their choices and write their name and phone number at the bottom.

Transforming PDS into USN proved to be, as Laura Knox predicted, an enormous undertaking. Recently she

recalled that both committees on which she served met every week for a year. "It was a huge commitment of time, but nobody ever complained. It was a wonderful experience, getting to know people I wouldn't know otherwise; a nurturing group of people absolutely dedicated to saving the school. We were all optimistic, with so much enthusiasm, so much recognition of the value of the school."

Though anyone who has served on a committee doubtless shudders at the thought of putting so much time into what often proves to be an exercise in frustration, those who worked on the transition from PDS to USN tell a different story. Ann Teaff, then a green middle school teacher, now Harpeth Hall's Head of School, says that participating in the creation of a school was an invaluable opportunity, one that has continued to inform her ideas about education. Heber Rogers, a PDS administrator then and later USN's acting head, speaks of the "excitement and awesome responsibility of being part of shaping the future of the new independent school."

The immediate problem facing the Transition Committee was finding a home for the school. Though Peabody College would lease the current building

November 16, 1974

Transition Committee members are invited to stay after the meeting's adjournment to be interviewed by local television news reporter Oprah Winfrey, who is following the PDS story.

April 29, 1975

The first officers of University School of Nashville's "Board of Directors" are elected: James Hays, President; Bernard Werthan, Jr., Vice-President; Alfred Galloway, Treasurer; Georgette Hardman, Secretary.

December 8, 1975

Coach Tony Springman discusses with the Board the possibility of fielding a football team at USN, estimating that outfitting a team would cost \$80 per player.

September, 1976

720 students enroll at USN in its first year of existence. "The more things change" department: "The concerns of parents and students about the lunch room are being considered and handled by the administration. The congestion in the parking lot at dismissal time is being handled by the administration." (from the minutes of the September 7, 1976 Board of Directors meeting)

October 30, 1976

USN purchases its property from Peabody College.

January 18, 1977

Harold Snedcof is named USN's first Headmaster.

March, 1977

The first eighth grade trip to Washington, D.C. takes place during spring break.

September, 1977

Janet Carney adds college counseling to her other duties, thus beginning the program that she continues to direct.



February 14, 1978

The Board agrees not to accept the offer to lease part of USN's property for a Popeye's Famous Fried Chicken outlet.

April 18, 1978

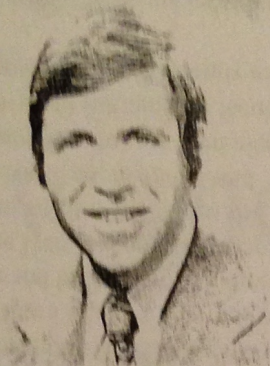
The Board announces the resignation of Harold Snedcof.

September 19, 1978

USN is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

April 17, 1979

The Search Committee recommends that Harvey Spierling be offered the position of Director of USN.



May, 1979

Nobel laureate Stanford Moore '31 is named the first PDS/USN Distinguished Alumnus.



September 25, 1979

The Board approves an after-school program for students in kindergarten through second grade.

February, 1979

Fred Humphries and Ronnie Lawson lead the men's basketball team to the region championship.

February 29, 1980

The Board adopts a statement of nondiscrimination and decides to institute a program of computer study at USN.

April 29, 1980

The Board decides to convert the tennis court property into commercial parking.

March 24, 1981

Math teacher Robert Kammerud is recognized for his many contributions to PDS/USN and named Professor Emeritus.

December, 1981

"Academic Creative Theater," the High School drama group, presents *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the lost Shakespearean play to be performed at USN until *Twelfth Night* in February, 2000.

to USN for \$80,000 in 1975-76, what of the future? Faded, mimeographed minutes of a September, 1974 Transition Committee meeting contain the following list, under "Facilities":

- Little Sisters of the Poor
- Metro-Center
- Vanderbilt Urban Renewal Center
- Jewish Community Center
- Other options being explored.

Imagine the stories behind each of those laconic entries, especially "other options."

