



The Neighborhood Newsletter

Volume 11 Number 2

The Brrrrrrrrr Issue, February, 2004



ROVING REPORTERS

By Jessie Brown and Ben Kuhn (*Jason Street*)

With this column, we launch what we hope will be a new feature, designed to get more neighborhood voices into the Newsletter. Many thanks to Jessie and Ben for starting us off, and for collecting responses from many diverse neighbors, especially from neighborhood youth.

To inaugurate this new column, we asked neighbors the question "If you ruled the neighborhood, what would you do?"

"Nothing." Adam Long, age 10, Pleasant View Rd.

"Reopen the Parmenter as a neighborhood school!" Laura Bergan, Lombard Terrace.

"I'd make it okay to cut through people's yards. And I'd encourage people to keep chickens, and livestock. We need more horses and ponies in the neighborhood." Carol Band, Bartlett Ave.

"Give kids more gym time!" Trevor Griesman, age 10, Jason St.

"Bring back art teachers in the elementary schools." Ben Kuhn, almost 11, Jason St.

"I would organize humongous snowball fights in the winter, and a snowperson and snow angel festival.

Also, I'd direct traffic on the Jason speedway." Wilbur Kim, Irving St.

"I would somehow stop traffic, certain days of the week or month, for a certain number of hours, close whole neighborhoods to cars, and make it a rule that all children had to be outdoors, hanging out in the streets." Charlotte Milan, Bellevue Rd.

"Let dogs roam free." Aden Evens, Brantwood Rd.

"I'd have the dogs be able to run around, and no cars." Alex Long, age 12, Pleasant View Rd.

"Just horse drawn carriages." Patricia Watson, Addison St.

"Have the kids read more instead of watching TV." Delia Bonugli, Bartlett Ave.

"I'd make a ski hill in the middle of town, with rentable sleds and tubes, so we'd have a place to go only three blocks away!" Andrew Pereli, Pleasant St.

"I'd make kids be allowed to vote, and tell the adults what to do except when they grew up and had kids of their own, they'd still be in charge. Also, I'd make it so kids don't have to eat their vegetables, except carrots. They have to eat at least five carrots every night." Amanda Leone, age 9, Bartlett Ave.

"I would prohibit all through traffic on Route 60, and turn Menotomy Rocks Park into a buffalo habitat." Rick Wells, Devereaux St.

...Is there a question you would like our Roving Reporters to ask next time? Let us know.

OPPORTUNITY AWAITS...

Let's get right down to it. We're hoping to get more of you involved in helping to plan and guide the Neighborhood Newsletter. Are you ready (that's you, our reader) to take this small step? It's easy, it's fun, it's gratifying; and if you join us, who knows where it will lead?

Here's what's involved: We envision a core Newsletter group of about 5-7 people that meets 3-4 times a year to plan the content of the next Newsletter issue, to track down stories agreed upon (though not necessarily write them), and in general to help the Newsletter stay lively, responsive, stimulating, and solvent. Your interest is the main criterion. We'd hope for a minimum one-year commitment, which means maybe ten hours a year. And that's basically all there is to it.

Why are we asking? Because with more neighbors involved, the Newsletter will have more structure, more diversity, more continuity, and more responsiveness to your own ideas. You want to read something that's alive and engaging, that speaks to you as a valued neighbor. We want exactly the same thing. That's the wealth we would like to share.

So if you might possibly be interested in working together with us, even if only to stick your toes in the water or to learn more, please be in touch. Contact Mary at 641-0954 or at JHitesnews@comcast.net, or Bill at 646-6319 or at Bill_Berkowitz@uml.edu. With your participation, we'll be sure to have great Newsletter times ahead.



SHAKESPEARE RETURNS TO MENOTOMY ROCKS PARK FOR THE 4TH YEAR

By Betsy Baldwin (Jason Street)

The Arlington Center for the Arts, in cooperation with the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park, will once again bring the nationally acclaimed Trinity Repertory Company of Providence, RI to Arlington this summer. Trinity will perform Shakespeare's comedy, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, on Sunday, July 11 at 6:00 p.m. in Menotomy Rocks Park. The free performance is funded by a grant from the Arlington Cultural Council and donations from generous audience members.

