

# The EVERGREEN NEWS

*A Neighborhood Newspaper Sponsored by Vollintine-Evergreen Community Action Association*

## THE BURROW LIBRARY Southwest Memphis **HOUSE NOTES**

Memphis, Tennessee 38112

by Joe Hough

Two years ago we purchased a home on University Street to raise our three children in the neighborhood of our choice. At that time, I wrote an article about some of the supply-demand factors adversely affecting real estate values in the Vollintine/Evergreen community. Houses were for sale on literally every block. This was the reflection of the uncertainties instilled when blacks began to move into this previously "white" district. Unscrupulous, block-busting real estate agents were



exploiting home owners and were on the way to totally disrupting property values. The number of houses on the market far exceeded demand. Prospective purchasers such as myself found a wide variety of housing available. Panic sales by irrational sellers resulted in many accepting less than fair market value for their property. About this time, along came VECAA with its goal to stabilize the community and promote a desirable, viable, bi-racial residential district.

Now, two years later, I am glad to report that the observable evidence shows that the real estate market and resulting property values are substantially better. In fact, I would say that the market is extremely tight at present. Since Christmas, the VECAA real estate committee has been working directly with five potential buyers who wish to purchase a home in the V/E area, but who are having difficulty finding the house of their choice. If you know of a house not on the market that might be available contact me (274-5551) and we might

possibly get buyer and seller together. We want to accommodate all and create a stable real estate market that will assure buyers and sellers of reasonable property values.

A number of facts relate to the present stable housing values in our neighborhood. The school situation is better known, to a degree. Those who fled to avoid integrated schools have gone. Those who moved to avoid a black neighbor are likewise gone. The character of the community has not drastically changed as some initially feared. The activities of the block-buster have lessened. Frankly it can probably be attributed to the fact that there have been greener pastures elsewhere. However it is also a result of the residents resisting and even fighting their tactics including the policy of the VECAA real estate committee to investigate all complaints and report them to proper authorities. And finally the out-migration of the Jewish population seems to have slowed. Church leaders have stated in previous articles that the Synagogue is not for sale as often rumored and those residing in the community intend to stay. All of these factors contribute to the current stabilization. Meanwhile, the story and purpose of VECAA has attracted city-wide and even national publicity which in turn has created a demand from those, such as the mentioned five prospects, seeking homes who desire to share our viable, desirable bi-racial neighborhood which has so many urban amenities and conveniences as well as good housing values.

## ZAP!!

One of the more notable attractions in the Memphis area is the Overton Park Zoo. It attracts visitors from all over the Mid-South and at one time was the country's largest free zoo.

Despite its expanding collection of animals and the erection of new buildings, the zoo has not been without its problems. For example, a litter problem is obvious and, like most zoos, its visitors include those who abuse the animals.

To deal with some of these problems and to generally improve the attractiveness of the zoo, a new organization — Zoo Action Program — has been formed. ZAP was originally conceived for the purpose of deterring, while at the same time educating, litterers and animal abusers. However, its goals have become more ambitious, and its functions will include guided tours and, eventually, providing lectures on various aspects of the zoo.


ZAP meets the first Saturday of every month, and a different zoo-related topic is generally discussed at each meeting. Meetings will be held at the Old Reptile House starting at 10:30. Last month members were invited to hear a lecture on birds and watch the zoo's veterinarian examine SHASTA, a Siberian tiger.

The organization has just completed its first training program which had an enrollment of 40 members. This group will in turn begin training the second class of recruits at the

You are invited to the March meeting of VECCA to be held Monday the 19th at 8 p.m. at McLean Baptist Church.



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next scheduled meeting on March 3. The only requirement is that members be able to travel around the zoo for an hour at a time, and an attempt is being made to get senior citizens involved. Prospective trainees should send their name, address, telephone number and age to ZAP, 884 N. Belvedere, Memphis 38107.

## Nashville Notes

by Rep. Doy Daniels, Jr.

When Secretary of Transportation John Volpe decided against putting I-40 through Overton Park, he listed several alternative routes. Among those listed was the L&N Railroad route.

I find that to be completely unacceptable. Accordingly, on the first day of the session I shall introduce legislation prohibiting the use of state funds.

It is my judgment that putting the expressway through the middle of our community would do far more harm and create more problems than it would solve. To Memphis the Vollintine/Evergreen area stands as an example of modern, stable, and harmonious living. As well, I believe that no more property owners should be displaced in solving this controversy.

I am pleased to report that after careful study involving two weeks of hearings, I shall be working closely with the Dunn administration on the passage of the budget. It is one of the most progressive programs ever presented by the governor to the legislature.

However, I shall offer suggestions for change. As you may know, the budget includes the "circuit breaker" concept whereby the poor get a refund for a portion of the sales tax paid by them. In my judgment there is a better alternative.