And imagine the stories behind all the other problems encountered in founding a school, even one following a predecessor. Would students and faculty return? Ann Teaff surveyed teachers and Georgette Hardman called parents. How would they feed these students, who

might or might not enroll? A subcommittee began to study catering options. What would this new school call itself? From the minutes: *The names submitted [by students] left much to be desired. Need to go back to the students for additional suggestions. Need to select name within next few weeks. Need to go back to the College to clarify use of "Peabody."* Curriculum committees considered what to teach. (Note from minutes: *Study alternatives to keep curriculum within prescribed cost levels.*)

As you would guess, money was the biggest question of all. From those same minutes: *Needs: study to be made of ways and means to reduce the cost (\$75,000) for maintenance, housekeeping, water, electricity, etc.*

SPECIAL BULLETIN

The President of the Demonstration School P. T. A. has formed the nucleus of a Transition Committee to gather basic information and be prepared to present some positive thoughts to the meeting of the entire membership of the P.T.A. on Wednesday, September 4th at 7:00 p.m.

at

Neely Auditorium, Vanderbilt.

It was reported in the Sunday Nashville Tennessean that the Peabody College Trustees "were willing to negotiate contractual arrangements with any group to continue operation of the School under another name", and it is hoped that at the Wednesday meeting a vote of confidence toward formation of such a group might be accomplished.

ALL PATRONS AND FRIENDS OF THE
DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL ARE URGED TO ATTEND.

NEELY AUDITORIUM - 7:00 P.M.

WEDNESDAY -9-4-74

This flyer drew 1,000 PDS parents and students to the meeting.

School To Buy Its Building, Land

Peabody College will sell the building and property housing the University School of Nashville to the school next week for \$1.5 million.

University School board member Ronald Addlestone confirmed the sale this morning and said final arrangements on the sale would take place Thursday.

The University School took over running what was called the Peabody Demonstration School two years ago when the college announced it was no longer planning to administer it.

Addlestone said the board has been paying Peabody rent for using the property but that a fund raising drive has been under way for two years to either build a new school or purchase it from Peabody.

The board is made up of parent's from the school's approximately 720 students, Addlestone said.

The school, which enrolls students from kindergarten through high school, is located on the corner of 21st and Edgehill avenues.

Included in the purchase agree-

ment will be the school's main building, an annex and about seven acres of land, Addlestone said.

Addlestone said the school will continue with the same philosophy and one reason the buildings were purchased from Peabody is that the parents wanted it to remain in the university area.

He also said the school hopes to hire a new headmaster shortly after Jan. 1.

The school's current headmaster, Dr. L. Edward Pratt, announced earlier this year his intentions to resign.

The Tennessean announces good news in October, 1976.

Betty Werthan recalls that her husband, Bernard Werthan, Jr. and Suzie Morris made the first solicitation calls to other parents. "Once we got started and saw that it wasn't an insurmountable amount of money and that parents were forthcoming, we were confident that we would succeed." Indeed, as Bernard Werthan explains, since student, faculty, and parent involvement was part of PDS tradition, it was expected that many people would participate in many ways in the new school's founding. Heber Rogers says that he knew early on "that parents were strongly supportive of the survival of the school—that hit me between the eyes very quickly."

Probably only the Werthans themselves would downplay their role in helping PDS become USN. Laura Knox's most vivid recollection of her year on the Transition Committee is working with its chairman, Bernard Werthan. "In those meetings, every Saturday morning for a year, we never took a vote." She explains that, although of course it took much more time to achieve consensus, everyone left the meetings with a sense of accomplishment and of having been listened to. As chairman, she says, Bernard Werthan "showed a great deal of compassion and a great deal of wisdom."

The Werthans' interest in the Demonstration School began when Betty Werthan was studying social work at Peabody College. Passing the nursery school one day, she thought how pleasant it would be to have her

little girl Betsy go to school on that pretty campus. By the time PDS was to close, when all four of the children were there, it was hard to imagine their life without it. The phone call she received from her late father-in-law Bernard Werthan, Sr., a trustee of Peabody College, remains firmly etched in her memory today. Though the bad news that the Board of Trustees had just voted to close the Demonstration School was a blow, the Werthans never considered just accepting the decision and finding new schools for their children. Within days that group of committed parents was gathered at their dining room table, and the long struggle to save PDS had begun.

Why would busy people like the Werthans and other PDS parents give so much time to a cause? Laura Knox contrasts her daughter Elizabeth's unhappy 8th grade year at another school, when she sometimes flatly refused to go to school, with her 9th grade year at PDS, when every morning she stood in the kitchen doorway tapping her foot in her impatience to get to class. Laura Knox says of PDS/USN that she always "loved the interaction between students and teachers. The teachers took such an interest in the students. Elizabeth's first year at PDS, Mr. Offutt and Mrs. Metzger were particularly kind to her. Without that relationship, teaching becomes a mere performance."

