



The Valley View

NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER MADISON VALLEY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

January -February 2010 • issue 168 • madisonvalley.org

Rats, Raccoons, and Other Critters I Have Met

By Jerry Sussman

I came to this valley in 1956 and have lived here ever since. Here I found a wife and home and helped raise a family. My avocation is natural history so I watch the scene carefully. Local animal life is interesting so I'll try to stick to writing about that, although people come into it also. This story is mostly true, except for some names I have changed to avoid prosecution and gainsaying.

Rats and squirrels do not like our winters any more than we do. They find a way to get into the attic and stay through the worst of it. You can hear them pattering about and chewing on the wires or something. They usually leave when it warms up in the spring.

When our son Allen was about eight years old, he saw a rat up in a tree and came running to tell us. Our neighbor Jean was there and she ran into her house to wake up her friend Mike, to get him to do something. He was a longshoreman and slept over often. Mike came out with a big pistol and blasted that rat with one shot in the head. Our kids will never forget that day. They buried the rat and put up a marker. It impressed me as well, and anticipating more rat encounters I went out and bought a single shot .22 rifle from Sears for twelve dollars. I actually did get one of the varmints, who was eating tender plants in the garden. I shot him from the window. My wife was appalled, and she started an anti-gun campaign right there on the spot. I gave in and removed the bolt from the rifle, hiding it away. I have never seen it since, so this inoperable gun sits in a closet as a relic of my huntsman past.

Our house was one of a group of three that sits just up the street from Harrison School (later called M.L. King Elementary). The land had been purchased in the 1930's by three UW students, one of whom was the architect. The architect of the cottages was Ted Jacobsen, who around 1940 was chief designer of the Yesler Terrace, the first racially integrated public housing in the country. They are all Cape Cod cottages, made of cedar and mahogany. The Depression was grinding on so building materials were cheap and good carpenters needed work. We learned that the cost of building the cottages was around \$3,000 each. They back up to the Harrison Greenbelt whose woods grace the east slope of the valley.

Some time in the late 1940's Victor Steinbrueck came to live with his mother in a little plywood house in the nearby woods. That was before Steinbrueck married and went on to become an influential architect, artist, designer of the Space Needle, and savior of the Pike Place Market. The valley was a democratic working class community back then,



Jerry Sussman and his family with a 12 foot sunflower at their first home in the valley. Pictured from left to right: Jerry (seated), his wife Peggy, and his three boys, Allen, John and David. Jerry's daughter Barbara is not pictured in this snapshot.



events calendar

Wed, Jan 13, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. – Arboretum Master Plan Public Meeting at the Graham Visitor Center. Hosted by Seattle Parks & Recreation, Arboretum Foundation, and UW.

Wed, Jan 20, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. – GMVCC Monthly Meeting at the Valley School.

Wed, Jan 20, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. – Seattle School Board Meeting at the John Stanford Center Auditorium at 2445 Third Ave South. Show up to support the CCC@MLK proposal!

Sat, Jan 30, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. – Madison Valley Potluck Party at the Valley School. Don't miss this special event!

Wed, Feb 3, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. – Seattle School Board Meeting at the Stanford Center.

Tues, Feb 9, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. – Merchants Association Monthly Meeting at Fast Frame. Food & networking starts at 6:00 p.m.

Wed, Feb 17, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. – GMVCC Monthly Meeting at the Valley School.



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GMVCC Minutes – November 18, 2009

Treasurer's Report: 11/18 Balance: \$9051.38

General Business: Meeting called to order at 7:40 p.m. by President Triandafilou. A quorum was not present. Introductions were made. A general discussion ensued regarding highlights of the Halloween pot luck, landscaping of the retention pond, and ideas for future neighborhood events.

Larry Levine, President of the Merchants' Association, spoke about the financial woes of some smaller neighborhood businesses. The group will try to boost sales with extended holiday hours coupled with festive events.