I am presently co-sponsoring legislation which would remove the sales tax from prescription drugs and residential utilities. This would make the reduction or "refund" immediate and universal. It is my deep belief that

staff: editors: george bradfute, rick thomas/news: bernice williams, hershel lipow, hinda silber/copy: nancy lowe/cover picture: brad mcmillan/typing: sallee bruhwiler, cathy awsumb, alleen castellani, judy johnson, judy wieduwilt/circulation: niki st. cyr/printing: john w. smith, courtesy southwestern at memphis/business: richard johnson.

those of us in the middle income group deserve a tax break as well.

In general, it will be my intention to see to it that your tax dollar is well used. I believe this to be my obligation and privilege.

## Art Celebration

The Evergreen Presbyterian Church will hold its Second Annual Art Festival April 1-4 in Fellowship Hall beneath the sanctuary of the church. The people of the VECAA community are invited to attend any of these days between 9 and 5. The theme this year, which will be conveyed in some of the art work, is "Celebration of Life — in Christ."

Amateur and professional artists from all over the city are invited to submit their work. There is no entry fee, but the art work must be delivered to the church either March 28th or 29th. Advance entry forms may be obtained from Mrs. Sue Miller, 3631 Shirlwood, 323-2094. All mediums are acceptable, and the work may be put up for sale, but all sales are strictly between the purchaser and the artist.

There will be no awards except in the Children's Art Contest for children through age 16. A special artists' reception will be held April 1st from 3 to 5, and the neighborhood is invited.

## VECAA Objects

As this issue goes to press, work on the Jackson Avenue median has been stopped by a preliminary injunction granted VECAA by Federal District Judge Bailey Brown. Later, the matter will get a full hearing, but at present VECAA is negotiating with the State Department of Transportation about the possibility of obtaining a settlement.

Attorney MARVIN RATNER of 925 University is representing VECAA. He explained that the state's original plan called for removal of most of the median for left-turn lanes. VECAA protested, asking that only a minimum space be taken in order to save most of the grass and trees. The state responded with some modifications, but the revised plans still seemed to take too much area, and VECAA could not persuade the state to make further changes.

Mr. Ratner said that VECAA hopes to preserve the last

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four remaining intersections closest to Watkins, believing that the attractiveness of the median strip helps identify the neighborhood and set off our part of Jackson from adjoining commercial areas.

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**To Build or Not**

by Nancy Lowe

On January 19, Transportation Secretary John Volpe released his decision not to approve the present design of I-40 through Overton Park. The next step is choosing an alternative to the present route. In response to area residents' concern the Evergreen News presents a short historical perspective and observations on the alternatives.

In accord with the original purpose of the interstate system, the earliest expressway concept for Memphis was a circumferential route providing for through interstate traffic with minimal disruption of urban areas. For various reasons, including local interests, modified plans pushed three commuter routes through existing urban areas - I-240-I-255; I-40; and the Southern Freeway. The latter two provided downtown access for central east Memphis at the expense of less valued eastern and mid-town sections. The primacy of commuter traffic is seen in the I-40 projected traffic volume of 2% through traffic and 98% commuter traffic.

Unfortunately for I-40 proponents, the route was not completed fast enough to outrun growing awareness of the importance of urban neighborhoods and parks. However, I-40 supporters tried hard. They built, at their own risk during liti-

gation, most of the contested route. During final public hearings in 1972, they mobilized local organizations and used the divide-and-conquer tactic of urging V/E residents to support the park route in order to avoid a northern by-pass route.

The available alternatives include four basic choices: 1) Re-design of the present route; 2) Using a by-pass route north or south of the park; 3) Constructing the present route with state funds; 4) A no-build decision for the park route with I-40's interstate function shifted to the I-240 northern route.

The first two alternatives - re-design and by-pass - would retain 90% federal funding and would involve like issues. First, both must follow all or part of the two-stage location and design hearing process required for the present route, including environmental compliance. Second, both would produce legal controversy comparable to the present case. Third, both would retain commuter traffic primacy and continual mid-town disruption from an operating freeway. The by-pass choice would also destroy a second mid-town area. These negative factors make neither choice a desirable alternative.

The third alternative is constructing the present design with 100% state funds. This choice would probably raise substantial legal questions. A similar attempt in San Antonio resulted in a legal ruling that the interstate system was indivisible, and the state could not evade federal law by building one segment. This choice also retains emphasis on commuter traffic and mid-town disruption. Like the first two, it is not a desirable alternative.

The fourth alternative - the no-build decision - means simply not constructing any more of the mid-town route. Through interstate traffic would go over the I-240 northern route. Commuter traffic would be served by a combination of improved arterial streets, and more important, broadened public transportation services.

Several precedents have been set in other cities for this type of decision. San Francisco left an elevated freeway literally in mid-air when it stopped all freeway construction and built a new mass transit system. Toronto decided to stop a planned freeway system and build a new subway. These cities simply decided that the negative results of urban freeways outweighed any benefits.

