

# The *TIMES* of.... SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

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FREE

The oldest neighborhood newspaper in St. Louis

## Walgreen's on DeBaliviere? Deferred But Not Denied

Whether Skinker DeBaliviere will have its own Walgreen's continues to be up in the air. There are new plans but also a contending use for the proposed site. Following is a compilation, in condensed form, of some of the critical events regarding the possible arrival of this emporium.

In May of this year, the request of developer Pat Kelley to locate a Walgreen's on DeBaliviere and Pershing on land owned by Ted Krakover was stymied by the Board of Adjustment. Due to a change in state law, the Board was unable to rule on the request for a zoning variance needed for the Walgreen's. The strip of land is in two parcels,

one zoned residential and one commercial. At that time, the Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council did not oppose this development although a number of neighbors testified against it.

At the end of July, MetroLink opened. It was a success beyond the hopes even of its designers. People immediately began to use the vacant lot at DeBaliviere and Pershing (owned by Krakover and directly across from the Forest Park MetroLink station) as a parking lot while using rapid transit. However, through perhaps a misunderstanding a number of cars were towed from the lot on a Friday evening. The resultant publicity helped BiState to

enter into a month-to-month lease with Krakover for the property for a sum of \$2,000 a month. The lot has been heavily utilized since. BiState had talked to the owner in months prior to MetroLink's opening about either buying or leasing the property. The purchase price was steep and BiState was short on cash. The owner did not agree to a temporary lease before 20 families had their cars towed and had to pay \$140 apiece to redeem them.

In August, Krakover and his architect met with Alderman McGuire to resolve difficulties in the site plan and building design. They had not changed their desire to have a Walgreen's on the site of the now MetroLink lot.

Krakover and the architect came to the SDCC meeting of October 11. They presented their new plans and agreed to have certain restrictions the Council wanted recorded against the land to facilitate enforcement. Such conditions included a prohibition against the sale of alcoholic beverages, restricted hours, provision of security and control of litter.

The Council discussed the presentation and the status of the site at length. Many people spoke of the importance of the MetroLink parking lot and preferred a parking lot to a Walgreen's. Five residents from the 57XX block of DeGiverville said they preferred the parking lot.

Continued on page 5

## Ruth Johnson: Helping Children Be All They Can Be

by Lana Stein

Ruth Johnson lives in Kingsbury Square in our neighborhood. She's been there since 1985 and loves the location, "30 minutes from anywhere and now there's MetroLink." In 1992, she retired after 37 years with the St. Louis school system. She had taught all grades kindergarten-8, was a remedial reading specialist, math specialist, assistant principal, and instructional coordinator. After all these endeavors, one might expect Ruth Johnson to rest a bit, to stay way away from a classroom. But, that was not the case. She quickly involved herself in a project that keeps her working with the city's schoolchildren.

Johnson's husband Herbert is a member of the Prometheans. This is a social group founded about 35 years ago. They have always worked with the community assisting at the Annie Malone Children's Home and donating Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets to families various city schools recommended. They now receive names from 10-15 schools and give out over 100 baskets each holiday.

The Prometheans turned their attention more directly to St. Louis school children several years ago. They felt that people "say that inner city kids can't achieve; they're latch key or one parent family." Many of the Prometheans came from poor families but they were able to achieve because their parents pushed them. They wanted to tell the kids that they can succeed. "It doesn't matter if your parents have to work and are not there when you



come home. You can succeed if you have one parent."

The Prometheans began to work with boys in grades 4 and 5 at the Irving School. Speakers from the group would come to classes and tell children how it was when they were growing up. They hold assemblies twice a month. This year

Mayor Bosley will be invited. The Prometheans hope to expose the boys to many careers. They work toward the Science Fair by having workshops led by a former teacher who also worked at the Science Center.

The Prometheans also provide one-on-one assistance. The teacher

will explain the particular needs of a boy and a Promethean will work with him. The group wants to help the boys develop feelings of self-confidence and self-worth as well as discipline. The men always review the boys' report cards with them every 5 weeks. Teachers look forward to this. One side of the report card deals with academic achievement. The other side covers attitudes and behaviors. If this latter side is satisfactory, the academic could be rectified. The Promethean volunteers will find out why boys are talking in class or not bringing their homework in. They tell them that they're unhappy if a boy is disrespectful and others can't learn.

The Prometheans who participate are retired and this project holds a very special place in their life. Many keep in touch with some of the boys for a long time.

Each year the Prometheans escort the youngsters they are working with to Jefferson City. There they meet the governor and other officials and tour Lincoln University as well as the state prison. They always close the school year with Fun Day. A street is closed off; there is a cook out with barbecue pits and of course games, sock races, and volleyball.

What does this have to do with Ruth Johnson? Her husband is a Promethean, in fact the current chairperson. She took a very strong interest in the program at Irving School and decided to do something there for the girls since the boys

Continued on page 6

# Editor's Notebook

by Lana Stein

I would like to recommend to all Times readers the very fine exhibit that just opened at the History Museum. Entitled "The Gilded Age," it deals with the period of time just before the World's Fair. However, it is not a glorification of that epoch. Rather, it is a true portrait showing the good and the not good, the beautiful and the brutal. It is an excellent exhibit for all ages because it gives a real understanding of life for people of various classes and both races. There is an extra treat: on weekends for a few months there will be actors playing streetcar workers. These gentlemen provide the most direct portrait for young and old.

The exhibits at our cultural institutions are another nice thing about St. Louis. Yet another is how lovely our neighborhood looks as the leaves turn.

