

The *TIMES* of... SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

Vol. 36 No. 4

November-December 2005

FREE

The oldest neighborhood newspaper in St. Louis

Independent and all volunteer-run since 1970

Wintermarkt Returns to Skinker DeBaliviere

Wintermarkt, an outdoor arts and crafts fair sponsored for the fifth year in the Skinker DeBaliviere neighborhood, returns Saturday, December 3, 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. at Greg Freeman Park at Four Corners (the intersection of Kingsbury and Des Peres Blvd.).

Guests will stroll outdoors among booths set up by participating artists and craftsmen. Potters, glass blowers, photographers, jewelers, and many others will offer their finest wares. Neighborhood bakers will present fine food products from their ovens, both for snacking that day or for gifting further into the holiday season. Roasted chestnuts, hot dogs, hot beverages and other goodies will be offered. Musical entertainment features area choirs, a hand bell group, a capella performers from Washington University and more. Individual craftsmen will demonstrate their skills. Horse-drawn carriage rides can be purchased through the neighborhood. Come and share a creative afternoon of mer-



riment and anticipation in the finest European tradition.

The festivities continue no matter what the weather; if it's really cold, wear your boots and mittens and sample some spiced cider or gluhwein.

Last year, over thirty-five vendors afforded shoppers a wide variety of hand-crafted, one-of-a-kind gift items. Many are returning for their second or third year! Organized by members of the West End Arts Council, the event is funded in part by a grant from the Regional Arts Commission. Funds raised help underwrite programming for the community throughout the year. So don't miss out - visit this beautiful neighborhood, get in the holiday mood and be prepared for upcoming festivities.

Pageant Celebrates 5th Anniversary by Giving Back to the Community

By Jo Ann Vatcha

It's such a key part of the Delmar landscape, it feels like it's always been there; other times, it's hard to believe that five years have passed since the momentous construction of The Pageant. To mark their 5-year milestone, on October 19, 2005, Pageant partners Joe Edwards and Pat Hagin announced an exciting program launch which will benefit all segments of our diverse community.

Starting November 8, 2005, there will be a weekly on-line auction of autographed concert posters from the amazing array of artists who have appeared at the Pageant over the past five years, including Lenny Kravitz, Herbie Hancock, Billy Idol, Elvis Costello, Marilyn Manson, and many more, actually more than 100 more.

In thanking the staff of the Pageant, Pageant manager Pat Hagin started with "the greatest partner anyone could have," Joe Edwards. Together, they announced the poster auction which will benefit seven local community programs by sharing the auction proceeds equally among the recipients. The posters and the on-line auction idea are the brainchild of Pageant staffer artist

Jesse Raya.

The seven organizations which will benefit are:

Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Council, which has worked with churches, business owners, and Washington University for 40 years to improve their historic neighborhood. Edwards noted the important work of the Delmar Commercial Committee, a volunteer group of neighborhood residents and business owners, who have worked for a dozen years to plan and improve the Delmar streetscape. Also within the SDCC umbrella are the West End Arts Council and the SDCC Beautification Committee. Jo Ann Vatcha, Chair of the Delmar Commercial Committee, accepted the award.

West End Community Conference, incorporated in 1955, has worked to stabilize the city's west end north of Delmar, focusing on youth and family programs and on bringing homebuyers to the many new homes being built in the area. WECC also works with SDCC through the Delmar Commercial Committee. Ann Voss, a lifetime resident of the west end, also a

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CHRISTMAS CAROLING

On December 18 at 4:30 p.m., interested Carolers from the 6000 and 6100 blocks of McPherson are once again invited to share in Christmas festivities with their neighbors. Plans are to gather on the Rosedale/McPherson barricade and traverse the neighborhood singing carols. Afterwards, the Christmas carolers and friends are invited back to 6179

McPherson for fun and fellowship. Please bring your favorite holiday treats; hot chocolate and wassail punch will be provided.

This festive holiday activity is organized annually by your neighbors Dave Schmidt and Mary Schmit. David is a volunteer with the St. Louis Christmas Carol Association and can help you start a caroling tradition on your block.



MLK Day

Our great and diverse neighborhood celebrates the life and spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. each January with a Commemoration Celebration. This year's annual event is tentatively scheduled for January 15, 2006.

Committee Chairman Liz Johnston, daughter of Jack Wright, one of the founders of this long-time tradition in the neighborhood, invites anyone interested in helping plan the event to contact the Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Council office at 862-5122. A flyer will be distributed to announce the date and place.

THE TIMES NEEDS YOUR HELP

Inside this issue you'll find a fundraising envelope for our own special cause, THE TIMES OF SKINKER-DEBALIVIERE. This all-volunteer newspaper has been published continuously for over 35 years — it's the "oldest neighborhood newspaper in St. Louis."

Did you know that all our writing and all our distribution of nearly 3,000 newspapers is done by volunteers? Our shoestring budget is managed well by Business Manager Lois Schoemehl, but advertising doesn't quite cover our expenses for layout and printing. If you agree that communication among neighborhood residents is crucial to having a successful place to live and raise our families, please put a little something in the envelope for your own neighborhood newspaper this holiday season.

And, if you'd like to volunteer to help, note that, too. We'll be happy to have your writing, your photos, help with delivery or decision-making. Happy Holidays!

Editor's Notebook

By Lana Stein

Change is relative. Former SDCC President Catherine Forslund and her husband Roy Roncal visited last weekend. It was so good to see them and I regretted that they now live – very happily – in Rockford, Illinois. We went up to Delmar to Miss Saigon for dinner. Seeing all the lights and cars and people on Delmar was a shock to Cath and Roy. All the development has occurred since they moved about 8 years ago. I myself couldn't believe all the cars parked on what had once been a deserted boulevard. The restaurant was full and groups of people walked by in the time we were there. It really is a miracle and hopefully it will continue to extend further east. I've been buoyed by the news that Companion Baking is coming to the former Dobbs Auto site, baking facilities plus cafe plus retail sales. A place for neighbors to meet and greet and to get the staff of life. As someone used to say, "It's a miracle."

Last weekend I ambled over to Nina Place where I had lived for 12 years. It looked so familiar and yet different. When I first moved there, there were a number of boarded up buildings. I was afraid to walk around. That changed quickly. I hope some of the condo folk on Nina think of finding a permanent home in Skinker DeBaliviere. I'm certainly glad I did.

Newer residents might wonder why we are so tenacious about the Delmar redevelopment ordinance. Perhaps it's because we know where we've been and we want the positive changes of the last few years to endure. Our neighborhood and the East Loop are special blessings, perhaps still fragile in their spring. Never take anything for granted.

