

The *TIMES* of... SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

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FREE

The oldest neighborhood newspaper in St. Louis

Independent and all volunteer-run since 1970

It Changes Every Decade

By Lana Stein



The U.S. Constitution requires that our nation take a census every ten years. Supreme Court cases from the 1960s mandate that our various legislative districts be as nearly equal in population as possible, guaranteeing the principle of one person, one vote. Before then, congressional, state legislative, and aldermanic districts varied greatly in population. For awhile, the 24th ward had at least 5 times the number of residents as one of the river wards (then 7, 8, 9, 10).

The issue of the ability of minority groups to elect people of their choice also became part of the landscape in the 1960s. Courts have ruled on whether districts diluted minority population to prevent minorities being elected.

The aldermanic redistricting of 2001 has already garnered considerable publicity. The map finally approved by a majority at the Board of Aldermen will be tested in a court challenge that may not be decided for some time.

Using the approved map, we find some changes in representation in Skinker DeBaliviere. For the last 20 years, our neighborhood has been part of two wards, the 26th and the 28th, with the 28th encompassing a majority of our area. In this redistricting, several additional blocks have joined the 26th, represented by Ald. Irving Clay Jr. Ald. Lyda Krewson represents the 28th ward.

The area in our neighbor-

hood east of DesPeres and, including the north side of Waterman, north to Delmar is now in the 26th ward. This includes the odd side of 5700, 5800, and 5900 Waterman, Nina Place (entire), 5900 McPherson, 5800 and 5900 DeGiverville, and 5800 Westminster.

In the old map, 5700 McPherson was divided with the north side in the 26th and south side in the 28th. Under the new map, this block is entirely in the 26th. 5800 Washington and Kingsbury Square remain in the 26th.

Regarding the state senate and state house, the neighborhood finds itself in the same districts, represented by State Sen. Patrick Dougherty and State Rep. Bob Hilgemann. Interestingly, there will be two different members of Congress representing the greater Skinker DeBaliviere area. To the east of Skinker, our Congressman continues to be our neighbor, Lacy Clay. Those in Parkview will now be represented by the House Minority Leader, Richard Gephardt.

For some of us, it will take a little getting used to. If you know the correct alderman to call, you can contact him or her about potholes, trees and any number of city housekeeping issues. Aldermen also are very influential in approving new development for their wards. The new map is now in effect. In 10 years, the whole process will begin again.



The Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council's annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration celebration was observed Sunday, January 20, 2002 at the New Cote Brillante Church of God. See page 6 for the story.

Beautification News

Operation Brightside's 21st annual Project Blitz clean up day for our neighborhood will be on Saturday, April 27th. We will have a planning meeting for block captains and other neighbors interested in working on special projects on Wednesday, March 6th at 7:00 pm in the SDCC office at 6008 Kingsbury.

More information will be available on the Blitz Day flier

which will be distributed in April. We will also have our annual plant exchange at the Four Corners in May, when Operation Brightside flowers arrive for distribution.

In addition, the SDCC beautification committee is already at work planning the 4th Annual Breakfast Garden Tour. The date for the tour this year is Saturday, June 8th.



Operation Brightside's success in the neighborhood is legendary. Shown here in the mid-80's are Sam Green (left), Bob Dogwillo, and an unknown but surely appreciated neighborhood youngster. Come out on April 27, 2002, to make your own history!

TIMES FUNDRAISER MEETING
MARCH 2, 2002
2:00 P.M. • 5923 PERSHING

Editor's Notebook

By Lana Stein

The sun is shining today and it's almost 60 degrees as I write this. This alone would be enough to make me an optimist. But, as I think about our neighborhood, I have mixed feelings. I have lived here almost 13 years and can attest to tremendous strides in that period, let alone since 1970. Yet, there are a variety of divisions we have yet to overcome. The newest one perhaps is between newcomers and oldtimers. It is what you might expect: oldtimers remember the past and are more sanguine; newcomers may feel the need for more rapid change.

A significant division that has not been made any easier by redistricting is the chasm between Rosedale and Washington Heights. Although Skinker DeBaliviere is everywhere integrated, Rosedale is now majority white and Washington Heights is majority black. Because Rosedale has its own organization, it can more readily take stands on a variety of issues. I heard recently that some of its residents are examining traffic patterns.

That may be a wise idea given the significant construction expected to take place on our north and south boundaries. However, my immediate response was we're one neighborhood; we should look at all the traffic patterns together.

Perhaps Washington Heights needs to form its own organization or there might need to be an identical formula for council representation on both sides of the neighborhood. We can extol diversity forever but unless there is real inclusion our diversity is only symbolic and not substantive.

Finally, there is the question of the "naysayers." Two old and dear friends will refer to this ilk frequently. The question is how many are afraid of change and want to fight it instead of shape it. Sometimes I wish there could be something we are fighting FOR. The best example of that is Delmar.

When the Commercial Committee began to look at ways of improving Delmar, many were skeptical. We've come a long way since 1989 but there still is distance to travel. Pluck and luck initially moved us forward but there was also a dream and very gifted people who could help us realize it. Let's keep dreaming. Let's aim at enhancement. And, let's make sure everyone is part of the process.

The TIMES of... SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

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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. Copy may be submitted on computer diskette if the diskette is in DOS format or on high density Macintosh diskettes. Submissions on diskette should be accompanied by a printout of the article, the name of the word processing software in which it is written, and the full name and address of the party to whom the diskette should be returned. The signature on correspondence to the editor may be omitted by request. Calendar listings should be phoned in to the editor at 721-7532, or mailed to 5953 Pershing Ave., 63112.

Deadline for April/May issue: April 3, 2002. Please send copy by e-mail to jvatcha@msn.com or submit typed copy or by disc to 6008 Kingsbury, St. Louis, MO 63112.

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.

Calendar

Upcoming Events Calendar

- March 5** – Seventh District Public Affairs Meeting, North Patrol Station, 4014 N. Union Blvd.
- March 5** – Neighborhood Plan Steering Committee Meeting, 7:00 p.m., SDCC Office, 6008 Kingsbury
- March 5** – SDCHC Board meeting, 6:00 p.m., SDCC Office, 6008 Kingsbury
- March 6** – Operation Brightside Blitz Day Planning Meeting, 7:00 p.m., SDCC Office, 6008 Kingsbury
- March 11** – SDCC Monthly Board Meeting, 7:00 p.m., SDCC office, 6008 Kingsbury
- March 20** – SDCHC Board Meeting, 6:00 p.m., SDCC office, 6008 Kingsbury
- March 23** – SLACO Neighborhood Conference, Forest Park Community College, ALL DAY

Nearby Events of Interest:

Now-April 9 – "Art and Cultural Awakenings," featuring Middle Eastern film, music, dance and visual arts. At the Missouri History Museum. Events take place on Tuesday evenings at 7pm. For information, call 746-4599.

