



# Coventry Village News

February, 1989

The Newsletter of Coventry Neighbors, Inc.

Volume 13 No. 2

## CNI meetings set for February 14 and March 14

The regular monthly meetings of Coventry Neighbors, Inc., are held on the second Tuesday of each month, at the Coventry Village Library, 7:45 PM. Everyone is welcome, but only dues-paid members may vote.

All memberships expire at the end of each year, so all members who have not already done so are reminded to send us your 1989 dues.

### *Miracle on Coventry . . .*

#### *Five of six businesses closed by fire are back*

On December 10, just 25 days after a devastating fire closed six Coventry Village businesses, Tommy's Restaurant, Coventry Cats, and High Tide/Rock Bottom reopened in temporary quarters at 1820 Coventry Road.

Passport to Peru, after a complete re-stocking and thorough scrubbing of the space, reopened on Saturday, December 3.

Carroll Drug opened its doors on Friday, December 16.

Of the six businesses affected by the fire, only Phil Imperi's dental office remains closed. Dr. Imperi is seeing patients, on an emergency basis, at another location.

The swift reopening of High Tide, Tommy's, and Coventry Cats was the product of weeks of around-the-clock work. Without smooth cooperation among the merchants, their landlord, his architect, and the municipal government, the task would have been impossible. City inspectors, who usually work only standard business hours, gave final approval of the project at about 7:00 AM on December 10, just

before Tommy's scheduled opening at 7:30.

A few days after the fire, the basement of 1824 Coventry was turned into a sort of Santa's workshop, with a crew of a half-dozen workers scrubbing, cleaning, and polishing salvageable items from High Tide and Coventry Cats. For all the businesses involved, items made of cloth or paper were destroyed or sold to outside salvage firms. Only items made of hard, non-porous materials like ceramics and metals could be saved.

Some problems continue for the reopened businesses. Carroll Drug and Passport to Peru are now heated only with space heaters. It is unclear when steam pipes can be installed to supply heat to these storefronts.

## Broad-based neighborhood effort nets \$4,500 for the victims of November fire

### *Diverse elements come together in fund-raising effort*

### *And a theme song in the bargain*

A bank, a night club, and a car wash joined forces with a community theatre, a neighborhood organization, and hundreds of ordinary citizens to raise more than \$4,700 for the victims of the November 15 fire.

The money was distributed in equal shares to the twelve households forced out by the fire. The twenty-nine people in those households included young people in their first apartment away from home, two senior citizens, an Indian doctor, and families from China and Japan.

*Continued on page 2*

Donor and beneficiary groups alike reflected the immense and cherished diversity of this community.

The fund-raising effort began the day after the fire, when Society Bank seeded the a fund with \$500. Jars for cash contributions were placed in a dozen area businesses. More than half the money raised was placed in these jars, or given to the bank in many small contributions.

A benefit performance of Alan Ayckbourn's *A Chorus of Disapproval*, at Dobama Theatre on December 8, brought in about \$250.

Star Wash Car Wash, a new facility on the south side of Mayfield Road west of Lee, contributed \$900—a dollar for each car through the business during its first three days of

operation.

At Turkey Ridge Tavern, on December 18, two dozen of the area's best-known nightclub musicians gave benefit performances, and \$1,000 was raised for the fire victims.

Most of the artists who performed at Turkey Ridge that night had come together a few weeks earlier to record a theme song for the event. Among them were Jason White, from the Janglers, Jennifer Lee and Sasha from Michael Stanley and Friends, Evelyn Wright from the Evelyn Wright Project, and Tom Jares from the French Lenards. The recording was made at Audio Recording Studios, the region's leading high-tech recording facility. Copies of the recording went to most local radio stations, several of which gave it repeated broadcast exposure.

That—with a lot of leg work—attracted the attention of all three television news organizations, each of whom used the story in evening news broadcasts.

Jane Scott, who covers rock-n-roll for *The Plain Dealer*, devoted her entire column to the event and its theme song in the *Friday Magazine* of December 16. Ms. Scott ended her column saying, "Hopefully, the song will go on getting play on local radio stations, even after the event is over."