- DONORS NEEDED FOR WINTERMARKT BAKE SALE -

The 5th Annual Wintermarkt, to be held December 5, 2005, will feature fine food products from our neighborhood bakers' ovens, both for snacking that day or for gifting during the holiday season. West End Arts Council is seeking donations from neighbors to sell at this annual bake sale. Cookies, brownies, and individual treats are great sellers. At the food tent there will be hot dogs and brats, roasted chestnuts, hot cider, a special German treat from the St. Louis Gast House, all in addition to our fabulous bake sale items. Our bake sale will include those amazing cookie/ornaments in the shape of Gingerbread Men that are donated every year by Joan Bender.

If you are interested in donating baked goods, contact Laure Porterfield at 862-5122 or skinkerdstlouis.missouri.org, or Katrina Stierholz, 863-0965.

Calendar

Upcoming Events Calendar

Monday, Nov. 14 & Dec. 12, 2005, and Jan. 9, 2006, Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Council Meetings, 7 p.m., 6008 Kingsbury.

Wednesday, Nov. 16, Dec. 7, 2005, Dec. 21, 2005, Jan. 4, 2006, and Jan. 18, 2006, Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Housing Corporation Meetings, 6:00 p.m., 6008 Kingsbury.

Saturday December 3, 2005: Wintermarkt. Greg Freeman Park at Four Corners, DesPeres at Kingsbury. 11:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Thursday December 15, 2005. Police and Firefighters Appreciation Luncheon. Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council. 6008 Kingsbury. 11:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, January 15, 2006, 3:00 p.m. (tentative) Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Celebration. Call SDCC, 862-5122.

Other Events of Interest

11/11 and 11/12: *Death & the Ploughman* at the Edison Theatre, Washington U. 15th century German classic exploring the meaning of both life and death.

11/15: Reparations. FOCUS St. Louis is partnering with the YWCA to promote the Racial Justice Lecture Series. For this last lecture of the series, Bernie Hayes, Social Activist/St. Louis American columnist, will speak from 5:30 -7 p.m. at the Phyllis Wheatley Heritage Center, 2711 Locust. Free. Ample parking in well-lit lot. For more information, call the YWCA at 314-531-1115.

11/17: Breakfast Club - Tour the Centene Center for the Arts, Formerly the Medinah Temple. FOCUS members and friends are being given a rare opportunity before the grand opening in December. 7:30-9:00 a.m., continental breakfast. \$12 FOCUS members/\$15 non-members. RSVP to 314-622-1250 x101.

11-/18-11/20: Noche Flamenca at the Edison Theatre, Washington U. Co-presented by Dance St. Louis.

Through November 27: Regional Arts Commission (RAC) presents Inti-m-te/Intimate, curated by Margaret Keller, featuring the works of two local artists Patrick Hunt and Robert Michelmann. RAC is located at 6128 Delmar. For more information, call 863-5811.

12/09: Opening Reception - Ceramics Exhibit, 5:30- 7:30 p.m., The Gallery at the Regional Arts Commission, 6128 Delmar, 863-5811.

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loyal attendee of the Delmar Commercial Committee, accepted for WECC.

Neighborhood Outreach Center, at 5325 MLK, serves clients who are motivated to move from substance abuse with job training skills, counseling, computer training, exercise, nutrition, a neighborhood library, tutoring and much more. Kirk Williams, a resident of the 6100 block of Washington, and member of the board for Neighborhood Outreach Center, accepted on behalf of this organization, which can be reached at 361-7878.

Music for Lifelong Achievement encourages the contribution of used musical instruments from individuals and new instruments from manufacturers and others. The instruments are refurbished and provided free of charge to schools and other music programs serving disadvantaged youth. In 2004, they collected over 150 instruments with a value exceeding \$42,000. Speaking on their behalf was Terry Perkins. Their website is www.supportMFLA.org.

West End Mount Carmel Community Outreach Services provides opportunities like computer classes, early childhood development, summer youth camp, GED classes, and much more, to a variety of residents in the west end community. For more information about this organization, call Vivian Dudley at 863-5892.

7th District Public Affairs Scholarship Program is a sub-

committee of the public affairs committee established last year. This group raises funds and selects eligible applicants to award scholarships. To date, 5 local students have received scholarships after completing over 300 hours of community service and serving in high level leadership positions at their schools. Mattie Brown, 361-5204, serves on this committee.

7th District Community Partnership was organized to promote and recruit businesses into the area. The organization conducts programs to build morale among police officers by demonstrating the cooperation and appreciation of the businesses and residents served by the police. 7th District Police Captain Jim Moran accepted the award for this group. Captain Moran wrapped up the presentations by acknowledging the great role that Pageant founders Joe Edwards and Pat Hagin have played in transforming Delmar and thanked them and the community organizations for their active, ongoing cooperation in making the police officers feel appreciated and supported.

You can look for the posters to be auctioned on E-Bay starting November 8. Each poster auction will run 10 days. The fabulous artwork and bold colors make each of these posters memorable, and the autographs of the artists make each one a unique treasure. Plus, by bidding, everyone helps our diverse community continue to thrive. What a great idea!

The TIMES of...
SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

Co-Editors: Lana Stein and JoAnn Vatcha
Business Manager: Lois Schoemehl

Contributors: Norbert Hart
Maggie Peters
Laure Porterfield
Tom Hoerr
Andy Cross
King Schoenfeld
Nicole Blummer
Rachelle L'Ecuyer

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Loretta Lloyd	Juliet Schoemehl	JoAnn Vatcha	Katie Kurtz
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Kathleen Williams			

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The writer is responsible for the accuracy of the data, including times, dates, location, and particularly the spelling of names. The editor retains the right to omit or alter any material.

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Please send copy by e-mail to jvatcha@peoplepc.com or by disc to 6008 Kingsbury, St. Louis, MO 63112.
Readers are welcome to send us e-mail or letters commenting on any of our content. Send to jvatcha@peoplepc.com or lstein@umsl.edu.

News of Neighbors

By Jo Ann Vatcha

Nancy Farmer, resident of the 5800 block of Waterman, and formerly Missouri State Treasurer, following three terms as State Representative for the 68th District, recently accepted a new position. Following her brave and exciting campaign for the Senate against Republican Kit Bond, Nancy has decided to forgo the political scene for now and will be president and chief executive officer of Tuition Plan Consortium (TPC), which describes itself as "an organization of more than 250 private colleges and universities nationwide that operates Independent 529 Plan, a prepaid tuition plan." Jo Mannies reported recently in the Post Dispatch that Nancy will oversee the relocation of the consortium's headquarters from Albuquerque to St. Louis by next year.

