

The *TIMES* of.... SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

Vol. 51, No. 2

September - October 2021

<http://SDTimes.org/index.html>

The oldest neighborhood newspaper in St. Louis

FREE

Independent and all volunteer-run since 1970

A Stalwart Volunteer Retires

By Lana Stein

In 1965, newlyweds JoAnn and Neville Vatcha moved to an apartment on Nina Place.

In 1973, they bought a house on Westminster where they lived for almost 50 years and raised their 2 daughters, Chanaya and Dina. Particularly in reference to the Times, JoAnn was a constant board member and volunteer. She served as editor for almost 2 decades.

But, that is only one of her many contributions. She served on the council. She was the first non-Catholic head of St. Roch's parent organization. She volunteered at many events.

She and Neville hosted new neighbors parties for the Times that always drew crowds to their backyard.

Most important, she became chair of the newly formed Commercial Committee in 1989. After assessing conditions on Delmar, she worked with committee members

Dennis Townsend, Loretta Lloyd, Sam Green and Lana Stein to create a redevelopment plan for that area see it adopted by the Board of Aldermen, sponsored by Aldermen Irv Clay and Dan McGuire. The committee assessed proposals for new usages. An upward trajectory was assured when Joe Edwards proposed the building of the Pageant. JoAnn 'i and the committee partied with Chuck Berry and the Motown Review at the opening in 2000.

The committee met regularly to discuss proposed businesses, parking and other issues. Representatives from owners of businesses and West End residents joined Skinker DeBaliviere residents on the committee.

From the early 1990s onward, JoAnn had a day job with the city. She was a housing analyst and successfully spearheaded property development in Benton Park, The Shaw and Souldard. Her work was honored by the Board of Aldermen when she retired.

This neighborhood's centennial occurred in 2008. JoAnn was part of the planning committee. With the aid of Marj Weir, she worked with the History Museum to publish a comprehensive neighborhood history that sold many copies. It was an introduction to the neighborhood and a reminder to all of its struggles to be diverse and stable. More recently, she and Marj has been exploring the history of DeBaliviere in the Times.

Returning to the Times, we find that Jo left us with an interesting and informative publication with new writers covering a range of topics. Despite moving to an independent living facility several miles to the west, her heart will be here in the Times and on Delmar. She has had a strong and positive impact on our hood. Regrettably she makes her journey without Neville, her husband of almost 56 years. He embraced her activism and was quite active himself but passed away just after the move.



Neville and JoAnn Vatcha

Lindell Reconfiguration Planned

A repaving of Lindell from Skinker to Kingshighway is coming due. This presents an opportunity to reconfigure the street to enhance safety and better serve all users. Under consideration are two vehicle travel lanes in the center flanked by bike lanes and parking at the curbs. The design wasn't ready to share in detail at press time so stay tuned for information and opportunity to give feedback in SDCC emails and on the SDCC webpage. In addition, Union repaving is complete and they are striping parking protected bike lanes with new delineators called zebras to keep people from passing and speeding through the parking lanes.

See more images at <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/public-service/projects/lindell-boulevard-safety-improvements.cfm>



Ways you can help Afghan Families Now



Leaders in the St. Louis Metropolitan region have committed to serving 1000 Afghan refugees in response to the vast need for the resettlement of loyal allies to our soldiers and to the development of Afghanistan. This is a wonderful opportunity for members of our community to help with this humanitarian commitment to our friends from overseas. Here are some options:

1. Donate to international organizations on the ground helping Afghan families

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) Rescue.org Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) Lirs.org United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) - Unhcr.org

2. Donate to local organizations who will directly assist Afghan refugees coming to St. Louis

- The International Institute of St. Louis (IISTL) is the area resettlement leader, and they will field the vast majority of arrivals, triage, and initial services. With deep cuts to the refugee resettlement infrastructure over the last four years, your direct assistance is most needed.

- House of Goods Baitulmal (For direct donations of goods) (314) 833-3300
Oasis International Ministries (For direct donations) (314) 353-3800

3. Donate to specialized service organizations serving refugees

Bilingual International Assistant Services
(314) 645-7800

MICA Project (314) 995-6995

IHELP (formerly Immigrant and Refugee Women's Project) (314) 771-1104

Welcome Neighbor STL welcomeneighborstl.org

Casa de Salud (314) 977-1250

4. Volunteer your time and energy with the agencies above

5. Advocate at all levels for the moral imperative of Afghan refugee resettlement

- Pick up the phone and call local, state and federal officials.

- Write an op ed. Speak up.

6. Show Radical Compassion when these families come to St. Louis. Smile when you see them at a grocery store, welcome them. Let your eyes meet with their eyes with love. Remember they have often been traumatized and now live in a totally new world. You will find the Afghani people immensely gracious!