It will. Brad Thomas, who wrote music and lyrics, and Gary Wells, who staged and promoted the December 18 event, intend to use the song again in the effort to promote a summer event in Coventry Village. —LB

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Anyone wishing to submit copy to the *Coventry Village News* may do so by sending it to the Editor, *Coventry Village News*, 2776 Hampshire Road, Apt. 1-B, Cleveland Heights, Ohio, 44106.

The deadline for each month is the 16th day of the preceding month. While no unsigned material will be used, names may be withheld from publication at the writer's request.

Phone: 371-6095.

**Coventry Village . . .**

*where we all get along together  
pretty well.*

## Library Goings-on

Registration is being held in January and April for sign language classes at Civenry Village Library. These clsaaes are made possible through the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Department of Community Services.

The Proud Hands Sign Language Club meets on the second and forth Mondays of each month. It is open to hearing and deaf people of all ages. Games, jokes, songs and stories are used.

Poetry readings are held on the first Sunday of each month, at 2:30 PM. John Gabel and Bonnie Jacobson will read on February 5.

## Snow removal effort begins with support of Development Corp.

### Patrick Murphy Foundation grant will buy equipment

A new snow-removal program began with the first snow on December 10. The effort is funded by the Coventry Village Development Corporation (CVDC), which has raised more than \$2,700 so far from merchants and landlords.

A grant of \$2,500 from the Patrick Murphy Foundation will make it possible for the CVDC to purchase a power-driven snow plow. The Gravely two-wheel tractor the CVDC is now considering for purchase can be fitted with a variety of attachments for other tasks, including sweeping sidewalks and mowing lawns.

The CVDC is offering its workers \$8.00 per hour for the hard labor of manual snow shovelling. Anyone willing to do this work is invited to call 371-6095.

Larry Beam, who manages the snow removal program for CVDC, said that the new snow plow should make it possible to clear not just the sidewalks of the business district, but some additional sidewalks as well. "We'll try to keep walks clean between Coventry and Musicians Towers," he said.

Until now, the Coventry Merchants Association (CMA) has been responsible for financing the litter clean-up efforts in the area. Because the CMA is a purely voluntary group, its ability to raise money for the common purposes of the merchant community has been limited.

### Grant money will make it possible to clear walks to Musicians Towers.

The \$100 annual dues paid by CMA's approximately twenty members represents all the

money the organization has been able to raise in the last several years. When a key piece of equipment broke down last year, continuation of the litter clean-up program was possible only because Coventry Neighbors, Inc. contributed half the cost of replacing the troubled machine. CMA never attempted a snow removal program.

For an increasing number of merchants—now fifteen—contributions to the CVDC are *not* voluntary. The leases offered by most area landlords now *require* participation in the CVDC. As more leases are renewed, an increasing number of merchants will be required to pay, and the resources available to the CVDC will rise. All merchants received statements requesting payments to the CVDC. Several merchants whose leases don't require it have made these payments voluntarily. Some small shops pay as little as \$60 in this first phase of the program. The largest shops pay as much as \$240.

The CVDC expects to assume responsibilities for the litter pick-up and flower plantings efforts as soon as next summer. The organization will add marketing and promotional activities to these basic services as its income rises.

## Old wires caused fire, Captain Maver says; other experts agree

### Concern for other old buildings

Cleveland Heights Fire Warden Robert Maver told the December meeting of Coventry Neighbors, Inc., that the November 15 fire began with the building's wiring. Wires in the space between the ceiling of High Tide/Rock Bottom and the apartment above apparently overheated, igniting the wooden structure of the building. Insurance industry experts who have reviewed Captain Maver's findings concur.

The fire was discovered in the basement of High Tide/Rock Bottom. Captain Maver said

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### Wires caused fire . . . from previous page

that the fire spread there only after smoldering unnoticed for several hours in the walls and floors of the building.

Captain Maver said that the wiring that caused the fire was probably installed when the structure was built, in 1926. This copper wire was insulated with a wrapping of linen or silk. Over long periods of time, Maver said, these materials can go through physical and chemical changes that dramatically lower the temperature at which they can catch fire. Other changes can lead to the development of what Maver called "high resistance faults"—areas of the wires which quite easily overheat.