The announcement came from Wendy Libby, chairwoman of the consortium's board of directors and president of Stephens College in Columbia, Mo., and Phillip Rollock, vice president of Education Savings for TIAACREF.

"Nancy is committed to ensuring that college is affordable and accessible to all Americans," said Libby. "Personal savings is critical for the future of both our children and our country," said Farmer in a statement. "I am excited about this program and eager to spread the word about how Independent 529 Plan can help parents who dream of a private college education for their children." Among Farmer's responsibilities as state treasurer was overseeing Missouri's Section 529 college savings plan, called MO\$T. Nancy and husband **Darryl Hartke** have lived on the 5800 Waterman for many years. She began her career in public service as executive director of the Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Council.

Get well wishes to **Carla Mash Duncan**, who has been bustling through her busy teaching career at New City School and volunteer work running the summer concert series in Ivory Perry Park, despite a serious leg injury which left her wheelchair-bound for several months. Husband **Roger Duncan** has been her indispensable partner through the unexpected events. The Duncans live on the 6100 block of McPherson.

Recuperation is also the state of affairs for another neighborhood teacher, **Mary Smith**. We're wishing happier days soon for Mary and husband **Tim**, who live on the 6100 block of Westminster.

Congratulations to **Mary Schmidt** of the 6100 block of McPherson, who has retired. Mary worked as school social worker for the St. Louis Public Schools for many years. She and husband **Peter** have recently returned from one of their fabulous cruises, this time to Nova Scotia, and look forward to more travel and relaxation.

Sam and Lu Green have moved to the Paul Brown Building downtown, after more than 30 years on the 6100 block of Westminster. Their many contributions to the life of the neighborhood will be re-chronicled in these pages soon. Suffice it to say for now that they are sorely missed.

New on Delmar: Welcome to new neighbor "**Gabby's**," located at 6140 Delmar, across from the Pageant. Name-brand shoes, boots and purses, hats, watches, custom-made jewelry and intimate apparel are among the items carried in this new boutique, a welcome addition to the variety of shopping available nearby. You'll want to see the latest items at "Bittersweet Botanicals," "Big Shark Bicycles," "Big Shark Athletic Gear," "Diversity Gallery," and all the other spots to explore. While doing your holiday shopping, you may also want to visit The Loop webpage with all the latest information on shopping, entertainment, and dining, including all the great new locations east of Skinker. You can see it all at www.ucityloop.com.

Not New on Skinker: an Italian carry-out restaurant which wanted to locate in Wash U's building at 350 N. Skinker, next to the entrance to Grace Church. Neighbors had complained of the potential for parking and trash problems, as well as potential liquor license requests. Hopefully, the start-up restaurant will locate on Delmar instead. Why not expand our dearly beloved Charing Cross Branch of the St. Louis Public Library into that space instead?

Welcome to new City Neighborhood Stabilization Officer **Chris Howard**, an experienced and respected NSO, who will help us address nuisances and problem properties; City Hall, 622-4628.

News on the Forest Park Parkway Wall: soon to be unveiled, a new wall design from neighborhood resident **Andy Cross**, working with Metro officials and other artists. The original design will incorporate motifs of trees and leaves and will be unique to our wall. The design will be displayed at the Regional Arts Commission and online soon. What an exciting finish that will make to the long-awaited completion of the Forest Park Parkway and the MetroLink Extension. Alderwoman Lyda Krewson has been told that the parkway should be open by year-end. We also learned that the 28th Ward Holiday Party will be held Dec. 1 at Bar Italia in the CWE. Everyone is welcome, but the 28th Ward Regular Democrats also hopes for new members to listen and learn about what's happening in our state and city governments, as well as nationally. Call Brad Weir for membership information, 863-7558.

SarahJane's Dog Show

By Andy Cross

SarahJane Cross and her friends love their dogs and always wanted to enter them in a dog show. Usually, dog shows are for purebreds, very talented dogs, well-trained dogs, that sort of thing, and SarahJane's dog Dixie is 'a mutt' with only ordinary tricks. But Dixie is a great dog and so are her friends' dogs. SarahJane came up with a solution. She created her own dog show, for herself and her friends, and any kind of dog could enter, even pretend dogs. Anybody who

were coming. The date and location were cleared with the council office. Many special blue ribbons were made with the artwork from the flyer, so that people would remember the event.

Many, many dogs and their owners attended the dog show, which was held on the summer evening of June 7, 2005. It was too hard for SarahJane to count how many dogs there were. "All my friends came, and some people I didn't know." Neighbor Ellen Blay's dog Zoe won a prize for the

"highest jump." "She held out her hand higher than my head, and Zoe jumped up that high and she gave it a treat. Ellen's other dog, Jake, won a prize for 'the spottiest dog,'" said Sarah about Ellen's Dalmatian. Sarah's friend Gretchen Boxdorfer was very happy that her dog Trenton won "Best Dog." Trenton had a good trick,



From left, Christian Boxdorfer, Gretchen Boxdorfer, Sydney Bender, "Best Dog" winner Trenton, and event organizer SarahJane Cross.

wanted to enter his or her dog could come. They would have the dog show next to the playground and give ribbons for things like the "fluffiest dog," the "biggest" and "smallest" dog, the dog "with the best trick," "shortest tail," "longest tail," and "stuff like that." Sarah planned the event for months, carefully considering how the dogs would be judged and how to be fair, what kind of refreshments, etc. She made great flyers and checked with people to see if they

also the longest tail, and tied for the title of spottiest dog! Gretchen had been helpful in some of the planning of the event and she was the very first person Sarah invited to attend. There were so many different kinds of real and pretend dogs that won ribbons. "I was so happy that Dixie won a prize!" said Sarah. The event was so much fun that SarahJane is making plans to do it again next year and invite the whole neighborhood.



From left, Emil Banasek, Nick Schoemehl, Luke Schoemehl, Theo Banasek, and in the front, Luke's dog Dudley.

Greenways Close at Hand

By Lana Stein



Approval of a ballot proposal by voters in St. Louis City and several neighboring jurisdictions has made possible the construction of Greenways in the metro area dedicated sections geared to cyclists, joggers, and walkers. The St. Vincent Greenway which begins out by UMSL will include DeBaliviere from the Ruth Porter Mall to the History Museum.

Planners are currently trying to configure the greenway, about 9 feet wide, with a proposed trolley, which would follow DeBaliviere to Delmar and then go west to the Lions Gate.