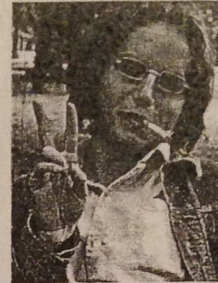
November, 1982

The Lower School holds its first Grandparents' Day.

Fall, 1983

After two high school students are cited by Metro police for smoking on "The Wall" on Edgehill Avenue, USN prohibits student smoking there, ending a long tradition.

(photo by Richard Lorch)



April 28, 1984

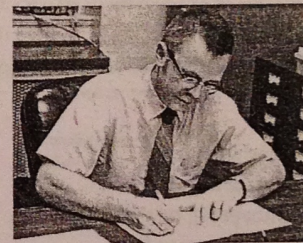
The USN Auxiliary, forerunner to the USNA, makes its fund-raising auction part of the party held the night before the Country Fair, thus creating the first USNA Dinner Auction.

February, 1983

David Brown, Ricky Ewing, Eric Rosen, and Tony Werthan lead the men's basketball team to a 26-7 record, a top 10 state ranking, and a district championship tie.

May 22, 1984

The Board recognizes Heber Rogers for his 25 years of service to PDS/USN.



September, 1984

The kindergarten expands to four sections.

March, 1986

For the first time, the High School band performs at Disney World.

April, 1988

Lower School music teacher Doni Princehorn directs the first fourth grade operetta.

September 24, 1989

The Sperling Center opens.

January, 1990

Harvey Sperling resigns after accepting the position of Head of University School of Milwaukee.

February, 1990

For the second straight year, the women's basketball team wins the district championship, with sophomore Jenny Boucek on her way to being the only woman in the elite USN basketball 2,000 point club.

January, 1991

Edward R. Costello is named USN's Director, effective July 1.
(photo by Bob Schatz)



March, 1992

Joel Gordon, Raymond Zimmerman, and Bernard Werthan are named lifetime honorary members of the Board of Trustees.

November, 1992

Suzie Morris and Betty Werthan are named lifetime honorary members of the Board of Trustees.

March, 1992

Coach Jeff Goold fields the first USN lacrosse team.



March, 1993

The USN community builds a playground.



November, 1993

USN wins the first of four consecutive state volleyball championships.

May, 1994

The Women's tennis team, led by Kate Burson, Leslie Marnett, Kate Moody, Ellen Thomas, and Nicole White, wins the state championship after compiling a record of 17-0.

March, 1995

The Board votes to air-condition the main building.

Spring, 1995

Garret Westlake's and Dan Hodges' eighth grade "Change Project" results in the formation of USN's new Ultimate Frisbee team, "Brutal Grassburn."

November, 1995

In USN's third consecutive state volleyball championship, Melissa Irvin is named state MVP.

This unique student/teacher relationship, the magnet that drew students to school every day, is what those PDS parents were seeking to preserve when they devoted a year of their lives to saving their children's school. Other changes were inevitable.

Bernard Werthan recently said, "Within a short time after the school was formed, it became apparent that it would be a different kind of school from PDS.

While parents liked the ambiance, it was perhaps too relaxed. Parents wanted more rigor, more Merit scholars, better SAT scores."

As Laura Knox promised in 1974, committed parents, faculty and students could not only save PDS, they could improve on it. The new school began immediately to define itself and evolve as an independent school governed by a Board of Trustees.

Worries about adequate enrollment were soon replaced by the need for more space. Harvey Sperling, named USN's Director in 1979, would lead the school throughout the 80's as it moved into the first rank of independent

"...education ought to be not only academically stimulating and challenging but it should also be one of the most exciting aspects of a person's life."

schools in Tennessee. Two sentences in the 1974 "Statement of Principle" point to the chief ways the new school would enlarge upon its PDS heritage: "students are regarded as individuals...who are encouraged and expected

to exercise an increasingly large measure of initiative and self-discipline" and "students...represent the varied racial and religious composition of the [Metropolitan Nashville] area." Harvey Sperling's pithy phrase for USN was "academic excellence in a pluralistic setting."

By 1984 USN's success was beginning to seem certain. That year, inspired by George Orwell to attempt to predict the future, the *Volunteer* staff asked 3rd and 4th graders what USN would be like in the impossibly-distant-sounding year 2000. Some of their predictions remain unfulfilled: "Maybe there won't be any hook-ups, just spaceships to take


us to school," said Brian Lapidus; Katie Bush said, "Ricky Ewing will be the basketball coach." (Ricky was the basketball star who had graduated from USN the year before.) Lisa Tanley predicted, "In the year 2000, University



PDS students in 1974.