The Community Center at MLK project: Two other entities have submitted proposals for the property that offer at least a million more dollars than our proposal. The Bush School has offered the most at over \$3.5 million. They wish to demolish the buildings and construct a playfield to enhance the school's athletic program. Use of the field will be controlled by a locked fence and the Bush schedule. The Bush School is also soliciting support from the neighborhood with a letter campaign. Leaders of the GMVCC efforts to retain the property as part of our community will meet with the Seattle School Board on Dec. 9.

The November meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

No Council meeting was held in December.

Community-Wide Yard Waste Fraud

By Catherine Nunneley

Do you check your utility bill carefully? If you're like us, (we pay by automatic withdrawal from our checking account), you may be only giving the bill a cursory glance. I suggest that you may want to scrutinize the charges.

A few months ago, I noticed several unwarranted extra yard waste charges on our bill. A call to the friendly Public Utilities Representative resulted in the charges being removed at the next bill cycle. However, when the next bill came, I noticed new extra charges had been made. Hmm. Something was amiss. I contacted my neighbors. All of them had extra charges on their bills. One neighbor told me he was charged for extra yard waste on a day that he hadn't put ANY waste out. I called again. I explained the situation in the neighborhood. The rep reviewed the bills of my neighbors and concluded that indeed something was wrong and said that she would schedule an inspector to come out.

New bill: new extra charges so I called again. After discussion, another promise to send out the inspector was made. I informed my neighbors and am awaiting the results. The Utilities Reps both told me that there have been past problems with fraud involving the company that collects yard waste for the city. They were not sure if the problem lies with the actual collectors or someone who has manipulated the computer files to add charges.

If you are concerned, I encourage you to call the number for service questions located on your bill. You will need the bill to give them your service ID number. The representatives are very friendly and cooperative but I feel that unless pressure is exerted on the company, we will continue to be cheated on our bills.

Crosswalk Correction



Correction to the Crosswalk Flag Project reported in the November 2009 issue: The Madison Valley Merchant Association (MVMA) was involved in the placement of a much-needed pedestrian crosswalk at the intersection of E. Madison St. and 29th Avenue East a few years ago. However, the bright orange crosswalk flags installed this past fall for increased pedestrian safety were the result of three private citizens who petitioned funds from Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods and independently organized the project. Valley resident Chris Page submitted a grant proposal to the City for \$250 to purchase the crosswalk flags in early 2009. Lindy Wishard and Richard Winsler then installed the flag containers on either side of Madison Street. Mr. Page and Mr. Winsler keep track of the flags, to ensure plenty are on hand for pedestrians. In the continued spirit of collaboration, both the GMVCC and the MVMA have agreed to allocate funds to cover the cost of replacement flags in the future. – Ed. 🏠

Ways to be Neighborly in the New Year

By Nori Hawkins, Editor

1. Maintain your sidewalks so neighbors can enjoy strolling our friendly streets all year long. Trim back overgrown bushes, ivy, blackberry and overhanging limbs, so the walkways are safely passable. Rake up leaves and remove moss to prevent slippery surfaces and falls. Repair cracked concrete and pull weeds to minimize tripping hazards.
2. With the flurry of recent business closures on Madison, it's more important than ever to patronize local merchants whenever possible. Make a point to do errands on foot occasionally, which reduces traffic congestion, burns extra calories and makes our community a greener place to live, work and shop.
3. Go to a community council meeting on the third Wednesday of each month, to hear about the latest projects, news and events happening in the valley. It's a great way to meet new people and get involved in your community.
4. Remember to drive slowly on all our local streets and thoroughfares. Driving carefully, paying attention and being courteous makes our neighborhood a safe place for children, pets, bike riders, and pedestrians to get around day and night.
5. Get to know your neighbors better, taking a little extra time every week to say hello, wave and learn their names. You never know when you might need a cup of sugar or a spare hand.
6. Plant some colorful flowering bulbs in your front yard this winter, or in a pot on your porch, to beautify your street and spread cheer in the cold dreary months ahead!
7. Keep your recycling and trash receptacles tidy and secure. Not only does it make our neighborhood look more attractive, it prevents pesky scavengers from scattering litter onto streets and yards, and deters unwanted pests like raccoons and rats from foraging.
8. Donate just a few hours of your time (or a few dollars) to one of the many local citizen groups or non-profit organizations making a difference in our community. Find your inspiration with Green Footprints Action Works, CCC@MLK, The Arboretum Foundation, The GMVCC, The Bailey-Boushay House, or the Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee, just to name a few.
9. Learn the name of your postal carrier or garbage man, and thank them for serving our community so diligently. With Catherine Nunneley's enlightening report on yard waste fraud, it's a timely reminder that we can all improve community relations by putting a name to a face in a hectic, impersonal world.
10. Make 2010 the year to attend a neighborhood Potluck Party. It's an easy way to meet new folks, reconnect with old friends, and enjoy great food. *Happy New Year from the Valley View!* 🏠