Activists in the neighborhood,

including SDCC President Dan Schesch, are also hoping that the Centennial Greenway will include a Des Peres Neighborhood Connector, in addition to the Ackert Walkway in University City. This Connector would link Skinker DeBaliviere to other neighborhoods along the greenway. It will connect the Greg Freeman Park at Four Corners, the heart of our community, to Forest Park and other neighborhoods. It is an excellent route to Forest Park for the joggers, cyclists, and walkers in our neighborhood. It would also provide a better connection to the St. Vincent Greenway.

The Des Peres Connector and the Greenways should stimulate further economic

activity on Delmar, particularly east of the Wabash Station. The Connector will also provide access to the greenway to Washington University students planned to occupy new housing at the north campus. Schesch encourages people to help in this effort. If interested, call the SDCC at 862-5122.



Holly Hills entrance of Greenways.



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Neighbors watching out for neighbors

By Dan Schesch

The SkinkerDeBaliviere Community Council and interested residents recently revived the SDCC Security Committee, which had become inactive. In an effort to increase communication in the neighborhood regarding security issues, the committee will be sending a regular email reporting important incidents that occur in SkinkerDeBaliviere as well as "security tips" and other information about, and what you can do to help deter, crime in our neighborhood.

Please also look for the article on security awareness & precautions in this issue of the *Times of SkinkerDeBaliviere*. If you are interested in helping out with the Security Committee's work, contact SDCC at 862-5122.

HELPING TO PREVENT & REPORT:

The key thing is to be alert and observant, report even just suspicious people/activity by calling 911. Don't just report crime incidents; see two incidents and the good results from calls to 911 below. That information, after evaluation by the 911 staff, is shared with the police on patrol, who are alerted to look for the described people/activity even if it has moved from your block to another.

"We want citizens to call us whenever they see activity or people that appear out of place. No call is unimportant." Capt. Moran, 7th District.

PERSPECTIVE:

To put the below in perspective, according to the police, overall reported crime in Skinker DeBaliviere is down from last year, and the incidents reported below are not occurring more frequently here, they are happening all over.

BURGLARIES:

Wednesday, 10/19, a home at

61xx Westminster was burglarized. A neighbor called 911 after they saw a person run from the home and get into a green SUV, and obtained/reported the license plate number!

This license number enabled the police to trace it to a group of people that had been burglarizing several homes in south St. Louis. They were transferring the license plate from vehicle to vehicle. The police tracked the car to an address in the 7th District, where surveillance yielded two arrests, and the recovery of several stolen items, including from the Westminster and a Dogtown burglary, and numerous pawn shop receipts. They are responsible for over 25 burglaries in south city, and at least two so far in District 7. The group is a wife, husband, and nephew, i.e. a family enterprise. The police expect to identify these suspects as responsible for more burglaries.

There have been about 6 burglaries in SkinkerDeBaliviere since September 1, as above, and on 61xx Kingsbury Thu. 10/6, during the day (broken front window).

Also on 62xx Waterman, 9/5 Mon. daytime, and 59xx Kingsbury, Tue. night, 10/4, the only two where residents were home. On Waterman, the residents were home but left their front door unlocked, the burglar came in & went upstairs, but was only noticed on his way out. On Kingsbury, the burglar unscrewed the rear porch light, pried open the back door, took items on the first floor, but left immediately after seeing the residents who'd been sleeping on the 2nd floor.

A different incident occurred in the Central West End, where a home in 44xx Westminster was entered, Mon. 10/17 at night, while people were home. A nearby resident later called 911,

reporting that someone had jumped their fence. Because of this prowler call police were in the area, and that led to the capture of the above burglar in the 39xx block of Delmar after a foot pursuit. The suspect lives in 53xx Pershing, and is believed responsible for at least 7 burglaries in the CWE and possibly elsewhere in the 7th District. His mode of operation was to break into homes while people were asleep.

HOLDUP:

On Fri. 10/14, at about 2 a.m., four Washington U. students were held up (a pistol was shown) walking along Skinker north of McPherson. They handed over wallets & a cell phone, but no one was physically hurt.

Incidents in the City are reported on the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department "Safe City crime map" at: <http://64.218.68.50/stlouis/newslmpd/viewer.htm> I don't know what the time lag is between the occurrence / reporting of a crime and its inclusion on the crime map. It sometimes takes several minutes to load the map, especially if you have a dialup connection.

Incidents are also reported on the Washington U. police department web site at: <http://police.wustl.edu/crimealert.s.html>; the list is in chronological order and goes back about two years.

Again, though crime is somewhat down, even one occurrence is one too many.

We must continue to take precautions, keep an eye out for and report suspicious activities to the police by calling 911.

With regard to some precautions, the Washington University police department offers some crime prevention tips at: <http://police.wustl.edu/crimeprev.ention.html>.



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Thoughts from a native

by Rachelle L'Ecuyer

I am the same age as the SkinkerDeBaliviere Community Council (SDCC); its bylaws were written within months of my birth in 1964. In our shared infancy we had many things in common: My father, a founding member, became the first executive director of SDCC, we attended many community and functions within our first few years, and were bounced on the laps of its members while serious issues such as arson and prostitution were discussed around the table.

I was born on the 6000 block of McPherson, grew up on 5700 DeGiverville, rented on the 6100 block of Waterman, owned a home on 6100 Kingsbury and settled now on the 6100 block of Washington. Back in the day, I remember riding my tricycle to my father's office, then on DeBaliviere in what is now the parking lot of the CWE bank, it burned to the ground by an arson's flame. Many a building on DeBaliviere met the same fate as many building owners were left with vacant buildings as businesses fled to the safety of the suburbs. At the same time, banks refused mortgages to homebuyers and insurance companies refused homeowners insurance. Prostitutes and drug dealers seemed to be the last remaining tenants of Nina Place and the slumlords ruled the territory now known as DeBaliviere Place and the buildings that were torn down in the area we know as Kingsbury Square.

Little hope remained except in the hearts of the community, the families and people who had set down their stakes and claimed this land to raise their families. Not for these folks would I even be writing this essay for there would be nothing to write. And it is to some degree to these people I write because they taught me a life's lesson, they gave me my vocation and I hope they realize what they have done for all us that still live here and all of us who come to live here. We have the churches to thank, too and Washington University.

Fast forward to the 21st century. Young professionals flock to SkinkerDeBaliviere. In many cases, homes sell at the open house for above the sales price. Not a bad thing if you are a vested homeowner who paid \$15,000 for your five bedroom home back in the late 60's. Or even if you bought into the neighborhood later into a rehab, or had the wherewithal to rehab and rid your house of its 1940's kitchen and in the process saw that adding granite counters added market value. The addition of central air into one of our homes is of course one of the most marketable things to do.

