



COVENTRY

VILLAGE NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF COVENTRY VILLAGE NEIGHBORS INC.

September 1998

From the President's Den

On election night, after the last presidential bout, an old acquaintance called, "We won! We won! We did it again!" Larry was ecstatic and expected I would be as well. My excited friend was aghast when I told him that I wasn't that thrilled with Bill Clinton's first term and couldn't vote for him a second time. I explained, after his first election, I was energized. I had never felt so good about a candidate and his chances of success. I felt he really wanted to be president so that he could make the changes he felt were necessary to make America great. Clinton had better odds than most any presidential candidate did in my lifetime and he blew them. I told him that my job as a voter in the United States was to cast my vote for the best candidate. I voted for the Naturalist Party candidate Dr. John Hagelin.

"How could Mr. Democrat desert the party?"

I responded that I didn't desert the party, they deserted me. They were now more interested in re-election than in doing the good work elections are held to facilitate. The election is a game; the prize is insignificant.

During the 70's I truly believed that if we worked to elect the correct people, the outcome would be a society better equipped to handle the future. After high school, I started working for and supporting various Democratic candidates and ultimately ran for Maple Heights city council. I could make a difference; I could help my fellow human being. I felt people could/should/would make the right decisions if provided with the appropriate facts.

Over the years, many things have led to my disillusionment. The blatant political excesses of Richard Celeste, the outcome of some Maple Heights elections with which I was involved, the failure to re-elect Dennis Kucinich, and especially John Gilligan. These milestones slowly rotted my confidence. Will Rogers' comments were losing their irony.

I keep an old excerpt from the Cleveland Press published the day after Gilligan was defeated in favor of sending Jim Rhodes back to Columbus. I read it often, and it never fails to ring true.

"In my opinion, Gilligan's defeat means absolutely nothing in the grand design, except to underscore a long held belief that many Ohio voters are anomalous and unpredictable simply because, when confronted with productive controversy versus comfortable mediocrity, they pay no attention to party label and habitually and traditionally cast their lot with comfortable mediocrity."

I wish I knew who wrote this so I could give proper credit. The failed presidential aspirations of John Anderson and Morris Udall led more credence to the idea that good quality candidates with sound ideas and well thought out plans take a back seat to fluff and posturing (see Ronald Reagan).

We now find the nation concerned with the genitalia of our political leaders instead of the brain matter. Fodder for speculating sexual proclivity rather than critiquing public policy seems to be the extent of their worth. Our expectations have tumbled that low. I and I expect, most Americans wouldn't care if Bill Clinton had an affair with ALL of the White House interns if his moral impudence were balanced by solid achievements, fair laws, righteous decisions and even handed justice. Marital indiscretions linked with a marginal job performance don't provide much reason to defend his presidency. Political involvement has however slipped so low, that outrage doesn't even register. We expect little from our public servants and are never disappointed.

During high school, I argued alone in Civics and Physics class (when the instructor finished his lesson plan, class was open for debate) the merits of George McGovern's candidacy. My classmates called me stupid and ALL supported Richard Nixon. I predicted Watergate would be a deathblow to Nixon. I told them I would throw a party when he was finally booted from office. For five years I celebrated the resignation of the president with the biggest parties in my social circle. I still smile silently each August 9th. As much as I'd like it to be, the fact that I was right and they were wrong is not the point. The point is an entire class of thirty high school students knew enough about politicians and public policy to fight about it most every day.

An idea implied in the movie "The Ice Storm", vilified one I have been professing since that time; the decline of America's trust in their elected officials and involvement in

the political process can be linked directly to the resignation of Richard Nixon. Just prior to that event, young people grabbed hold of political power. They held politics passionately in their heart. They tried tirelessly to work for the "greater good". Their reward was the re-election of a crooked politician. The more conservative older adults who had placed their faith in the cloth coat of "the new Nixon" were equally disgraced. Their belief in a righteous man was shattered. For young and old, liberal and conservative, Democrat and Republican, the near impeachment of the president pointed to the beginning of the end. Young people stopped believing that they could "change the world". They started to examine themselves for the sake of themselves without regard to others. The 80's turned into an ugly time of personal excess. Older Americans started to question the faith they had placed in their leaders for the last fifty years. Was their involvement a waste of time? Did they blindly follow hollow leadership? Was their patriotic nature a lie? The result has been twenty years of steady, but assured decline in voter participation, and respect for those leaders.

