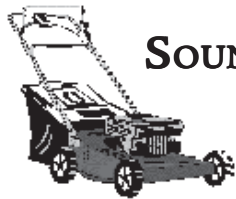




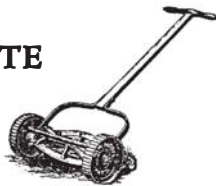
The Neighborhood Newsletter

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The Peace and Quiet Issue, July, 2006



SOUND ETIQUETTE



By Mary Cummings (*Jason Street*)

The verdant peacefulness of summer in our neighborhood can be noisome to maintain, according to neighbors who responded to our “Sound Etiquette” survey. We posed six questions about living with seasonal neighborhood noise and, among responders, it seems that noise is a warm but not hot issue. We wanted to find out what, if anything, causes noise problems in the neighborhood, how neighbors cope with each others’ noise production, and what sound etiquette guidelines might be proposed. The actual survey is posted on our website at www.jhitesnews.org

The nutshell version of our results is that 1) traffic noise is an inexorable torment, 2) leaf blowers are universally despised, 3) barking dogs can be a headache, 4) we tend to grin and bear our neighbors’ noise because, 5) by and large, we are a considerate lot, but 6) a very few of us inflict our loud entertainment on others. The strongest message we got was 7) landscape gangs can really blow a summer day away.

One response captured the gist of most others:

“My main noise complaint is yard machine noise — mowers, blowers, string trimmers. I think that the decibel level must be off the charts for the workers (who never seem to be wearing earmuffs), and the hired gangs usually have two or three machines going at a time. Otherwise, the noises in my neighborhood seem to be moderate in level and duration, and I have no complaint with ordinary life.”

Traffic was described as an incessant, year-round auditory intrusion, especially on Pleasant Street.

“The biggest concern for noise in the summer for me is the traffic on Pleasant Street. I am not a fan of the noise from blowers and other contraptions used by lawn care companies, but I enjoy the lawn mower sound. I do not think that any of these noises concern me, just irritate given that the windows are open and you can hear everything.”

“Equally troubling in our neighborhood is the Route 2 noise

and . . . I am sure that the sensitivities to road noise and solutions for it have both grown dramatically, and I think a study should be done on what we can do about it. It impacts our neighborhood where we live and where we play (i.e., Menotomy Rocks Park is not tranquil).”

Landscape services and the equipment they use upset a whole lot of neighbors. Unfortunately, they are also used by a whole lot of neighbors. I don’t know if any of our responders employ the accused offending teams but it would be interesting to hear from those folks. If you have a landscape service, do you consider them to be unnecessarily noisy? If so, have you asked them to minimize the noise by, for example, not using leaf blowers?

“If they didn’t have these cacophonous blowers, would they find anything that had to be raked?”

“Generally our neighbors are thoughtful, but unfortunately their landscapers aren’t. Leaf-blowers and gasoline-powered lawnmowers can really ruin the chance to read a book outdoors, or eat dinner outside. I’ve often fantasized about how all the neighbors could agree to limit the gas-powered machines to certain hours — say, Monday, Thursday and Saturday, 9 to noon — so we could count on being able to use our yards peacefully the rest of the time.”

“For me the worst are leaf-blowers and gasoline-powered lawnmowers (which also spew the most pollutants). I loathe the wood-chippers that some landscapers use, too. I wish neighbors would tell us in advance if they’ve hired someone to use a chainsaw or chipper, so I could arrange to be gone! I hate having to go interview the landscapers to find out when I’ll be able to work at home again.”



“Leafblowers (or suckers) are the loudest noises.”

“We HATE leafblowers!!!!!! Decibels are extreme and unnecessary. That they are now considered routine is a downside to the neighborhood.”

“Lawn services – seems like everybody has ‘em. I have offered up the services of my son to mow lawns and rake.”

“LEAF BLOWERS!!!!!! They ruin a bright autumn day. And when you are trying to work at home, in an un-air-conditioned house, they can be so loud you can not talk on the phone.”

“One neighbor owns one of everything and is anal on week-

ends in the fall about vacuuming and blow-clearing the street in front of his house as well as his yard and sidewalk."

Gasoline powered machines were cited as the most offensive, but the clamor of other motorized appliances gets on neighborly nerves as well. These include air conditioners, especially central air compressors which are often placed between houses where they echo.

Motorcycles produce stentorian volume that appears to be deliberately enhanced and frequently revved. Joe Cavicchi (*Bellevue Road*) informed us that complaints regarding loud motorcycle exhaust systems can be lodged with the State Police by calling 617-727-4812. It is important to call them right when you hear it as they actually will make an effort to track down the riders in real time. The more calling the better, as it will lead to heightened awareness and enforcement.