What has happened is there are no deals here anymore. Homebuyers plop down sums of money larger than what some of our neighbors paid for their entire homes. Prices range from the \$200,000's to the \$400,000's

and that means downpayments in conventional terms of \$40,000 to \$80,000. Mortgage payments (with taxes and insurance) run in the \$1,200 - \$2,400 monthly range at this level. Everybody's taxes go up, too.

This has and will create some friction and unless we work on how to work together on shared issues we are going to become a divided community and here are three areas where I believe this will happen:

1. Expectations: People no longer are attracted to the neighborhood for its charm as much as its value. When someone buys a home for more than \$250,000 they are making an investment and not only do they intend to maintain that investment, they expect you to as well. So, don't expect a "good morning" from your neighbor if you are behind in cutting your grass; it has shaved value from their home.

When I lived on Kingsbury, there was a neighbor who kept watch over gutter replacement and chastised a fellow neighbor for replacing rotted copper with aluminum and I bet if they could have taken some action they would have, even though the copper gutter was cost-prohibitive for the neighbor. On my new block of 6100 Washington, I had to replace the walk and hired a contractor to carry out the work. Unbeknownst to me, he decided to dispose of the rubble in the alley dumpster. Instead of telling me what was going on, a watchful neighbor called the police, instead of me. These actions are several things I have observed or experienced in this neighborhood that we are breaking down and it is no longer about helping people but more about "me and my investment." Let's find something that we all share and can nurture and work on together. Where are the block groups?

2. Information: information from the source (SDCC). There is disparity in the amount of information that flows across Des Peres. I know because I lived east of Des Peres and SDCC has minimal presence. My best example is when Lyda Krewson began discussing in 2000 the CONSERV inspections of our neighborhood that were to be scheduled in 2001, SDCC had an opportunity to mobilize the information and get neighbors ready. They did not reach out to the folks who needed to know. I feel very strongly that our neighbors, some 40-year veterans of SkinkerDeBaliviere, are not getting the information they need to help them. Many of these neighbors could not afford the \$250,000 home prices does that mean they deserve to be ignored. There are resources ranging from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to a 5% Home Equity Loan from UMB bank that could help our neighbors repair their homes and meet CONSERV and City of St. Louis Codes.

WINTERMARK CALL FOR ARTISTS

The West End Arts Council invites you to participate in the fifth annual West End Arts Council Wintermarkt on Saturday, Dec. 3, 2005 from 11 am until 4 p.m. Wintermarkt is held in the Skinker DeBaliviere neighborhood at the corner of Kingsbury and Des Peres (a public square).

We seek artists (including crafters) to sell their works at this outdoor arts and crafts fair. Last year we had ceramacists, candle-makers, jewelry makers, glass artists, a doll maker, garden-inspired accessories, handmade purses, musicians, and more. In keeping with European tradition,

the event will be held outdoors. We will also feature a bonfire.

We also are looking for donated baked goods for our bake sale. The West End Arts Council will sell an array of homemade baked goods, along with hot drinks, hot dogs, and roasted chestnuts.

If you would be interested in participating, please register by November 25th. Artists will be required to supply their own table.

For more information about the artist sale, to register, or for donating baked goods, contact Laure Porterfield at 862-5122 or at skinkerd@stlouis.missouri.org.

3. Perception: The Perception of our neighborhood is that it is a desirable enclave adjacent to a booming commercial strip, now known as the East Loop. This would not have happened without countless volunteer hours from a handful of hardworking neighbors. That is really good for all of us.

It brings value that all of can now embrace and feel pride in. But that the perception that everything is booming is misleading. We experience crime here on a regular basis and I don't believe enough attention is being paid to the muggings, drug dealing, traffic violations (aren't you sick of the speeding and the wrong way drivers, when will it stop?!) Let's work together on issues such as license tag theft, as cohesive contingency we could get our legislators to take this issue to the next level.

Where are we going? I only hope our neighborhood continues to get better. My children are a living legacy of what the founding members of the SDCC set out to achieve. But if the expectations are not agreed upon and met, the information not shared and the perception put into clear focus, we will suffer and so will our investment in our home, and a wonderful community that we all share.

Editor's Note: Rachelle L'Ecuyer has worked professionally in community development for 17 years, including several at Regional Housing and Community Development Corp. She was the 2001 Community Fellow at UMSL and a 2004 Fannie Mae Foundation Fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and currently is Director of Community Development for the City of Maplewood.



Thanks to Art Santen for another great party, and thanks to judges Kate Nash and Maggie Peters. The Winners at the St. Roch's 2005 Halloween Party were: Claire Rater, 57xx Westminster Place, Corpse Bride Xavier Harmon, 60xx Washington, Bear Elia Barker, 62xx Washington, Snail Kaitlin Holmes, 40xx Flad, Vampiress Alex Haupt, 59xx Kingsbury, Robot Zhaneen Walker, 7xx Inter Drive, Snow White Shelby Segbers, 30xx Eads Ave., Ladybug Christopher Young, 60xx Westminster, Jedi Terrence Griffen, 20xx Rutgers, Blade Mary Rater, 57xx Westminster Place, Caterpillar Daisy Hudspeth, 60xx McPherson, Caterpillar Gretchen Boxdorfer, 60xx McPherson, Caterpillar Sara Cross, 60xx McPherson, Caterpillar.

November 10-20 14th Annual St. Louis International Film Festival At the Tivoli Theatre

Advance tickets for all films and events will be on sale exclusively at the Tivoli box office beginning Nov. 1. Box-office hours are 4-10 p.m. weekdays; 1:30-10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. No phone or internet sales. Individual tickets are \$9 each, \$8 for MasterCard cardholders, and \$7 for Cinema St. Louis members and students with current and valid ID. For information visit www.cinemastlouis.org.



The Opening Night and Closing Night Spotlight presentations of *The Matador* and *Mrs. Henderson Presents*, as well as

the Spotlight presentations of *Beyond the Rocks* with Stan Kann at the organ, *Breakfast on Pluto*, and *The White Countess* are specially priced at \$10. No discounts or passes. The Long Road to Cabo at The Pageant is \$5. Five at Five -

The screenings prior to 6 p.m. Monday, Nov. 15 through Friday, Nov. 19 are specially priced at \$5. Family film screenings of *Rounding First* on Saturday, Nov. 19 and Sunday, Nov. 20 are specially priced at \$5. Seating is limited. Sponsored by Georgia Frontiere and the St. Louis Rams.

Commercial Venture Violates Delmar Redevelopment Plan

By Lana Stein

This is a sad story whose last word has not been written. There is a facility on Delmar that used to house Waldman Glass. I remember it well because my car's side window was broken 10 or 12 years ago and Waldman repaired it with great dispatch. Waldman closed up shop a few years ago. I sort of hoped it was because they weren't getting as much business from Skinker DeBaliviere. The site has an unusual configuration and we all hoped a tenant could eventually be found.