Now-May 12 – "John Singer Sargent: Beyond the Portrait Studio" featuring paintings, drawings and watercolors from The Metropolitan Museum of Art at the Saint Louis Art Museum. Over 100 works are on view. Many are European scenes.

7th Annual St. Louis Neighborhoods Conference

Join neighborhood residents and leaders from throughout the St. Louis area to learn what it takes to build better neighborhoods and healthy communities at this year's St. Louis Neighborhoods Conference **Saturday, March 23, 2002**. The full-day conference is coordinated by the St. Louis Association of Community Organizations (SLACO) and co-sponsored by St. Louis Community College at Forest Park and KWMU-90.7 FM. Every year hundreds of St. Louisans, including dozens of Skinker-DeBaliviere residents, gather to hear a morning keynote address, network with city officials and neighborhood leaders from throughout the city, attend interesting and informative workshops, and participate in an afternoon Town Hall Forum. All this and lunch for the low, low price of \$10.00!

Dr. Robert Archibald, president and CEO of the Missouri Historical Society is this year's keynote speaker. President of the Historical Society for over 10 years, Dr. Archibald is the author of the book, *A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community* in which he explores the intersection of history, memory and community.

Conference attendees will choose from 21 different workshops focusing on the following topics: housing, economic development, crime prevention and reduction, environmental issues, technology tools, youth & school issues and organizational effectiveness. Attend a Q&A session with **Police Chief Joe Mokwa**, and a Town Hall wrap-up moderated by our very own neighbor

Greg Freeman. There will be sessions where you can learn about lead poisoning prevention and remediation resources, and you will be able to check out the improvements and updates to the City's website. This is just a sampling of the workshops available at this year's Neighborhoods Conference.

Be sure to stick around for the Town Hall forum at the end of the day! **Greg Freeman**, Post-Dispatch columnist and host of KWMU's "St. Louis on the Air," will moderate a panel discussion on Home Rule for the City of St. Louis. Since this important issue is coming up on the November ballot, this forum will be a great opportunity to get your questions answered and learn what experts from inside and outside of city government think about the proposal.

So, join us at the 7th Annual Neighborhoods Conference and become part of the solution!

The St. Louis 7th Annual Neighborhoods Conference is Saturday, March 23, 2002 from 9 AM to 4:30 PM at St. Louis Community College at Forest Park (5600 Oakland). The cost is \$10.00, which includes breakfast pastries, a box lunch, and the closing reception.

To register for the conference by phone with a credit card, call (314) 644-9175. For more information or to request a conference brochure, contact SLACO at (314) 533-9104, slaco1@aol.com or <http://stlouis.missouri.org/slaco>. Further questions? Call the Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council office at 862-5122.

Schesch's Goal Is to Maintain Neighborhood Diversity

By Lana Stein

Dan Schesch, now finishing his second term as SDCC president, moved to St. Louis and Skinker DeBaliviere in 1967 to pursue graduate study at Washington University. Schesch was born in New York City and grew up in a New Jersey suburb. Although he did not complete that graduate program, he developed a strong affinity for St. Louis and our neighborhood and has continued to make his home here ever since.

He now owns both duplexes he has lived in. In 1971 he bought out his landlord to come to own the dwelling he still calls home in 60xx McPherson. In 1973, he bought the duplex next door where he had first lived on coming to St. Louis. Schesch has been active in the neighborhood at two separate intervals. In 1970, he became the block captain for 6000 McPherson. Between 1971 and 1977, he served on the Council. Cal Stuart was SDCC director then.

In 1977, Schesch ran for the school board for an unexpired two year term. He lost to Dan Schlafly but was elected to a full six year term in 1985. Skinker DeBaliviere residents Marj Weir and Betty Klinefelter also served on the school board at that time. Schesch credits the board with putting together the plan that achieved a peaceful desegregation.

Schesch had served on the Citizen Education Task Force before running for the school board. He noted that only one K-8 school at that time tested at national norms. There had been middle class flight from the



Photo by King Schoenfeld

schools for some time.

He finds some schools better now but feels overall parents are not confident of the education their kids are getting. The number willing to ride busses to the county schools is evidence of that. Schesch originally worked in labor relations/human resources.

In 1985, he began work on a master's degree in management information systems. He took one course at time and finished the M.A. in 1993. Since 1994, he has been utilizing his talent at Maritz. Schesch says that he stayed in St. Louis because he had a good living situation. He also likes the midwest, in part perhaps because his father was from Chicago and there was family there.

In 1993, Schesch began to involve himself in the community again. The demands of work and school had occupied him for the previous decade. Responding to a column in the Post-Dispatch, Schesch called Greg Freeman.

Freeman had written about the lack of social interaction between blacks and whites and this was a concern that Schesch shared. Together they formed Bridges Across Racial Polarization which started with 3 pilot groups in the fall of 1993. During the summer of 1994, the Leadership Center (now part of Focus St. Louis) began sponsoring these interracial gatherings and continues to do so.

In 1996, the proposed MetroLink expansion along the Forest Park Parkway portion of our neighborhood grabbed his attention. It continues to do so. He had not given up the hope of seeing the extension underground at Des Peres. In 1997, Schesch was elected as a Rosedale representative to the council.

He has been president of the council for two years. Schesch noted that the neighborhood has experienced tremendous success. In the 1960s and 1970s, there were people who wanted to be in a diverse neighborhood. He strongly wants the racial and economic diversity to continue and will talk about that during the neighborhood planning process.

Another thing that has been a concern to him is that younger people didn't know what the Council was and how to get involved. More representatives from Rosedale are younger and/or new residents. He is proud of the Council having a web site and he has an e-mail distribution list.

Schesch also mentioned Washington University. He noted that they had purchased many

multifamily properties. In part, it was a good thing because some were owned by absentee landlords. On the other hand, single family, two and three family buildings throughout the years had been owner occupied. He feels the university should not own single, two or three unit buildings. Two and three families can be great starter homes. He is happy that the university ended the right of first refusal because that could threaten single families.

He wants Washington University to create a long-range plan for substantial improvement of all of their properties in the neighborhood, giving them new kitchens and bathrooms. He wants Washington University's housing in Skinker DeBaliviere to compare favorably with their new small group housing.