Editor's Notes

By Linda Cross

The Autumn weather and the changing of the leaves always leaves me nostalgic and a little melancholy. Shorter days, kids back in school, the end of summer vacations and activities. I am the kind of person who is always looking forward to the gloom of winter rather than taking in the beautiful fall sweater weather. (I am not a fan of the winter, and my fantasy is to be one of those people who can 'winter' at the beach.) My husband Andy is constantly trying to point out the beauty in the leafless tree silhouettes, the subtlety of the muted color pallet, and the joy of drinking hot cocoa in the house. I am not buying it. However, this year I am going to make a concerted effort to enjoy the now. We have suffered some losses in our family recently, two beloved long-time pets and even a car that we have owned for nearly 20 years that held some great memories. Those losses, small in comparison to other's pain, remind me how important the 'now' is. This fall our youngest daughter will be able to be home for three weeks before starting at her first non-seasonal job in California. Our oldest daughter will be exhibiting her artwork at the Shaw Art Festival. We have great activities coming up in the neighborhood including PorchFest and Wintermarkt, two of my favorite events. The new little art gallery will be installed by the little library across from the community council office. I can take a break worrying about the Covid 15 that I put on by hiding it under bulky sweatshirts, and maybe we will get a new dog that will force us to take even more walks and see our neighbors more often. The 'now' is good. Our neighbors are good. Our neighborhood is good. If you see me out and about in the neighborhood, let's ask each other how we are enjoying it all.

RECYCLING UPDATE

While residential pick-up has been suspended until the City's Refuse division can hire more drivers, the City has added a drop off location at the Crossroads College Preparatory School parking lot on the west side of DeBaliviere. Bring your single-stream recycling that you would normally place in the blue bins.



Guidelines for Submitting Copy

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.

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. Opinions expressed in Commentaries are the opinion of the author.

Deadline for next issue: October 15, 2021

for our November - December 2021 Issue. Please send copy by e-mail to Linda Cross, lcross@sdtimes.org, by disc to 6060 McPherson Ave, 63112.

The TIMES of... SKINKER DEBALIVIERE

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Readers are welcome to send us e-mail or letters commenting on any of our content. Send to lcross@sdtimes.org.

The SDCHC Historic Roof Replacement Pilot Program

The Skinker-DeBaliviere Community Housing Corporation (SDCHC) announces the kickoff of a pilot program to assist Skinker-DeBaliviere (SD) homeowners and owner-rehabbers in retaining or re-establishing a building's original historic slate or tile roof. The initial funding for this pilot program is \$20,000. The maximum grant award will not exceed the lesser of \$10,000 or 25% of the total roof replacement cost.

Grant requests will be accepted no earlier than November 15, 2021 on a first come basis. The grant request must include the property address, the requester's contact information, and a copy of the contractor's contract or quote indicating the total roof project cost. Grant requests can be submitted by email to gbsdchc@sbcglobal.net

SD Historic Roof Replacement Program Specifications

Purpose of grant is to assist in the retention of historic slate and tile roofs on properties located on public streets in the historic Skinker-DeBaliviere neighborhood.

- Open to SD homeowners or owner-rehabbers
- Historic roof must be retained or returned to original material (clay tile or slate)
- Grant awards will not exceed the lesser of ten-thousand-dollars (\$10,000) or 25% of the roof project cost
- Grant award is a three (3) year forgivable loan
- A 3-year lien will be placed on the property and the owner must continuously reside in the property for the life of the lien (3 years)

Skinker DeBaliviere's Not-for-Profit Organizations

For those newer to the neighborhood or those who have not been active in the neighborhood, below is a description of two non-profit organizations that were established during some transitional times that were challenging to the neighborhood to ensure stability, equity, and diversity.

Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council

SDCC is a Certified Community Based Development Organization that operates out of offices at 6008 Kingsbury by the Greg Freeman Four Corners Park. Founded in 1966, the SDCC is made up of resident and institutional representatives. Per the council's website "The mission of the Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council is to serve and promote the community and advocate on behalf of the residents to enhance their quality of life.

The Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council aims to be the connector, coordinator and facilitator of all aspects necessary to maintain and enhance the diverse, desirable and thriving community of Skinker DeBaliviere." The council is a 501C3 nonprofit subject to government audit. Traditional grants and funding have been reduced over the years and the council has had to increase its fundraising activities in order to provide the services and programs that they offer. The council has a group of committees addressing safety, commercial development, the historic district, and residential issues. The SDCC is comprised of several volunteer committees: Security Committee - Chairs Mark Gorman and Ken Burton, Residential Housing and Zoning Committee - Chair Linda Cross, Commercial Development Committee - Chair Nicole Blunner, Community Engagement Committee - Chair Josh Peck, Commercial Districts Development Committee - Chair Rachelle L'Ecuier, Beautification Committee - Chair Andy Cross, Historic District Committee - Chair Nancy Hohmann,

The Council meets 9 times a year on the second Monday of the month at 7:00 pm. If you are interested in being more involved with the neighborhood and your neighbors, please attend the open SDCC meetings or feel free to join any of the committees that work to ensure that our neighborhood continues to thrive. You can contact the office at 314.862.5122 or view the meeting calendar at <https://skinkerdebaliviere.wordpress.com/calendar/>.

Volunteer Board of Directors:

Rosedale (west of Des Peres)
Tracy Granneman
James Holzer
Arline Webb
Tim Woodcock

News of Neighbors

By Rachel Boxdorfer

Hello neighbors! I hope you have had a wonderful summer in what continues to be a bit of a crazy world. Let's catch up today with some of our neighbors and see what they have been up to these past few months.