The first prospective tenant who visited our Delmar Committee was Michael Bowe, from Cabinets Flooring and More. His family had lived on 61xx Westminster. It was clear that they wanted a storeroom more than a showroom. When we argued for the latter, they withdrew from their lease.

Mike Rasch was the next person to visit our committee. He wanted to go into the granite business and have his showroom at the former Waldman location. He told us that there would be no major granite cutting. He was told about the redevelopment ordinance which prohibits open storage. We made clear we wanted a retail business. He said he would conform and moved his new business to Delmar.

What happens next is confusing. Rasch said he was surprised by the volume of business he began to enjoy which forced him to take steps he had not intended to take. Lo and behold there were sheets and sheets of granite hanging in his parking area. The granite was cut on site with particles going into the sewer system. Complaints from other Delmar businesses were heard.

Rasch said to give him time and he would fix it. His proposal was to place a high fence on his parking area facing Delmar to hide the sheets of granite. A date was set at City Hall to examine his

violation of the redevelopment ordinance. On the one hand, it is a pity to perhaps bid adieu to a successful business drawing clientele from throughout the area. At the same time, if violating the ordinance is allowed to continue, what does that do to the enforceability of the ordinance in the future?

Rasch knew the rules of the game when he stepped up to play. The Delmar Committee unanimously voted to ask him to use his business site as a showroom and fabricate elsewhere. The Board of Adjustment held its hearing on Oct. 19 and has notified Rasch that conditions of his occupancy permit are in violation, that these conditions must be complied with at all times, including no noise or business activity after 8 p.m. Additionally, Graniteworks must now submit parking lot and fencing plans to the Building Division within 30 days to obtain necessary permits. Also, he now has 90 days to provide a written letter from MSD approving the sludge removal system. A lot of pain for all involved could have been avoided if the business had complied with conditions from the beginning.

The Delmar Commercial Committee believes "sticking to the plan" and providing consistency in enforcement have been big factors in the successful redevelopment of Delmar.

Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council, Board of Directors Meeting, Sept. 12, 2005
WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
 * Meeting called to order by President Schesch at 7:05 pm.; Dan informed Board that Katrina Stierholz succeeds Tim Schoemehl.
 * Attendees introduced themselves and the area they were representing.
MINUTES
 * Minutes from June 14, 2005 meeting were deferred until October meeting.
FINANCIAL REPORT
 * Copies of the July and August 2005 financial reports were provided in the Board package. Approval of the reports will be deferred until the October meeting in the absence of the Treasurer.
 * Friends Campaign will be discussed at the October meeting
 * National Night Out was well attended despite the heat, a special thanks to all the volunteers who worked so hard to make the event a success
 * Rags to Riches had the highest participation, there were 71 households participating
 * Picnic: Shirley Polk reported that participation was good and she thanked everyone for supporting the picnic. A concern was raised that some areas did not receive the flyers, Shirley responded that she would look into the distribution of the flyers for next year to address the concerns raised.
SECURITY
Police Update
 * Officer Hoffman presented the police update. This was his first time attending the SDCC meeting. He responded to several questions
 * Question: What is the status of the kids painting gang graffiti in Lucier Park?
 Response: It appears that the Cates, Pershing & DeGiverville gangs seem to be hanging out together now. Police are aware of the situation and are monitoring activity. Gangs have tattoos; PSG for Pershing Street gang, DEG for DeGiverville gang and 57 for Cates gang.
 * There was a report of a 3AM mugging of the artist next door
 * Question: What is the best way to report an incident
 Response: Call 911, provide a good description, age, location, where drugs are being hid, etc.; the more information you can provide, the more it helps to apprehend the suspects
Security Training
 * Security Training meeting scheduled for Wednesday, September 14th at Regional Arts Commission building on Delmar. Jointly presented by 7th District, Wash. U.
Security Committee
 * Security Committee met last Thursday for 2+ hours. Several in-depth discussions as to how we could raise safety conscientiousness in the neighborhood. Also discussed issues surrounding youth: some suggestions were to provide more structured activities, apply for grants to fund neighborhood youth programs, have police as coaches, sports program, and invite local business owners join to discuss problems and help identify solutions. The next meeting of the Security Committee is scheduled for October 12th.
ALDERMAN'S REPORT
 * Alderwoman Krewson introduced Chris Howard as the new Neighborhood Stabilization Officer for our neighborhood. Mr. Howard reiterated to call 911 because a record is made and it helps in identifying nuisance properties; also let him know the addresses of any problem properties.
 * Reported that a new restaurant, Italian carryout, not a chain was opening at 350 N. Skinker, will have 10 tables, tenant of Wash. U. A conditional use permit has been granted by the City, will be open 7 days from 7am - 9pm; Washington University has not yet executed lease; parking needs to be resolved, restaurant wants to use Grace's lot; suggested that a meeting be held at space with surrounding neighbors being invited to discuss parking, trash, odors (exhaust system), liquor license and other items of concern.
 * Traffic Signal at Lindell & Skinker: a trustee from Catlin Track has requested that the temporary signal be taken down; Lyda will continue to evaluate the signal pros and cons to look for an agreeable solution
 * Forest Park Parkway to open by the end of the year, currently being paved in concrete, no asphalt, should last longer