He is aware that there is some concern regarding the strip mall on DeBaliviere and some of the uses the owners propose. In addition, the Archway building across from the MetroLink parking may become available for different use. Schesch is interested in changing the zoning there to protect the neighborhood.

Schesch summarized his goals:

- Maintain the neighborhood stability, diversity and keep it family-friendly
- Build on our success in the planning effort where residents can say what they want for the next 20 years
- Desires the widest possible participation, obtaining a consensus among residents Schesch said, "Ultimately I am a representative of my peer group."

Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council Board of Directors Meeting
September 10, 2001 Minutes
Welcome, introduction and announcements.
The minutes from August were reviewed and approved as corrected.
Treasurer's report approved as submitted.
Security Report
Auto theft and license tabs still problem little pattern in thefts numbers 17:10 p.m.
Neighborhood Committees
Rosedale
Lucier Park
Meeting tomorrow 7:00 p.m. Fall Festival in Park October 21. 2001 Laure gave update in Katrina's absence.
Have met with landscape architect. Possible grant from Whittaker Foundation moved Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council support grant effort. Passed unanimously.
Planning Committee - Sole Van Emden
Will meet to formulate process September 24 - 7 p.m. Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council office organize neighborhood charette and break down topics. RHCDA met with Laure possible HUD moved to pay for consultant to develop mission/vision for Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council and strategic plan for organization. Discussion about purpose of neighborhood plan end how it will interact with existing neighborhood committees. Moved to authorize executive committee to enter into agreement with RHCDA to provide planning services. Passed unanimously.
Beautification - Andy Cross
Michelle Pike looking at possible public art project for neighborhood to be sponsored by Art Council move info to follow.
West End Community Picnic - Shirley Polk
Picnic was a great success. Thanks to everyone who gave donations and helped with the event. Good food, great weather; special thanks to Kingsbury Square for school supply donations.
Transportation Committee - Paul Hohmann
Arts in Transit will include metal roses on fence behind Pershing along Parkway.
Building connections through catlin tract with folks in U-City and Clayton to try to address the variety of community concern related to MetroLink expansion. Dan and other neigh-

bors have attended several meeting in U-Cityaving off Laure expressed appreciation for Security Seminar sponsored by Police Washington University.
Executive Committee - Dan Schesch
Annual Meeting Saturday, October 13th recommended combining with October Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council meeting council approved unanimously. Boarding Houses city ordinance limits occupancy to no more than 3 unrelated people. Several have been reported working with building division need neighbors support to gather evidence.
Arthur Building CDO hearing September 24th - 2 p.m. for approval of new building. Have valid demolition permit. Hoping to begin demolition first of October. Existing lot behind will remain. Working on sign begin construction in April complete January 2003. Brick and building materials at Johannes & Cohen for Historic District Review Committee. Set backs are sidewalk same as discussed plans for landscape watering, security parking, refuse collection for retail use; mechanical will be shielded from view on roof. Issue of alley changes and street direction still begin negotiated with street department and Lyda. No disruption on Skinker expected.
Executive Director's Report - Laure Porterfield
Liquor License Sure Save denied unrestricted license willing to accept restrictions. Neighborhood agreed because of need for nearby neighbors for grocery store. Next step is to get signatures for restrictions for Country Store in February. Catalogs from Hamilton. Delmar Business District possible special taxing district. Housing Corporation report.
Alderman Update - Lyda Krewson
Medians going in on Delmar should be finished late October. Transit Plaza 30-40 design complete to sidewalks will be widened construction complete end of 2002. Trolley feasibility study complete Gephardt now represents south side of Delmar west of Skinker may pursue funding. Redistricting 4 maps being considered; need 15 votes and mayor's signature of 20 votes and mayor veto; each map impacts neighborhood differently proposed.
The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.
Respectfully submitted, Tim Schoemehl

Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council Board of Directors Meeting
October 13, 2001 Minutes
President Dan Schesch called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.
There being no quorum present approval of minutes and the treasurer's report deferred.
Beautification Committee - Deferred until annual meeting.
Executive Committee update
MetroLink meeting with Mayor's office Monday afternoon. Lucier Park will be discussed at annual meeting.
Executive Director's Report - Laure Porterfield
Presented an Archway building update apparently lack of process in funding a total rehab some exterior improvements should be visible soon including new mini blinds to replace the blue tarp and new awning to replace those that currently deface the building's facade. Laure noted that her full report was included in the packets.
The Board then listened to a quest presentation by Joe Edwards and Michael DelPietro. Joe first introduced Michael DelPietro Joe has purchased 6154 Delmar. DelPietro family plans to open a restaurant following renovation. Next 8 month - 1 year; 25 years experience in restaurant business. Italian concept likely; liquor license - full service in restaurant; no alcohol to go. Parking on east side for restaurant west side for theatre in former Mt. Olivet Missionary Baptist Church. Joe has also signed a contract to purchase Mary Goreis building on 6172 Delmar. Plan complete renovation four store fronts and probably office above. 6128 Delmar former gathering house bought with church property. Regional Arts Commission wants to build there. Trolley discussion; another presentation needs to be scheduled.
Security Report
Year to date crime status down 5% from last year no violent crimes. Auto thefts up 113% none in the last two weeks. Overall crime up 15% due to auto thefts.
The meeting adjourned prior to the annual meeting.
Respectfully submitted, Tim Schoemehl



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Neighborhood Chronicles

by Jo Ann Vatcha

The Skinker-DeBaliviere Housing Corporation recently honored outgoing Board President Susie Feinberg and Director Karleen Hoerr at a luncheon at Riddle's Penultimate Restaurant in the Loop. Chris Manzo, newly elected president of the board of directors, and Gary Boehnke, housing manager, presented both longtime board members with framed copies of a very important document, releasing the original Deed of Trust. The salute to Susie and Karleen clearly demonstrated the housing corporation's success with the 12 buildings in Rosedale Square on the 6000 and 6100 blocks of Washington Avenue.

The turnaround of Rosedale Square began in 1989, when ownership of the property was returned to HUD after a developer failed there. Mayor Vincent Schoemehl persuaded the federal regulators to entrust the buildings to a newly formed not-for-profit neighborhood-based housing corporation, which would complete the rehabilitation of the buildings in exchange for ownership free and clear. With that promise, the newly formed housing corporation went to work to bring stability to Washington and other trouble spots in the Skinker-DeBaliviere Neighborhood.

