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The EVERGREEN NEWS

A Neighborhood Newspaper Sponsored by Vollintine-Evergreen Community Action Association

Reflections

by Rick Thomas

During the early days of the Vollintine/Evergreen Community Action Association and up til recent times, two names have often been mentioned in connection with its activities. Both individuals were founding fathers of VECAA, so to speak, and both have served the community in official capacities. MARGARET DICHTEL of 893 Oakmont presided as chairman of VECAA for its first two and a half years of existence and Monsignor JOSEPH LEPPERT, now stationed at St. Peter's Orphanage, was the priest at Little Flower Catholic Church during this period.

Once an organization becomes established it tends to forget its initiators and it's true that little has been said in the Evergreen News about these two individuals. Since they are no longer serving VECAA in official capacities, this article takes an opportunity to present their reflections on the past, present and future of VECAA and the V/E community.

Margaret and Msgr. Leppert both became concerned about the state of the community before the establishment of VECAA, she through the community awareness activities of the Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association and he through association with other neighborhood ministers. In 1969 and 1970 the problem of city-wide racial turnover was becoming more obvious and, at the neighborhood level, ministers who were community-conscious, and fortunately there were several, became aware of declining memberships and shifting congregation composition. As these ministers looked at the community, they saw a frightening number of For Sale signs and, more than this Margaret points out, they saw an atmosphere of apprehension developing into one of fear. The neighbors were beginning to ask themselves the question, "Will I be forced to move?"

Little Flower had risen to meet the problem earlier and was well integrated at this time. Its leaders realized this would cause some white families to leave and were prepared for it. Other churches, however, felt this path was not appropriate for them. Consequently, the Methodist, Catholic, Baptist and Presbyterian ministers of the community conceived of a community organization that would "maintain and enhance a stable, biracial community." But Msgr. Leppert adds, it was not to be a ministers' organization but a people's organization.

Thus, VECAA was conceived and Margaret elected its chairman. The first problem, as seen by Margaret and Msgr. Leppert was to dispell the fear that was growing. The main instrument in this cause was the Evergreen News which attempted to initiate communication in the neighborhood and let residents know that they were not facing this problem alone, that others were trying to solve it with them. They also summoned the aid of such institutions as McLean Baptist, Evergreen Presbyterian and Southwestern, whose personnel and facilities were made available to them.

One result of these activities was a change in the prevailing atmosphere of the neighborhood. Margaret says that today one can feel the result of what has happened and adds, "I don't find the people in this section saying anymore, 'Am I going to have to move?' You find



people, whites as well as blacks, moving in. The calibre of the black that they have met in the community makes them have less fear." The atmosphere of fear has gone, she concludes, and has been replaced by a feeling of "hope and growth".

Monsignor agrees. "Some of the people have changed. In Little Flower parish there has been a renewal and restructuring." He finds lay members now are willingly following the official policy of the Church by getting involved in the community.

"This has been the most exciting part of it for me," adds Margaret, "the eagerness with which people were willing to participate." She points out that the results had gone well beyond a community organization. Community-wide ecumenical Good Friday services had been instituted and even the fact that a Catholic woman was conducting meetings in a Southern Baptist church indicated the type of atmosphere that had arisen out of VECAA's activities.

Margaret expressed several concerns in regard to the future. "Many people think we've got it all done. You never do." The problem as she sees it will be to maintain enthusiasm when there is no issue to rally around. Even with no crisis in sight the organization has the responsibility to deal with new problems.

This means that not only should VECAA maintain a "watchdog" attitude but that it should be organized to anticipate problems rather than reacting to emergencies. Both Margaret and Msgr. Leppert agree that this means working with other groups. VECAA has the responsibility to expand its philosophy, at least, to the city as a whole, rather than sitting smugly isolated.

Because VECAA has become a recognized organiza-

You are invited to the February meeting of VECAA to be held Monday the 18th at 8 p.m. at McLean Baptist Church. Alternating meeting dates between Monday and Sunday will be discussed.



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tion it has an opportunity to do things other groups can not. Margaret gives as an example the fact that a representative of the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) office here approached VECAA offering a grant of several thousand dollars for the initiation of a program related to housing.

To both, the quality of education in the neighborhood is a continuing problem. Much progress has been made in introducing innovative programs at Vollentine and Snowden and academic standards have been maintained. Still many residents are disenchanted with the school situation and some "liberal" parents continue to withdraw their children, not because of academic deficiencies but because of unresolved problems having to do with the cultural backgrounds of teachers and students alike. They point out that we have a long way to go before white and black teachers conduct class in a manner acceptable to all.

Msgr. Leppert points out that this is a problem to be faced by neighborhood Catholics also. Many are already in the public school system and, although Little Flower is at capacity, it is likely that it will be phased out along with other Catholic schools in the future. This means that neighborhood Catholics too will have to deal with the problems related to integrated public schools.