First of all, news from the Trudy Busch-Valentine School of Nursing at Saint Louis University about Cristina McGroarty of the 6100 block of Kingsbury. Cristina received the Fr. James Veltrie, S.J. Cura Personalis Faculty Excellence Award. This award is given every year to a faculty member who humbly exemplifies extraordinary commitment to the spiritual and intellectual development of members of the SLU community. Con-gratulations Cristina! Cristina lives on the 6100 block of Kingsbury with her husband Sean and their children.



Cristina McGroarty

Moving on to more good news, it's a boy! Rich and Emily Stenberg of the 6000 block of Washington welcomed their third child Calvin Richard on June 1. Calvin joins older siblings Martha and Soren.

Cleo Woods of the 6000 block of Westminster retired from the St. Louis City Assessor's office after 27 years of service. Well done Cleo, enjoy your retirement!



Heather Navarro, Cleo Woods and Mike Evans

And as the circle of life continues, we lost a couple of long time neighbors over the summer. Peter Schmit, formerly of the 6100 McPherson passed away on July 1st. Peter was married to his wife Mary for 43 years



Peter Schmit wife Mary

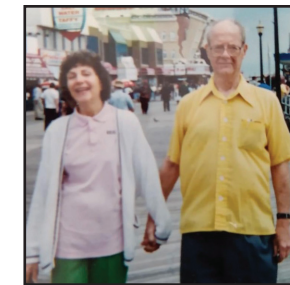
and was a former Christian Brother for 30 years and was a member of the Quicumque Club and C.O.P. (Couples of Prayer) through St. Peter's ACTS.

And on July 15th, Art Santen, also formerly of the 6100 block of McPherson passed away at the age of 87. Art was a collector extraordinaire - look him up on Youtube! He was active socially and generous with his volunteer work. His obituary summed up many of his activities and career; Pressman at Post Dispatch, Star and Globe; Very Active Member of St. Roch Church; Knights of Columbus; Skinker-DeBaliviere Newspaper; Neighborhood Halloween Party Founder/Chair for 50 years; Troop 98 BSA Treasurer; Rosarian Club; Founding member of Just-For-Openers; Volleyball; Bridge; U.S. Army Veteran.

For anyone in the neighborhood, who as a child on Halloween dressed in costume hoping to win a prize at the neighborhood pre-trick or treating party, or any parent who took their child to the festivities, it is Art Santen that you have to thank. Art was the man behind the party, the costume prizes, and the booking of the entertainment. He also saw to it that neighbors were out making sure children crossed streets safely during our trick or treating hours. I know for me, I will always think of Art on Halloween.

Our condolences go to Art's family, especially his children; Steve, Susan, and Scott. There will be a memorial mass at St. Roch Church on Monday, October 18th at 10:00 a.m. The family asked that in lieu of flowers, dona-tions be made to St. Roch Church.

Jason Yi, PhD, assistant professor of neuroscience at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis and resident of the 6100 block of Kingsbury, has joined the scientific advisory board of the Angelman Syn-drome Foundation, an organization that supports research on this rare disorder. His expertise on UBE3A, the protein that is lacking in individuals with Angelman syndrome, will advance the board's work of helping to guide the research strategy for the organization.



Art and Dorothy Santen

Angelman syndrome affects about one in every 20,000 people and individuals experience severe developmental delays, seizures, a lack of verbal communication and challenging issues with sleep.

I am hoping to hear from some of our neighbors about graduations this year. I know some students were able to graduate in person again, while others still did so virtually. We would love to hear about it and see photos.

I am now putting on my proud mom hat and congratulating two of my children. My son, Christian Boxdorfer graduated from Loyola University New Orleans with a Bachelor of Science in Music Industry Studies in May. He completed an internship with a company called Stranded South in New Orleans over the summer.



Christian Boxdorfer



Gretchen Boxdorfer

And my daughter Gretchen Boxdorfer defended her thesis in July and received her Master of Arts in Mathematics. at the University of Nebraska Omaha. The topic of her thesis was "a new approach to Boolean net-works". An upside of the use of Zoom in education during the pandemic is that our family was able to watch her defense live from St. Louis and New Orleans. And the very proud father of both of them is my husband, Matt Boxdorfer (can't leave him out!)

That's all the news I have today and I hope more of you will reach out to me with your news about your family or your neighbors. In the meantime, be well. Times are difficult so please be kind to others and check on your neighbors. See you around the neighborhood!

Do you have news to share? Please send your submissions via email with the subject line News of Neighbors to rachelb@sdtimes.org or drop off a note to the attention of Rachel Boxdorfer at the Skinker DeBaliviere office. Be sure to mark it "News of Neighbors". We love to hear about neighbors accomplishments, awards, travels, weddings, anniversaries, births, and more!