Led by the dynamic team of Karleen and Susie, both real estate agents and activist neighbors, the housing corporation's original Board of Directors included former Times Editor and Historic District Committee Chair Katie Kurtz and James McLeod, Vice Chancellor at Washington University and a former President of SDCC. Other board members in the early 90's were long-time Waterman resident John George Storey (28th Ward Democratic Committeeman from 19xx to 19xx); the visionary Kathleen Hamilton, followed by Tom Scatizzi, from the Central West End Savings and Loan; George Johannes, architect and neighbor; and Amrit Gill, who has gone on to develop other properties in the area.

Since the beginning, the idea was to involve the neighborhood in the turnaround effort. Susie Feinberg remembers how "Vince's initiative was modeled after West End Townhouse." Previously profiled in these Neighborhood Chronicles, West End Townhouse was formed by Parkview resident Phil Lucier, who felt that public companies, such as his own Continental Telephone, had a responsibility to assist neighborhoods. Before Lucier's untimely death in a car bombing, believed to be a case of mistaken identity, he had formed a non-profit corporation and provided incentive grants to entice others to rehabilitate and rent homes and apartment buildings in the neighborhood.

West End Townhouse, and later the Skinker DeBaliviere Housing Corporation had sound volunteer leadership and a goal of salvaging solid buildings, especially rental property in bad condi-



The SDCC office building was recently renovated by owner, the SDCC Housing Corporation.

tion, starting as far back as the 60's. When no one in the private sector stepped forward to rescue troublesome buildings, the housing corporation became, as Susie said, "developer of last resort."

Not all of their projects have been rehabs. The housing corporation also purchased some pretty disreputable buildings on Des Peres. Repeated drug activity and other crimes, including the shooting of a policeman there in the 70's, had made getting control of the laundromat on the edge of the railroad tracks at Westminster and DesPeres a high priority for the neighborhood. The housing corporation became the catalyst for purchasing and demolishing the laundromat, as well as putting control over the property in neighborhood hands. As Susie Feinberg puts it, "who else could have gotten that torn down?"

This success led to others: a ramshackle shop on the western side of DesPeres and a row of tiny, severely dilapidated single-story apartments, known as a "ranchette", were also cleared to become part of what former SDCC Executive Director Cal Stuart had called "the greening of Des Peres." Throughout the 90's, the housing corporation tackled trouble spots like these.

With Rosedale Square, the effort had to be comprehensive and have a long-term plan. Initially, as Susie remembers, "tenants weren't paying rent, and the so-called "rehab" had been a disaster," with choppy room arrangements and architectural features obscured. Taking one building at a time, the rehab started. Professional management was given through Personalized Property Management Company, owned by former neighbor Pat Sweets, whose emphasis on finding good tenants and proper maintenance overcame many obstacles. Today, in 2002, her daughter, Sarah Mensing, works with the company and continues that neighborhood link.

With the completion of the

Rosedale Square Apartments, Karleen Hoerr stated that she feels "the housing corporation has made a gigantic difference. Luckily, we were given the opportunity to get things going on Washington Blvd.," leading to increased homeownership as well as property values which at first stabilized and then rose to the level of the rest of the neighborhood.

In addition to the Rosedale Square success, the housing corporation has also acquired many buildings and transferred them to developers who could transform them into assets for the neighborhood. A drug house on the 6100 block of Waterman became a

single-family home; two houses on the 6000 block of McPherson and three buildings on the 6000 block of Washington were sold to owner-rehabbers. A three-unit building on the 6000 block of Westminster was also beautifully developed as a result of the housing corporation's efforts.

Vacant lots are also part of the housing corporation's inventory. They have recently sold five lots on the 5700 block of McPherson to Kingsbury Square's Martin Jaffee; other lots include the "green" area on the east side of Des Peres, the southwest corner of Washington/Des Peres, the community garden lot on the 5900 block of McPherson, and several lots, previously Mills Properties, on Delmar. The housing corporation was able to acquire the building at 6008 Kingsbury, which houses the Council Offices and has completed extensive rehab of the two apartments on the second floor.

With the completion of more than a decade at the helm, in 2001, partners Hoerr and Feinberg stepped down from the leadership of the housing corporation, turning over the reins to new leaders.

President Chris Manzo, an architect who lives on the 6000 block of Washington, had learned

first-hand how the housing corporation worked when he bought a four-family building from the organization and transformed it into a townhouse for his family, along with two rental units.

New directors also include: Stephen Kramer, a Vice President with USbancorp Community Development Corp. and resident of the 6100 block of Westminster; Kevin Short, investment banker with Clayton Capital Partners, who lives on Washington Terrace; Jennifer Olmstead, resident of the 6100 block of Washington and an urban planner with Development Strategies, Inc.; and Richard Wilkes, 5900 block of Kingsbury, Director of Communications, Metropolitan St. Louis Police Department. Providing continuity are long-time directors George Johannes, architect, and George Storey.

The corporation was able to hire professional staff in 1997. Gary Boehnke has been Project Administrator in charge of completing the rehabs of Rosedale Square and other buildings.

The Skinker-DeBaliviere Housing Corporation's tradition of becoming "developer of last resort" continues into the new century with its recent acquisition of 5888-98 Delmar, a mixed-use building at the southeast corner of Delmar and Hamilton, adjacent to Lucier Park and Hamilton School. The board has formed a sub-committee, made up of Chris Manzo, Steve Kramer, and Jennifer Olmstead, to formulate a plan for the building and for their lots both east and west. The committee and board are also participating in a cooperative effort of the Delmar Committee and SDCC's Safety Committee (working on liquor issues), to coordinate efforts to turn around the intersection of Delmar and Hamilton.

The Skinker-DeBaliviere Housing Corporation is a twenty-first century success story, made so because of its recognition of solid strategies: neighborhood involvement, volunteer leadership, dedication to reinvestment in the community, and the contributions of dynamic individuals like Karleen Hoerr and Susie Feinberg.



Photo by King Schoenfeld

2002 Skinker-DeBaliviere Housing Corporation (left to right): staff Gary Boehnke, Directors Steve Kramer, Richard Wilkes, Kevin Short, George Johannes, Jennifer Olmstead, John George Storey, and Board President Chris Manzo.