Will and I can feel virtuous because we use a manual lawn mower, but we also own Tess, the barking border terrier. Keeping her barking under control is a constant challenge that we try very hard to meet. We find barking dogs abrasive as do several of our responders. Dog barking was frequently listed as a problem noise, but only a couple of responders elaborated on that theme.

"Unattended barking dogs are a hassle, and should not be more than an occasional oversight by owners."

To the question, "Do you discuss noise with your close neighbors and make accommodations for each other?" Most replied that they don't talk about it unless the noise or their need for quiet is extraordinary. The typical response was in the order of "We grin and bear it." Other responses:

"Only one in the immediate neighborhood is generating extra loud noise."

"If I am really bothered I go tell the person making the noise. For example, I have told a kid mowing the lawn in the dark at 9:30 pm. to go tell his dad I had told him he should quit. I have also complained to a contractor who was making noise all weekend once from early morning until past dark, that he should stop. In both cases they stopped and I didn't even have to threaten to call the police."

"My close neighbor has a very barkey dog and I fear that I will damage our relationship if I complain."

"It is usually a lawn service that comes when the neighbors are not home, so they are not aware of the noise."

"Thank heaven we've never had a problem with our close neighbors."

"With our close neighbors, we just call up and ask, for example, whether the dog is ready to come in for the night. People are very understanding. With landscapers or distant neighbors, we have to go find the source and ask the person how much longer the noise will go on, so we can decide whether to just close the windows and wait it out, or whether to give up and leave the house."

We asked neighbors for messages about noise that they

might like to pass on to the rest of us.

"Do unto others . . ."

"Hire a kid to mow your lawn. Maybe your yard doesn't have to have every single leaf blown from it four times during the fall."

"No leaf blowers without 'silencers'; no barking dogs for more than a few minutes stretch."

"Take responsibility for your dog. That means scooping poop and teaching it not to bark."

"Ask our lawn care people to not use blowers."

"Suggest everyone be sensitive to the noise they are making (or having made), and suggest some hours during which no noisy power tools be used outside (e.g. 5 or 6 pm until 8 am)."

"Please keep your sound system just for your premises."

"Remember that everyone doesn't love machines."

"Talk to each other! Ask in advance! If you have a leaf-blower or a gasoline-powered mower, let your neighbors know beforehand when you plan to use it, so they can plan accordingly!"

"If you're lucky enough to be able to hire landscape or contracting help, please ask those people to save their loud machinery tasks for times after 8 am!"

Working on the newsletter at 8:30 Saturday morning, I heard a lawn mower start up. It occurred to me that it was a relatively quiet lawn mower and I went outside to see who was using it and what kind of a mower it was. As it turned out, the lawn mower was being used nine houses away. It wasn't quiet, just distant yet disquietingly audible.

Jason Heights neighbors are generally considerate of each other when it comes to noise. There are conventional "do unto others" guidelines that we usually follow. But have we become too complacent about it? If the typical response is to "grin and bear" each others' noises, might we be harming ourselves and others? After 85 decibels (busy city traffic), loudness becomes a health hazard. Gas powered lawn mowers average about 90dB and leaf blowers range between 90 to 115dB. The threshold for pain is at about 120 dB (ambulances sirens).

Writing this article has increased my sensitivity to noise and perhaps reading it will increase others' awareness of the problem. Not complaining does not mean neighbors are not bothered by the noise we generate. Let us know your thoughts about noise in the neighborhood. In the meantime, join these two responders enjoying a peaceful, quiet summer.

"Good noises are children laughing and running around in the yards after dark, the ball game on the neighbor's radio, pianos being practiced with the windows open."

"It [noise] is not a problem. (Uh, oh, what am I not hearing?)"

Note: Town regulations dealing with excessive noise can be found in Article 12 of the Town Bylaws. 85 dB is the generally recognized noise limit.

If you are interested in learning more about noise pollution, Noise Free America is a great place to start: <http://www.noisefree.org/>.

REMEMBRANCES...FROM JEAN POTTER

By Marianne Curren (*Hillsdale Road*)

Children, education, history, and politics – these are a few of Jean Potter’s favorite things. And during her 41 years as a resident of the neighborhood, Jean has had ample experiences with all of them, often at the same time.