Captain Maver, who also carries the title Fire Warden and is in charge of fire safety in Cleveland Heights, said that the changes that old wires can undergo make possible the development of extremely dangerous situations even when circuits are not overloaded. Problems of this sort often cannot be discovered by the usual inspection techniques.

Standards of public safety in 1926 allowed each apartment unit to be served by just one fifteen-ampere circuit. That's easily enough to operate a toaster or other similar appliance. But it isn't enough to supply two such appliances at the same time. That makes overloading a possibility, but there is no evidence of it in this case.

The fire did most of its damage to the apartments on the second floor of the building. Apartments at 1808 Coventry, above High Tide, Coventry Cats, Phil Imperi DDS, and a portion of Tommy's Restaurant were completely destroyed by fire. So was the roof of the building above these shops. Apartments above Carol Drug and Passport to Peru never actually became involved in fire; but, like the businesses downstairs, they suffered lots of damage from smoke and water. A total of twelve apartments, housing twenty-nine people, were destroyed or made unlivable by the blaze.

A crew of demolition workers spent the week following the fire removing charred and damaged parts of the building.

Reconstruction will have to wait at least until spring. —LB

## Strategic Development Plan calls for maintenance and new economic development

The City of Cleveland Heights recently released to the public copies of a "Strategic Development Plan" that has been in the works for several years. The twenty-one page document makes clear the local government's strong will to pursue economic development and housing maintenance in order to sustain the the community's high quality of life.

Copies of the Strategic Plan, in shortened form, will in the coming months be distributed to every household in the city.

Little has been added to the long-term plan since it was presented in verbal form to Coventry Neighbors, Inc., by Planning Commission Chair Jack Boyle last year. But now Mr. Boyle's ideas have been organized into a single document, and broad concensus has been built in support of them. City Council formally adopted the Strategic Plan some months ago.

City Council now seems willing to offer the sorts of public subsidies that may be necessary to call forth the huge amounts of private investment that the Plan envisions. The Council is, for instance, studying an offer of tax abatement to the developers of a large residential building at Severance. Financing for that project will come, in part, from a federal grant of more than four million dollars.

Much of the effort to implement the Strategic Plan will be led by a "development czar," or economic development coordinator. The person hired for this recently-created job will report directly to the City Manager, and will apparently be given substantial powers.

Another key player will be a new Director of Planning and Development. Mark Majewski, the incumbent planning head, will depart on January 20 for a private-sector job. The new Director will also oversee annual review of the Plan.

Parts of the Plan will stir considerable controversy. Among its goals is the large-scale redevelopment of the east side of Coventry Road.

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## Around Coventry . . .

**Turkey Ridge . . .** Marty Rosenblum, proprietor of Turkey Ridge Tavern and Eatery, 1860 Coventry Road, and his day manager, Mark Bock, have made some big changes there in the past fifteen months. Most importantly, the old tough-guy atmosphere of the place has been replaced by something much more mellow and mature.

The nightly live music, once the hardest rock in town, has softened a bit. Hootfoot Quartet, a bluegrass band, will perform there on January 22 and 29. And Hollywood Slim, a delightful jazz group, will entertain on January 6 and 20.

The menu is due for revision in January. And many small improvements to the physical plant add up to a brighter, cleaner and more cheerfull ambiance.

**Star Wash . . .** There is now a car wash near Coventry Village—on the south side of Mayfield Road, west of Lee Road. For as little as \$1.50 you can use a self-serve bay. And for \$3.00 to \$5.00, you can have the job done by a robot-like machine that never touches the car, except with high-pressure streams of water. One option washes the salt from the bottom of your car. Another coats the car with wax.

There's some sophisticated technology behind all this. The second floor of Star Wash Car Wash look more like the inside of a submarine than anything one would expect to find in a car wash. A complex maze of pipes and tanks heat and treat water.

The result is a quality service at a reasonable price. Best, it's close to home and open all night.

**Old fashion . . .** The newest shop here is The Cleveland Shop, at 1868 Coventry. This one is a second outlet for proprietor Maureen Burns, whose shops both offer "vintage clothing—Victorian through Psychedelic 60's" for sale or rental. The shop also offers imported military surplus clothing.

**Hyde Park Grille . . .** After just five months of operation, Hyde Park Grille was rated twentieth (of twenty-five) in a *Cleveland*

*Magazine* list of the area's finest restaurants. Joe Saccone, a partner in the business, says he fully expects to be among the top ten next year.