Delmar Committee News

The Delmar Committee is undertaking a study of parking on Delmar, in an effort to plan for the future success of the area. Since the original plan for Delmar was adopted several years ago, new uses for some properties have made the demand for public parking more apparent. Committee members Jennifer Olmstead, Neal Shapiro, and Jo Ann Vatcha, and Dave Mastin, President of the Delmar Business Association, have volunteered to update currently available parking, study the successes of the Loop, and brainstorm other strategies with the full committee. Jennifer Olmstead will make a presentation on February 21, 2002, at the committee's noon meeting at SDCC. A report will be prepared this spring for discussion with the area's two Alderpersons, major funders Bi-State, the City of St. Louis, and Washington University, as well as business owners on Delmar.

Other Delmar news: the committee welcomed Daffney Moore, a new participant, from the City's Planning and Urban Design Agency. Ms. Moore has



6172 Delmar will soon undergo a major transformation. From its lowest point after a fire in the early 90's, shown here, the building was a safety and aesthetic trouble spot. Numerous efforts to repair it failed. Because this is the first real building east of Skinker, it has long been considered a key development that can bring the eye—and the street traffic—of the Loop east of Skinker. Joe Edwards has purchased it and plans offices for the second floor and retail space on the first floor, providing tenant parking in the rear, and closing the rear basement wells, a very dangerous condition for many years. With the assistance of state historic tax credits, the rehab will return the building to its original beauty. Joe is seeking photos of the building in its earliest days. Anyone with photos or information can contact him at Blueberry Hill or drop off or mail to THE TIMES at our box at 6008 Kingsbury.

worked in several cities and is currently working on maps and planning materials which can be shared with potential developers, chiefly for east Delmar to Union. And, at long last, the medians and planters from Hodiadmont to DeBaliviere have been completed. Trees and grass have even been planted! The view east from the Wabash Station is lovely and displays a long and unin-

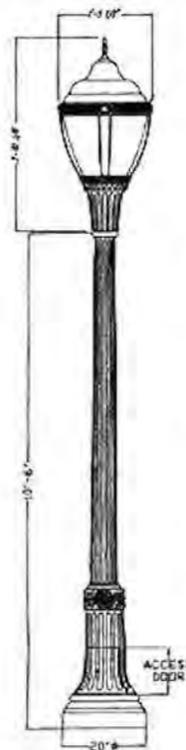
errupted vista of planted median as far as one can see. That was the vision years ago when the Delmar Committee worked to obtain funding for the beautification improvements on Delmar. And the implementation of the streetscape improvements goes on, with the sidewalk enhancements for the 60 and 6100 blocks now in final engineering stage just before bidding begins. Construction will begin later this year on the view west from the station, designed to provide a wider sidewalks and a vista looking toward, and like, the Loop.

Selection of pedestrian lighting will be made soon, to augment the street lighting along the western portion of Delmar in the new, wider sidewalks. An interesting discussion, including the lighting expertise of our own Neal Shapiro, owner of Antique Lighting, helped all the committee members understand the intricacies of the choice, including information on available fix-

tures, as well as the pros and cons of having the so-called cobra fixtures remain. Not only did we learn about the budgetary restraints, we also considered the potential for continuing the Loop Christmas lighting east of Skinker at some future date, by retaining the taller streetlights. The decorative pedestrian lighting will be at a lower height and give light and ambience to the street.

The committee decided that whatever selection is made, the most important point is that it should be consistent with the fixtures being selected in the University City portion of the

Loop. A design has been tentatively selected, and a sample fixture will be installed shortly in the Loop. Be sure and go by to see it and let one of the Delmar Committee's members know what you think about it. The final selection will be made this spring.



News of Neighbors

Gregory Weir, who grew up on the 6100 block of Westminster, son of Brad and TIMES stalwart Marj Weir, will be married on February 23, 2002, to Diana Schutte. Greg is currently studying at the Art Institute of Chicago; Diana is a web designer and also a graphic artist. Best wishes to all the Weirs!

The Board of Directors of THE TIMES is especially sorry to be saying farewell to a past TIMES Editor **Sue Rothschild and husband Sandy**, long-time neighbors. The good news is that they're moving only a short distance away. Best of luck to the Rothschilds, who have contributed so much to the neighborhood's success.

Greg Freeman, of the 5700 block of DeGiverville, has recently returned to work at KWMU and the Post-Dispatch, happily for all of us who enjoy his work. We hope his health continues to improve.

Happy news from Washington D.C. **Melissa and Marc Smith** announced the birth of their first child, a girl, named Georgia Archer, born December 2, 2001. Melissa is the daughter of Richard and Venita Lake, of the 5800 block of Waterman. Congratula-

tions to parents and grandparents!

Congratulations are due, too, to **Christina and Sean McGroarty**, of the 6100 block of Westminster, who've added a second child, Brendan Dwyer, born October 2, 2001, joining 2-year-old big brother Charley and grandparents Charley and Mary Fleener.

New neighbors this winter include **Patricia and Robert Biel**, who have moved to the 6100 block of Westminster. Welcome to the neighborhood!

Crossroads School reports that **Monica Hammond** has been selected for the Missouri Fine Arts Academy, a 3-week residential program for 200 of Missouri's artistically talented students on the campus of Southwest Missouri State University. Proud mom is Linda Nodiff.

There is sad news to report as



Photo by Suzanne Johnson

In the mid-70's, Suzanne Johnson posed neighborhood youngsters for this moment of happy play. On top from the left, Chanaya Vatcha, Greg Weir, Joy Berry, and Liz McKee. On bottom from the left, Christina Johnson, Mac McKee, Adam Johnson, Katie McKee, and Kim Hagood.

well, with November 26, 2001, passing of **Joy Berry**, who was barely 43 years old. Her fight with lupus went on for many years, but she still had a marvelous smile and a personality

that made her name the perfect one. We extend our condolences to mom Gwen and all of her family, who've lived on the 6100 block of Westminster for nearly 30 years and friends.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration Celebration Continues Neighborhood Resident June Fowler Calls Neighbors to Action

The Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council's annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commemoration celebration was observed Sunday, January 20, 2002 at the New Cote Brillante Church of God. Pastor Miki Merritt, co-chairman of this year's planning committee and representative of the congregation on the Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council, welcomed guests into the church sanctuary along with his assistant, Dana Banks and others from the church.

Committee co-chairman John Thomas was busy marshalling the youth group from Grace United Methodist Church, while Regina Morris, music instructor at St. Roch, gathered the fourth grade girls who were participating in



Speaker June Fowler.

energy when they sing."

The Keynote Speaker was June Fowler, a Parkview resident who grew up in Washington Heights. She has been a community activist and has been the director of community development for St. Louis County. In her speech, she called neighbors to action. She emphasized the importance of community volunteers in resolving our city's biggest challenges along with the need for a shared vision of what we want our community to be.