Jean’s perspective is thoughtful and interesting. She first moved to 82 Bartlett Ave. in 1965, when she and her family were looking for a quiet area with roomy old houses and easy transportation to Harvard. Jean and her husband at the time decided on the Bartlett Ave. property over a house in Newton because of the bus to Cambridge, as well as proximity to the park, library, and “downtown,” the large number of young families, and the Parmenter School.

Jean appreciated the gracious houses in the neighborhood, recalling that many were Victorian and turn-of-the century dwellings built by wool merchants and the like, with maids’ quarters on the third floor and the occasional carriage house for a coachman. Her immediate neighbors lived in homes built by their parents. As a California native with immigrant parents, Jean says, “All of this history and generations of people in the same houses was fun for me.”

According to Jean, the Bartlett Ave. area in the ‘60s was lively with children, on average four per family. With two babies, two school-age children, and an outgoing nature, Jean soon found herself meeting people, and being pulled into local political campaigns as well as the life of the Parmenter.

Changes at the Parmenter School in 1968 offered up a “tricky time,” Jean recalls. The concept of open classrooms was introduced to address different learning styles and provide more creative options. As a former elementary teacher, Jean and others helped rally those who were resistant to the change. Contributing supplies for cooking, building cubbies – this type of parental involvement was new for both many families and the school administration. But, says Jean, it was “an exciting time, an adventure,” and a wonderful experience that “pulled everyone together.”

One outgrowth of this type of cooperative attitude was the formation of the first food co-op in town, according to Jean. Founded by 10 families around 1970, people united by school and liberal politics now alternated 6 am trips to the Chelsea Market for vegetables that were fresh and cheap. Car trunks, order forms, scales, and front porches were the mechanism; the co-op grew to 25 families, at which point the effort became impractical. Were these Arlington’s hippies, one might wonder? Not at all. These were optimistic young families, interested in education and living in a neighborhood that was not necessarily *the* place to live in that era.

As the ‘70s passed, Jean remembers a change along Jason St., Bartlett Ave., and nearby. Suddenly, there were not so many

families. Groups of unrelated individuals, with fewer children among them, began to inhabit the properties. Residents of the town were agitated, and Arlington passed a law prohibiting more than five unrelated people in a house. But there were far-reaching effects of fewer big families, and one of the more significant was a decline in the school population. Despite reports in the ‘70s recommending that Arlington build more schools, several closed. The Parmenter School shut its doors in 1983.

As for Jean, she continued to pursue her interest in education and civic affairs. She taught in the evening at Middlesex Community College for 20 years; was a member of the 1975 Bicentennial effort which brought a series of lectures to town (including one by John Kenneth Galbraith), and hosted a Victorian Ball; was president of the Arlington League of Women Voters, active in the Arlington Historical Society, and on the board of the Middlesex Canal Association.

Jean began to teach at the Arlington Heights Nursery School in 1969, and by 1972 was the director. Perhaps her proudest moment came when, long before any legislative mandate, Jean welcomed a special needs child who had been turned away at more than 20 programs. The mother dissolved into tears, and Jean began her serious efforts at inclusion, hiring a social worker and professionals for speech and language, physical, and occupational therapies. Today, the Arlington Heights Nursery School has a contract for special children, and a waiting list despite the fact that it’s still a traditional, half-day “old-fashioned” school (Jean’s term) in the best sense.

After 41 years, Jean offers some observations about Arlington, its citizens, and its leaders. When fire destroyed Jean’s home in 1998, the outpouring of support was a source of strength. Notes, a place to stay, the dog-walkers’ contribution towards the hospitalization of her injured animals all reminded Jean of the kindness of neighbors. Educational challenges that were “unusually trying” proved to Jean that “given a chance, Arlington citizens care,” and have worked together to “do what needed to be done.”

Finally, Jean’s years on the local political and civic scenes have convinced her that “we have had remarkable public servants in Arlington.” Jean feels today that Arlington is still a “well-run community.” She remains busy and connected, and among other commitments she is currently vice-president of the League and working on Arlington’s 200th birthday. She laments that the area is getting more unaffordable for large young families, and laughs about her 1965 mortgage payment of \$73.20 – but apparently is still content to call our neighborhood home.



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NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING NEWS

By Judy Weinberg (*Venmer Road*)

One doesn't have to go far to hear dire reports about the real estate market. The Boston Globe, particularly, offers articles on a regular basis explaining how the market is crashing. There's no denying that there's been a real cooling of the market in the Boston area. However, all towns are not created equal, and we're lucky (on so many levels!) that we live in Arlington.

