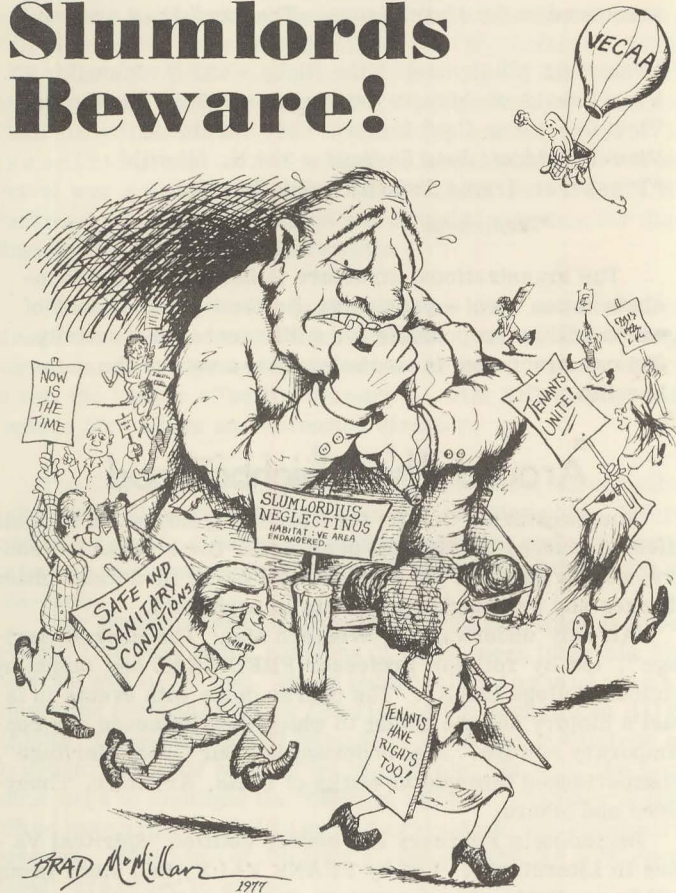


The EVERGREEN NEWS

A Neighborhood Newspaper Sponsored by Vollintine-Evergreen Community Action Association

Slumlords Beware!



How do I get my security deposit back from my former landlord? How do I get the landlord to fix a leaky pipe? How do I get the landlord to exterminate the roaches? Many renters meet with frustration in dealing with insensitive and unresponsive landlords who neglect their legal responsibilities of keeping a rental unit in safe and sanitary condition.

What can you as a renter do to get action from your landlord? First, you should call your landlord personally and ask him to repair the premises. Explain the urgency of your circumstances and that you are paying rent for these services. Many landlords are reasonable and simply put off repairs because they are busy with other activities.

However, if a reasonable request does not bring the needed repairs, call the Mayor's Action Center at 528-2500. Explain to the Action Center the urgency of your request. The Action Center will order an inspector to examine your dwelling; this inspector has the legal power to compel the landlord to make the repairs. The Action Center will call you back to see if you were satisfied with the resolution of your complaint. If you were not satisfied, say so and ask for further action.

By state and local law, the landlord is required to keep rental units in safe and sanitary condition. However, it is only when you complain that these provisions are enforced.

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Also, by state law, the landlord cannot evict you, harass you, increase your rent or decrease your services because you make a complaint against him.

If you are still not satisfied, you may withhold rent and use it to pay for the services needed to correct the problem in your rental unit. Withholding rent is your most powerful tool against a recalcitrant landlord. You must first give your landlord written notice of the problem and state that you intend to withhold rent. You may then withhold that portion required to pay for the maintenance. Make sure you keep receipts and have the repairman state in writing the damage he is repairing.

You have a legal right to a strict accounting of your security deposit. After you vacate the premises, the landlord must inspect and give you a written list of damages and the cost of repairing each item. If you sign this list, then you and the landlord agree to his estimate. He will withhold the amount of damages and return the remainder of the security deposit. If you disagree with his statement, prepare your own list and ask the landlord to sign it. At this point you have legal standing to sue the landlord for the unused portion of the security deposit and for legal fees.

The most serious violators of renters' rights and neighborhood standards are the large landlords and the management companies. It is cheaper for them to do business in this way since few renters demand that dwellings be in safe and sanitary repair.

There is ultimately only one solution to this problem. A union of all tenants in the neighborhood can put pressure on these landlords. Tenants must form their own organization, with VECAA giving technical advice and other forms of assistance. Historically, VECAA has been mostly made up of homeowners as tenants have fewer roots in the community. It is time for renters to join in this fight for neighborhood preservation.

VECAA is starting a tenant's organization. If you want to join with other tenants to: (1) find out more about your rights, (2) work on disseminating information to your fellow tenants, (3) take action against your landlord, NOW IS THE TIME. Renters, please call or write CATHY JOHNSON at the following address or phone number: Box #517, 2000 N. Parkway, Memphis, TN 38112, 276-6100.