Not-for-Profit Organizations continued from page 2

Washington Heights (east of Des Peres)
Mickey Clarke (SDCC Vice-President)
Sheryl Davenport (SDCC Treasurer)

Kingsbury Square
Molly Rater (SDCC President)
Marnita Spight (SDCC Secretary)

Parkview
Andrew Cawood
Mike Stephens

Washington University
JoAnna Schooler

St. Roch
Kim Freter

New Cote Brillante
Carl Merritt

Grace United Methodist
Jeff and Karen Stokes

East Loop CID
Rachelle L'Ecuier

Business Rep Busey Bank
Kathryn Bulard

At Large
Jeff McGee

Executive Director
Mike Reid

Administrative Assistant
Karen Kelsey

Skinker DeBaliviere Community Housing Corporation Board

Richard Bose
Joe Fank

Eric Friesen
Paul Hohmann

Alice Stanley
Executive Director
Gary Boenke

The housing corporation was founded in 1988, per its website, to "be the buyer and developer of necessity; empowering strong development and homeownership, with the goal of improving the character, heritage and quality of the Skinker DeBaliviere neighborhood and community." with a mission of "combating community deterioration and improving the quality of life by promoting and undertaking neighborhood improvement and housing development activities within service areas defined by the Board of Directors." It's original mission was to be housing developer of last resort, buying and repairing abandoned units for owner occupancy. The Housing Corp was given Rosedale Square apartments by the city. It sold the Rosedale Square units which were rehabbed as condos by a private developer. This provided a nest

egg for the housing corporation. The housing corporation now owns several buildings which it rents out and has been trying to develop new townhomes in the neighborhood on properties that other investors have not shown interest. It no longer wants to redevelop existing housing that could be acquired by speculators if it did not act. The Housing Corporation is a sister organization to the SDCC and maintains an office at 6008 Kingsbury. The housing corporation has had only one director, Gary Boenke, hired in 1997. Although Boenke has relocated to Arizona, he remains a half time employee. If you are interested in working with the housing committee you can view their meeting dates on the SDCC Calendar at <https://skinkerdebaliviere.wordpress.com/calendar/>.

THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND: Fertilize right!

By Mark Banaszak and Katrina Stierholz

Fertilizers are any organic or synthetic material used to supply plant nutrients to plants. Humans have a long history of adding things to soil to help plants produce successfully. For thousands of years, this meant applying manure and compost, but also could include things like fish by-products or blood meal.

In the 1800s, scientists first described the “Law of the Minimum” or Liebig’s Law. This is simply that adding plant nutrients does not necessarily help plants. Rather, plant growth and success is limited by the least abundant nutrient. The barrel illustration is common for this law. If you imagine that each stave of the barrel is a specific plant nutrient, like nitrogen (N), potassium (P) or phosphorus (K), the plant’s success is not determined by the amount of each nutrient, but the amount of the most limited nutrient.

Nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus (N-P-K) are the three most important plant nutrients. Nitrogen contributes to leaf development, and plays a major role in photosynthesis. Potassium is important for root development, flowers and fruit. Phosphorus is present in every plant cell and plays an active role in moving nutrients within a plant. Plants may have fertilization needs that differ by species, so fertilizers are often specific to plants or families of plants.

If you purchase any fertilizer at a garden store, you will always see a series of three numbers connected by dashes. These three numbers represent the percentage by volume of Nitrogen, Potassium and Phosphorus (N-P-K). For example, 20-10-10 fertilizer (commonly used for grass) has twice the concentration of Nitrogen, compared to Potassium and Phosphorus. Because overfertilization can also hurt plants and cause environmental damage, it is a good idea to pay attention to these numbers. Most fertilizers are formulated for specific plants and application methods, making it important to read the labels and instructions.

There has been an explosive growth in global population that corresponds closely to the rise of chemical fertilization of food crops. Soon after the Law of the Minimum was recognized, agricultural science found that certain chemical compounds had a more immediate effect on plants than traditional fertilizers like compost and manure. This has led to the “Green Revolution,” which means higher crop production on less land than ever before. It has also had some unintended consequences. A significant amount of the nitrogen in chemical fertilizers is not taken up by plants, and leaches through the ground water into our water table, streams and rivers. This leaching has had negative consequences for land; money wasted, damaged soil health, acidification. It also has had negative consequences for water systems, like excessive algae in river and lake water that kills other vegetation or smothers animal life. Scientists have detected large “dead zones” in many places that they attribute to fertilizer run-off.

Excessive use of chemical fertilizers is currently more common in urban areas than in rural, agricultural ones. To combat this problem, many garden and lawn experts highly recommend using compost and natural fertilizers. They are easy to use and help the soil in ways that chemical fertilizers do not. The greatest drawback is that positive results are not visible as quickly.

The most common way to naturally fertilize lawns is top dressing. Top dressing is easy and combined with aerating and overseeding, produces nice, healthy lawns. Top dressing is when you spread fertilizer out in a thin layer on the growing surface around your plants. You should top dress your lawn two times a year; once just before leaves fall and once in the spring before your lawn greens up. Spread ¼ to ½ inch of organic fertilizer like compost or manure and rake it in. That’s it. You can use a wide variety of natural fertilizer products. Most animal manure products are now treated so that they have little or no manure smell. Even a product like cotton burr compost will work, and will benefit your lawn in a variety of ways that chemical fertilizers will not - it will support the microorganisms that make healthy soil, avoid leaching of excess nitrogen into the water table (saving your money), and reduce soil compaction. So fertilize right!