The lead story of the May 12 issue of the Boston Business Journal is titled "Sales Levels All Over the Map," and explains that while in some towns sales are plunging, others are seeing a healthy surge. The following paragraph from the article says it well:

"... Greater Boston's housing market is really made up of 178 distinct municipalities or Boston neighborhoods, each with its own housing stock, demographics, location, and amenities that attract or repel different kinds of buyers." Arlington has been in demand, attracting many buyers, and that trend continues.

Arlington ranked #4 on the BBJ Hot Market chart, following Boston's waterfront, Westwood, and Beverly. The criterion they used was volume increase in first quarter sales from 2005-2006. In checking MLS figures from January 1 - June 26 we have seen the following increases:

1/1/05-6/26/05 1/1/06-6/26/06

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Number of total properties sold | 224 | 270 |
| Number of single families sold | 92 | 132 |
| Average sale price | \$524,826 | \$538,182 |

While the prices remain relatively flat, the demand for Arlington remains. These numbers are no consolation for homeowners with a perpetual "For Sale" sign in their front yard; but as a community, Arlington is faring very well. Following is a list of the sales in our **Newsletter** neighborhood from February 23 through June 26, 2006:

Single Family Homes

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| 20 Bartlett Avenue | \$749,000 |
| 44 Brantwood Road | \$910,000 |
| 88 High Haith Road | \$550,000 |
| 107 Jason Street | \$900,000 |
| 16 Maple Street | \$650,000 |
| 20 Maple Street | \$905,000 |
| 53 Pleasant View Road | \$620,000 |
| 42 Temple Street | \$1,100,000 |
| 7 Woodland Street | \$745,000 |

Condos

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| 34 Jason Street #2 | \$464,000 |
| 15 Jason Terrace #1 | \$629,900 |
| 125 Pleasant Street #103 | \$170,000 |
| 100 Pleasant Street #11 | \$317,500 |
| 100 Pleasant Street, #31 | \$405,000 |
| 152 B Pleasant Street | \$660,000 |

Our neighbor Judy is also affiliated with RE/MAX Leading Edge Real Estate, judyweinberg@comcast.net.

COOKING WITH COLIN

By Colin R. Campbell (*Morton Road*)



This first recipe for the **Neighborhood Newsletter** recipe column comes from a neighbor of mine on Morton Road who dines with her friends and their families on a weekly basis. It is called 30 Minute Shepherd's, from "Rachel Ray's Top 30."

Ingredients

- 2 pounds potatoes, such as russet, peeled and cubed
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 ¾ pounds ground beef or lamb
- 1 carrot, peeled and chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup beef stock or broth
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire Sauce
- ½ cup frozen peas
- 2 tablespoons sour cream or softened cream cheese
- 1 large egg yolk
- ½ cup cream (vegetable or chicken broth may be substituted)
- 1 teaspoon sweet paprika
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Preparation

In a large pot, boil potatoes in salted water until tender, about 12 minutes.

While potatoes boil, heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add oil to hot pan, then beef or lamb. Season with salt and pepper. Brown and crumble meat for 3 or 4 minutes. If you are using lamb and there's a lot more fat, spoon some of it out. Add carrot and onion; cook 5 minutes stirring frequently. In a small skillet over medium heat, cook butter and flour together, 2 minutes. Whisk in broth and Worcestershire. Cook to thicken, 1 minute. Add gravy to meat mixture. Stir in peas.

Drain potatoes and pour them into a bowl. Combine sour cream, egg yolk, and cream.

Pour the cream mixtures into potatoes and mash until potatoes are almost smooth.

Preheat broiler to high. Fill a small rectangular casserole with meat and vegetable mixture. Spoon potatoes evenly over the meat. Top potatoes with paprika and broil 6-8 inches from the heat until evenly browned, about 2-3 minutes. Sprinkle with chopped parsley and serve.

Many thanks to my neighbor for supplying this recipe. If you would like to see more recipes in this column, please send them to me at Colincampbell1@comcast.net.

SLOW DOWN, HAVE A LOOK

By Amy Lees (*Jason Street*)

It is spring again and our strollers, bikes, and sandals have been dusted off. Walks have replaced car rides and all is right with the world. More refreshing still is the prospect of checking in with the local creatures that inhabit our soil, trees, flowers, and bushes. Left to their own, my children explore the yard 'til the sun goes down. And when it does, they ask for a flashlight. We recently cleared out a back corner of our yard unveiling a tree we barely knew was there, and a surrounding area with endless possibilities! The previous owners of our home must have collected branches and twigs for three decades there; the pile was daunting. But now, what a wonderful treasure this area is, with its tree that gives cover, making it almost a "secret" place for the children to comb through. Bug cups in black-fingernailed hands, discoveries flourish!