The Arlington Center for the Arts provides programs that enhance the cultural life of the community through art exhibits, performances, literary readings, festivals, and classes for all ages and abilities. Located at 41 Foster Street in East Arlington (the former Gibbs School), the ACA has an art gallery, several classrooms, an auditorium, and 15 studios leased by professional artists, writers, and musicians. Everyone is welcome at the gallery opening receptions, which occur throughout the year. In addition to a wide range of classes for adults and children that run year round, the ACA runs full-day high-quality arts programs for children during the summer and school vacation weeks in December, February, and April. With a different theme each week, professional art teachers help students experiment with a wide variety of media including painting, cartooning, ceramics, wood-working, writing, dance, music, acting, sculpture, and much more.

For more information about upcoming ACA classes, exhibits and receptions, performances, and the vacation arts pro-

grams, go to www.acarts.org or call 781-648-6220 for a catalogue. More information about the Shakespeare performance will be posted on the ACA website this spring.

[We are grateful to Betsy for playing a primary role in bringing Shakespeare to the Park, as well as for her long-running town-wide leadership at the ACA.]

HELP



Winter walking has improved in the past couple of years but it's still difficult to get around by foot. Many neighbors still do not extend their clearing efforts beyond their own driveways and front walks. Their cars get out while neighbors have to climb over the mounds left behind and trudge through the unshoveled sidewalks. Clearing your sidewalks is a legal as well as a social responsibility. Failing to do so presents a safety hazard for which you may well be fined. Please do your part.



PLEASANT STREET TRAFFIC UPDATE

By Ed Cuoco (Pleasant Street)

The Pleasant Street truck restriction legislation (Bill 1233) is continuing to be studied by the State's Committee on Transportation. Rep. Jim

Marzilli is hoping to set up a meeting with District 4 of the Mass Highway Department soon (we'll need to rally as many residents as possible to attend). I met with Ed Starr of the Town's Transportation Advisory Committee in November, and he asked us to explore opening route 16 (Alewife Book Parkway) to truck traffic, which we'll propose to Mass Highway as one alternative for late-night truck traffic. In the meantime, support for this initiative has been building in Belmont and Medford, whose residents would also benefit from reduced noise and pollution.

It's also great to see new crosswalk signage at the corner of Kensington and Pleasant Streets – an intersection that sees much traffic with "T" and school bus stops, as well as a long stretch to walk to the next nearest crosswalk on Irving Street. The Town has been selective in adding new signage because of budget constraints, and it's a testament to those who attended our meeting with the TAC last year that we were able to get this intersection on the priority list. Thanks for your support!

...Ed also asks if we might know someone who could represent our neighborhood on the Transportation Advisory Board, especially someone with interests in reducing cross-town traffic. If that person might be you, please contact Ed at ed@cuoco.com.



Dear Neighborhood Newsletter,

The following “Newsletter Nostalgia” might be worthy of relating in the next Newsletter.

During the years of 1950 – 1960’s, lower Jason Street was the homes of many distinguished citizens (very likely the same today); i.e., 6 doctors, 3 professors, Judge Parker, many attorneys and Mr. Hoyt who manufactured iron lung machines. Earlier years boasted the presence of the Scott family of Scott Paper Company and Capt. Donald MacKay the famous shipbuilder.

Note: In the last Newsletter re “story ideas” First Baptist Church with its beautiful carillon and St. Agnes Parish of many of our neighbors was omitted by the contributor.

Once again, I must tell you how very much I enjoy the Newsletter.

Pegge Nicholl (Stony Brook Road)



NEWSLETTER NOSTALGIA

by *Mary Cummings*

Pegge Nichols sent us some interesting neighborhood history just as I was deciding which past issue to revisit. It seemed fitting to find the article that described Pegge as “A Proud Daughter’s Mother,” Volume 4, Number 3, Party Issue September 1995.

The main item in that issue was the announcement of the Friends of

Menotomy Rocks Park (FOMRP) party to celebrate the completion of the pond renovation. Dotty Burt contributed a picture of the park challenging children to find Hawkeye Turtle (FOMRP Mascot), dogs, butterflies and other marvelous details. Don Matthiesen provided a history of the project that led to the birth of FOMRP.

Other highlights of that issue included Landscape Architect, Cricket Lewis’s, article, “Dividing Perennials.”

We welcomed four new families, at least two of which have moved out of the neighborhood since then. Three babies were welcomed, Rachel Smith, Christian Close, and Alexander Agudelo. Where are these babies now?

Do you have a favorite issue or another piece of neighborhood nostalgia to share? Let us know.