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Four Competing Proposals for MLK

By Kimberly Larson-Edwards



There are currently four separate entities vying for the closed M.L. King Jr. Elementary School: Citizens for a Community Center at M.L. King (CCC@MLK), First A.M.E. Church, The Bush School, and Hamlin Robinson School (another private school).

The Bush School proposes turning the property into playfields for its own primary use, followed by usage from other area schools, and lastly for the neighborhood if and when it's available after school hours. The Hamlin Robinson School proposes turning the school into a private academy for dyslexic children. While First A.M.E Church proposes to move much of the programming at their current location in the Pike/Pine corridor to Madison Valley. The CCC@MLK group wants to turn the former school into the **M.L. King Jr. Community Center**, which would offer a much-needed public playground in our neighborhood and cultural programs for children, families and life-long learners alike. Partners with the Community Center would include Spectrum Dance Theatre, African American Veterans Group of Washington State, and Creative Beginnings Childcare & Preschool. Delridge Neighborhoods Development Association would manage the Center.

If you agree with CCC@MLK's vision, we are asking community members to make sure the School Board and staff considering these four proposals hear your clear voice of support on the following points:

1. People of the community want and need a Community Center of, for and by *this* community;
2. No matter how well-intentioned, we have more than enough private schools in this neighborhood;
3. CCC@MLK has a viable vision and plan;
4. Publicly-owned property, such as Seattle School District property, should be put to community use if sold or leased;
5. The School Board should not balance their budget on the back of our community!

Please call the School Board at 252-0040 or send them a letter via Pamela Oakes (the senior administrative assistant for the School Board) at pjoakes@seattleschools.

We think the School Board will vote on the proposals in January 2010. We still need neighbors to turn out at School Board meetings in January, so please check our website at www.mlkcommunitycenter.org for more information. Also, please email us at info@mlkcommunitycenter.org if you would like a button to show your support!

Finally, on November 3rd, Director Mary Bass lost her reelection bid for the School Board position. Director Bass has played a critical role in first fighting to keep the M.L.K. Elementary school open and then in building support for a community center at the school after it had been closed. She has been a champion of our efforts and she will be missed. We are hopeful that Director Smith-Blum will support the CCC@MLK's vision and plan moving forward. 🏠



Arboretum Master Plan Meeting

By Karen O'Connor, Seattle Parks & Recreation

Seattle Parks and Recreation, the University of Washington, and the Arboretum Foundation will host a public meeting on Wednesday, January 13, 2010 at the Graham Visitor Center from 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. to discuss the continuing implementation of the Arboretum Master Plan. This plan ensures the Washington Park Arboretum will effectively fulfill three primary purposes: conservation, recreation, and education. The Graham Visitor Center is located in the Arboretum at 2300 Arboretum Drive East.



The public is invited and encouraged to join in the ongoing design and provide input on various projects, including the implementation of Cascadia and New Zealand focal forests, ridge top trail elements, and interpretive way-finding signs. Contributions from public and private sources provide for these improvements. The Parks and Green Spaces Levy funding and the substantial support from the Arboretum Foundation take the city another step toward achieving the vision for this incredible resource in the heart of Seattle. For more information, please contact Andy Sheffer at andy.sheffer@seattle.gov, or call him at 206-684-7041, or visit our website at: <http://seattle.gov/parks/projects/arboretum/> 🏠

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What's Up On Madison?