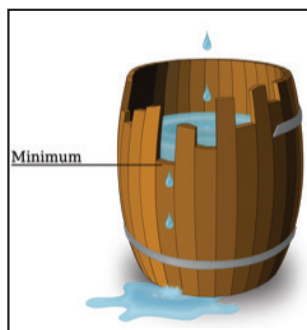
Share the Light at Village Aglow

Join STL Village as we celebrate seven years serving older adults, at Village Aglow – Share the Light, a virtual event featuring local artists, Tuesday, October 12, 7 p.m., online (no login required) via Vimeo, (<http://vimeo.com/582227360>).

Our half hour program features inspiring music, dance and spoken word performances that speak to our mission of giving light in support of our neighbors and community. There is no cost to view the program, but donations are greatly appreciated and will strengthen our work helping older adults in St. Louis to age in place safely and with social connection. Donations can be made during the event or anytime at stlvillage.org or by mail to STL Village, 4501 Westminster Place, St. Louis, MO, 63108.

Throughout the pandemic, STL Village volunteers have been a shining light, continuing to provide rides, delivering meals and checking in on our members. We’ve kept our calendar of activities vibrant, offering a mix of safe outdoor and online activities that bring people together, thereby reducing isolation during this difficult time.

So, grab your favorite drink and snacks, and enjoy the show!



Neighborhood Walker

By Janice Marshall

When I travel to a new city, I always note the sidewalk scene as an insight into the community I am visiting. Kids on the street, sidewalk chalk gracing the sidewalks, adults pushing strollers, bikers, runners, and those walking to catch the train all tell me something about the community, something good. I see all this in my Skinker-DeBaliviere community. Though we are graced with Forest Park nearby, the streets of our neighborhood are vibrant and gleeful, and full. Full of neighbors walking, running, cycling, walking dogs, stroller walking, walker walking. I love it! It comes sometimes, though without any rules. As a regular (that means daily for me) walker, I am confronted with groups walking side by side providing no place for me or others to walk, dogs, unintended showers from neighbor’s sprinklers and of course the cute wandering kids. I wondered if there are rules for the sidewalk like rules for the road. It turns out there are. Consulting my favorite quick info source, the internet, I found several sets of rules. Most had common themes.

From the City of Boston’s Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) I found this:

I can’t help but be reminded of a lyric from Aerosmith. Instead of creating a city of padded surfaces, I’d rather we borrow some rules of the road and “walk this way” to share the sidewalks with our fellow pedestrians:

- Stay to the right – This is the number one rule of walking.
- Don’t stop suddenly – You wouldn’t do that in a car, so why do it while walking? Stopping short can create a three-pedestrian pile up behind you.
- Don’t take up the entire sidewalk – If you’re walking with one or more people, try not to all walk in a parallel line.
- Walk faster or move over – Very similar to the right-hand lane on the highway.
- Get off the phone – To bring it all back around again, get off the phone. I know it’s difficult (I do it too).

Another group of ‘experts’ Diane Gottsman and Jeff Peo added:

- Watch Your Bags - Keep your packages and purse close to your body for safety reasons - and so you don’t hit other pedestrians.”
- Skip the Smoke - If you smoke, be kind to everyone around (and especially behind) you. Vaping doesn’t give you a free pass, either.
- Use Your Inside Voice - Travelers should keep in mind that the volume of voices adds up. Unless you’re marching in a parade or protest, err on the side of your “indoor voice”.

And now I’ll add my suggestions:

- Keep your dog on a leash - Keep them on a leash at your side. Also make sure that you and your dogs do not take up the entire sidewalk.
 - Make sure your sprinkler does not sprinkle the sidewalk –I know you are trying to water the broadest area possible to keep that lawn and plantings looking great, but I shouldn’t have to get wet or walk in the street as a result.
- So, let’s keep the sidewalks safe and fun and dry for all by following these rules. Maybe I’ll see you on my next walk. Oh, and I love the wandering kids. Let’s just keep them safe. They make me happy. See ya!



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Five Lessons from a Long Stay in Brussels

Covid was still raging when my daughter Eve and I showed up in Brussels on April 5. The cafes were closed. The archives and libraries where I planned to research had limited places. My host professor welcomed me by taking me into the university courtyard and making espresso on a camping stove, as we sat on a rickety picnic bench, next to a broken soccer goalpost. Eve’s Belgian school was still mostly online, which made the whole idea of a “real European experience” for her seem slightly absurd.

Still, somehow, it’s been a great trip. Eventually Brussels opened up. The archives not only let me in, but gave me unusual freedom to explore old patient case files and reports from the history of developmental disability. Eve’s school transitioned back to the classroom, and her fellow students seem to dote on her like some exotic puppy.

The long isolation gave me lots of time to watch and listen. St. Augustine wrote somewhere that, “the world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page.” In that spirit, I’ve got pages and pages to absorb. Here are four lessons from our time in Brussels so far.