THE KENSINGTON PARK STUDY CLUB

By *Doreen Stevens* (Jason Street)

Book groups, and study groups more generally, have a long neighborhood history. Have you heard of the Kensington Park Study Club? Its founding goes back almost a century, and it had a sixty (!) year run. Doreen Stevens, both neighborhood resident and scholar, has been uncovering some facts about this distinctive association.

The Kensington Park Study Club had aspirations as lofty as its location on the rocky bluffs above Spy Pond. The nine women who began the Club in 1911 lived in the new elegantly-rustic neighborhood of large distinguished homes with fresh air and lovely views, but they also felt somewhat isolated at the west-

ern edge of Arlington.

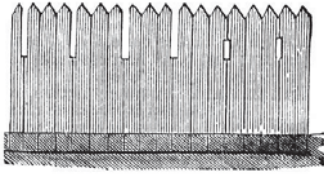
Mrs. Theodore Everett, Mrs. G.B.C. Rugg, Mrs. Campbell, Mrs. Billings, Mrs. H.D. Ever, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Cobb, Mrs. Walker, and Mrs. Morse – and, yes, they were always “Mrs.” – met every two weeks, fall to spring, with each meeting devoted to a different subject. So popular was the new club that soon membership doubled, and the geographical distribution of its membership expanded also – organizational expansion no doubt aided by the advent of telephone service and the family Ford.

Although the KPSC always adhered to serious study and the presentation of papers on topics ranging from Alaska to bacteria, the participants also attended to the intricacies of parliamentary procedure and sought to influence current events. They participated in the civic affairs of Arlington and Massachusetts and worked for Women’s Suffrage. During the war years – the Kensington Park Study Club’s long life encompassed both World Wars – the club members knit sweaters for the soldiers during meetings, sold war bonds, and supported the Free Bed Fund at Symmes Hospital.

Still, the intellectual and political activities of these very busy and influential women never supplanted the pleasure in “social intercourse” that was a founding principle of the Kensington Park Study Club. The Club minutes reflect a constant exchange of cards, flowers, and social events amongst the women, just as neighborhood book clubs in our own lives offer not just intellectual but also emotional sustenance.

If this history interests you, mark your calendars: Doreen will be giving a presentation with much more detail on the life and times of the Club at a meeting of the Arlington Historical Society on Tuesday, February 24th at 8:00 p.m. The Society meets at the Smith Museum, right next to the Jason Russell House on Jason Street.

The Neighborhood Newsletter is produced through contributions from neighbors and the support of Print Aspects.



GRASS ROOTS DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

by *Mark Miller* (Jason Street)

At some point in October, some of the neighbors near the intersection of Jason and Spring Streets noticed that a line of metal stanchions had been erected around the pumping station. “Now what was in the works?” we wondered. “Must be something to do with Homeland Security.”

So we contacted Selectman Diane Mahon and asked her “What was going on?” She contacted the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, and indeed they were in the process of installing chain-link fencing that would be nine feet high and black. Our feeling was that the fencing would only draw attention to the facility, and moreover that it would seriously detract from the neighborhood.

Over the next week, the e-mail circuit grew active. Folks living nearby pointed out that the fence would make it difficult for children and parents to wait safely at a bus stop that would now be crowded by a fence. Others remembered how the site had served as a good place to teach a youngster how to ride a bike. Still others said that the building itself was attractive and a great site for watching the fireworks in Boston on July 4th.

Then Selectman Mahon contacted Senator Havern, and with the help of his assistant George Laite an early morning meeting was scheduled for November 11. For some reason MWRA folks like to get started early, so the time was set for 7:15. Mike Ralph, in charge of community rela-

tions for MRWA was there, as well as Mahon, Havern, Laite, and about 25 neighbors. We stood in the rain while neighbors expressed their concerns and said that the community would be willing to keep an eye on the facility. We had hoped to be able to demonstrate our concerns about the bus stop, but November 11 was Veterans Day so there was no school. After the meeting at the site, we adjourned to the home of Netta Davis and Joel Rubin on Spring Street for some refreshments, and continued the discussion of how we could get this plan turned around.

Subsequently, as a result of the good work by Diane Mahon, the Board of Selectman sent a letter to MRWA proposing a “partnership between the MWRA and the Town of Arlington, through its town officials and neighbors, that would address Homeland Security for this site.” That partnership could also serve as a model of how to form alliances between state and local officials. Well, this letter did the trick; at a subsequent meeting Senator Havern and George Laite announced that the fence would not go up. George Laite then organized a follow-up meeting with abutters to the pumping station to outline ideas as to how we could be responsive to the needs of the MWRA.