A new Hyde Park Grille opened on December 12 near Columbus. Rick Hauck and Mr. Saccone, who have operated the Hyde Park Grille for nearly a year now, are joined in the new venture by Alton Doody. Mr. Doody built the Coventry restaurant, and operated it for two years under the name Bistrot des Artistes.

Under the direction of Columbus-based architect Lajos Szabo, architect for the Bistrot des Artistes, they spent about \$200,000 remodeling the old Cork Cleaver restaurant, at 1615 Old Henderson Road, West Arlington. The new Hyde Park Restaurant closely resembles the Coventry restaurant.

**The Inn on Coventry . . .** Bob Romback, the new chef at the Inn, has revised the menu and made a variety of other improvements to this eight-year-old Coventry establishment. Mr. Romback came to the Inn from the Watermark.

Sunday brunch at the Inn has several times been voted the second best in Cuyahoga County in a *Northern Ohio Live* survey. Earlier this year, *Cleveland Magazine* called that brunch the "best breakfast—East Side." It is worth the occasional wait for a table.

The menu includes a wide variety of seafood, pasta, home-cooked meals, and vegetarian items.

**Anniversary . . .** The Coventry Café, 1763 Coventry Road at Mayfield, apparently wants to be known again as Taj Mahal, the name of the place when it moved to this neighborhood about eight years ago. Its ownership recently circulated a coupon advertising a special, two-for-one dinner deal on curry dishes, as part of a "15th Anniversary celebration." The menu posted in its window contained no curry dishes.

The place appears to get very, very few customers—even with Irv's closed. Even in the weeks that Tommy's Restaurant was closed, it appeared to pick up almost no business.

The usual forces of the marketplace seem to

*Continued on next page*



have no influence on its proprietor, Raj Mathur. He's kept the place open, on and off, for an awfully long time—with nearly no visible customers.

Nor do local laws requiring some reasonable minimum standards of building maintenance seem to affect Mr. Mathur. A building that could be a real showpiece has declined severely under his ownership.

If the local government really is serious about using all its tools to encourage economic development, it should act swiftly to force Mathur from the ownership of that key building. Faced on Taylor Road with a building less deteriorated than this one, the City Council offered very substantial financial assistance to new owners who have made a show-piece of it. The same could happen here. But the government, again, will have to help.

**Thanks . . .** An awful lot of people and institutions in Coventry Village contributed to the effort that raised \$4,700 for the fire victims. Among them were: Grum's Sub Shop, Hyde Park Grille, The Inn on Coventry, Arabica, Turkey Ridge, Coventry Pizza, Tommy's Restaurant, Bob's Place, Heights Hardware, Hunan on Coventry, and Mac's Backs Books.

### **Strategic Plan . . . from page 4**

On the point of vacant land called the Top-of-the-Hill, where Euclid Heights Boulevard and Cedar Road come together, the Plan calls for "mixed use development containing high density and high value residential and commercial uses." Over the last decade, specific proposals for both these sites have found angry opposition and strong support in this town. —LB

### **Coventry Village in the Strategic Development Plan**

*The following paragraphs were selected from the new Strategic Development Plan, dated August, 1988, but released to the public only in recent weeks:*

Coventry Village, an urban pedestrian-oriented commercial district, has great potential. Presently, it has some deteriorated physical

conditions, a visually chaotic appearance, and a shortage of parking. Coventry is a gateway to the city; it is positioned adjacent to Mayfield Road, the heaviest traveled arterial in Cleveland Heights, and is "up the hill" from the thriving University Circle area in Cleveland. It is also adjacent to the largest and most dense apartment district in the city. Coventry is known throughout the metropolitan region, and is sometimes considered a barometer of the city's overall condition. Due to Coventry's strengths and appeal, it must be improved to reach its potential.

It is critical that a well coordinated development program consisting of the following elements be implemented:

1. Zoning—To ensure coordinated and well planned development, all of Coventry should be designated a planned development district.

2. Infrastructure and Streetscape Project—To improve the general appearance of the district and to provide an attractive and safe environment for merchants and shoppers, improvements to infrastructure and streetscaping should be constructed.