So, you can imagine our delight at meeting Peter Bloom, our Jason Street neighbor, who seems to tend to more than flowers and plants in the area. Peter introduced us to a delightful clan of preying mantises last spring. It began over a year ago, when the kids and I were on our way to Johnnie's, using Peter's street as a short cut. "Hi Amy," he said. "Hi.?" I respond. Mind you, I hadn't yet met Peter. What a mystery; how does he know my name? I quickly review the files in my memory and come up dry. As I approach, he apologizes. "Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you were someone else." "I AM Amy," I reply. He then tells me of another Amy on our street that also pushes a double stroller with two blond children in it. Apparently she lives in the purple house. Hmm. I think there are three purple houses on my street.

So, that is our introduction to Peter, who shares with us the beautiful flowers he is tending to, and creatures that live there. Peter's soft-spoken manner works well with my children. They listen with all ears and lean in to smell the flowers, and explore the garden. Later, on another visit, Peter summons us, "Come check this out." Arching over, he pulls the branches aside to reveal the treasure: there, blending into the greenery they're perched on, are a couple of praying mantises looking much like the aliens of our imaginations, their movement slow and methodic, calculating. How is it that these creatures exude intelligence? I was SURE they could read my thoughts and were busy devising "plans." Peter gives a lesson on their habits, diet, disposition. How does he know all this? I assume from books, but wonder, is it just through observation? He does seem to be gifted at the art of observing.

Throughout the late spring and summer, my eight-year-old son runs down to check on the mantises; are they still there? Are there more? Have they grown? My husband Eric joins the fun, camera in hand. The following Friday, show and tell gets off to an exciting start with a photo starring Aidan and the alien insect.

In February we take a wintry trek through the short cut, and we run into Peter again. He shows us the nests the praying mantises have left behind, and tells us that, come late April, there should be many, many new preying mantises inhabiting these bushes. How exciting! He wonders what they eat and makes



plans to keep them fed once they hatch. The female lays 12-400 eggs in the fall in a frothy liquid called an "ootheca" that turns into a hard shell. That's how they survive the winter. They are carnivorous and will eat their own siblings, so we hope they find other food sources and leave their brothers and sisters alone to grow over the summer.

Life moves fast if you're not careful. It feels frustrating that the ride is too quick, that we can't focus on anything because we're en route. We've got places to go, people to see, things to do. So, I welcome a reason to slow down and "see." This is the nectar that nourishes us all.

WIND POWER IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

By Gene Benson (*Hillsdale Road*)



Wind Power is in these days. Wouldn't it be great if Arlington (or even our own neighborhood) could generate its own electricity by wind power or another alternative energy source, thus lowering our costs while reducing the generation of greenhouse gases and our dependence on foreign oil?

What is the chance of wind-powered electricity in Arlington? The town of Hull recently built its second wind turbine that will produce enough energy for about 750 homes and offset 3,000 tons of carbon dioxide per year (the amount of greenhouse gas that will not be produced by using wind rather than a fossil fuel to generate electricity). Sustainable Arlington, a committee of Vision 2020's Environment Task Group, has been researching this issue for Arlington. (You can also read about the Hull wind turbines and get links to other wind resources at www.hullwind.org.)

A starting point is wind. Does Arlington have enough wind? Where does the wind blow in town? (No jokes about Town Meeting, please!) Wind maps show that parts of Arlington, notably our hills, are fairly windy while other areas, notably the Mass. Ave. corridor, have much less wind. Wind maps, however, are based on estimates. Ideally, we would want to measure the wind for at least a year at a point above the trees and other objects that might block the wind. That would give us a good idea of whether a wind turbine would be economically feasible. Sustainable Arlington has been trying to find a good spot to measure the wind and obtain, at least on loan, an anemometer.

Another starting point is location. Where could a wind turbine be located in Arlington? We are a very densely populated town, without much open space. Would you want a wind turbine in your backyard? How about in Menotomy Rocks Park or Robbins Farm Park? The wind turbine tower would have to be much taller than the tallest tree or other structure so that the wind would not be blocked from the blades of the turbine. And, the blades might shed ice during the winter.

The other part of the location equation is how to get the electricity from the turbine to an electric user. Hull has the

advantage of having its own municipal electric utility. It uses the electricity generated by Hull's two wind turbines to supply electricity to the town. Arlington does not have its own municipal electric utility, instead being served by NSTAR. That means a wind turbine in Arlington could sell electricity to the electric grid. Unfortunately, the price one gets by selling to the grid is much lower than the cost of buying from the grid, so much lower that Sustainable Arlington has preliminarily determined that it is not economically feasible to build a wind turbine to sell electricity to the grid.