All of us who live near the pumping station would like to thank all of the officials – Diane Mahon, Bob Havern, George Laite and Mike Ralph – for helping us reach a good solution.

NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY UPDATE

In the Fall Newsletter, we described a project designed to learn more about life in neighborhoods such as ours, and to consider how neighborhood life might possibly be improved. This study will be based mostly on your own responses – on your own experiences and thoughts about living here. At this point, the interview phase of the project has already begun, while some questionnaires should be coming up soon.

I’ve greatly appreciated the chance to meet with several of you in the fall, and hope to continue these conversations throughout this year. In the coming months,

I also hope to be contacting many of you with a survey, to learn more about how you think and feel about neighborhood life. (Responses are confidential, of course.) The questions to be asked will be based in part upon your own past suggestions, since this project is definitely meant to be a collaborative effort.

When all the results are in, I will be eager to share the conclusions with you, so that we can learn together, and perhaps think of ways our neighborhood could be even better than it is now. In the meantime, your questions, feedback, and suggestions are always encouraged and welcomed. I can be reached by phone at 646-6319, by e-mail at Bill_Berkowitz@uml.edu, and by postal mail at 12 Pelham Terrace.

If this study is done properly, it should be exciting to create a portrait of our neighborhood and of community life in one part of modern America. I’m looking forward to developing this portrait together with you. Thanks! — *Bill Berkowitz*.



BUSY COUPLES

by Mary Cummings (*Jason Street*)

If you want something done, ask a busy person. Our neighborhood is full of busy people we depend on, and in many cases these people come in pairs. Knowledgeable, talented, flexible, and reliable, they are among the first people that come to mind when there is a job to be done. Ted and Betsy Baldwin (of Jason Street), Jane and Peter Howard (on Woodland Road), and Judy Weinberg and John Pickle (on Venner Road) are perfect examples of these remarkable duos. In this and the next few issues, we will be profiling these Can Do Couples, starting with John and Judy.

John Pickle and Judy Weinberg met in Menotomy Rocks Park in March of 1995 and married two years later, bringing good fortune to each other and the entire town. Originally from West Hempstead, Long Island, Judy has been a resident of Arlington for 19 years. She worked as a buyer's assistant at the Harvard Book Store when she first came to the Boston area in 1972. Eventually, she moved on to selling advertisements for the Boston Phoenix and then to a 20-year-long career in radio advertisement sales for WBZ. As much as she liked her work, Judy wanted to have more flexibility in her schedule and time at home with her daughter, Dana. She went back to school and took on a whole new career in real estate sales at Coldwell Banker in Arlington. "I love selling Arlington," she declared.

Starting in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, John took a more circuitous

route to the Boston area. Geology was his first calling. He spent three months studying sediments in Mammoth Cave for his master's thesis, and has some very interesting tales to tell about Floyd Collins, whose body lies in those depths. When geology jobs dried up in the 80's, John joined the Air Force and was sent to get his degree in meteorology. His first meteorological assignment was forecasting typhoons all over the world from a station at Guam. While based there, he married a pilot during a brief stay in Utah; then their son, Elliot, was born. A few years later, John was stationed at Hanscom Field. After leaving the Air Force, John moved here to be near his son, who had moved to Cambridge with his mother after John's divorce.

It was while checking out parks in the area with Elliot that John met Judy in Menotomy Rocks. The couple must have really clicked, because John went to great lengths to meet Judy again. He had forgotten which radio station she said she worked at, so he focused on the park. He borrowed dogs and asked friends to be on the lookout for Judy and her dog, Sammy. It was not in Menotomy Rocks, but rather in the frozen food section of the Star Market where the couple next met.

John is now project manager for global systems at the Museum of Science. In this capacity, he has been working with Arlington and other school systems in the area. He set up a weather station at the Ottoson with science teacher Anna Colozzo and helped another science teacher, Rick Sharff, to set up the "Green Team" for environmental studies. John's scientific talents have been very valuable to the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park. He has also monitored the water quality of the pond for 3½ years and has used his knowledge, talents, and connections to produce the very successful Earth Day events at the park.