By the way, I have received the name of one prospective Times volunteer this week. I hope a few more emerge to help us. We really need someone to write Vicissitudes. If you want to please let me know. In the meanwhile, thanks to everyone for their support and special thanks to Marj, Venita, King, JoAnn, Katie, and Tom who make this happen on a regular basis.

# CALENDAR

## Neighborhood Meetings/Events:

- 11/8 SDCC Board Meeting, 6008 Kingsbury, 7:30pm.
- 11/10 6000 McPherson block unit meeting, at SDCC, 6008 Kingsbury, 7pm.
- 11/15 Apartment Owners Association Meeting, SDCC, 7pm.
- 11/16 Delmar Business Association, Wabash Triangle Cafe, noon.
- 11/17 Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration Committee Meeting, 6008 Kingsbury, 6:30pm.
- 11/18 28th Ward Regular Democratic Club, place and time to be announced. For information call 727-1727.
- 12/10 28th Ward Regular Democratic Club Holiday Party at Portland Towers, 5:30-8:00pm.

## Other Events of Interest:

- now-1998 "St. Louis at the Gilded Age," History Museum. Free. Tuesdays-Sundays, 9:30am - 5pm.
- now-11/30 Art work of Joe Silvestro on exhibit at the University City Public Library Gallery
- 11/6 COCA's Holiday Boutique opens, 524 Trinity, U City Loop.
- 11/6-7 "Holidays at our House," annual arts-crafts-food bazaar. Grace United Methodist Church, 6199 Waterman. 9am-3pm, on Sat., 12:30pm-3pm on Sun. For information call 863-1992.
- 11/12-13 "The Persistence of the Past: The Legacy of Gilded-Age St. Louis," a one and one half day forum at the History Museum beginning on Fri., the 12th at 6:30pm. Presentations and discussions with Howard S. Miller, Katharine Corbett, Andrew Hurley, James Neal Primm, George Lipsitz, Gerda Ray, Eric Sandweiss, David Roediger, Susan Strasser. Free but registration required. Call 454-3135.

## Ervin Scholarships

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Up to 10 full-tuition scholarships will be awarded to talented college-bound black high school students next year. Washington University is now accepting applications for the program, which was inaugurated in early 1987. The recipients will receive renewable scholarships of full tuition and an annual stipend of \$2,500 for four years of undergradu-

ate study. The scholarships are awarded on the basis of academic merit and community service. The university will provide further support to recipients who demonstrate additional financial need. They are renewable each year provided the students maintain a satisfactory academic record. Interested person may write to Dr. James E. McLeod, Chair of the John B. Ervin Scholarship Committee, at Campus Box 1089, Washington University, One Brookings Dr., St. Louis 63130-4899 or call 935-6800.

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 The Times welcomes unsolicited articles and letters. Because of the small size and volunteer nature of the writing staff, the quality and range of The Times has always depended in large part on submissions from non-staff area residents.  
 All material - articles, letters, notices, classified ads - must be typewritten on opaque paper, double-spaced, and signed. Signature on correspondence to the editor may be omitted by request. Calendar listings should be phone or mailed to 6008 Kingsbury. Deadline for all copy is the 15th of the month.  
 In a news article it is essential that the writer state the most important information in the first paragraph. The writer is responsible for the accuracy of the data, including times, dates location and particularly the spelling of names.  
 Any pictures or illustrations submitted should be black and white.  
 The Editor retains the right to omit or alter any material.  
 Send all correspondence to 6008 Kingsbury, 63112. Deadline: 15th of the month or call 721-7532.



Bill Kohn's "Yagul toward Tlacolula", 57" x 112", Acrylic on canvas, 1993.

## William Kohn's "Testimonios En El Valle"

A collection of acrylics and watercolors by celebrated artist and longtime local resident, Bill Kohn, will be exhibited through November 28, 1993, at the Elliot Smith Gallery at 4727 McPherson. Works in the exhibition, titled "Testimonios En El Valle," are interpretations of archeological sites in the Valley of Oaxaca, Mexico.

A concurrent exhibition at Washington University's Steinberg Gallery, will begin November 19, 1993, and continue through January 3, 1994. For more information call 361-4800.

## Forest Park Summit to be Held

Dec. 3-5

The Forest Park Summit is being sponsored by the Office of the Mayor in order to assess overall visions and ideas for the future land use of Forest Park. It will also identify the points of consensus and controversy among key constituencies regarding the use, restoration and conservation of the park as the basis for the revision of the 1983 Forest Park Master Plan.

The Summit will include a discussion of the historical development of the park, the 1983 Forest Park Master Plan, park improvements since 1983, and the new consultant study and recommendations commissioned by Forest Park Forever. The Summit will provide an

opportunity to discuss case studies of successful urban planning in other major urban parks and to hear the views of the park institutions, neighborhood and advocate groups and local users of the park. The Summit will begin to build a consensus on the future of Forest Park through workshops and panel discussions.

The Forest Park Summit will provide the basis for an open, inclusive planning process that will culminate in the ratification and immediate implementation of a Revised forest Park Master Plan in the Spring of 1994 utilizing public and private funding sources.

## Bingo Update

"So Far So Good"

by Kim Koenig

On October 3, the Skinker De-Baliviere Community Council began sponsoring bingo on Sunday nights from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Salad Bowl (3949 Lindell Blvd.). With four bingo nights under our belt, we have experienced tremendous success. By December, we hope to begin implementing various beautification programs, planning for a free youth day camp, and various other improvement projects. A number of neighborhood groups including individual block units and institutions (i.e., Grace Pre-School) have already agreed to staff a number of bingo nights in order to receive a percentage of the profit.

