

THE SAGA OF THE JOLLY GREEN GIANT

An historical account 1964-2006

By Chuck Counts, GW Class of 1965 Historian

Based on information from the pages of The Surveyor, the school newspaper, the Jolly Green Giant appeared during the fall of 1964. In the November 13, 1964 issue, in an exclusive column, the Surveyor announced that during an all school assembly, the student body was given the option of choosing a patriot or a Green Giant for the school mascot. The Giant won out 1350 to 950. The Giant option also included the addition of a school flag and the Alma Mater, both chosen later in the school year.

Although the association of the Jolly Green Giant and the class of 65 was short, there were many shared adventures during this brief period of time. The Giant's large stature and the strains of "The Jolly Green Giant" song by the Kingsmen made him a hit at many school functions. (Although no evidence has surfaced showing that the Jolly Green Giant song hit the air waves before the fall of 1964, in my perfect world, the Giant and the song arrived together.)

The Giant's stature also made him the target of our "rivals" and even fellow Patriots. The most infamous adventure took place during the night of Sunday January 27, 1965. Sometime during the night, under cover of darkness, the Giant, aided by a group of students, ascended the West wall of the auditorium, leaving a trail of foot prints marking his "path". On Monday morning, much to the delight of the returning student body, the Jolly Green Giant stood on top of the auditorium, greeting the returning students and faculty. The administration took a dim view of the whole affair, and the students involved in the adventure received a harsh penalty for their actions. (See Matt Wells' account of this episode elsewhere on this web site.) As luck would have it, the Giant's student "pals" got the last laugh, because the foot prints became the inspiration for a long enduring symbol of George Washington and can be seen at school, even today.

As time passed, the popularity of the Giant as a mascot seemed to wane. By the 1980's, the Patriot had supplanted the Giant as the school mascot, and the not so Jolly Green Giant was rarely seen. In this case, Dr. Holland got the last laugh. The JGG, showing his age, was relegated to numerous storage spaces around the school.

During 1995, 30 years after the Jolly Green Giant's most famous adventure, a group of students decided to recreate the event. Once again, the Giant stood "feet above the rest". This time, the students fared well, but the Giant was further damaged in a rough descent. For almost another decade, the Giant resided in a storeroom in the student council classroom. About 40 years after his arrival, the Jolly Green Giant finally left George Washington in a "Jolly Green Dumpster". We hope he is looking down on us from that Valley in the sky. HO HO HO!!

EPILOGUE

A clone of the Jolly Green Giant has been lovingly restored by Sandee Ely and Janice Lane. He is now under the care of the Class of 65 and makes appearances at various functions.

THANKS

Truly Callaway made available her bound volume of the Surveyors published from 1962-1965. Amanda Schmidt, the current Surveyor faculty advisor made the Surveyor archives (sadly incomplete) available. Amanda, a GW graduate from the IB program(class of 1995) and the current IB counselor, reminded me of the 1995 incident. Gerry Wennberg provided information concerning the Jolly Green Giant song. Any additional information would be much welcomed and appreciated!

FYI

The famous foot prints on the auditorium wall were not the first time a foot was associated with GW. A new sports column titled "Athlete's Feat" appeared in the January 17, 1963 Surveyor. In the February 21, 1963 edition of the Surveyor, Andee Samelson(class of 64), the Surveyor art editor, added feet to the column header. The column last appeared in May of that year. Although I believe that these feet were not the inspiration for the "famous" GW symbol, it is certainly interesting.