1. Slow Down!

I should have learned this lesson long ago. My wife Nicole and I lived in Berlin in the mid-2000’s. We were perplexed the first time German friends came over for Sunday brunch and then stayed.... and stayed. First it was just a really long coffee after a pleasant meal. Then we went for a stroll in the park (I think we figured we’d say goodbye there). But our friends remained with us, walking and talking, until we stopped for more coffee and some cake. Eventually they invited us for dinner. “Tonight?” we thought. “Really?!” But then: Ok, why not? At first our day felt like a reenactment of the SNL skit about “the guests who wouldn’t leave.” In the end, it was a pleasure to say goodbye to our crazy American work ethic and enjoy a real day of rest.

Belgians linger over every coffee. They take their time at lunch. Dinner goes on forever. Waiters never pressure you to leave (don’t ask me how restaurants makes money). Sometimes it seems like you have to beg them to let you pay. Does anyone here get any work done? Apparently, yes! Productivity per worker here is only slightly less than in the United States (which, btw, is behind Germany). I’d happily trade a dollar in national productivity if every American could spend an extra half-hour strolling with friends or people-watching on their favorite street. Maybe this is why Europeans live longer?

2. Put away your phone

Eve took me out for a birthday dinner, and I did the red-blooded American thing of a) photographing the restaurant, b) photographing the food, and c) sending the photos to wife and siblings in the USA, hoping it would stoke their envy. It was Eve who told me to put my darn phone away, pointing out that no other diners had their phones on the table, let alone in their hands. I looked around and was shocked to realize she was right. It turns out that people here actually put their phones away when socializing. I was even more shocked to find out that Eve’s friends at school don’t pull out their phones when hanging out in the park. Teenagers! How is this possible? Aren’t their brains hardwired for phone use? Evidently not. Lesson learned.

3. Don’t let the weather hold you down

It amazes me how St. Louis comes alive when the weather is perfect: suddenly everyone is walking around the neighborhood; the Loop is packed; and Forest Park is like a scene from a French impressionist painting. A harsh breeze or, god forbid, a threat of rain, however, and this lively atmosphere disappears. In fact, Nicole and I were able to get Eve vaccinated before we left St. Louis because it was pouring one day in March, and we thought, “there must be tons of cancelled appointments at CVS.” Sure enough, CVS, like the rest of the Loop, was empty, and the pharmacist was thrilled to see us.

In Belgium, the weather sucks but no one seems to care. As I write, it’s June 1, and I just saw a woman in her winter coat with a giant wool scarf around her neck. Not unusual. And yet: people are sitting at sidewalk cafes, strolling, waiting for the bus. This evening there will be people in the park across from my apartment, because there are always people in the park after work. Nothing seems to hold them back.

4. Drive as if your Grama lived here.

The driving culture here is the most amazing thing. Car ownership levels are high by European standards, but people still walk and ride their bikes to get around. There are remarkably few stoplights in Brussels and almost no stop signs. Instead, there are big white lines

KIDS CORNER

By Tracy Granneman

GRAND OPENING:

The Little Art Gallery of Skinker-DeBaliviere

The Little Art Gallery of Skinker-DeBaliviere opens mid-September.

Join us the afternoon of **October 16th** for a launch event!
(More details to come)

What is the Gallery? Much like the Little Free Library, the Little Art Gallery is a place for artists of all ages and abilities to display and share their creations. All the community is invited to enjoy the display and to take home pieces that they like.

Where is the Gallery? The Gallery will be located on of southeast corner of Kingsbury and Des Peres (next to the Little Free Library).

Who can participate? Anyone can leave art and anyone can take art home. Artists may identify themselves or leave art anonymously.

What happens to my art? Pictures of the artwork will also be displayed on the Little Art Gallery of Skinker-DeBaliviere Facebook page. Artists who want their name identified can sign or leave their name with the art. As the Gallery fills up, we will pull out older pieces to make room for new items.

Will I get my art back? Artists should leave art understanding it won’t be returned. Artists are welcome to remove their art at any time, but the idea is to share.

Why should I participate? We hope to add a little more beauty to our wonderful neighborhood. This an opportunity for artists and craftspeople to build interest in their work. Young artists will also LOVE to show off their work!

How big is “little?” Generally, please try to keep your art, crafts or sculptures to under 8 inches in height.

What is art? That is up to the artist! We welcome traditional artwork, crafts, sculptures and other creative works.

What is the Facebook address? Follow us at: <https://www.facebook.com/LittleArtGalleryofSkinkerDeBaliviere>

WORD SEARCH

See if you can find the names of streets in our neighborhood!

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| E | D | U | E | O | E | L | P | A | A | H | N | S | K | E | DEGIVERVILLE |
| T | U | E | B | R | W | M | A | C | M | J | O | E | T | K | DELMAR |
| A | D | N | G | S | U | X | Y | C | R | J | T | R | E | N | DESPERES |
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at every corner where cars are expected to stop when pedestrians are present. And they do. The hardest adjustment in fact has been getting used to the idea that cars will really watch for me when I’m on foot, and they really will stop.