We still need an ongoing number of volunteers--and of course, players--to keep bingo successful. If you would like to volunteer or want more information, please contact SDCC at 862-5122.

Also, a thank you to everyone who has volunteered their time thus far!

## Planting Flower Bulbs at the Delmar MetroLink Station

by Brian Perrin, St. Louis University High School Student

I chose beautifying the MetroLink station for a number of reasons, especially to help improve the quality of our neighborhood and to improve the scenery on a ride on the MetroLink.

I contacted Ann Ruwitch at BiState who gave the okay. The ground was compacted from the vehicular activity on it, so Ms. Ruwitch offered to have some people come out with machines to break up the soil before planting began.

Another step was to decide how to beautify the Wabash Station. I first discussed it with our neighborhood's Operation BrightSide block captain. I then talked to Mary Lou Green, the director of Operation Brightside. I decided on planting King Alfred daffodil bulbs. I liked them because they come back every year. They don't die out after one year like some other flowers. Green offered to give me a discount on the flower bulbs since I was doing a project and was buying a large quantity.

The next and possibly biggest step was to raise money to buy the daffodil bulbs. I decided to send out a flier to nearby homes and businesses asking for a donation. I printed out 500 copies of the flier and delivered them from the 5800 block to the 6300 blocks of Pershing through Washington. I also sent a letter with the flier to businesses and asked National Supermarket for donations of food for the volunteers.

Fundraising was very successful. We raised over \$500 when my goal was \$400. We have plans now to buy an additional couple of trees and bushes to be planted with the flowers.

On October 23 I and members of Troop 98 of the Boy Scouts pitched in to plant the bulbs. A nearby Girl Scout troop also lent a hand. In March we should see 2,000 flowers blooming.

Editor's Note: Many Skinker DeBaliviere/Parkview neighbors contributed to Brian Perrin's effort. Congratulations Brian and all the volunteers for a job well done.



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# Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Council

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 13, 1993

Attending the meeting were: Directors R. Johnson, G. Fox, B. Bender, K. Keaveny, A. Johnson, J. Wright, C. Forslund, G. Hayes, S. Polk, A. Carr, J. Miller, ConServ Officer J. Waits, and Executive Director K. Koenig.

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 p.m.

### NEW BUSINESS

6016 Delmar, Development Proposal - Mr. Brian Kang, owner of property, made a presentation to the Board on his plans for this space. His plans call for approximately six vendors selling merchandise (clothing, jewelry, etc.) within the building. In addition, the building will be completely renovated and the parking lot will be repaved as well. R. Johnson moved "That the Board accept the proposed development with the following added restrictions:

1. No check cashing service;
2. No visible bars on exterior of windows and doors;
3. No prepared food service; and
4. Daily litter patrol of lot"; seconded by J. Wright and approved with three opposed and one abstention.

Neighborhood Plan Summary - J. Waits distributed copies of final text and photos to appear on the neighborhood plan summary. J. Wright moved "That the Board adopt the photos and text as amended for inclusion in the brochure"; seconded by B. Bender and approved.

Bingo Update - K. Koenig reported that a mock bingo training session will be held Sunday, September 26, 6 p.m., at the Salad Bowl. All Board members are encouraged to attend. G. Hayes announced that a Bingo Steering Committee meeting will be held Wednesday, September 15, at 7 p.m. S. Johnson reported that Washington University greek organizations have agreed to staff eight bingo nights.

MetroLink Lot at Forest Park - K. Koenig reported that Bi-State is currently leasing the lot at DeBaliviere and Forest Park Parkway for \$2000 per month.

### OLD BUSINESS

J. Wright moved "That minutes of the July Board meeting be approved as read"; seconded by A. Johnson and approved.

R. Johnson moved "That the treasurer's report for July be accepted as read"; seconded by G. Hayes and approved.

### COMMITTEE/ASSOCIATION REPORTS

DeGiverville - No report.

Kingsbury Square - R. Johnson reported that a block party/barbecue was held for residents.

Nina Place - No report.

Parkview - K. Keaveny reported that a bike safety rally was held, with police officers assisting in the event. They are planning for the annual Parkview picnic in Pershing Park in late October.

Rosedale - J. Miller announced that Rags to Riches is scheduled for Saturday, September 18, from 8 to 3 p.m.

Housing Corporation - K. Koenig reported that demolition approval for the ranchettes is imminent from CDA.

Recreation - K. Koenig reported that the softball season for almost sixty neighborhood kids ended last week with a trophy distribution and picnic in Lucier Park. Registration for volleyball, basketball, and soccer teams through Operation Teamwork will begin next week.

Commercial Planning - No report.

Beautification - K. Koenig thanked those who have watered Four Corners this summer.

Fundraising - K. Koenig reported that bingo will start on October 3 at the Salad Bowl, contingent upon licensure.

Revolving Loan - K. Koenig reported that an article marketing this program will appear in the next Times issue.

Social Service - B. Bender reported that this committee plans to begin home weatherization in late October. They are also awaiting word on interns from Washington University School of Social Work.

### DIRECTOR'S REPORT

SDCC Riverboat Cruise - K. Koenig reported that the cruise is scheduled for October 22, at 7:30 p.m., on the Tom Sawyer. She asked that any remaining unsold tickets be returned to the office by October 12.