School will have an elevator." Of course, that elevator is just one of the physical improvements that in 1984 seemed as far away as a spaceship. Consider air-conditioning, new science and computer labs, excellent and ample playing fields, comfortable classrooms, the Sperling Center, the West Wing, the Gordon Wing, all dreams that became reality because of the efforts and generosity of many. When the Transition Committee finished their work, others stepped in. Of course we think first of Harvey Sperling and Ed Costello, each of whom devoted a decade, more or less, to leading USN. Consider as well all the other administrators, the Board members, the parents giving countless volunteer hours, and the students, from the youngest kindergarten child acquiring a lifelong love of learning to the senior looking forward to graduation and continuing her education at the college she so carefully chose. And, most of all, think of the teachers. Without their love of learning, of teaching, and of their students, USN would be a mere shadow of PDS.

For Hugh Gaston's 1984 vision of USN in 2000 has proven the most prescient: "They will have more students and good teachers like they have now." The relationship shared by these "students and good teachers" is what makes USN 2000, despite all its changes, recognizably a true descendant of PDS 1975. The Transition Committee and all who have followed them have given Nashville a school that lives up to the wish expressed by Laura Knox that night in Neely Auditorium:

"I believe in very few 'oughts,' very few 'shoulds' in this life, but I do wholeheartedly believe that education ought to be not only academically stimulating and challenging but that it should also be one of the most exciting aspects of a person's life." 

We received this letter in response to the fall Magazine's look at the PDS/USN transition:

Your article on "PDS Is Now US" made me remember the day the faculty was told the school was closing. Janet [Carney Schneider] and I were brand new teachers, having just been hired that summer by Dean Pratt, my salary was to be \$7,000. It was my first (and subsequently only) teaching job, and it was August, 1974, and about to begin. Then at our first faculty meeting Dean Pratt announced we wouldn't have a job the next year. News about the closing had evidently leaked out because when we left the meeting Channel 5 was there to cover the story. None other than Oprah Winfrey, a reporter with the station in those days, came up to me and asked for my reactions. I told her I had just been fired before even teaching a class.

Over the next year, I remember countless meetings with parents, who truly did keep the school from closing permanently. Mrs. Knox, Leah's mother, is the parent who stands out most in my mind, though I know it only happened as the result of the efforts of many. I can't remember when exactly during that year the faculty realized we would have jobs for at least one more year or if we were even given contracts. I do remember that because we had been terminated by Peabody, we were able to collect unemployment that summer. Heber Rogers, who served as acting headmaster, kept the school running and did whatever it took to keep the doors open. I've always admired Heber for his resiliency and loyalty.

Claudia [Thompson] Hazelwood
Director of Development
Owen Graduate School of
Management
Vanderbilt University

June, 1996

The "gray building" at the corner of 19th and



Edgehill is demolished so that construction of the East Wing can begin.

September, 1996

Henry Foster is named lifetime honorary Trustee.

November, 1996

Kendra Nye is tournament MVP as USN wins its fourth straight volleyball state championship.

May, 1997

Mazi Abdolrasulnia is the fastest miler in Tennessee, with a school-record time of 4:20.1.

August, 1997

The East Wing opens, providing a home to the Middle School and science and computer labs for the High School and bearing the name "Gordon Wing" thanks to the generosity of Bernice and Joel Gordon.

October, 1997

USN acquires 80 acres of land on the Cumberland River to be developed as athletic fields and a campus for science and outdoor education.

September, 1998

When school opens, grades one through four have four sections each, with fewer students in each. The Drum Corps is formed.

January 27, 1999

Ed Costello resigns to become Head of Durham Academy in North Carolina.

February, 1999

Wil Howard-Downs is named Tennessee's "Mr. Basketball" for the second year and becomes USN's all time leading scorer, breaking Fred Humphries' 1979 record. The basketball team reaches the state semi-finals.

May, 1999

"Brutal Grassburn," USN's men's Ultimate Frisbee



team, wins the Junior National Championship in Philadelphia.

July, 1999

Dr. Jean Gray Litterer begins her one-year term as Interim Director.

September 7, 1999

The first official athletic contest takes place at the River Campus: women's soccer, USN vs. Northwest.

November 24, 1999

Vince Durnan is appointed Director of USN, beginning July 1, 2000.