

# CLEVELAND PARK



# Voices

VOL. 4, NO. 2

NEWSLETTER OF THE CLEVELAND PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FALL 1990

## CPHS Busy on Many Fronts

By Kathy Wood

President  
Cleveland Park Historical Society

The Cleveland Park Historical Society is off to an energetic start this fall. I hope you and all your neighbors received the announcement of our first lecture series and the "Helpful Suggestions to Expedite the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Process" from our Architectural Review Committee. CPHS members graciously donated time in mid-September to deliver these materials door to door to all residents

within the Cleveland Park Historic District. We realize that it's a complicated process to clear the historic preservation review and obtain a building permit for outside work on a historic district residence, especially because employees in that branch of the D.C. government are short-handed and overworked. Please call me (244-1276) if you need additional copies of the "Helpful Suggestions" or have questions. We plan to distribute the "Helpful Suggestions" to real estate agents active in Cleveland Park so that they will understand the process.

### CPHS Hires Administrative Coordinator

We have good news. CPHS has hired Sam Friedman to be our Administrative Coordinator. He comes to us from Woodley Park, where he was an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner. He served as ANC-3C's Treasurer and as Co-chair of its Planning and Zoning Committee. He was also on the Executive Board of the Woodley Park Community Association, where he was active on the Business Committee, and he served as Membership Coordinator for the Woodley Park Historical Society. Sam studied architecture in college, has worked as a real estate agent, and has experience in the retail world. For several years, he has worked as a freelance designer specializing in store planning and visual merchandising. Sam brings to CPHS an interesting background which combines architecture, design, real estate, and retail expertise — a good fit for our particular activities and needs.

### CPHS Lecture Series

Don Hawkins, a Washington architect and historic geographer, led off CPHS's lecture series, "200 Years of History in Cleveland Park," on September 24th with a lively talk illustrated with historic photos and maps. He discussed specific land forms in Cleveland Park and showed how they have been altered over time. The second lecture on October 22nd featured Priscilla McNeil talking about the original land grant which included present-day Cleveland Park and discussing some of the earliest estates. Kathy Wood concludes the fall series with a November 26th lecture on Cleveland Park's country and

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### 1990 Decal



CLEVELAND PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1990

CPHS's 1990 membership decal, again created by Di Stovall, depicts Waldron Faulkner's 1937 Cleveland Park home at 3415 36th Street, one of Washington's earliest "modern" buildings (see photo in *Voices*, Spring 1990). Following his wife's drawing, noted Washington printmaker Lou Stovall prepared the decals, which all CPHS members who have paid their 1990 dues should have received to post in a window and enjoy.

## CPHS Busy

*Continued from preceding page*

summer houses. For more information and reservations, call Rives Carroll (363-6556). See also the listing on page 8.

## Connecticut Avenue Revitalization

Through the long hot summer, the CPHS Connecticut Avenue Committee (Jane Hardin, Alan Dowell, and myself) met and began exploring ways that Cleveland Park's neighborhood shopping areas could be refurbished and revitalized. The committee has been expanded and is moving ahead. Sam Friedman will devote at least ten hours a month to working with the committee on the commercial areas. He is meeting the shopkeepers and talking to them about their concerns. Our plan is to work toward a "Main Street" project on Connecticut Avenue. The National Trust for Historic Preservation created the "Main Street" program to spur the economic revitalization of under-utilized commercial areas. To be a success, such a project requires that commercial property and restaurant owners, shopkeepers, neighbors, and city government officials all work together to accomplish the goal of economic revitalization. We are in the very early stages of this process. The Connecticut Avenue Committee and Sam Friedman, with the help of professionals with expertise in this area, will be trying to assess if such a program will work for our Connecticut Avenue commercial area. If the merchants and residents are interested, we will sponsor a presentation to explain more about the concept of "Main Street" projects and demonstrate how they have promoted economic revitalization in other cities.

Meanwhile, I urge all of you to *support our local shops; they really need you!* (See Sam Friedman's article, "Shoppers' Delights on Connecticut Avenue," page 4.) Tell them you are a Cleveland Park neighbor, that you value having their business in our neighborhood, and be sure to compliment the several Connecticut Avenue business people who have already planted colorful streetside flower beds. They need to hear from you.