Evaluation of Director - C. Forslund, J. Miller, G. Sanders, and A. Carr will form a committee to draft an evaluation form for all Board members to receive and to initiate formal evaluation procedures.

SDCC Office Relocation - K. Koenig asked for volunteers to assist with the move in October.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.



photo by King Schoenfeld

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## Vicissitudes

by Marj Weir

It is always hard to report joy and sorrow together, but it seems to be in the nature of things.

We celebrate the arrival on September 25, of Neil Edward, newborn son of Dawn Blobaum and Jim Bartl of 61XX Kingsbury. He weighed 6 lbs. 15 ounces. Our best wishes to them.

We regret having to report the death of Ben Breun, son of Joan and Ray Breun of the 6100 block of

McPherson. Ben attended St. Roch's school where his mother is also a teacher. A memorial service was held November 1 at St. Roch's. All their many friends and neighbors extend their sympathy.

Catherine Forslund has been awarded a fellowship by the LBJ Library to study there in Austin during the winter. Her research will focus on Anna Chennault's involvement in the Viet Nam War.

## DeBaliviere Delights

by Katie Kurtz, Food Editor

This month's culinary offering comes from *Times* Editor Lana Stein. In recognition of the first anniversary of Bill Clinton's election to the thankless job of President, we bring you Hillary's award-winning cookies. Partisanship aside, Consumer Reports recently reported that Hillary's cookies were voted the best in a major taste test. So enjoy, no matter what your politics!

### Hillary Clinton's Chocolate Chips

Vegetable oil for baking sheets

1 and 1/2 cups unsifted all-purpose flour

1 tsp. salt

1 tsp. baking soda

1 cup solid vegetable shortening

1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar

1/2 cup granulated sugar

1 tsp. vanilla

2 eggs

2 cups old fashioned rolled oats

1 12 oz. package semisweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease baking sheets.

Combine flour, salt and baking soda on waxed paper.

Beat together shortening, sugar, and vanilla in large bowl with an electric mixer until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in flour mixture and rolled oats. Stir in chocolate chips.

Drop batter by well-rounded teaspoonfuls onto baking sheets. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes or until golden.

Cool cookies on sheets for 2 minutes. Remove to wire rack to cool completely.

Yield: 7 and 1/2 dozen cookies, 67 calories per cookie.

Note: This baker substitutes unsalted butter for vegetable shortening and it works well.



photo by King Schoenfeld

Walgreen's

Continued from page 1

A spokesperson from BiState, Jim Herries, said the site was desirable for a park and ride lot but he could not speak of plans to acquire it because of the agency's present lack of funds. Alderman McGuire discussed the amended site design and building design. He said it was an improvement but that the best use would be as a MetroLink lot.

The Council tabled action on Krakover's amended plans and asked the Executive Director, Kim Koenig, to write BiState and ask them to state their intentions in an expeditious manner.

Right after the SDCC meeting, developer Kelley filed for an adjustment to the variance on the property at the Board of Adjustment. A change in state law now made it possible for the Board to rule in the matter. A hearing was set for October 27 although the SDCC had not acted. In the interim, Kelley also presented plans to the Heritage and Urban Design Commission for approval. The SDCC was not informed nor was the alderman.

On October 26, the SDCC received a letter from BiState expressing their desire to purchase the property and their attempts to obtain funding so that they could do so. They also mentioned the possibility of shared usage with a Walgreen's on the surface and an underground parking facility.

At the hearing on Oct. 27, Krakover's son and the architect spoke in favor of the development. Alderman McGuire and SDCC Director Koenig opposed the variance for a Walgreen's because of BiState's interest in the land, the sentiment supporting BiState's of the property, and mentioned that an agreement

had not been entered between the owner and the SDCC. Both McGuire and Koenig said that if a variance were to be granted it should be contingent on the restricted uses cited above being recorded against the land in a three way agreement between the owner, Walgreen's, and the SDCC.

Other speakers opposed Walgreen's as an inappropriate use for the site because of a possible increase in crime and traffic or spoke of the importance of a MetroLink parking lot at this site.

At the close of the hearing, Pat Kelley, the developer, was asked if he would be willing to allow more time to meet with the SDCC. He said yes; there was only one point of contention in the agreement. He said Alderman McGuire, however, had asked him not to ask for a postponement. McGuire denied that. Then Kelley said he had talked to Koenig. She denied having said that and also added that there was more than one point left to be decided. And, BiState had to be heard from.

The Board decided to take the matter under advisement until November 17 and asked for further information from the developer, BiState, and the SDCC who are to submit letters of intent or opposition.

Perhaps we will then learn whether there will be a Walgreen's at DeBaliviere and Pershing, a permanent MetroLink park and ride lot, a combination, or the saga will be continued into yet another year. In the meantime, the word is that a Walgreen's will come to the Loop in the near future.

If you have an opinion to voice on this subject, send your comments to Leroy Grant, Room 400, City Hall, St. Louis, MO, 63103 before November 17.

The Cats Are Back



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# Pet Talk

by Stephen A. Brammeier, D.V.M.

## Holiday Hazards

As the Holidays approach, I consider the topics of interest to pet owners. Previously I have written about the inadvisability of giving pets in particular, as Christmas gifts. Another area of concern for people who already own a pet is the potential hazard produced by the trappings of our celebrations: decorations, wrapping paper and ribbons, rich food treats.