Despite the competition with the Rams playoff game, over two hundred neighbors and friends turned out for the program. And only a few were seen to slip away downstairs to the church hall, where a small television set kept all informed as to the game's progress. She received a standing ovation for her presentation.

Greg Freeman, long-time member of the committee and chairman for the last two years, was presented an award for his outstanding leadership and commitment to the neighborhood. Due to his illness, he was unable to attend, and Elizabeth Freeman, his wife, accepted the award on his behalf.



Photos by King Schoenfeld



the program. Sandy Kalin from Bethel School kept the youngest program participants in a tidy group and did her best to channel their nervous excitement.

This year's program opened with remarks by 28th ward Alderman Lyda Krewson and 26th ward Alderman Irv Clay. Both speakers reflected on the legacy Dr. King has left for our city, and the challenges we continue to face as we work together to bridge the racial divide. Reverend Mary Harvey, Grace United Methodist pastor, neatly connected each portion of the program while serving as the master of ceremonies.

The New Cote Brillante Church of God Choir, under the musical direction of Dr. Carol Merritt, provided the musical connection and inspiration that program attendees anticipate eagerly each year. As more than one child noted, "you can FEEL the



Reverend Miki Merritt of New Cote Brillante Church of God.



Alderman Irving Clay.



Alderwoman Lyda Krewson.



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Council Activities

Neighborhood Planning

By Sole Van Emden

The Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council has initiated a new planning effort for the neighborhood. The Planning Committee (a sub-committee of Lana Stein's Residential Committee), headed by Sole Van Emden began this large undertaking in September and has made significant progress in setting forth a process for the planning endeavor. The goal of the planning process is to develop a written document, a neighborhood plan, to serve as a guide and resource to our institutions and neighbors as we work to improve and preserve the community in which we live.

Our first step was to gather background information on the current conditions in the neighborhood. Many residents have volunteered to help with the research which includes a history of the neighborhood, zoning and demographics, transportation and circulation maps, among many other topics.

Once the Information Gathering phase began the Planning Committee established four working groups. The

Infrastructure Group, headed by Eric Mumford, will focus on the physical characteristics of the neighborhood, including topics such as security, transportation, recreational space, and areas for beautification.

The Neighborhood Relations Group, led by Amy Gill, will tackle the 'people' aspect of the neighborhood, exploring areas such as social/recreational/philanthropic/cultural activities, internal neighborhood relations and external neighborhood relations (including marketing and perception) and availability of services for residents. The Housing Group, headed by John Thomas and Paul Hohmann will explore the topic of housing as it relates to the residential character of the neighborhood. Possible areas of interest are development of new housing units, renovation of existing housing, and other neighborhood elements that can improve the quality of the housing available in Skinker-DeBaliviere. Finally, the Commercial Group, led by Juli Einspanier will deal with how to improve existing commercial areas in and adjacent

to Skinker-DeBaliviere to better serve our residents. The goal of each working group is to develop short term goals, long term goals and strategies by which these goals are to be met. We welcome members of existing Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Council committees to share their knowledge and experience with the topics mentioned.

The next major element of the planning process is the residents' participation. The Planning Committee will be hosting an event this spring open to all residents, business owners, and institutions. In this neighborhood wide brainstorming session we intend to develop a Neighborhood Mission/Vision statement. This statement will be a description of the desired future of the neighborhood, a reflection of the spirit that guides or neighbors and institutions. After working on the statement we will break into the four working groups previously described and neighbors are invited to share ideas, complaints, hopes and dreams for the neighborhood on specific topics.

If you are interested in getting involved with our planning effort please contact Sole Van Emden at mail to:sole@vanemden.com sole@vanemden.com or Laure Porterfield, Executive Director of the Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council, at 862-5122 or at mail to:skinkerd@stlouis.missouri.org skinkerd@stlouis.missouri.org.

The following is the schedule of planning meetings. Feel free to join us. All meetings are held at the Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council, 6008 Kingsbury. Commercial Group: Thursday, February 28th, 5:30 pm, Infrastructure Group: Tuesday, February 19th, 6:15 pm, Housing Group: Monday, February 18th, 7:30pm. Neighborhood Planning Steering Committee will meet Tuesday, March 5th, 7:00 pm.

We will be sending out flyers to announce the Neighborhood Wide Brainstorming Session in the near future. We are looking forward to hearing everyone's ideas for the future of Skinker-DeBaliviere.

Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council Board of Directors Meeting November 12, 2001 Minutes

President Dan Schesch called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Welcome, introductions and announcements: Thank to all who helped make the Lucier Park Fall Festival a success.

Minutes from September 10, 2001 and October 13, 2001 approved.

Treasurer's Report - Peggy Droege

Reviewed October's budget: CDA checks not yet received although requests have been submitted. This hurts our cash flow. Still working within our budget. Request approval of the report. Moved, seconded and passed.

Security Report - P.O. Don Reynolds

Overall, crime is down in the neighborhood. Some incidents have occurred involving pedestrians; as the holidays approach Officer Reynolds reminded all present to be aware that crimes increase.

Aldermanic Report - Lyda Krewson

Nothing new on redistricting; still believes that a new map will be agreed upon by the deadline. Medians on Delmar nearly complete. Question raised regarding right turn signal restoration at Waterman and Skinker. Committee and Neighborhood

Planning Committee - Report presented by Sole Van Emden

Next meeting is November 26.

Brainstorming to choose areas for in-depth planning. Intend to have a written plan by June.

Lucier Park - Report given by Committee Chair Katrina Stierholz

The Fall Festival well attended. We have submitted two grants to help develop the park. Surveys have been tabulated and report will be made at next committee meeting on November 19, at 7:00 p.m., here at Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council.

West End Arts Council - Andy Cross reported that he and the 3rd Grade Brownies from St. Roch planted bulbs at the playground. Wild Woods is going well. Wintermarkt (December 8) to raise funds for the Arts Council. Residents asked to donate baked goods. Resident crafters may also participate.

Executive Committee Report

Annual Meeting - low attendance this year.

Annual meeting for 2002 to return to the regular Monday meeting date in September or October.

Nominating Committee

Members of the committee cannot be candidates. Several questions asked to clarify rules. Committee is: Steve Givens. A motion was made that Steve would be a one person Committee. Seconded. Approved. MetroLink - report made by Dan Schesch Met with Catherine Kolb from the Mayor's office on October 15. Asked to investigate

costs. Discussed neighborhood concerns.

Notes from the meeting emailed to all Board members.