Judy, for her part, became active in the Bishop School PTO. It was in response to a PTO request for a liaison to Arlington Educational Enrichment Fund (AEEF) that Judy got involved in that organization, which she now so efficiently presides over. She also became involved in the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park in its early days, and has been a very valuable member of that organization's board of directors for several years.

Both Judy and John were always interested in being active in the community they lived in. John was especially motivated to develop community roots after traveling around so much. "Arlington is easy to get involved in, and the people are great to work with," he said. Education and the environment are two areas in which John and Judy have expended a great deal of time and effort. They often work as a team and always support each other's efforts. Their individual talents, their energy, and their mutual interest in our neighborhood and town make John Pickle and Judy Weinberg an extremely valuable can-do couple that we greatly appreciate.



CALLING ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS!

By Bill Berkowitz (Pelham Terrace)

If you are a photographer – or even an occasional point-and-shooter – here's some news that may interest you.

Over the course of the next few months, especially when the weather warms up a little, we hope to be doing some neighborhood photography and displaying some images of our neighborhood. Not just our own photographs, though, but your photos too; for we know there are **many** pairs of perceptive and

creative eyes among our readers.

Why photography? Because images capture parts of life less reachable by words. More specifically, photographs can help us understand and appreciate aspects of our neighborhood in a different light. And what kind of display? We hope to post some photographs, hopefully including yours, on the Menotomy Rocks Park bulletin board and possibly at other neighborhood locations in the spring. There might also be a chance for others to offer comments on what they see, to create a kind of dialogue between photographer and viewer.

All this is scheduled to conclude with a first-time-ever exhibit of neighborhood photography in the park sometime in May or June. The photos could in addition be posted on a Web site, to be a lasting repository of neighborhood knowledge. A grant from the Arlington Cultural Council will help make these activities possible.

Have we captured your attention so far? Now, what does this mean for you?

Your ideas and contributions are needed, no matter what your level of skill. Since this project is very much in the planning stages, here's a great chance to share your ideas and your work with others, no matter whether you are an amateur or professional or something in between.

More specifically, if you've got some neighborhood-related photographs you'd like to display; or if you might be interested in taking some photos; or if you know someone who would be; or if you have thoughts about putting on the best possible neighborhood exhibit, or ideas about using photography to enrich neighborhood life, or any other questions or suggestions at all, then please be in touch so that we can plan this work together.

Get ready, then, to fire up your cameras and your imaginations. Looking forward to hearing from you!



GOOD READS

by MaryAnna Foskett (Brantwood Road)

Our reading group (Rambling Readers) has been going strong for the past 10 years. We recommend Myra McLarey's **Water From the Well** (1995), which we read a couple of years ago. Myra is an Arlington resident – originally from Arkansas – who was gracious enough to come to our meeting. The book is a great read. I think folks would like it.

The other local author we've read, and who also graciously came to our meeting, was Patricia Thomas, whose book **Big Shot** (2001) is about the search for an AIDS vaccine.

Here are some other books we've read fairly recently:

- Louise Erdrich, **The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse** (2001)
- Alexandra Fuller, **Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight** (2001)
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, **Unpunished** (1929/1997)
- Julia Glass, **Three Junes** (2002)
- Laura Hillenbrand, **Seabiscuit; An American Legend** (2001)
- Thomas Hine, **The Rise & Fall of the American Teenager** (1999)
- Dennis Lehane, **Mystic River**
- Harper Lee, **To Kill a Mockingbird** (1960)
- Margot Livesey, **Eva Moves the Furniture** (2001)
- Naguib Mahfouz, **Palace Walk** (1956)
- Ann Patchett, **Bel Canto** (2001)
- Michael Pollan, **The Botany of Desire** (2001)
- Arundhati Roy, **The God of Small Things** (1997)
- Alexander McCall Smith, **The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency**

MORE BOOKS

The Rambling Readers are not looking for new members but the book group at the Robbins Library is open to all. The group of 15 to 20 meets on the first Monday of every month and discuss a wide variety of books. The group is open to men as well as women. Anne Honeycott (Jamaica Plains), facilitator since 1994, does an extensive amount of research on all of the books and authors. The entire list of books they have read over the past 10 years is available at the library or on the web (<http://www.robbinslibrary.org/>)

Contact the Neighborhood Newsletter

We always welcome your letters, articles or suggestions, as well as any donations you might be able to make. To contact Mary Cummings, Editor:
To make a contribution to The

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