* Delmar lots of new things being proposed for Delmar
 * A new 10 story 120-room hotel
 * Yellow Cab: 2 story building
 * Saaman planning 40 condos at 5811 Delmar selling for \$225 - \$250,000
 * TIF proposal being submitted for Delmar Alleys being paved: 6100 Pershing/Waterman alley
 * Fence on north side of Parkway: no solution to date, still talking to Metro
NEIGHBORHOOD REPORTS
Beautification - MetroLink
 * Andy Cross reported on the Catlin Track wall. He has met with Cathie Farroll, David Allen and Chris Poehler of Metro. Andy showed copies of the drawings for the wall which will consist of trees, leaves; this is an original design just for our neighborhood and cannot be used anywhere else; will display design at RAC and email electronically to give neighborhood a chance for input
Transportation
 * Dan reported that he had emailed Cathie Farroll regarding the DesPeres overpass. He was concerned that the width was only 5 feet, which was not adequate to accommodate bikers and walkers. Revised completion date is the first week of October.
 * North Hart is the new Transportation chair.
 * Delmar Trolley is 3 years away.
Greenways
 * Two greenways n St. Vincent and Centennial
 * Requesting Centennial to reconsider DesPeres connector
 * St. Vincent will include walking path around perimeter of Lucier Park
 * Greenways committee meets next Thursday at 7:00pm
 * Brief discussion of lights for Lucier Park Rosedale Neighbors
 * See attached correspondence from Rosedale regarding Rosedale pedestrian easement n want to keep open for resident access.
 * Lyda is currently working with developer, no resolution has been reached at this time
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT
 * Copy of report is attached.
 * Laurre reminded us of Police and Firefighter's Appreciation Luncheon on December 15th, Ruth Johnson has called to volunteer to serve as event chair.
 * Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. celebration committee will meet on September 22nd at 7:00pm.
 * Laurre reported that attempts are underway to resurrect the Residential committee.
BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE
 * Andy Cross brought apples from a tree on the Rosedale barricade for everyone to enjoy
 * Planted trees at Lucier Park
 * Barricade posts on Kingsbury have all been repaired
FOOD DRIVE: NOVEMBER 5
 * Shirley Polk is looking for volunteers to assist in collecting and sorting food. Food collected will be distributed between Grace, St. Roch, New Cote Brillante and Grace & Peace churches. She will provide more information at the next meeting.
HURRICANE KATRINA
 * Government has restricted local relief efforts to housing 500 evacuees
 * Liz thanked Steve and others for their support and cooperation
GOVERNANCE
 * Dan Schesch suggested that the Board look into amending the bylaws to require committees to meet at least twice a year. It was suggested that the Board instead of amending the bylaws, just say what you would do if the committees don't meet.
 * Establish an ad hoc communications committee. Again, it was stated that we should revisit the bylaws to see what they say in this area.
 * It was suggested that we adopt guidelines on how to be a good board member rather than amending bylaws.
OTHER BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS
 * Steve Givens passed out maps of Washington University campus.
 * Avis May (Hamilton) thanked Katrina for passing out the 1st day of school flyers.
 * Housing Corporation - closed on sale of Rosedale the end of July, will be inviting neighborhood to attend meetings on 9/21 and 10/5 to voice their thoughts on future developments
 Adjournment.

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Security Around the Neighborhood

by Tom Snider

Sitting around the conference table recently, your SD Neighborhood security committee had some ponderings then these suggestions about what might be helpful for folks in the Neighborhood to consider about home, personal and neighborhood safety.

Lighting.

All residents are encouraged to turn on lights in the front and rear of their property from dusk until sunrise. Use lighting strong enough to illuminate a person at least 100 feet away and flood lights should be in common areas. We also encourage all to use the newer screw-in fluorescent bulbs. These bulbs can save money by producing the desired amount of light yet using less electricity. In some locations, neighbors find it convenient to share the cost of operating a dusk-to-dawn mercury vapor light that may illuminate backyard and alley spaces.

Parked Car Security.

Unattended cars need to have all windows closed, all doors locked, key out of the ignition with no valuable or desirable items visible inside the car. To further discourage car theft, an antitheft locking bar can be installed on the steering wheel. That bar needs to be installed every time the car is parked. Make it a matter of habit. 'The Club' is a popular product name, and that product is available to City residents and employees at Operation SafeStreet in City Hall for \$10.00. Other antitheft products are available there also.

Awareness and Responsiveness.

Knowing the people who live around you. Get out to meet your neighbors, learn and call them by name as well as their dogs, say hello to folks walking and riding in the neighborhood so you become acquainted with who is a regular in the area and who is not. Be aware of the comings and goings of folks. As you make it a habit to chat with your neighbors, share news of the Neighborhood with them just as you do the news of your families. When you feel uncomfortable with persons or occurrences in your

neighborhood, or when you see people actually doing things or being where they should not be, call 911 immediately with details of what you've observed. Please realize that just because the people or situation in question moves out of your immediate vicinity, the potential or actual problem moves with them; they may remain active in your Neighborhood, just not in your sight. Alerting the police by calling 911 will make officers patrolling in the area aware of your concerns and descriptions. Calling 911 immediately is so important.

Home Security Measures.

Interior. Keep all doors locked even when you are in the home. Deadbolt locks on all exterior doors are encouraged. Deadbolts should have a tapered cylinder and at least a one inch throw. Strike plates and hinges should be secured to the door frame with screws at least 2 inches long. Install a peep hole with 180 degree view in exterior doors so you can identify people before opening the door. Some burglaries have occurred recently even while people were in the house as access was through an unlocked door. Close and lock all windows when you leave the home. Secure upper story as well as basement doors and windows. Secure sliding doors with an antislid device and install a screw into the track to prevent the door from being lifted out of place. Arm your security system every time you leave, whether for a few minutes, an hour's shopping trip, or for a long weekend. Arm the system especially when you're retiring to bed for the night. Test your alarm system monthly to make sure it works as you expect it to. Contact the alarm company to assure that your test signals are received and that the company is clear about what you want to happen when an alarm is received by the company. Keep a flashlight and a phone in the bedroom where you sleep. Should you ever be surprised by an intruder in your home, DO NOT block their escape route and DO NOT make threatening gestures.

Exterior.

Be sure that your house number is easily visible and in a well lighted area. Post your house number clearly at the back of your lot also. Keep trees and shrubs from becoming hiding places or impairing the view of entrances. Trim tree limbs to at least 7 feet off the ground. Trim shrubs to below window height. Rose bushes outside windows can act as natural barbed wire, making it difficult for burglars to enter (also difficult for window washers and painters!). A bed of rocks outside entry points can make enough noise to alert neighbors. And turn on lights in the front and rear of your property from dusk until sunrise.

When Reporting to Police.

Here are some helpful details to report to police when you call the 911 number:

- Location by address: use street names and numbers

- Date and time of the occurrence
- Description of vehicle: color, number of doors, new/old estimate, license number
- Descriptions of people: number, age, sex, race, dress
- Your name, address and telephone number (you may request to be anonymous).

Personal Safety.

Finally, take care of YOU! When walking in the neighborhood, walk with others whenever possible. Be aware of others in the general vicinity and move to keep a distance from strangers, especially when you're alone. Avoid darkened areas, alleys or lightout areas. When walking, carry little to no valuables with you. If you are accosted, give up the "things" demanded. Things can be replaced. Use your energy to LOOK, to gather as much visual information as possible about the assailant.

Working together as friends and neighbors, we can make SkinkerDeBaliviere a more attractive, fun and safe neighborhood to live in!

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Holiday Open House to Thank Police, Firefighters

By Laure Porterfield

Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council will host a Holiday Open House at the Council Office for the police and firefighters who serve our neighborhood. This tenth annual Open House will be held on Thursday, December 15, 2005, from 11:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. at SDCC's office at 6008 Kingsbury.