It is agreed that existing and potential problems can be solved if the spirit that fostered VECAA is maintained in the community. On a pin that Msgr. Leppert wears is the phrase, *Orbis Unus Orans* - "One World Praying Together." Both Margaret Dichtel and Msgr. Leppert have worked actively to make this a reality in their corner of the world. With their examples before us one cannot help but be optimistic about the future of VECAA and the Vollintine/Evergreen community.

Vollintine-Evergreen Community Action Association
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West Drive: a guest editorial

by Bill Weber
 782 West Drive

In 1969 the Hein Park Civic Association realized that traffic through subdivision streets was becoming a detriment to community welfare. Steps were taken to petition the city government to bring about a redirection of traffic in the area. The problem simply stated is that West Drive has become a convenient shortcut for individuals between Jackson and North Parkway. Traffic on this street alone approaches 2,000 cars per day, these counts reaching 200 per hour during morning and late afternoon.

The majority of this traffic, I will say, is not comprised of residents in the surrounding community but is commuter traffic racing through our residential area with no respect or awareness that this is a place where people live and raise children and call home.

West Drive was not designed as a collector street; in fact no destination can be reached on it. Traffic using this street is obliged to switch to other more major thoroughfares to reach northward or southward destinations. The streets have become unsafe for the children playing and walking to local schools and to those who enjoy such endeavors as walking, jogging or bicycling.

The traffic problems of the area seemed to center on West Drive and for this reason the city was petitioned to close the street at Jackson by erecting a low traffic island—one that emergency vehicles could easily cross. This proposal was passed by the Planning Commission and is to be heard by the City Council this week (ed.—the last week in January).

It is essential that this entire community work together in harmony for the betterment of this area. The West Drive proposal in no way isolates the Hein Park area from the rest of the community and is in no way intended to do that. A few of us that normally use West Drive may be slightly inconvenienced to select an alternate route but this is a small price to pay for the sake of saving a desirable place to live from the ravages of traffic pollution.

By the time this editorial arrives at your home the City Council will have taken action. Whatever their decision is let us accept it, put aside our differences, communicate openly about the needs of the community, and by our actions and attitudes strengthen this great neighborhood.

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Around The Neighborhood

GEORGE H. BROWN, Jr., of 1030 Monticello has been elected by the Board of Education to serve as president during 1974. He was elected to the board in 1971. Important offices seem to run in the family; Mrs. Brown (MARGARET) was re-elected secretary of the VECAA steering committee on January 20.

Other events at that meeting included the re-election of IRV SACHRITZ of 899 Sheridan as chairman of the steering committee, refreshments for members and their children, and square-dance calling by B.V. and KAY STEVENS. The Stevens, who lead square dance groups as a hobby (taking them as far away as Cherokee Village in Arkansas), recently moved to 1015 N. Willett. Mr. Stevens is executive secretary of the Memphis Mechanical Contractors Association. The Stevens have six children of whom JAMES, 17, a student at Catholic High, still lives at home. An older son, TIM, was married January 15 to TERRI SOKOLA of Memphis.

Fifty or more people attended a public meeting held January 16 at Baron Hirsch Synagogue concerning the proposed recreation center at Vollentine School. The meeting was addressed by Mayor WYETH CHANDLER, Squire JESSE TURNER, Rabbi RAFAEL GROSSMAN, BROTHER GREENE and others. The Mayor reported that funds had been deleted by the budget committee from the capital improvements budget. Mr. Greene has appealed to the Council for a public hearing on the action of the budget committee.

VECAA's car-pool efforts have been joined with those of the First National Bank's Comput-A-Ride. Residents who want to try this service can fill out an application at the First National branch at Jackson and Watkins (or any other branch). By the 15th of the next month you'll receive a list of persons in your area who also want to form a car pool. It's up to you then to contact them.

Dr. JAMES T. ROBERTSON of 628 N. Trezevant has been appointed the first full-time chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery at U.T. He is also president of the Congress of Neurological Surgeons and has been in practice with the Semmes-Murphey clinic since 1964.

Dr. HUEY H. PORTER of 1700 Forrest has been elected to a three-year term on the medical staff executive committee of Baptist Hospital. Dr. Porter is an otolaryngologist, which means ear-nose-throat specialist.

Learning for Fun

Lewis Center

The Lewis Center for Senior Citizens and the American Association of Retired Persons are sponsoring the Memphis Extension of the Institute of Lifetime Learning. Members of both organizations who are 55 years or older can participate in short-term, day-time courses taught by well-qualified instructors. The emphasis is on learning for pleasure with no exams, assignments or grades.

All courses are taught at Lewis Center at 1188 N. Parkway. A wide variety of subjects are offered and include indoor gardening, consumer affairs, antiques, oil painting and transactional analysis. For the footloose and fancy-free courses on travel are offered including French and Spanish for travelers.

The Winter Term starts on February 4 and the Spring Term on March 25. All courses cost \$7.50 and prospective participants need only to register at the Center prior to the first Session. For course descriptions and registration forms call the Lewis Center at 272-7408.