Technology Committee Recommendations

Proposal to upgrade computers: need to purchase two Dell computers at a total package of \$2,800.

Motion was made to approve the purchase. Seconded and passed.

Executive Director's Report

See written report

Board member attendance information will be sent to all Directors

Police appreciation lunch scheduled for December 13th. Volunteers and donations needed.

Friends campaign for 2002 and other fund raising events needs to be considered in 2002 Budget.

Housing Corporation

See minutes and project reports. Three Board vacancies have been filled; Steve Kramer, Kevin Short and Jennifer Olmstead. Project 01017 5888 Delmar Rehab. Building has been purchased and is scheduled for rehab.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council Board of Directors Meeting December 10, 2001 Minutes

Welcome and Introductions, Announcements

Avis Miller announced that Hamilton on DesPeres will begin a tutoring program in January 2002.

Once a quorum was present the meeting was called to order by president, Dan Schesch at 7:03 p.m.

Minutes were read. A motion to accept the minutes as written was made and seconded. The minutes were accepted.

Treasurer's Report - Peggy Droege

Expenses are within limits. Still some funds to be collected. Motion was made to accept the budget. Seconded and Passed.

Executive Committee Report

Dan Schesch reported that he and a small group of residents addressed Bi-State in regards to impact on the neighborhood. Raised issues of budget and design issues. He also reported on meeting with the County Council regarding funding streams.

Security Report - P. O. Don Reynolds

Indicated that there have been two robbers since last month. Robberies are still down approximately 40% from last year. Car break-ins, mostly in evening hours, primarily in 6000 & 6100 blocks. A couple of home invasions.

Committee and Neighborhood Report

Nominating Committee, Chairman Steve Givens

Slate: President - Dan Schesch, Vice

President - Lara Lennon-Doyle, Secretary - Tim Schoemehl, Treasures - Peggy Droege

No nominations from the floors. Motion to close the nominations. Seconded. Passed.

Planning Committee - Sole Van Emden

Noted that the next meeting January 22. Information gathering with four groups; infrastructure, leadership, commercial. If interested, contact Sole or Laure.

Rosedale - Tim Schoemehl

A block meeting for 6000 & 6100 Washington, Westminster, Kingsbury & McPherson was held on December 8, security and traffic flow.

Commercial District report covered by Laure. Delmar newsletter to be inserted into the TIMES prior to delivery.

West End Arts Council - report given by Andy Cross Wild by Wood n projects are installed at Four Corners, Wintermarkt n very successful; thanks to all who helped make this first - time ever even a success. Looking forward to doing it again next year.

Washington University thank you letter Sole Van Emden asked the Board to approve draft to acknowledge cleanup of Arthur Build site following demolition. Moved, Seconded and passed.

Executive Director

Police/Fire Fighters Appreciation Luncheon Ruth Johnson organized this event again this year. Open House from 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Help still needed with clean-up.

CDA status all documents submitted for 2002 contract.

Meeting Schedule for 2002 attached. Discussed cancellation of July meeting. No decision made.

Housing Corporation update - see written report #01011 @ 6036 Washington is complete.

Old business - Lucier Park update. New committee chair needed.

New business - there will be several neighborhood blocks in the changed from the 28th to the 26th Ward.

Martin Luther King Committee - co-chairs Miki Merritt and John Thomas. New Cote Brillante Church of God. If interested in participating contact Laure, John or Miki. Meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council Board of Directors Meeting January 12, 2002 Minutes

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. By Dan Schesch, President.

Welcome and Introductions, Announcements

P.O. Don Reynolds has been promoted to homicide detective. He will no longer be working out of the seventh district.

Congratulation Officers Heather Sabin is our new liaison/7th district public affairs officer Minutes from the December meeting werere-

viewed. A motion to accept was made and seconded after two spelling corrections were made.

Treasurer's Report - Peggy Droege

Treasurer asked to postpone her report until next month. St Roch has paid 2001 dues after the first of the year. New Cote Brillante is increasing donation to \$3,000.00. Peggy is working with Laure and Juanita on the budget.

Nomination Committee - Steve Givens reported that the following slate had been accepted in December with no other nomination election of officers.

Forthcoming: President - Dan Schesch, Vice President - Lara Lennon-Doyle, Secretary - Tim Schoemehl, Treasurer- Peggy Droege

Committee/Neighborhood Reports

Martin Luther King Committee - Dana Banks Commemoration celebration will be held at New Cote Brillante January 20, 2002 at 3:00 p.m.

Keynote Speaker: June McCallister Fowler iWhere do we proceed? Dr. Kings Legacy Post September 11.

Planning Committee - Sole Van Emden

Next meeting is January 22 at Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council offices at 7:00 p.m.

Continue to seek volunteers from 5700 and 5800 blocks.

Executive Director Report - Laure Porterfield

Police Appreciation Lunch was very successful thanks to all who helped; especially Gwen LaZard and Theresa King. Need a motion to authorize Executive Committee approve CDA contract. Motion was made, seconded and passed. We were able to get a new copier out of the 2001 budget.

Waterman - DeGiverville parking district n each household will pay \$25 and receive two decals and two hang tags.

Security Report - P.O. Heather Sabin

Voice mail is 444-0047. Will be attending board and security meetings and other events as necessary.

Housing Report - Gary Boehnke

See written report

Executive Committee Report - Dan Schesch MetroLink - Bi-State at the 30% design phase. Bi-State looking at plans/ideas presented by neighborhoods.

Aldermanic Report - Lyda Krewson

New redistricting map was approved. Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council is still in 28 and 26 Wards. Joe Edwards project moving ahead Yellow Cab will not be moving soon.

Other Business

Big Jake has a liquor licenses; no opening date. MetroLink/Delmar transportation plaza and streetscape enhancements modified but construction will begin in June or July.

The meeting adjourned 8:35 p.m. to Executive session.

IN YOUR EAR

by Hawkeye Q. Hoerr

I believe in Karma. That is, I think that our future lives are determined by how we behave in this one.

And yes, who and what we are now was determined by who and what we were before. Now don't roll your eyes. I'm no Shirley McClaine but it's true. What we do here comes back to haunt us — or grace us — in future lives. I'm sure of it.

I don't know the details. I don't know how many lives we'll have or how it's actually determined where and when and what we wind up with during our next trip here. But I envision God, sitting there in a white robe, surrounded by clouds, melodies from Fleetwood Mac playing gently in the background, looking down on our tiny rotating rock. A lightning bolt cracks and she focuses her eyesight. "Him," She says, as much to herself as the phalanx of angels standing by Her side, looking below, "I want him, but for where and when?" she muses. In this case, the him is a young man who's just perished in an auto accident, a crash with a tractor-trailer. The ambulance is still on its way but life has already left his body.