The decorations placed around a house during the holidays often get the attention of pets in the household. Dogs and cats may find new objects interesting and appealing enough to chew on, or even eat. Decorative items that have food components may attract animals. New objects placed in different locations with different shapes and textures may be appealing to an animal for chewing. Minimally a pet will end up with an intestinal upset causing vomiting and diarrhea, which may not be a minimal problem for the owner. The tinsel hung on Christmas trees is particularly interesting to cats, and potentially deadly. Cats like to eat lengths of the tinsel which often cause intestinal obstruction and possible perforation. Thread or yarn ornaments present the same danger. Greenery with berries and the sap from the poinsettia plant can be irritating, also causing intestinal distress.

Package decorations are often small; the perfect size for chewing or better yet, just swallowing whole. And, the ribbons (especially curling ribbon) are very dangerous when swallowed presenting the same problem as tinsel.

The excess of food that comes with holiday celebrations is no better for our pets than it is for us. And, just like us they don't know when to quit. Cookies, candies and hors d'oeuvres left on low tables are too tempting for our four-legged friends. Chocolate in large quantities is dangerous and potentially fatal. Meat scraps left over from holiday feasts, whether given freely by well wishing revelers or pilfered

from the kitchen garbage, will throw a damper on merry making when they are hurled back up on the living room carpet. Such a rich indulgence could spark an attack of pancreatitis, one of the most difficult conditions to treat, very painful for the pet, and life threatening.

So, keep in mind, along with the other 100 million things to remember around the holidays, there are potential problems for your pets lurking amongst the holidays trappings. A few precautions could keep you from spending Christmas Eve with Fido or Felicia, at the Animal Emergency Clinic.

Johnson

Continued from page 1

were getting so much attention. She too brings in speakers and she tries to stress moral and spiritual values. She also teaches the girls sewing, some cooking techniques, crafts, etiquette, and poise. She also arranges story telling for grades K-2. She and several other volunteers help the girls learn "What You Need to Succeed from A to Z." Johnson admits that when she retired she "never intended to leave the children. The greatest thing is to make them happy and see them succeed." Johnson makes sure that the girls get to go to Jefferson City too.

Irving School was the oldest in the city and its physical condition was badly deteriorated. The school is closed this year. So Ruth Johnson and the Prometheans have begun working with children at Jefferson School. Johnson came back from the first day and said it was just wonderful.

Johnson's concern with public education in St. Louis does not end with her work with the Prometheans. She is a board member of a new organization called CHANGE. The group was begun by former Mayor Schoemehl in the last months of his term. It has taken root and is now incorporated. It is dedicated to working with the school board and the school system to bring about change in order to make things better for the kids. Members of the school board are attending CHANGE's meetings and Johnson is very optimistic. She would like to see schools where all were magnet schools. It would attract people to the city.

Johnson is a member of the Board of Trustees at Kingsbury Square and has previously served as president. She represents Kingsbury Square on the Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council where she

# Jason Allen: Nintendo Victim

by  
Jeffrey Schoenfeld

Her hand fell. A streak of crimson eye shadow ran down her cheek. Her allergies were gone, but that Benedryl she had taken was still making her drowsy.

"Hey, people!" was heard from the downstairs kitchen.

"I'm coming, Dad!" said Jason. Soon Jason was seated at the table, saving a seat for his mom. Slowly she came into the dining room, dragging one foot in front of another.

"Feeling better?" asked Bruce in a slightly sympathetic voice. There was a blank expression on her face.

"Mom! What happened to your cheek?" wondered Jason.

Agatha replied, "I was doing my makeup and I lost it."

"Right," said Jason casually. Bruce's mouth dropped open. He made a sound that suggested unfairness.

"Honey, put down the paper and eat," said Agatha with a mouthfull of tortellini.

"Mom, that's sick," mumbled Jason. He liked to say things that were usually said to him.

"Uh, what didga say?" asked Agatha. Her voice was getting tired again.

"Never mind," said Jason with impatience.

Bruce said loudly, "I still can't believe it."

"Believe what?" asked Agatha, who was instantly interested.

"The Billikens lost the game."

"You like the Billikens?"

"Why do you care about the Billikens, Honey?"

"I lost two hundred on the Billikens."

"But...but...well..." Agatha stopped to think about this.

Bruce was relieved to see this, because, like Jason, he couldn't stand to be criticized by her.

"What were you thinking? No one in their right mind would bet two hundred bucks on the Billikens! The Billikens aren't

even adults!" Jason tried to yell as loud as he could. He wanted to make it as awful as it could sound. Jason continued, "I'm full. Well, actually, I lost my appetite!" He marched over to the door. "You know, two hundred is more than a Nintendo costs," and with that he ran up the stairs. Agatha and Bruce sat there wondering. Jason had put on some show.

Jason dashed in front of the Nintendo and quickly turned it on. His second favorite game was Super Mario Bros. 3. He hadn't played it yesterday, so he decided to play it today. After Jason had gone through three levels, there was a place called Toad's House. (You need to go in there and get a prize. Now, once you enter Toad's house, your friend Toad, who is a mushroom man, welcomes you by talking through a message box.) Jason moved Mario over, then went into Toad's House. The message box is supposed to say: "PICK A BOX, ITS CONTENTS WILL HELP YOU ON YOUR WAY."

The message box appeared. The letters popped up: "HEY, KID. HURRY UP ALREADY. IF YOU DON'T GET A MOVE ON, I'M GONNA KICK YOU TO KINGDOM COM."

Jason almost fell through the floor. He quickly turned off the Nintendo. He thought it might be breaking down. He thought, "Kingdom com?"