Meetings

The VECAA meeting originally scheduled for February has been rescheduled for March in order to allow time for all ballots in the election of officers for 1977 to be returned. Watch the News for the time and place.

* * *

A meeting on public policy formulation will be held at Southwestern's Center for Continuing Education on Thursday, Feb. 24, from 7-10 p.m. Neighborhood residents are invited to meet with local political leaders in a face-to-face discussion of the problems facing Mid-town.

NOT TO BE PLACED IN MAILBOXES

Housing Board

V/E residents are urged to report housing-related problems they identify in the neighborhood to VECAA's Housing Complaint Board. The Board can deal with violations of the city's building codes such as structural disrepair, weeds, litter etc., as well as other deviations from neighborhood standards. Action will also be taken in the area of tenant landlord relations when they relate to neighborhood goals. The Board is especially interested in hearing about "undesirable activities", real estate whether legal or illegal, in our community. All complaints, inquiries or comments should be directed to Board chairman JOE SOHM at 278-6962

More Blockbusters?

Within the last six weeks two companies, an investment company and a realtor, have gone door to door in the neighborhood and attempted to convince neighborhood residents to list their homes for sale or sell their homes to the investor. To VECAA, these tactics smack of block-busting. Because we consider these tactics illegal and because of complaints from numerous residents, VECAA has fought back. We have contacted state, city, and federal officials asking that they take action against these two concerns.

As a consequence, the Justice Department has assigned a staff attorney to our case. This attorney will be coming to Memphis personally to examine the facts in this case. In addition, this attorney has authorized an F.B.I. investigation of the tactics of these two concerns.

Please cooperate if you are called upon for information. If you have received a letter from these concerns or have talked to one of them personally please call MIKE KIRBY at 274-8709 in the evening or 274-1800 during the day. If I am not there, please leave a message and I will return your call. Also, you may write me at 2000 N. Parkway, Memphis, TN 38112.

Why is VECAA concerned about the activities of these firms? We are not opposed to normal real estate practices in the neighborhood. We have no concerns as to whether blacks or whites purchase homes in the neighborhood. What we do object to is the use of scare tactics and playing upon people's normal fears in getting listings in the neighborhood.

VECAA will not tolerate these unethical and/or illegal activities in its neighborhood.

VECAA Election

The VECAA electoral process was set into motion in January in order to provide new officers for 1977. A slate of nominees was prepared by VECAA officials and ballots have been mailed to all paid-up members. The ballots are now being returned and the results will be announced in the March issue. The candidates are:

*President (Chairman): Mike Kirby - 683 N. Idlewild
 Vice-President: Marcia Heitzmann - 745 N. Hawthorne
 Vice-President: Carl Holmes - 695 Dickinson
 Vice-President: Jean Scruggs - 984 N. Idlewild
 *Treasurer: Irving Sachritz - 889 Sheridan

*Incumbent

The organizational structure is being modified to include three vice - presidents (instead of one), each of which will be responsible for a different area of activity. This restructuring is also being put to a vote of the membership.

Around The Neighborhood

Southwestern's Center for Continuing Education is again offering courses for students of all ages. Some began in January, others have not yet started. All carry moderate tuition charges and are taught by experts in each field.

Already underway is "Western Man: The Hebrew Heritage", led by religion professor FRED NEAD and taught by various College faculty. The course deals with events in Israel's history and the extent to which they influence our contemporary culture. Also underway is "Our Greek Heritage", as experienced through the works of Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides and others.

Beginning in February is a course entitled "Spiritual Values in Literature". Led by FRANK FAUX, this study group will be available either mornings (starting Feb. 22) or evenings (starting Feb. 8). Through works such as J.B., Siddhartha, The Old Man and the Sea, the group will seek to understand the human condition as seen by novelists. The fee is \$22.50 (\$30 for married couples) and includes books.

Coming up in March and April are several more sessions. Included will be a study of Japanese culture, a symposium on changing values in today's society, language courses for travelers and others. Also planned is a summer course on the Biblical history and archaeology in Israel. Information on all programs can be obtained by calling 274-6606.

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Several Southwestern faculty members who reside in the V/E community were recently elevated at the College. YERGER CLIFTON (1539 N. Parkway) and CHARLES WARREN (1696 F rest) were promoted to full professors, VECAA Chairman MIKE KIRBY (683 N. Idlewild) was promoted to associate professor and MARSHALL McMAHON (767 West Drive) was granted tenure. GRANVILLE DAVIS (1960 N. Parkway) who recently retired was awarded a citation for distinguished service to Southwestern.