Flipping quickly through her Palm Pilot, God reviews the man's life, both his achievements and misdeeds. With the tiny stylus She scrolls through his history. "Carl Tolan," she mutters to herself as she finds his name (her mutterings causing clouds to burst over Toronto and a hailstorm in Mozambique). "He was a good man, took care of his mother and father in their old age, raised three children, two of them in good shape, I don't know what to make of the third one, the belly-dancer, did his best at his job, and tried very hard to be a good person. He gave lots of his time and energy at the neighborhood youth center."

God pauses and looks at the angels around Her. As if by command, they all genuflect and nod together, looking a bit like synchronized swimmers practicing outside the pool. She continues, "I think, I think, I think..." and arches Her eyebrows. At this, the angel on Her left pokes his neighbor who hadn't been paying attention. The distracted angel straightens his halo, pops to attention, and hops in front of God.

At this, She says "I think..." once more, clearly looking for direction.

"Seven-oh-snyl9-H, your Holiness," the angel says, fiddling with his halo.

"Wonderful," she replies and smiles. The thunder stops in Phoenix. "Now help me," She says, looking at the angel, "it's been a long eternity and I have a lot of things on my mind."

"Oh yes, your Most Wonderfulness," he continues, "Seven refers to the fact that Carl will be dormant for seven generations and the oh-snyl9 means that he'll come back in location oh-

snyl9. The H means he'll improve his lot in life by ninefold; he was a P in the life he just left." At this God nods then turns her attention elsewhere, looking at a huge gas storm on Neptune while also reading the latest issue of People Magazine.

Carl, by now, had been hauled away and was on his way to the morgue. He family hadn't heard the news yet, but they would soon be sad. And why not? They were losing a loved one with no notice.

They'd never see him again; for them Carl was over.

But thanks to Karma, Carl wasn't over at all. Oh, Carl Tolan — Carl the father of three, Carl the electrician who worked in Seattle, Carl whose parents were still alive, Carl who never saw the truck that hit him — that Carl was over. But the internal Carl, the soul of Carl, wasn't really over at all. He was simply changing form. In this case, Seven-oh-snyl9-K meant that Carl would be reborn again in 140 or so years. He wouldn't return in Seattle but would rejoin the flesh and blood in Milan, Italy. The K, a reward for Carl's being a good and caring person in this cycle, meant that Carl would come back in a much higher social standing.

Carl, of course, wouldn't remember his life in Seattle any more than he could recall his previous lives in Auckland, Beijing, Singapore, Iron Mountain, Burlington, San Francisco, Canterbury, Athens, Cardiff, Rimouski, an oasis near the Sahara, or a village in Egypt. Oh, occasionally people do have flashbacks or recollections, sometimes caused by hypnosis or a traumatic accident.

But that isn't the norm. The norm is that the previous existence, all of the earlier existences, simply fade to oblivion, forever locked in forgotten memories. Carl will return in Milan and while we don't know much about his future, we do know that he will be given the opportunity to work at a much higher social standing. What he does with that opportunity, whether he squanders or capitalizes upon it, is up to him.

More important, neither Carl's personality nor morality are programmed. It's up to him (really it's up to his caregivers and him) what sort of an individual he'll become. Who he is and what he does during this next cycle will determine how he will come back still later.

Had we been in the clouds a bit earlier, we'd have witnessed God doing her magic on someone not as good as Carl. Indeed, Rafola perished not too much earlier, in Madrid. It was a far easier death, by the way. Rafola simply died of old age; his body gave out and he was surrounded by crying family members. But Rafola, despite the wailing at his departure, had not led a good life. He lied, cheated, consistently wore plaids with stripes and checks, and stole from his friends. In any case, the formula from the Palm for Rafola's

return was quite different. Twenty-three-tee-bral3-U meant that Rafola would have to wait 23 generations before getting another chance, nearly 500 years. Rafola would return in a rural area in northern China in a position much lower than that he occupied when he left. The life awaiting Rafola was going to be hard and tedious, a repayment for his most recent life of duplicity. Even if Rafola rallied during his next time here, he would only be able to earn a few higher levels for his following cycle.

God isn't unforgiving by a long shot, but She does have a long amortization schedule for repaying evil.

Actually, the whole system is much more complicated than I've described. I've only dealt with time in limbo, general location, and the standing with which we're return. That's just the tip of the cloudburst, as it were. You see, you can come back as something other than a human being. That's right, all living things — mammals, anyway — fit into the Karma equation. If you do a dastardly enough deed, you not only have to wait for years and years and years to hop on the carousel again, you might come back as a lower form. If you thought being a worker in rural China was tough, think what it must be like to be a gazelle in lion country, or a cat in an urban neighborhood. Yes, gazelles and cats can earn their way out, too, but generally these roles are simply another form of penance.

This was very clear with Coco and Boomer, two family pets that I knew quite well. The saying "It's a dog's life" was made for them. They had a loving owners, a comfortable home, ample meals (much of it people-food), relaxed and listened to KWMU during the day, and slept in the masters' bed at night.

Think about it: no worries or cares, surrounded by those who

love you, your role is to be a dilettante. I don't know for sure, but I have no doubt that if we could peek into their doggie-souls, we'd find their previous cycles being served as Civil War nurses, tending to the sick, or maybe as people who worked in orphanages in Dickensian England, taking care of the children. Whatever they did then, being a dog in my household is the best payment they could imagine, I'm sure.

Once you're aware of the Karma, it changes things. I'm just here for a while, I know, enjoying myself on a relatively few revolutions of this rock we call Earth around a flaming gas ball. I'll be back, but I don't know how, where, or as what. I'd like to think that even without the motivation of who I am now helping to determine what I will become then, I'd still be good and caring today.

I smile often now, seemingly at nothing in particular but in reality wondering what this person did two or five centuries ago, wondering how today's conditions are a payment for a previous incarnation or two.

And where will I be on the next iteration? Will I come back higher or lower? And is my existence today a reward or penalty for the last time here?

It's all quite confusing, that's for sure. But it's comforting too, knowing that what goes around does come around. As for me, if I'm good and lucky — and I'd rather be good than lucky — I figure that maybe next time I can come back as Coco the standard poodle. Now that would be the life. And just because good and lucky may not be enough, I'm working on a computer program that will give me electronic access to others' Palm Pilots.

See you in the future.

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