By Ann McCurdy



The Merchants Association recently installed colorful new banners along Madison Street, designed by local artist Sandy Haight.

Times are tough, but local businesses are coming up with innovative ways to stay afloat! **Rue de Lyon** will be closing its storefront in January at 2703 E. Madison, but will continue selling gifts and accessories at a new virtual store on the web. So when you stop by owner Hilary Neff's store for their big blow out sale this month, be sure to give her your e-mail address so she can inform you of Rue de Lyon's new incarnation. Or e-mail her at ruedelyonimports@yahoo.com. Rue de Lyon has been in the neighborhood for over five years, let's help her keep going!

Rue de Lyon has been sharing a storefront with **Baas Framing Studio** this past year. Owner Karrie Baas plans to stick around, and we hope to hear of her plans soon for a different sort of art space! Not the formal gallery from before, but a place for artists to sell their paintings, ceramics, jewelry and crafts. Sounds cool! Baas helped me find a perfect frame for a masterpiece painted by my son, so I want them around for future framing needs.

Plum Shoes is also moving to an online store and closing their storefront at 2913 E. Madison. Plum has sold high quality European children's shoes in the neighborhood for seven years, and these same shoes will be available at their website, www.plumshoes.com. Its neighbor, **Swedish Heirlooms** has closed its doors at 2911 E. Madison as well, and the owner Kiki Alvord is moving to Sweden. We wish her all the best in her new country and future endeavors!

Designed Dinners has also closed its doors at the big gray house at 511 28th Ave. East, just off the corner of MLK and Madison. There are other Designed Dinners locations in the city if you are looking for a place to prepare and bring home gourmet entrees, but sadly it's no longer available in Madison Valley.

On a positive note, **Peahi Pilates** is moving across the street to 2610 E. Madison, the location that formerly housed **Birth & Beyond** (which is still in the neighborhood, but now located at 2719 E. Madison). Peahi's new location should be more visible than their current spot in the commercial space above the Essential Bakery, and I hope it brings them more clients in the coming year. Finally, **Master 5 Star Psychic**, a business which opened up at the top of the hill earlier this year at 2303 E. Madison in March, has closed. I will now attempt to master all of my positive energies, and not make any jokes about how they should've seen it coming. Omm... ☺

with a mix of Asian families, black households, communists, some drinkers and prostitutes. I recall during lunchtime that a police car would be parked down the street and its driver would be visiting one of the latter. At that time our street was still just a dirt road.

Raccoons live in the greenbelt today. They move around in the evening, sometimes whole troops with babies, searching for food. You cannot shoo them away, as they do not mind. Once a big heavy fellow came nosing around our door. His tail was half lopped off, evidence of a hard life. I yelled at him and banged two sticks. He just sat up on his hind legs and stared at me. They are also dangerous fighters. We used to have a short black dog named Angus. He charged a raccoon crossing the yard and was met with a barrage of teeth and claws that left him bleeding. Angus recovered all right but his urge to attack these masked strangers evaporated.

I also remember Bucky and Jim, who lived up the hill. They did woodcarving and designed things. Jim had fashioned a wood sculpture of Alice of Wonderland, which later stood at the door of the children's book room of the Seattle Central Library. The one before the giant glass birdcage of today. Bucky and Jim would come by Sunday mornings to have coffee and would bring an exotic animal pet. They had a kinkajou, which is a critter somewhere between a raccoon and a monkey.

He took one look at our son David (age ten), and flew at him. The kinkajou ran up his side to bite his ear and then took off. David seemed to invite this kind of trouble. We had a pet turtle, almost nine inches across. He plodded around the yard and slept in the house. One summer day he bit David on the thumb. He cried, we bandaged him up and made cocoa to ease things. We punished the turtle by not letting him back in the house. At that time we had Roger, a big black poodle who was tall and dignified. He somehow sensed the turtle had offended, so he commenced to beat him up and chewed right through his shell. We called the dog off and carried the poor turtle to the Woodland Park Zoo. They took him, but I don't know whether he survived.