We could site a wind turbine near a building, supply the building directly with electricity, and sell any excess electricity to the grid. Unfortunately, state law does not allow such generated electricity to cross a public way (unless by a utility). Thus, the wind turbine would have to be located on the same site as the building that it would serve. The largest electric user in town is the high school, and there might be room for a turbine near the school, but wind maps show that the wind is weakest at the high school. Thus, Sustainable Arlington has been looking at other schools and public buildings and cross checking with the wind maps.

Another possibility is incorporating wind power into the design of the new buildings for the Stratton and Thompson schools and the new fire stations. There are newer technologies that mount devices that look like box fans on the roof edges of buildings to generate electricity for those buildings. Sustainable Arlington hopes to talk with the Permanent Town Building Committee about that.

So, for now, there is no easy answer for wind power in Arlington. But you or other neighbors may have some of your own ideas, and they are welcomed. In the meantime, remember that you can do your part anyway by conserving – use less electricity. Turn off lights when they are not needed. Replace standard incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs. And be smart about your energy use.

Editor's Note: This is one of a series of occasional articles on sustainable living here in our neighborhood. We welcome others, as well as your own thoughts on how we can maximize our own neighborhood self-sufficiency.



THE TIES BINDING US TOGETHER

By Bill Berkowitz (*PelhamTerrace*)

I like my neighbors Brian and Theresa, who live on the next street over, even though I don't know much about them. (And I've changed their names here.) I do know what they read, for I've bought books at their yard sale. I did see that their son graduated from Arlington High with honors. And I remember Brian telling me how he walks from home to Fenway Park for Red Sox games.

Actually, that's almost all I know. Maybe I'll run into them once a year, if that, and invariably by chance. We might chat for a minute or two; I'm sure to enjoy it. Warm feelings are generated, at least for the moment. Then we drift apart; who knows when we'll meet again? And for better and worse, that's how it is with a lot of neighbors I've come to meet.

I wonder if I'm alone, and how much this type of interaction reflects neighborhood life in 2006. For if nothing else, I've learned that neighbors in 2006 are busy, or see themselves as busy (almost the same thing), loaded with demands, both external and self-imposed. To stop and chat with Brian or Theresa or other neighbors is a brief flicker in time. It is nice, it is fun, it is good when it happens; but if it doesn't happen, that's okay too, for there's no shortage of things to do. Life's rich harvest puts plenty on our plate.

And usually that stopping and chatting doesn't happen. Why would it? We don't hang out by our front stairs, even on hot summer nights. Our neighborhood is eminently walkable, but in real life we're not out walking all that frequently. There's little street life, no sidewalk cafes; apart from Menotomy Rocks Park, there are few public places to gather outdoors. And Brian and Theresa and I and other neighbors move in different social networks, among different social circles. So the statistical chances of us meeting are very low. It's surprising we ever meet at all. Many neighbors never do.

Does all this seem familiar to you, or do you see it another way? A neighborhood can be defined by the relationships within it, and overall these relationships are weak. They are fragile, too – they could disappear in an instant, without any warning. Often, I wish things were different, or could be different, although I'm not entirely sure how. Yet to seek out more of these delicate contacts, to actively initiate them, as opposed to receiving them when they happen – well, that might be good, or maybe not, but who will do it? It's not high on most people's lists. Without some mighty push or major change, it seems unlikely in this lifetime.

Still, as it stands, my relationships with Brian, Theresa, and many other neighbors, despite their fragility, are valuable to me. They are bearers of small joys. Sociologists sometimes call these relationships "weak ties." But those weak ties add up; summed many times over many days, they lend pleasure and comfort and richness to life. They have their own importance. Like filaments in a web, when woven together those weak ties can give strength.

Our neighborhood is bound in a web of weak ties. We are powered by firefly light – those evanescent glow-bursts we exchange with neighbors who are neither friends nor acquaintances, though not exactly strangers. They are like distant kin we see at extended family gatherings. I value extended family, so I'm glad for that much.

I might want closer relationships with my neighborly kin, but I know that's hard to come by. And it may not be wholly realistic; we guard time fervently. To make it happen, I'll probably have to create the opportunities. Is it possible to create more of those opportunities, for everyone? I'd like to think so; maybe we can figure out how. Until that day, I'll try to honor those weak ties, appreciating them for what they are. And I'll keep looking for ways I might help them grow stronger.