* * *

The Lewis Center for Senior Citizens has a new executive director and a new recreation director. SAM AKERS, who served for over a year as recreation director, was appointed to run the Center effective January 1. JIM ANDERSON will replace Mr. Akers as recreation director.

* * *

The City's Office of Community Development has compiled a directory of neighborhood associations in Memphis. Information provided includes location, officers and activities. Interested parties should contact MARILYN ROWLAND at 528-2860.

The Southwestern Continuing Education Center is sponsoring Thursday night sessions at three-week intervals (the next one will be on Feb. 24) on public policy formulation. Stemming from an effort by District 5 City Councilman BOB JAMES, the sessions will attempt to "educate" politicians as to urban problems as seen by the citizen. In fact, the sessions hope to highlight the "office of citizen". Holders of this office have a responsibility to contribute to the legislative process. Residents of District 5, and especially V/E residents, are urged to attend.

* * *

Congratulations are due Evergreen News art editor, BRAD McMILLAN, on the occasion of his recent (Jan. 15) marriage to CAROLYN MILLER. Ms. Miller is originally from Dallas and came to Memphis to attend Southwestern. She is employed as an administrative assistant with a major Memphis insurance company. The couple will live at 1906 Mignon.

Brad has recently equipped a studio at this address. He is presently doing commissioned art work and is set up to provide framing services. He provides custom framing, matting and related services at very reasonable rates.

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Polk Agee, Architect

by Karen Tynes

The oldest practicing architect in Tennessee lives in the V/E area at 1874 N. Rainbow Drive. He is also the man who is responsible for much of the grace and charm of our neighborhood. Eighty-five-year-old POLK AGEE drafted all of that grace and charm with his pencil back in the 1930's and '40's when the land north of Vollintine Avenue was developed. Though he has worked in every kind of architectural style imaginable, his favorites are, fortunately for the neighborhood, Tudor and Colonial style.

Born in Helena, Arkansas, Mr. Agee took time out from the normal things boys do to draw out plans for woodland cabins and playhouses. When it came time for college, though, he first tried engineering at the University of Arkansas. Later he went to the Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago. He returned to Arkansas to start his career as architect and in 1922 moved to Memphis. He kept his office in the Sterick Building for many years and now works out of his home.

One enters his office by going down a wrought-iron framed stairwell that leads from the driveway to the basement. This entrance leads to a beautiful and homey den and from there to Mr. Agee's gallery. Here are hung but a few renderings of the 4000 structures he has designed. Many are familiar, especially the grand castle-like home on Walnut Grove with the round tower on one side. Chickasaw Gardens also contains several of his Tudor designs, each very graceful and functional, planned with real people in mind.

When asked his favorite type of design work, he instantly replies "private homes". Because of the people he meets, of course. His clients become his friends. Mr. Agee says he has worked with people in every stage of life—just married, just divorced, expecting a new addition to the family and bereaved.

Mr. Agee has a lot of tales to relate about his clients. One woman, for example, called on him to make sure that her home would be warm enough. She wanted a coal furnace that could be converted to gas. Then she wanted a gas outlet and a fireplace in every room, including the bathroom. Mr. A-

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gee agreed to put a small fireplace across one corner of the bathroom on one condition: she should never tell anyone who designed her house. Another client ask him to design a beautiful home as a present to his wife, hoping that it might save their marriage. (It didn't work, he said.)

If that particular client was dissatisfied it is certain that later owners of Mr. Agee's homes are not. Both editors of the Evergreen News live in houses designed by him. In fact, the home of editor RICK THOMAS at 1860 Monticello Drive was the model home for the subdivision near Vollintine and McLean. Called the "Liberty House", it was designed to sell for \$10,000 in 1938.

Mr. Agee married his wife MARGARET in 1927 and the couple will celebrate their 50th anniversary this year. They will have lots of help at the celebration with six grown children to share the occasion.

Quotable

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home. . .so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

— Eleanor Roosevelt

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V/E Membership Drive

Continuing for the next few weeks households in the Vollintine/Evergreen community will be telephoned and the families asked to either become new members of VECAA or to renew their original memberships.

In order for VECAA to be successful this year, we are going to need your help. When you are contacted, please agree to pay the \$2.50 family membership fee. Please mail your payment to the address shown below at your earliest convenience. This money will help pay for services such as mailing, compiling reports, student assistants, etc.

Issues such as zoning, redlining, housing deterioration, and problems of the retired and elderly have been only a few of VECAA's major concerns. Your community organization needs your continued moral and financial support.

Vollintine-Evergreen Community Action Association
1977 NEW AND RENEWAL MEMBERSHIP 1977

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WANTED TO RENT: Young professional man desires nice, quiet apartment, duplex or home in the V/E area. Call Charlie Hill at 528-2860.

Address all correspondence to: The Evergreen News, 1906 Mignon Avenue, Memphis, TN 38107.

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