O

In the morning Jason still hadn't told anyone. He didn't want to tell his parents, because he couldn't think of anything more embarrassing than explaining a crime to its owner, or whatever you call it when someone sends threatening messages through a Nintendo.

He lay in bed praying that it was Friday yesterday and Saturday today. He checked his Garfield calendar that he had gotten on his last birthday, although he was surprised to get it on his tenth birthday. It was Saturday. While he was watching Garfield, not too long after, he thought that while his parents were doing their

Continued on page 7

serves as secretary. She works with Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration each year. And she is active at her church, St. Phillips Lutheran. She has been a Sunday school teacher and secretary for community involvement. She also serves as usher. She's volunteered with the literacy program and helped a 45 year old man learn how to read. Finally she's part of Delta Sigma Theta sorority which is working with Habitat for Humanity to build several homes here.

Johnson and her husband Herbert have been married forty years. They have two children and two grandchildren. Ruth gives a great deal of credit to her family, in laws, and friends for encouraging her through the years. She owes a great deal to her parents, William and Elizabeth Blanchard who were always firm believers in education. Her mother is now 82. It certainly was a very special inspiration that keeps Ruth Johnson so active, especially on behalf of young children who should not be written off.

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weekend shopping, he could call some people on the phone to help him with the Nintendo incident. It sounded a little crazy, him being a kid and all that, but he was adventurous most of the time.

After his parents had left and given him the usual safety directions, (which really annoyed Jason to hear them every week), he went straight for the phone book. He read the names off to himself. "the Dolly Shop...Dilno's Pizza...oh, okay, Dastardly Doodles Electronic Repair." A few minutes later he changed his mind. With a name like that, the didn't really trust them. He came across another one he liked: "Dayland Coffee/Computer Repair." Nice name. He picked up the cellular phone that he had kept beside him. The first time he dialed, he missed the four. He dialed again and got a hold of someone after five rings.

"This is Dayland Coffee and Computer Repair. Got a computer problem or just wanna cup of tea?" the voice said.

"Computer problem."

"I though so."

"Anyway, someone's trying to send messages to me through my Nintendo."

"What's wrong with that? They might be trying to help you."

"I don't think so. Especially with a message like: 'Hurry up or I'll kick you to kingdom com.'"

"Okay, so...do you wanna make an appointment, oh, maybe tomorrow?"

Jason didn't know. He might not be able to get out of the house tomorrow. Jason thought he could pretend to take his pomeranian dog for a walk. But he didn't know where the Dayland place was.

"Where are you located?"

"At the corner of Skinker and Kingsbury."

"What time should I be there?"

"Fourish."

"Fourish?"

"It means around four."

"Okay. My name is Jason Allen."

Beep. He quickly turned off the phone. Now all he had to do was wait.

Jason was completely bored now. He couldn't think of anything to do. Within two minutes he was glaring at the Nintendo screen. Jason wanted to do something else with the Nintendo problem. He needed someone else to call. Maybe there was something wrong with the game itself. If so, someone who has been in contact with the game before might know something. Ideas raced through Jason's head. The guy who sold him the game...the guy from Blockbuster!

After Jason had purposely killed all his people and quit the game, which was not Super Mario 3, he looked up Blockbuster Video in the phone book. As he dialed, he missed the eight twice. When someone picked up the phone on the other end, Jason talked immediately and quickly.

"Are you the guy from Blockbuster with the blond hair and the long face that's stubby at the bottom and wears those long black t-shirts that are black with red, green and yellow writing on them and they're all from Target across the street?"

"Which one?"

Jason swallowed a giggle. Then Jason said, "I think his name is something like Jamie Woods."

"Oh, Forest!"

"Yeah. Whatever. Can I see him sometime?"

"Why don't you ask him?"

"Oh...well, what's his phone number?"

"Four million, three hundred fifty-one thousand, seven hundred forty-five."

"I'm thinking of a phone number."

"That was a phone number. Four three five, one seven four five."

After the phone number was repeated and was written down, Jason hung up. Jason again picked up the cellular phone and tried to reach the Forest person. A scream echoed out of the Allen house. Jason was sick and tired of screwing up with the phone every single time.

"Is this anything important?" A mellow male voice said through the phone.

"Yes!" Jason almost yelled.

"Who is this?" the person asked.

"We met about a year ago. I'm Jason Allen."

"Oh, um...I think I remember you. Yeah, you're the best customer that ever walked through that door."

"You sold me that Super Mario 3 game."

"What about it?"

"There are evil and abnormal messages coming through my Nintendo when I play that particular game. I thought maybe you would know something about it."

"Sure. I've got nothing else to do."

"What is your name, anyway?"

"Forest. Forest James."

"Is that your real name?"

"No, actually it's James Alol. I got the name from a long time ago. My middle name is Foreman, and after people had stopped calling me J.F.A. (James Foreseman Alol), which they thought was funny, because it's close to J.F.K., They thought my middle name sounded like 'Forest,' so they called me Forest James."

"Interesting. Anyway, I've already called another person to help me. She's from Dayland Coffee/Computer Repair."

"Well, I wouldn't mind meeting her. So this is gonna be like a three person detective thing?"

"I guess. I'm going to the Dayland place tomorrow, and you could meet me in front of my house. I live at seventy-two, twenty-four Waterman. I'll be with my dog pretending to go on a walk with her."

"Okay, sure. What time?"

"About three forty-five."

"Okay. Bye."

"Bye." Jason hung up. After his parents had come home, Jason just finished up his game of "Wizards and Warriors" (which he had just beaten). He plopped down the steps.