We continue to need your help. Please consider contributing a dish or a dessert for the luncheon buffet. You are also urged to drop by the Council office to meet some of the men and women who protect our neighborhood, and if you can, drop off your holiday treat for this festive occasion (food drop-off begins at 8:00 a.m.)

We are once again recruiting volunteers from the neighbor to serve as hosts and hostesses throughout the day, and would like to coordinate the items being contributed for the buffet.

Please call the Council office at 862-5122 to sign up as a host/hostess and/or to let us know what you might bring. As always, thank you for your support. And best wishes for a safe joyous holiday season.

IN YOUR EAR

by Hawkeye Z. Hoerr

Fall is my favorite time of year. I'm not sure if it's the cool morning weather, the colors to which the leaves turn, the fact that it's football season, or Halloween. All I know is that I like it. But it's hot, the weather has been dry so the leaves are dull, and the Rams are pedestrian at best. Thank goodness for some all-American traditions like Halloween and steroids.

In my youth, lightyears ago, I wasn't a fan of Halloween. I could never find a costume that suited me, pun intended. I'd look and look then use all of my creative resources to disguise myself. Alas, it never worked. People always recognized me. I grew so tired of hearing, "Hi Richard Nixon, we know that's you, Hawkeye!"

My favorite Halloween time was the year that I dressed up as a gorilla. The temperature must have been 85° and costume was so hot, it felt a bit like wearing my own portable and personal sauna. Back in those days, I used to have a white convertible, a tiny Miata. If you remember Peter Sellers as Inspector Closeau in the movie,

"A Shot In The Dark," you know where I'm going.

That movie ends with a great chase scene, a score of cars racing after one another in a small European town, cruising around a fountain. The chase began after a masquerade ball, so, yep, everyone is in costume. Pirates lions; princesses are chasing policemen; knights in armor are chasing apples and bananas. (It reminds me a bit of a Democratic National Convention, but that's a story for another day.) Anyway, you guessed it, one of the protagonists is wearing a gorilla outfit and, you guessed it again, he's driving a tiny white convertible, top down, around the town square. When I got the gorilla outfit, that was the image that I had in mind. (In fact, it was the image that I had in mind when I bought the white Miata.)

Alas, by the time Halloween rolled around I realized that I might be pushing the realworld envelope a bit if I drove my car in the gorilla outfit.

Actually, most of the outfit worked just fine. I did drive it dressed as a gorilla from the neck down. People stared but when you think about it, that outfit is almost normal in the Central West End.

It was wearing the gorilla mask while driving that was over the top. First, the photo of me on my driver's licence doesn't look at all like the gorilla's face. OK, OK, it does a bit, but not that much. Second, visibility is hindered in the mask. Can you imagine wearing a gorilla mask while driving a car and then being in an auto accident? "Well, officer, this isn't as odd as it may appear," I'd begin.

Most, though, I was worried about the impact that this outfit would have on other drivers and passerbys. Imagine that you're

driving down Delmar. You're on your way home from work and have decided to stop at Miss Saigon for some calamari. Things are normal and SUV after SUV is on the road. These are Republicans, on their way to their homes in Chesterfield. You spot several Democrats' cars, and they are easy to identify: old, rust spots, and bumperstickers that sting. "No one died for Clinton's lies" reads one. Another says, "A village in Texas is missing its idiot." A third one states, "Let's Not Reelect W again." Now where is I?

Oh yeah, you're driving down Delmar when wait, what's that ahead? Is it a white convertible being driven by a gorilla? Yes, that just might be a bit distracting. So the full gorilla suit never made it behind the driver's wheel. I still regret that onset of maturity, though, especially whenever I see the movie.

Much older and a little wiser, the gorilla suit has gone into retirement.

That means that each year is a new challenge. What to wear? Finding my costume at Halloween is the most fun of all, even more fun than wearing it. (What is it that they say about anticipation?) As I write, that wondrous day is looming around the corner, but I've already narrowed my choices to a few.

I could be Wonder Woman. You may think this a bit odd for me, I am not a woman and rarely wonder, but actually it works quite well. She has a cape, these really cool bracelets, long yellow boots and lots of hair. What more could a guy want?

I could be Alfred E. Neuman from MAD Magazine. Nah, I worry too much. (Get it?) Besides, I'm not into freckles.

I could be Oprah. All I need is a little rouge, a lot more hair (which is true for me for any costume), an empathetic smile, and a head that bobs upanddownandupanddown like one of those ceramic dogs that sits in the back of a car's window. In truth, I'd be bored listening to these heartthrobbing stories. What possesses these people to share their dirty linen before millions? I'd roll my eyes throughout. But I could handle her gazillion dollars. The red and yellow dresses don't work for me, though - I'm a winter hue - so I doubt if I'll go this route.

I could be Senator Bond. I'd be chained and muzzled, masking tape around my knees, with blood dripping down my face, and there would be an electrical battery attached to a sensitive part of my body. Ouch! I would be much thinner and weaker, not having eaten for days. Why? Our illustrious Senator Bond was one of the nine senators who voted against legislation that would prohibit torture by our troops. Yeah, that's right, Kit thinks it's OK if our soldiers torture captives. Does this man represent Missouri or what? I wonder where he stands on Intelligent Design?

I could be Casper, my standard poodle. ARF! Once ensconced in curly white hair, the job is pretty easy. Sleep, be fed, bark at any passing movement, sleep, eat treats, sleep, dream of Lassie, be fed again, go for a walk, bark, and sleep. You know, this costume and role sound so good, I wonder how I could pull it off for the other 364 days each year?

I could be Karl Rove, Bush's political advisor. The advantage of this outfit is that it's simply a business suit, white shirt, and dull tie, so all I need to do is find the dull tie. The disadvantage is that I'd have to get my tongue forked and drink a full bottle of duplicity juice.

I could be Harry Potter. All I need is a scar on my forehead and some old clothing. Given what's in my closet, I just need a scar. This outfit doesn't really appeal to me, though, because Harry's gift is what he does, not how he looks. On the other hand, carrying a Quiddich broom has some appeal, plus I know where the Dursleys live!

I could be Lance Armstrong. Nah, too skinny.

I could be Martha Stewart. Now let me see, what color handcuffs go best with this dress? How can I get the electronic home monitoring system to also work the DVD recorder? Can I wear a paisley tie with a checked shirt and a plaid jacket? Or do the pinstriped pants take that outfit over the top? I probably won't be Martha because by the time that I'd coordinate my costume, it would be Thanksgiving.

I could be George W. Bush. No, I couldn't. Halloween should not be that scary.

Oh well, regardless of what I wear, you can recognize me by my favorite riddle: Why do cows wear bells? Because their horns don't work.

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