3. Redevelopment on the East side of Coventry Road—Some low value and blighted

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### **"The east side of Coventry Road . . . should be redeveloped"**

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commercial and residential structures should be redeveloped to create a large site which could anchor the district and provide more jobs and tax revenues. The City and two other land-owners hold the majority of this land.

4. Parking Plan—it is critical that sufficient parking be made available in the district. This could include new or expanded parking areas and shared parking in the residential lots.

[The] South side of Euclid Heights between Mornington Lane and Coventry [...] is a prime Coventry Village location. Redevelopment of this area will require property assembly. This site would be excellent for innovative housing such as cluster, zero-lot line, or townhouses.

The terrain could require imaginative site planning.

Parking Lot #30 at Euclid Heights and Lancashire [...] is located at the edge of the Coventry apartment district and is close to University Circle. It is underutilized and could be considered as a site for future multi-family housing.

[The local government should] target resources to maintain North Coventry [i.e., the part of this neighborhood north of Mayfield Road]. This area has the city's largest concentration of two-family houses and low-moderate income residents. The city must aid property owners so that housing does not deteriorate beyond repair. However, if homes deteriorate to a point where they are unsafe and are not economically feasible to repair, the city should acquire those properties for parking, pocket parks, or land banking for redevelopment.

The Mayfield Road frontage of North Coventry, now occupied by apartments and commercial properties[,] is too shallow for redevelopment. Opportunities should be sought to assemble parcels for redevelopment. At this point, it is not clear what the appropriate reuse should be.

## Beethoven, Brahms and Chopin on Unitarian Society program

Pianist Mark George will perform a program including works by Brahms, Beethoven, Chopin, and Prokofieff on Sunday, January 15, 3:00 PM at the Unitarian Society of Cleveland, 2728 Lancashire Road in Coventry Village.

Mr. George recently earned a Doctor of Musical Arts award from the Cleveland Institute of Music. In 1984, he was a finalist in the Fishoff Chamber Music Competition a member of the Greencastle Trio. More recently, he received the Robert Weiskoph Award at CIM.

The program is part of the Discoveries Community Concerts, sponsored by the Unitarian Society. Though no one is turned away for being unable to pay, a donation of \$5 (\$3 for students and Seniors) is requested.

On February 19, 3:00 PM, Ann Christensen, violin, and Rose Shlyam, piano, will offer a concert of work by Mozart, Brahms, and do Sarasate.

## "We call this place home" is event's theme

Here are the lyrics to the song "We call this place home" used as a theme for the fundraiser at Turkey Ridge Tavern on December 18. The song will be used again as the theme for other Coventry Village events.

By Brad Thomas, © 1987

There have been so many miles  
On oh so many roads now  
In a life of change and uncertainty  
A man needs a place to call home now

And a woman needs to be a part of something  
Even if it isn't always there  
Once it used to me just  
Nighttime on some highway  
Now every road is leading  
To this place that we all share

We call this place home  
Here is where we all want to be  
Sunshine on the sand  
River to the sea  
Everyone is in you and me  
Call this place home

Every night I have a sweet dream  
Every day I see what love means  
In sight of what we all can be  
A sweet Ohio dream

As time goes by we've come to learn  
That we really need each other  
We don't criticize—we realize  
That our neighbor, he's our brother.

Sometimes when I give thanks  
I look into the sky  
There's that same old tear  
Right behind my eye  
It's a feeling you can't have unless you try  
And you just have to look around  
To see the reason why

We call this place home  
Here is where we all want to be  
Sunshine on the sand  
River to the sea  
Everyone is in you and me  
Call this place home

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The next regular meetings of Coventry Neighbors, Inc. will be held on Tuesdays, February 14 and March 14 at the Coventry Village Library.

Join Coventry Neighbors, Inc. Today! You must be a member for at least 30 days to vote at our meetings. ALL MEMBERSHIPS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS EXPIRE AT THE END OF EACH YEAR.

Please indicate the class of membership you want:

\_\_\_\_ Individual (\$7.00)      \_\_\_\_ Family (\$10.00)      \_\_\_\_ Senior (\$3.00)  
\_\_\_\_ Just a subscription to the *Coventry Village News* (\$7.00)

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