Then there was our striped tomcat named Douglas Dauntless, after the famous Navy plane of World War II. He was a formidable hunter. He would stalk around in the woods and grab a mouse, a rat, even a squirrel. He would kill them and deposit the body at the door. We regretted this slaughter but didn't have the sense to keep him inside. He was an outdoor cat. When he dragged in a male pheasant still struggling, a colorful beauty, we had enough. We saved the bird and decided to give Douglas to Elaine Steinbrueck. She might have rats and this cat was scaring us.

One day I was walking back from a visit to the school, past the Bigby house where they kept their boxer dog. He always barked at me when I went by. This time he was out in the street and he caught me. He bounded up to me, spread his forelegs and lowered his muzzle right down at my shoes. He made a menacing growl and dared me to take another step. Calming words had no effect. I was paralyzed. Finally, not too loud, I called for Mr. or Mrs. Bigby. Luckily they were home and someone came out to rescue me. After that I always scouted the block and walked on the opposite side of the street.

The Harrison Greenbelt attracts lots of birds as well. We see bushtits, wrens, thrushes, crows, hawks, and eagles. Once a

flock of migrating vultures settled in the maple trees there. They like to soar instead of flapping their wings, so when updrafts quit on them, they come down to rest. Small birds must have thought of these vultures as omens of death for they shut up and hid until they left a couple of days later. Another time, a runaway parrot flew into the beech tree. Allen saw him up there and lured him into the house. He put up signs on lamp posts and placed an ad in the paper, but no one claimed him. He fed the bird for several weeks and eventually sold him to a parrot lover.

We haven't had a bear or a cougar wandering around, but there is the coyote. I saw him one morning loping through the backyard. Gary on 34th Ave. says the coyote killed his cat. That makes a new presence on top of our local food chain. He probably lives in the Arboretum and comes across Madison at night to prowl. With all its various inhabitants, this little forest keeps us in touch with the natural world. I am glad it's here. 🏠



A more current view of the Sussman's former cottage, showing the large willow tree that graced their back yard. The willow continued to thrive even after it toppled over in a big storm.



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GMVCC MEETING:

Please come to the next Community Council Meeting, held **every third Wednesday of the month from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m!** GMVCC meetings will be held at the Valley School in 2010, conveniently located on 30th Avenue East and E. Thomas St. The first session of the new year will meet on **Wednesday January 20th**, with many exciting topics to discuss. Charles McDade is organizing a new community event for summer, and will be talking about his ideas for an outdoor Arts & Crafts Fair at the redesigned Stormwater Basin Park. Come join the discussion and get to know your council members in 2010!

GMVCC WEBSITE DESIGN:

Council President Peter Triandafilou is looking for a computer savvy volunteer to assist him in redesigning the GMVCC website for a more user-friendly electronic forum. Please contact him to discuss the project and lend a helping hand in improving this invaluable community resource! You may email him at seattlelaw@msn.com, or call to chat directly at 206-720-0488.

THE VALLEY VIEW NEEDS YOU!

Valley View volunteers Richard Sloniker and Serin Ngai are moving away after purchasing their first home in Columbia City. We are seeking a new volunteer to replace Richard and assist with our bi-monthly layout design. Please contact Nori Hawkins at editor@madisonvalley.org with interest on joining the newsletter team. Congratulations to Richard and Serin on this momentous step, and best wishes from your Madison Valley neighbors!



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JANUARY POTLUCK PARTY!

The Greater Madison Valley Community Council invites you to attend the **Second Annual Winter Potluck on Saturday, January 30**. Please bring your favorite dish or tasty treat to share with neighbors and celebrate the New Year! The Potluck Party will run from **4:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the Valley School**, located on 30th Avenue East. Please call Charles McDade at 206-325-3518 for more information, or if you'd like to help out. Charles and Adrienne Bailey are designing flyers to deliver around the neighborhood, as friendly reminders of this fun family event. We'd like to extend a special thanks to the Valley School for hosting the Potluck events in 2009 and throughout the coming year.