“THAT STRANGE HOME SCHOOLING FAMILY DOWN THE STREET”

By Elizabeth Mahon (*Spring Street*)



It is with much shame (!) that we have waited this long to introduce ourselves to all of you. We are the Mahons and we have lived in the neighborhood for 9 years! We live at 16 Spring Street, which is at the bottom of Jason, Hillsdale, and Spring Streets. My husband, Andrew, works at Nokia on strategic planning. He is creating cell phones that will serve all of us better and hopes to make their use less offensive all around. I, Elizabeth, stay at home with our four children and we home school here at the “Mahon Academy.” We have been home schooling for six years.

Jake, our eldest, is 13 years old and is in seventh grade. He loves soccer and enjoys hanging around other kids and doing sports with younger children. He likes movie-making and computer games, and his favorite subject is ancient literature. He begins soccer refereeing this year and also is a pretty good swimmer. Every summer he goes to West Virginia to work with World Relief. He even plays his flute now and then. Lance is 11 and is in fifth grade. He LOVES to act with Arlington Children’s Theater and is quite a comedian. He has played in *Tom Sawyer*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, and *Really Rosie*. He wrote a play called *Picture This* with some other kids, which was performed at the Masonic Temple recently. Lance also likes to invent various board and imaginary games and reads *Calvin and Hobbes* comics.

Veronica, who is 6, is in first grade. She was born in Guatemala and is a strong swimmer and a cheerleader. She is working on developing her back handspring and tumbles all over the place. She got up on her bike the first time she tried and has been riding ever since. She loves babies and loves to organize *anything*. Grace, just 4, was also born in Guatemala, She is a delight and loves to play dress-up and to copy her sister.

I (Elizabeth) was formerly a biochemist, but I left my field to raise these little monkeys. We actually follow a classic Christian curriculum. We start out by reading children’s versions of the classics and then advance to the real thing in 7th grade. Jake just finished reading Herodotus and Livy. Lance just read a kid’s version of *The Aeneid*. We do Latin and we hope to start Greek next year in 8th grade. All of this is centered on strong Christian ethics and our faith.

We are also part-time missionaries to Africa working with an organization called PEER Servants that does micro-enterprise development (MED). MED essentially provides small loans to budding entrepreneurs in the developing world. This means that, *when appropriate*, we help move folks from a “relief” mindset to realizing they can care for themselves and their children, employ others, and rebuild their countries. Andrew is in the Sudan now for three weeks as I write this. I hope to go to South Africa in August.

Another thing you need to know about us is that we usually have a little dog here. Our most recent critter is Toby, and he sometimes gets loose when we have friends over and for this I apologize.

If you ever want to stop by for tea, come on over and introduce yourselves! Or if you want to talk all manner of schooling or overseas aid work, come on over! We’re at (781) 354-1379.



PARMENTER MOTHERS MEET

Although Parmenter School closed in 1983, the Parmenter mothers just don’t get it. A few years after the fact, Virginia Gregory, Sue Burton, and Deirdre Wadsworth, deciding that they wanted to keep in touch with their Parmenter friends, came up with the idea of meeting at a local restaurant (usually Shanghai Village) every two-to-three months.

The idea caught on and has become a valuable forum for staying connected with each other. Through the years, we’ve shared stories and pictures of our children (and now our grandchildren), have discussed our careers, and finally swapped advice on our medical aches and pains. In fact, at our last dinner we circulated information on women’s heart issues, and one mom even came dressed in red to make us aware of “women’s heart health week.”

These get-togethers are open to all Parmenter moms. If interested, call someone in the neighborhood who may be knowledgeable so that you’ll be included when the next “telephone tree” takes place. Virginia Gregory of Norfolk Rd. is the gracious coordinator who makes the final reservations.

Please come!

Mary Kokaras (*Venmer Road*)



SHAKESPEARE RETURNS IN AUGUST

Shakespeare is back! The 6th annual Shakespeare in the Park performance will be held this year at Menotomy Rocks Park on Sunday, August 6th at 5:00 p.m. The New England Shakespeare Company will perform *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, an exuberant comedy in Elizabethan style, full of passion, magic, and romance. The performance, geared for all ages, is co-sponsored by the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park, the Friends of Robbins Farm Park, and the Arlington Center for the Arts.

Neighbors are encouraged to come early, and to bring family members, children, blankets, chairs, and a picnic. The sponsors will sell desserts, beverages, Shakespeare tote bags, T-shirts, and more. Further information about the company can be found at www.newenglandshakespeare.com.