"Did you get those great Eagle ranch chips?" Jason got excited just with the thought of them.

"Two bags!" said Bruce.

"Woohoo!" Jason grabbed a bag of chips and shot back up the steps like an inflatable raft losing its air.

"Don't eat too many! We're having macaroni and cheese for dinner!"

Another muffled "Woohoooo!" came from the upstairs bathroom.

O  
Sunday afternoon when Jason came back from church and changed his clothes, he went for the Nintendo. He was going to experiment with the Super Mario 3 game. When he reached Toad's House, the words said this: "OH, YOU'RE BACK. I THOUGHT I'D NEVER GET TO TELL YOU WHAT I'M GOING TO DO. ANY DAY NOW I'M GOING TO GET YOU...BIG!"

Sweating, Jason checked his watch. It was three twenty-six. He turned off the Nintendo and went to the bathroom until three forty-three.

"Mom, I'm taking Avel for a walk!" Jason called his dog. "Alvetica!" Avel came hopping over like she was covered with laquer and couldn't move. They went over to the front room and waddled out the door.

Jason saw a stick figure coming down the sidewalk that had a little bounce in every other step. As it turned into Forest James, Jason walked toward him. Then Jason said, "Forest! We've got about fifteen minutes. Let's go!"

"Which way is that place you were talking about?"

"This way," Jason jerked his head over to the far side of the street a little. Eventually they turned the corner and saw the building three blocks away.

"Let's go up these steps," said Jason as they arrived in front of the two stairway deck. There was an annoying little bell that made a little "Bing, bing" as they came through the front door.

"Are you here for an appointment? Uh, what's your names?" asked a short Black lady with curly, bouncy hair.

"I'm Jason—" Forest took over, "Yeah, this is Jason Allen and I'm Forest and we're here for an appointment with someone about a Nintendo problem."

"Are you two related?"

"No!" Jason softly shouted.

"She's up the stairs and to the left. Would you like a cup of coffee? We have cappuccino."

"Decaf," said Forest as he slightly tilted his head. The lady reached behind the counter and pulled out a mug of coffee that said: "THE SECRET TO OUR SUCCESS IS THE GREAT COFFEE WE DRINK."

Forest, after he had gulped down most

of the coffee, swung over to the stairway and Jason followed. Forest knocked on the door and a tall redhead with mostly grey patterned clothes opened it.

"Hi, I'm Forest James."

"And I'm Jason Allen."

"No relation," they both said at the same time.

"I'm Alex Dayland. I run this place," she said.

"We're here about a certain Nintendo problem. I called here earlier and I thought you could help us. He's from Blockbuster where he sold me that video game."

Forest landed on the couch and bounced as he swayed from side to side. To the side of the window there was a black painting with other colored splatters of paint that was surrounded by a light pink wall.

"So what kind of a Nintendo problem is this?" Alex walked over to Jason as she talked.

"When I play Super Mario 3 and I reach Toad's House, weird messages show up."

"What kind of messages?"

"Get out or I'll kick you to kingdom com; any day now I'm going to get you big."

"What's Kingdom com?"

"I don't know, but that's the way it was spelled."

"Do you have any ideas of who it might be?"

"Only my dad."

Forest joined in. "Is Alex your nickname?"

"Yeah. My real name is Alexandra."

"Oh...Nice view of the park!"

"Why your dad? Has he done something like this before?"

Jason got up from a large leather chair and said, "No. But I don't think he would hesitate scaring me. Just recently he lost two hundred bucks on the Billikens!"

(To be continued)

(The Times will consider publishing fiction and non-fiction writing from its readers-young people and adults. Mail or drop off manuscripts at the Skinker-DeBaliviere office. The Times would prefer receiving stories on 3.5" computer disks as well as on paper, if possible.)



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# In Your Ear

by Hawkeye Hoerr

Everyone's family, when you get to know them, is strange. But my family is probably a bit odder than most. I'm not sure why this is the case, and I don't think it's just because I know my family better than I know other families. No, I'm sure that they're -- or I guess it's we're -- just extra strange.

As a young tyke, one of my earliest memories is taking the used Christmas Tree out to the back yard every year on the first of January, and setting it on fire. My dad used to say that it was a form of burial for the tree. Burning it was more honorable than putting it in the trash can behind the house, he maintained. I remember jumping with glee as pieces of tinsel would ignite here and there and waft into the air. Occasionally we'd leave an ornament we didn't like on the tree -- generally one given to us by Aunt Millie -- and watch it heat up and explode. What a way to start the new year!

Thanksgiving had its own set of traditions. You see, neither of my parents liked the taste of turkey. "Bland," said my dad; "dull," said my mom. Instead, we created our own family ritual: -WHITE CASTLES FOR THANKSGIVING! It was great, and I was the envy of all my friends who also didn't like turkey. I remember my dad painstakingly removing the two dozen little burgers from their white boxes and assembling them into the shape of a turkey on a platter. "Too bad the pilgrims couldn't have had these!" he laughed. There's nothing like sitting in front of the tube on Thanksgiving, watching the Redskins beat the Cowboys, over steaming hot White Castles and a Diet Coke. Eating White Castles at Thanksgiving had the added virtue of extending the holiday; for weeks afterwards the kitchen smelled a bit like a White Castle restaurant. And besides, leftover White Castles are much better for breakfasts the next week than leftover turkey.