Unfortunately, the answer to loss of faith in elected officials is not to stop voting, but to work harder at electing officials that do meet the high standards of personal and professional excellence. That has become increasingly difficult but it usually proves to be easier in the local political arena where you often know the politician, and they rely on their connection to you for votes.

I thought about this last month as I sat in two meetings. I have been working with the other Coventry organizations to find an equitable and balanced solution for the parking problem that plagues our neighborhood. During a council meeting that many merchants, apartment dwellers and residents attended, the council listened politely and then informed us that they could do nothing. The money was simply not available. A few weeks later, at a neighborhood meeting to discuss the idea of parking on the median strip along Euclid Heights Boulevard, the Mayor started to alter his hard line against city involvement. He was clearly more conciliatory. It sounds like he will think more seriously about the issue. Was he being convinced of the merit of the idea because he knew and presumably respected the audience members making comments or was he protecting his political hide? I believe he was trying his best. Unlike the state and national politicians we elect to serve so far from home, the local politicians can be held much more accountable. Deep down inside, they want to do a better job because it is not a career, but "part-time" paid community work that supports their real estate investment, helps their neighbors and builds a strong life for their family.

So then why is America, with all its frailties still the Mecca for hundred of thousand of emigrants? Are they unaware of the problems we have or are our problems smaller in comparison? Maybe the old adage is true; this is the worst country in the world except for all the others. Ignoring the

first half of the statement, people come to a place they perceive to be better than their home. Many of us who were born in the United States have started to ignore the second half. Our political leaders make it very easy to do. The emigrants remind us that there is still hope, the hope that this country still alludes to on some brief occasions. Like the glint of a chance that there is some money in the city coffers to finance equitable parking for the entire area, a glimmer of hope sneaks out and shows its face just enough to make us believe we were still in Kansas.

Jeffrey R. Dross
President, Coventry Neighbors



COVENTRY FAIR SENT BACK TO THE BLACKBOARD

At the July meeting of Coventry Neighbors, Inc, the Coventry Road Merchants proposed a September Coventry Road Fair. The event was to have been held in the Coventry Road Elementary School parking lot on Sunday from noon to about 8:00 PM. The afternoon of music, food and family activity met with objection primarily due to the proposed location. The assembled residents liked the idea of a Fair, but did not like the idea of moving the festivities into the residential district. Some attendees pushed for a street fair, with Coventry Road being closed from Euclid Heights to Mayfield (shades of the old Street Fair come to mind!) Bonnie Caplan explained that closing a main street is a VERY difficult operation. She pleaded for an alternate. The most popular option was closing the main parking lot behind Medic and transforming that into the fairgrounds. Another idea was turning the parking garage into an indoor midway. A resolution was made to support the event, but send it back to the Coventry SID for more discussion on a less obtrusive locale. It looks like the first possible date might be next spring.

COVENTRY GARDENS ON THE MOVE

The hole has been closed, the fence has been ripped down, the stone has been scooped away and the temporary walkways have been removed. The construction site actually looks good after so many months of work-day blight. As many of you are aware, we have been working to beautify this corner of our neighborhood. If we want this area to be something more than a grassy playground we need to start developing methods to fund the rehabilitation and plant installation. During some of the upcoming meetings we will again discuss methods for meeting our goal of a "beautiful place" to enjoy, at the center of our neighborhood.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING DEBATES THE MEDIAN STRIP PARKING

Last month, a meeting was held at the Unitarian Church on Lancashire Road to debate the idea of turning the median strip on Euclid Heights Boulevard between Coventry Road and Lancashire Road into a strip of parking spots. When this proposal was first brought to the attention of the neighbors at a Coventry Neighbors' meeting this spring, it was met with very little resistance. With an attendance of nearly one hundred neighbors, this outcome was slightly different. Most every resident who spoke objected strongly to the proposal. The merchants, who commented, said they would never force this on the neighborhood, but were looking for some way to alleviate their customer's perception that parking was not available in the Coventry shopping district. Many people did not believe the merchants had a problem. Some even irrationally suggested that the merchants could tell their employees where to park (I wonder how far away from their office they park?) Still others treated this as an environmental issue, with their primary concern being the death of some older trees and replacement with new, surrounded by asphalt . . . *not a healthy thing in their minds*. The meeting did again bring to light the need for a comprehensive parking plan for the Coventry neighborhood; one that would serve the merchants, residents, landlords and tenants. Coventry Neighbors, The Coventry SID, North Coventry Landlords Association and the Coventry Branch of the Library are all working to that end. The city officials heard the plea clearly. Let's hope their ears were open.