Biking too is a pleasure, though there are almost no bike paths. Instead, cars simply defer to bikes. Incredibly, drivers rarely get impatient, even when bikers block the driving lane along narrow stretches of road. Bikers are better behaved too, but there’s none of the nonsense that bikes must follow the same rules as cars. (Why should they? They’re bikes!) The atmosphere is one of mutual respect and toleration, which of course makes driving very different than in the US. You can’t be on your phone or fixing your appearance in the rearview mirror. You can’t zone out. And, really, you can’t be in too much of a hurry.


Writing this, I’m struck by how all of these “lessons” fit together. Slowing down, ignoring your phone, going out in bad weather, and driving cautiously are all part of living in the moment and living for the moment. I miss St. Louis and can’t wait to walk around the neighborhood and greet old friends, but it would be nice to take something of this culture back home with me.

SCOUTING IS BACK!

CAMPING!




HIKING!



CANOEING!



CAMPFIRES!



BSA Troop 98 meets every other Wednesday (5/19, 6/2...) in the evening on the green space outside the St. Roch Gym. Meeting times are currently to be determined. Scouts BSA is open to students who have reached the age of 11 or are finishing 5th grade. Scouts can join at any time during the year. Costs to families are minimal. If interested, or if you have questions, please contact Paul Winter (paul@krispaulw.com) or Sean McGroarty (mcgroarty@gmail.com).

News from The Delmar Loop

By Rachelle L'Ecuyer

iTap, 6219 Delmar, is opening! It's been a long time in the planning but the newest location of this St. Louis based chain now calls The Loop home. iTap was established in 2009 and offers a vast selection of craft beers and other beverages. There is an outdoor patio area, too. Welcome to iTap!

The Baked Bear, 6140 Delmar, has returned to opening Tuesday through Sunday. They have monthly ice cream and cookie specials and are available for parties and fundraisers. Who doesn't need an ice cream sandwich? Their hours and contact information are on their website: www.thebakedbear.com/st-louis/.

Check out the mural designed and painted by the St. Louis Artworks summer art apprentices on the east wall of the Loop Trolley headquarters at 5863 Delmar. The mural whimsically celebrates diversity of the businesses in the Delmar Loop and provides a great backdrop for your next Instagram post or a group photo. Don't forget to pick up lunch or dinner Krab Kingz across the street!


There's always something fun on The Delmar Loop's social media: Facebook, @thedelmarloop; Instagram @delmarloop; and Twitter @thedelmarloop. News updates: www.visittheloop.com.

Stay well and healthy!



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SD Book Review

By Tim Wookcock and Katy Gordon



During lockdown, like many families, we spent hours walking around the neighborhood, desperate for a glimpse of something besides the inside of our home. Luckily for the residents of this neighborhood, Skinker Debaliviere is home to the spectacular sculptures of resident artist Bill Christman (6014 of Kingsbury). Every time we walk past, something different would catch our eye: the serene face of the Buddha hovering over the side gate, that jaunty two-story robot high-stepping over the yard, or the glint of light through the colored glass of the New Jerusalem gates.

Christman's 2011 book *A Sign Painter's Scrapbook, Volume 1 & Volume 2* offers a similarly marvelous visual experience in bound form. The book celebrates the work of artisans – some professional, some self-taught, their names lost to time – whose work has informed his evolution as an artist. Like Christman's sculptures, the book evokes both wonder and delight, and it revels in the inventiveness of neglected American roadside attractions (drive-ins, bygone motels, and carnivals).

In the collection, Christman pairs photographs with waggish, insightful commentary; he also incorporates quotations from favorite artists that resonate with the images. Christman's no snob; while his commentary highlights his deep knowledge of design and design history, it also praises the artistic innovations of anonymous artisans – from the painter of a chubby, grinning Mr. Peanut on a Missouri State Fair sign to a hirsute Big Foot loping across a Route 66 billboard. Readers get an introduction to the greats of American sign-making as well as a crash course in learning how to see some of the underappreciated treasures of Americana surrounding us.

The common theme linking the images and text is an appreciation for the charm of effective sign craft through the decades. Christman pulls images from all over the world, highlighting work from the Czech Republic and Ireland, in particular; primarily, however, he lauds the variety of signs in St. Louis and further south. Think the gaudy chicken-car chimaera advertising Chicken Out in the Loop is an innovation? Christman includes a picture of the chicken-shaped truck that once delivered the mysteriously named "Chicken Dinner" chocolate bar around St. Louis (it has a fine set of tail feathers!). Particularly enjoyable to read about are the roadside ice cream stands, liquor shops, and amusement park ride signs; one also discovers the origin of the colossal blue trousers currently in residence outside Joe's Café (and an excellent directional guide for visitors to the neighborhood. How many twenty-foot-high pairs of

trousered legs are there on display in St. Louis? One.)

Christman is particularly taken with and knowledgeable about neon signs, and the book introduces readers to several gems. I was astonished to learn that one of the earliest neon signs in existence resides nearby; this emerald beauty of a sign dating from the 1920s belongs to Daniel Feinberg of Feinberg Real Estate. Throughout the text, Christman draws attention to the complex ways in which neon has been employed in signage – from chasing lights to the rotating wonders of the now-rare Sputnik signs.