Thanks to Colin Campbell of Morton Road and Linda Shoemaker of the Arlington Center for the Arts for this announcement.

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THE COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS PROGRAM



Not everyone here in our neighborhood lives in single-family homes, condos, or apartment buildings. Just for example, there's the home for developmentally disabled people on Kensington Park; the Brackett House Bed & Breakfast on Pleasant Street; the single-room housing run by the Salvation Army on Wellington. In housing at least, we really are quite diverse.

And then there's the home of the Community Interventions Program at 23 Maple Street, tucked in between the Senior Center and the Theosophical Society.

Its mission is to give short-term transitional shelter to young people, and more specifically "to provide comprehensive assessment and stabilization services, individual, group, and family counseling, an educationally focused day program, and case coordination." They must be succeeding, for they've been doing this work for many years now.

As far as one can tell, the teens living there are ordinary kids who've had some tough times. I sometimes walk by on my way home, and see them playing basketball or other games out in the driveway. In warm weather, they might be barbecuing by their porch. Almost always, I get a hello, and sometimes a "How you doing, sir?"

The Community Interventions Program wants their kids to be good neighbors and to integrate their facility into the neighborhood. I've stopped by their booth on Town Day, when they spoke about their home, and went to an open house they sponsored a while ago, where I was greeted warmly. There I also met Catherine, their next-door neighbor on Maple, an artist who comes over to teach the kids about painting. Beyond that, the young residents are willing to provide community service; more specifically, they may be available to do light yard work, such as yard clean-up, raking, snow shoveling, or similar household tasks.

Like most nonprofit groups, the CIP is raising money, in this case primarily for an Education Fund that will offer financial assistance to past residents for further schooling and training. A Scholarship Banquet was scheduled to be held at the Sons of Italy on June 22. Naturally, the program welcomes donations, but it would also be grateful for appliances and accessories as well.

It's tough to be a teen (or a parent) these days; and for a variety of reasons a kid sometimes needs to get away from his home environment for a while. When that happens, it's good to know that there's a safe place where they can go, and good to know as well that these kids can find a temporary and supportive home here in our neighborhood.

You can learn more about the CIP (and read its on-line Newsletter) from its web site, www.geocities.com/cipfund, or by e-mailing cipfund@yahoo.com, or by calling 643-1554. Bill Brown, CIP's Education Coordinator, was the person who reminded us about the program and sent us some materials; we're sure he'd be glad to answer any questions neighbors may have. - B.B.

WANTED: YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD STORIES

For our next issue in the Fall, we thought it would be fun – and also interesting – to print some of your own short stories about our neighborhood and neighborhood life. Don't go away! – we mean something easy, nothing hard at all. And it would be great to hear from you.



By "story" we mean any experience, or event, or vignette, or anecdote that illustrates or signifies the meaning of the neighborhood for you. We're betting that all of you readers have at least one story to tell. And just about anything counts, whatever you feel that might be. It could be an experience involving a neighbor, or a number of neighbors; or something that was funny, or happy, or even not so happy; or simply something interesting or unusual that's happened for you while you've been living here, and that you can share with others. As far as we're concerned, the more interesting or unusual, the better.

Why are we doing this? Because we all have our own neighborhood perspectives and points of view, but no one can duplicate yours, thank goodness. And also because our collected stories should be instructive and enjoyable for others to read.

So if you can send us some choice words – in any way, shape, or form – we'll print them in a special section in our next issue, either with your name, or anonymously if you prefer. Rough drafts and sketches are fine. As you can see, we're casting a broad net here. And now for some brief details:

How long? There's no fixed length, but roughly 100-300 words sounds about right.

By when? How about by September 15th?; that gives you about two months.

Where to send them? You can e-mail them to jhitesnews.org; or if you prefer, just mail them to Bill at 12 Pelham Terrace or Mary at 135 Jason Street. We'll touch base with you before we go to print.

How does this sound? Do you think you could give it a shot? Thank you for considering being part of this first-time venture! So have a great summer, everyone – and before it ends, we hope we can hear from you.

CONTACT THE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER

We always welcome your letters, articles, or suggestions, as well as any donations you might be able to make. To contact Mary Cummings, Editor:

Write to: 135 Jason St.
E-mail: Jhitesnews@comcast.net
Website: www.jhitesnews.org

To make a contribution to **The Neighborhood Newsletter**: Make checks payable to "Menotomy Rocks Neighborhood Association" and send to Bill Berkowitz at 12 Pelham Terrace. Thank you for your support!