DID YOU MISS LAST MONTHS ISSUE?

Last month we presented an issues with an update on many of the issues that concern those of us that live in the Coventry Neighborhood. If you missed those articles and some interesting commentary from local organizational leaders you should renew or enroll for membership in Coventry Neighbors, Inc. It could be the best little amount of money you spend.

WILTON ROAD CROSSWALK

In four years, automobiles at the Wilton Road crosswalk have struck two school-aged children over Euclid Heights Boulevard. Shortly after the last accident, the parents of that child fought to have some changes made to insure that another child does not need to risk the same fate. The parents believe that the ultimate solution to the problem is a pedestrian activated traffic signal. They cite the increase in automobile traffic, heavy foliage, glaring sun and the steep slope of the road near the crosswalk as reasons for the need. The officials responsible feel that the parents of the struck child may be taking a more reactive stance than necessary. The parents are asking for your help. If you believe that a pedestrian activated traffic signal is a good answer to this budding problem, write to the Cleveland Heights City Council and lend your support to this possibly life saving endeavor.

OUR SEPTEMBER MEETING

The past few meetings have been filled with lots of exciting news and information. During the May meeting the city presented parking options for the Coventry Merchants District that included re-routing Hampshire and Lancashire Roads and adding parking to the median strip on Euclid Heights Boulevard. The proposed expansion of the Centrum Theatre was announced at the June meeting. Controversy erupted at the same meeting because of the changes in traffic patterns on Hampshire and Lancashire Roads. The July meeting turned into a conversation on the Coventry Fair. These last minute issues all placed in the back seat our scheduled discussion on what we as an organization can do to protect our investments against the blight of our deteriorating neighbor's property. That slight will be rectified this month. Without fail, we will have that discussion. Our sister organization, The Cain Park Landlords Association has some good ideas, I mentioned many of them last issue. Can we apply any of them in our neighborhood? Please come and offer your opinion. The next meeting will be held at the Coventry Branch of the CH-UH Library located at the intersection of Coventry Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard. The meeting starts at 7:45 PM on Tuesday September 8, 1998.

LETTER FROM JIMMIE HICKS JR.

Because of the way change was made in the traffic patterns on Hampshire and Lancashire Roads, a number of residents took exception to the methods the city used. In combination with the other Coventry organizations, we wrote a letter expressing displeasure with its handling. Cleveland Heights City Council member Jimmie Hicks, Jr. came to the defense of the Community Relations Director in a letter to our organization.

I fully understand that some community members were upset by the change to one way traffic patterns on Hampshire and Lancashire Roads.

Please understand that Susanna Niermann O'Neil our Director of Community Relations is very good at her job and she advised Council to have an additional meeting with the community.

Council decided that since this was not a permanent solution and it could be reversed at any time, we would not have any more meetings. We thought this would be in the best interest of Coventry Village.

In the future please remember that City staff only implements the directives of Council, therefore, please direct your complaints to us.

*Jimmie Hicks, Jr.
Member of Council*

Chair of Community Relations & Recreation

Coventry Village News is published by Coventry Neighbors, Inc. The newsletter is distributed free throughout Coventry Village. Mailed subscriptions are available. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month at 7:40 p.m. at the Coventry Village Library, Euclid Heights Boulevard. & Coventry Road.

When you join Coventry Neighbors, Inc. you can be sure of having a voice in shaping your neighborhood's future. Membership includes a subscription to the Coventry Village News.

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CNI needs street representatives to communicate with the local neighborhoods and assist with the delivery of the newsletter.

YES! I would like to assist CNI by becoming a CNI representative for my street.

Please return this form with your check to:

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Michele J. Ladouceur Expires: 8/20/98

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