Concern for the historic Vieux Carre area in New Orleans finally stopped this area's freeway. In New York City decades of freeway controversy and construction culminated in the abandonment of the Lower Manhattan Expressway. After similar decades Massachusetts recently banned all freeway construction in metropolitan Boston. Atlanta voters recently approved a new mass transit system to relieve their congested expressway system.

The issues of mass transit, neighborhood and park pre-

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servation, and general urban destruction that resulted in these decisions are equally applicable to Memphis. An expressway anywhere in mid-town, including the park, would destroy parts of mid-town and blight surrounding residential areas, including the V/E area. It would also serve as a racial and socio-economic barrier between segments of mid-town.

The no-build alternative is the only desirable alternative to the destructive park route. This choice would return the Memphis expressway system closer to its original function as a perimeter interstate with minimal harm to urban areas. It would also prepare Memphis for its future role as a major urban center with coordinated multiple forms of transportation.

## Popular Mechanic

by John Bruhwiler

If you have ever been embarrassed by an AAA man who told you the reason you couldn't get your car started was a loose cable on one of the battery posts, you may have resolved to correct your automotive ignorance, someday. And it may interest you that one of the more popular adult education courses offered by the Northside Vocational Evening School is a course in Automechanics. It is taught two evenings a week, Mondays and Wednesdays, from six to nine.

Of the twenty students enrolled in the course, several are Northside graduates who work in automechanics or related fields. Some of the older students, however, who come from various parts of the city, have occupations that have little to do with automobiles. Among them, there is a business representative, a college professor, a building contractor, a Southwestern Senior, and a Naval Officer.

With several Memphis schools offering Automechanics for adults, it is surprising to find a relatively large and varied enrollment in the Northside course. The immediate Northside neighborhood is not the most attractive. In fact, the litter-strewn parking lot that has to be crossed in order to get to the shop at the rear of the building is distasteful, to say the least. The shop itself, however, is as clean, spacious and modern as the other Northside facilities, and it is equipped with the latest in tools, machines and electronic apparatuses.

The students work on automobiles, both domestic and foreign, that normally belong to them. They usually work in teams of two or three. They may operate a sophisticated Sun tune-up machine, replace an exhaust system, grind valves, or steamclean an engine block, or whatever pleases them. At times they create a level of air and noise pollution that might distress a visitor. Then again it can be very quiet in the shop, with only the pleasant sound of tools touching metal, and the occasional call, "Mr. Burkeen!".

"Mr. Burkeen", as everybody calls JIM BURKEEN, runs the shop. He admits the cars, diagnoses their ail-

ments, prescribes the treatment, instructs and, should the need arise, takes a hand in the operation himself. Under his direction, students undertake just about any kind of automechanical job, from fixing a tire puncture to rebuilding an engine. The only part of a car they will not touch is an automatic transmission. Automatic transmissions, Mr. Burkeen says, are a separate field.

Jim Burkeen is eminently qualified to teach Automechanics. Before coming to Northside, six years ago, he taught a year at Manassas, and previous to that he spent fifteen years in the Air Force where he was Head of Flight Engineers. He enjoys teaching evening school but says that his primary interest lies with his day classes. The desks at the rear of the shop, the blackboards, charts, practice engines, and books are all used by his day classes. Except for an occasional lecture on automotive theory, the evening classes are what Mr. Burkeen calls "on the job training".

The lectures on automotive theory are provided by WILLIAM YOUNCE, a retired Navy Chief and Mr. Burkeen's colleague in the day school. Mr. Younce, who worked seven years for Sun Electric before joining the Northside staff, teaches the functioning of the electrical system and the use of electronic equipment, an aspect of automotive science often underestimated by the layman.

I asked some of the students why they were taking the course. Several of the younger men said they wanted to improve on the skills they had learned in high school, or the course helped them in their jobs. Some claimed they didn't trust garages to do as good a job as they could do themselves. One said he loved his car and wanted it in perfect tune all the time. JOE BUTLER who comes to class all the way from Whitehaven said he did so "because Jim Burkeen's the best mechanic in town". The answer that may reflect the sentiments of many in our neighborhood came from BILLY M. BURROW, a Lieutenant Commander stationed at Millington, who lives at 1032 East Rainbow. Commander Burrow said, "This is something I've always wanted to do." The difference is that the Commander is doing it while many of us are still waiting for that mythical someday to get better acquainted with the automobile with which we share so much of our time.

P.S. Other vocational evening courses at Northside are Child Development, Drapery Making, Typing, Advanced Typing, Operation of Office Machines, Clothes Alteration, Sales and Cashier Checking, Food Service, Basic Education (Math and English), and Carpenter's Apprenticeship Readiness.

A special vocational evening course at Northside is Mr. MORGAN MORRELL'S Woodworking Class, which, however, is open only to members of the Carpenters Union, Local 345, which sponsors the program.

For information on any of the above, please call Mr. LEROY SHOLLY, Adult Education Director at Northside, 274-8493, Monday and Wednesday only, 6 - 10 p.m.

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