In the text, one also learns more about the impressive body of work Christman has created in his diverse career as commercial artist, sign-painter, collector, founder of Christman Studios, and close observer: the street art he crafted with young artists in the 1980s; the iconic typeface he designed for Blueberry Hill; the Cherokee Street statue greeting visitors at the corner of Cherokee and S. Jefferson; the Vintage Vinyl sign featuring Rassan Roland Kirk, the musician who could play three saxes at once; and a wide array of wry "fictitious" signs advertising products and companies he has invented ("Mankind's Search for Nougat"; Dimwit Brothers Sign Painting).

In an age of computers, Christman notes in his introduction, "the art" of sign-craft has "leached out." Much of the visual images we see daily are mass-produced, as distant from the hand that made it as our packaged, pre-prepared food is from the ground in which it once grew. Christman's book is a welcome reminder that artisans still produce vivid, imaginative art, even if one must seek it out in unexpected places. This Wunderkammer of a book demands reading and re-reading – and it makes one want to pay another visit to Joe's Café to look again at its splendors.



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IN YOUR EAR

By Hawkeye Z. Hoerr, Commentary in the TIMES for more than 33 years.

I've been collecting things for as long as I can recall. As a kid, like many boys at the time, I collected baseball cards; "flippers" we used to call them. My buddies and I amassed stacks of flippers, but growing up in St. Louis, we never saw a Musial card. Cards featuring local stars probably weren't available in their home cities but that didn't stop us. We all kept buying packets of Topps bubble gum and baseball cards to search for Stan even though the gum tasted like sweetened bug spray.

Then there was a long period when I don't remember collecting much, excluding poor grades, which I collected routinely. I guess you could say that I collected books because I was always buying more even though I hadn't read what I previously purchased. There were always tons of books throughout my home, most unread, but the stacks and piles looked good. I believe in the theory of "literary osmosis": if you have books by your bedside, the knowledge that is packed in them will waft into your brain at night while you sleep, whether or not you actually read the book. (In fact, practicing that theory probably accounts for my collecting poor grades, but that's a topic for another column.)

In early adulthood I began to collect clocks. I went to flea markets, garage sales, and purchased them on eBay. My searches for just the right clock were usually successful, so much so that I stopped collecting clocks because I had no space left in my three-story house to display them. Yeah, that says a lot about how many clocks I acquired and most are still here. For example, I have 73 clocks in my study and it's not a large room. Fortunately, most are simply decorative so I don't need to wind them or make sure the batteries are working. All told, my guess is that there are 225 clocks in our house, including two or three that keep accurate time.

My favorite clock genre (love using that word for clocks!) is electric statue clocks. Those were hugely popular in the 30's and 40's, and often feature statues of heroic figures posed next to the clock face. I have several FDR "Man of the Hour" clocks, and one of FDR, Lincoln, and Washington standing together. Will Rogers is depicted in a clock as is the Statue of Liberty. I also have electric statue clocks that feature pirates on a ship, majorettes dancing, a matador flaunting his cape, fishermen with their catch, along with trains, steamships, eagles, elephants, owls, cowboys and castles.

About 20 years ago, recognizing that I had no more room for clocks, I went petite and began collecting salt & pepper steamships. These small ships have two smokestacks, one for salt and one for pepper. Some ships were fashionably new and others were old, some had intricate windows and a deck while others were vividly painted. I even have a steamship sinking.

For a while, I used to collect neckties. Unlike baseball cards, clocks, or salt & pepper steamships, ties were actually useful because I wore a tie to work every day. The aesthetic range of my ties was quite remarkable because I figured that ties should be vivid since they weren't functional. Vivid is a euphemism for gaudy, some might even, gasp, say ugly. Students at school knew that I liked wild ties so they often brought me a vivid tie as a souvenir from their vacation. Although it took a while to do so, it was easy to cycle through wearing most of them since I didn't worry about compatibility with my shirt or pants. I had 500 or so ties when I retired from New City School. That's a lot of vivid.

I define a collection as having a bunch of something that goes beyond use. I mean, how many salt & pepper shakers can you use or how many ties can you wear? Given that criterion, since I will never read all of the books that I have, yet I continue to buy more, it must be that I collect them. So while my flippers disappeared long before I knew they might have value, I now have collections of clocks, salt & pepper shakers, ties, and books. That is a lot of stuff (as my wife frequently reminds me).

However, I'm not the biggest collector in our neighborhood. Founder of the St. Roch's kids' Halloween Party, Art Santen, who sadly died recently, used to collect bottle openers and corkscrews, and every time I saw Art, he had a new bottle opener or three to describe. In fact, Art was noted in the Guinness Book of Records for having the "World's Largest Collection of Bottle Openers Guinness Book of World Records (32,411 Different Openers & Corkscrews)." That is one impressive total! This video shows him on Living St. Louis, talking about his collection: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLa7d7YsptE>. But Art collected other things too. Here is talking about his collection of photos and memorabilia for the St. Louis Arch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KyWqcaOE11g>

Friends tell me they collected egg cups, matchbooks, 45 records, marbles, foreign currency, baseball cards, dishes, t-shirts, and electric parts. How about you? And please contact me if you have any extra electric statue clocks or steamship salt & pepper shakers. I can promise them a good home.




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