Weddings in my family were always, well, unique. For example, after every one of my cousin Melba's three weddings, the first song played at the reception was Del Shannon's "Hats Off To Larry." It was a tradition. The best part of this is that none of her three husbands were named Larry. THE Larry who prompted these musical salutes was her high school sweetheart. Larry and Melba were due to be married after graduation from high school, but he left her at the altar to join the Peace Corps. (Actually he called off the wedding three days before the date, but "left her at the altar" sounds better.) Being stood up for the Peace Corps was more than Melba could take. My mom once said, "Why couldn't it have been the Marines or at least another woman? Poor Melba." Ever since then Melba has been very active in the anti-anti-war movement. As a sort of protest, I'm sure, her first and third husbands, John and Rob, worked for McDonnell-Douglas, as welders on fighter planes, and her second husband, Earl, was an editor for *Soldier Of Fortune* magazine.

But Melba's weddings have nothing on Aunt Liz's ceremony. Aunt Liz was only married once, but what a wedding! Liz is almost six foot, two inches tall, and went to college on a basketball scholarship. She played at St. Mary's College in Wheaton, Illinois, averaging 19.7 points per game. While there, Liz -- known locally in the sports pages as "Liz the Wiz" -- became engaged to Ira Beummer, a local basketball referee. Ira was only about five foot, four, so they made an interesting looking couple. Mom always said that they looked like a mismatched salt and pepper set.

Liz's wedding attire was not a wedding dress, but a basketball uniform. She wore her St. Mary's Wildcats jersey, #22, and the red basketball shorts with the pictures of little wildcats on the sides. Ira wore his referee's shirt, complete with a whistle hanging down from his neck. And as if that's not enough, all of the bridesmaids also wore St. Mary's Wildcat uniforms and all of the groomsmen wore striped referee shirts. I have their wedding photo, the entire entourage posing by the church with a minister who looks rather bewildered, in my office. It never fails to spark a conversation when a visitor happens to glance at it. But there's more! Instead of throwing rice as they left the church, the crowd threw tiny styrofoam basketballs which Ira and Liz had distributed earlier. I still have a pocketful of them in my dresser drawer. Each one has a little inscription on it: "Ira and Liz, An All-Star Team."

Uncle Fred didn't go to Liz's wedding. In fact, we hardly ever saw him at any family birthdays or parole hearings. He was a bachelor until his death, and, in retrospect, it's easy to see why. Uncle Fred was a quiet sort who collected ironing boards. Now I'm into collecting

clocks, so I want to be careful here: far be it from me to criticize another person's collection interests. BUT, ironing boards? For whatever reason, Fred got turned on by ironing boards as a kid and never lost his fascination with them. And it's not as if he was a natty dresser with creases here and there. Everything he owned was always wrinkled, including his forehead and the fenders of his car (he was a terrible driver). I don't think Fred even owned an iron.

While I suspect there are various kinds or grades of ironing boards, I'm not sure about this. Worse, I don't think that Fred, the ironing board collector, knew either! He wasn't interested in quality, only quantity. He was definitely in the "more is better" camp of collecting. After Fred died, we had to have a trash removal company come and clean out his flat because there were so many ironing boards that we couldn't get into his back bedroom. By actual count, three haulers carried 783 ironing boards from his four room flat on Sydney Street. The worst part is that all these ironing boards had no value at all, none, not even for scrap. Cleaning them out of Fred's apartment cost \$200. How ironic.

Growing up, Cousin Gino was always fun to be around, if a bit dangerous. He was a few years older than me, and was the black sheep of the family. When I was daring to think of wanting a black leather jacket, back in the pre-Fonzie 50's, Gino already smoked cigarettes, drove a motorcycle, and readily displayed pictures that he'd made of him and "the babes," as he called them, playing kissie-face in the "FOUR PHOTOS FOR 25 CENTS" photo booth at the Cherokee Walgreen's. What appealed to me most of all, though, was that Gino loved to play practical jokes.

I remember once, I think it was Uncle Zeke's end-of-parole party,

when Gino gave Uncle Skippy an exploding cigar to smoke. To this day I don't know which was funnier, the cigar exploding in Skippy's face, leaving powder burns on his nose and cheeks, or Zeke thinking the noise was a gunshot and diving to the floor, getting caught in the tablecloth and pulling the entire punch-bowl and cake over on Aunt Glenna.

Gino never knew where the line was. More accurately, he knew but he didn't care. Once at a Christmas eve party at Janice's, Gino showed up drunk and fell asleep at the dinner table. That wouldn't have been too bad, but he later became sick and threw up over Aunt Melba's presents. Melba's husband, Rob the McDonnell-Douglas welder, was livid about this, and to get even, he stuffed two of the presents Gino had been given in the toilet. That made Janice very unhappy and she spit on Rob's new sweater to punish him for jamming her toilet. There's more, but I'll just say that was three years ago and the family hasn't gotten together on Christmas eve since then.

Gino dropped out of college two or three times, and finally did a stint in the army, stationed in New Orleans. He went into off-track betting and made a small fortune before he was 30 years old. Today he's a minister of a small church outside Elkhorn, Nebraska.

Then there's Anne, "Anne of nose-job fame," my mom calls her. Anne has had her nose reshaped and redone four or five times. I swear, it always looks the same to me, but each time she says, "Isn't this the best, honey?" The noses look OK, but she has an acoustical problem. By this time her nasal cavity must be hollow. It's empty; there's simply nothing there. As a result, whenever Anne talks, there's always a bit of an echo. My mother always says, "Serves her right! Who does she think she is, getting a better nose than the rest of us???"

The nicest thing about my family, is that when I think about my relatives, I feel almost normal.

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