SW Adult Education Center

The Spring offerings in the area of adult education at Southwestern are both varied and interesting. Among the entries is a study group on Allistair Cooke's "America" film series led by Dr. Granville Davis at 7:30 p.m. every other Thursday. Study groups will also examine James Joyce's Ulysses (Drs. Granville Davis and James Roper, every Wednesday, 7:30 - 9:30) and T.S. Eliot's "Wasteland" (Walter Armstrong, Jr., every Wednesday in March). A different type of course will be offered in the Southwestern gym by Deborah Martin, two hours a week, in the Oriental art of T'ai Chi.

All course leaders are experts in their fields. Miss Martin studied last summer under a master of T'ai Chi and Mr. Armstrong studied Eliot at Harvard. Dr. Roper and Dr. Davis are Southwestern faculty members.

The courses run for various periods of time and tuition ranges from \$6 to \$39 with discount rates for couples. Books are usually included. For further information call the A.E.C. at 274-1800.

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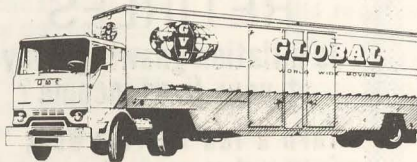
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Happenings

February

- 5, 8, 12, 14, 18 and 25-----New classes start at the Lewis Center for Senior Citizens. Classes starting in February are Tole Painting (Feb. 5, 8 weeks), Oil Painting (Feb. 8, 8 weeks), Glue Work Crafts (Feb. 12, 6 weeks), Cake Decorating (Feb. 14, 6 weeks), Wild Flower Collage (Feb. 18, one session), and Picture Framing (Feb. 25, one session). Costs run from 50¢ to \$8.00 with the Center furnishing some of the materials.
- 6-----Tupperware party at Snowden Junior High sponsored by the P.T.A. Twenty per cent of the proceeds will be returned for use by the school. Call 324-8693 for more information.
- 13-----Criminal Justice Symposium at Southwestern. Judge Kenneth Turner will speak at 8 p.m. in 200 Clough Hall on "What's New in Juvenile Court Administration".
- 26-----P.T.A. meeting at Snowden School. Elections will be held and officers chosen for next year.
- 28-----Criminal Justice Symposium at Southwestern. Norvell Davis, Director of Center for Criminal Justice at the University of Chicago, will speak on "The Politics of Prison Reform". The program will be in 200 Clough Hall at 8 p.m.
- March
- 1 - 2-----Dilemma 1974 will be held at Southwestern Friday and Saturday nights and all day Saturday.

Dilemma '74

This year Southwestern's unique symposium, Dilemma, will take place on March 1 and 2. Activities will include speeches, seminars and a play presentation.

In seeking to present a balanced program this year, student organizers have arranged for interaction between William A. Rusher and Daniel Ellsberg. Rusher is publisher of the National Review and a leading conservative spokesman. Ellsberg, of course, gained notoriety by disclosing the "Pentagon Papers" to the press.

Other participants include the controversial poet, Allen Ginsberg; the Chancellor for Women at M.I.T., Mary Potter Rowe; the Dean of the Emory University School of Religion, James T. Laney; and U.S. Congressman from the District of Columbia, Walter T. Fauntroy.

Dilemma is unique in that it is organized and carried out entirely by Southwestern students who are responsible for every aspect of it. It attempts to be a community event rather than a campus event and encourages active audience participation with the scheduled speakers.

Tickets are \$3.00 for adults and \$1.50 for students and can be obtained at the door or by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Dilemma '74 in care of Southwestern.



Highway or no, this sign near Overton Park Avenue points to a need for constructive planning for this wooded corridor through Mid-town.

Foster, Barrister

Although several attorneys reside in the V/E community, until December no law office was located within its boundaries. In that month, however, RICHARD W. "DICK" FOSTER opened an office at 2206 Jackson in order to start a general law practice. Killing two birds with one stone he occupied the vacant building at the corner of Jackson and Springdale. This former laundry building had fallen into disrepair and was considered an eyesore by many.

Dick is a native of Ohio but has lived in Memphis for three years. He came to Memphis via Nashville where he attended law school and spent two years with Tennessee legislative council committees. He moved to Memphis and spent two and a half years with Legal Services here. Now he wants the independence and satisfaction of private practice.

The 31-year-old attorney lives in the mid-town area and wanted to open an office nearby. Most law offices are concentrated downtown or in newer suburban office buildings. Dick wanted to get away from the somewhat hectic atmosphere characterizing the downtown. Not only did he want a residential location, but he also preferred an integrated community because the practice there would be similar to his Legal Services work.

Such a location is better for the client, Dick feels, although it's a little harder for the lawyer to attract business. So far he's pleased with his new office and likes the neighborhood. Time will tell what a little paint and a lawyer can do for an abandoned laundry-cleaners.

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