## Park and Shop

There is still no definitive news on the Park and Shop site at Connecticut and

Ordway, although the owners have been negotiating with a prospective tenant who would renovate the present structure for use. The economic climate does not seem conducive for development right now.

## Wisconsin Avenue Rezoning

Also over the summer, ANC-3C and TACPEC (Tenley and Cleveland Park Emergency Committee) filed a downzoning application for the area opposite the Washington Cathedral. Now that the Cathedral has been completed and consecrated, it seems appropriate that safeguards be put in place to protect vistas to and from the Cathedral. The D.C. Zoning Commission has agreed to set the case down for a hearing, which will probably take place in the spring.

## Cleveland Park Trees

John Poole continues to work on the tree situation for Cleveland Park. He now has many volunteers signed up for his CPHS Tree Committee, but he needs a vice-chairperson to handle activities when his work takes him out of Washington. Volunteers please call him at his home (966-8329).

## Architectural Review Committee (ARC)

CPHS's Architectural Review Committee has entered its fourth year of work in providing purely *advisory* recommendations to the staff person of the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board. The ARC does not comment on zoning issues. Zoning approval for proposed projects has been given before the building permit application reaches the Historic Preservation Office and the ARC. (For information and help on zoning issues, call D.C. Councilmember Jim Nathanson's office, 724-8021, or your ANC commissioner.)

The ARC has been able to expand its membership because of the larger meeting space made available by the Cleveland Park Congregational Church. Meetings are held the first or second Monday evening of each month and are open to all CPHS members and to Cleveland Park residents and their architects whose projects are under consideration. (Call 244-1276 for information on meetings.)

As many of you know, historic district status has stirred up much discus-

sion in the neighborhood. I am happy to report that I get about as many calls from those complaining that the historic preservation review required for building permits on outside work isn't strict enough as I do from those complaining that it is too strict. As long as concerns are being voiced by both sides, I think we must be following a middle course. (See page 6 for two opposing views.)

I would encourage you to drive through Wesley Heights where developers and speculators are making dramatic changes to the streetscapes. Many residents of Wesley Heights, which is not a historic district, are concerned because they have no control over developers who are buying houses and demolishing them to build larger ones or multiple houses on a single site. In Cleveland Park, we have recently had two speculators proceed with demolition and new construction without permits. Because we are a historic district, the neighbors have some say about how speculators, developers, and other neighbors treat the houses in our neighborhood.

In my experience, the end result is of a much higher quality after the project goes through the review process. George Hartman of the award-winning firm of Hartman Cox Architects once told me that he welcomed the comments of the Fine Arts Commission and felt his designs usually benefited from the discussion and advice he received during these reviews. Architects are used to critiques; they receive them during their training and in firms where they later work. The architects I have talked to thrive on the give and take of discussions of their designs. Ideally this is a three-way process that involves the client, the architect, and professionals on the various review boards. In this way, the design process is a collaborative effort resulting in a synthesis of the best of all the ideas offered.

CPHS and our Architectural Review Committee hope to help Cleveland Park homeowners as they deal with the D.C. government building permit process. The "Helpful Suggestions" delivered to your door are designed to clarify the process and answer questions. If you want more information, please call me (244-1276), Eleni Constantine (537-1456), or John or Susan O'Sullivan (362-6211). We all need to work together to preserve the quality of life that we value.

# Cleveland Park Personalities

## Lawrence Gichner

By Rives Carroll

One week before his 83rd birthday, I interviewed Lawrence Gichner in his Woodley Road home—the one he moved to when he was 14 years old and where he has spent “69 joyful years.” He lay flat on his back in bed, nursing a swollen knee with an ice pack. Just the day before, he had been hit by a car while crossing a street downtown. Nevertheless, he was in good spirits and determined to keep his travel plans — to fly to Paris in three days. When questioned about his energy and optimism, this octogenarian quoted from his baby book, “He is a happy and outgoing youngster,” and then added with amusement, “And isn’t it horribly monotonous to think that now, 80 years later, I’m still the same happy baby enthralled with life?”

No, Lawrence Gichner, it is not. You are a lesson in positive thinking and those suitcases standing at the end of your bed were a sure sign of it.

Born on Seaton Place, Gichner attended Cooke Elementary School and graduated from Central High (now Cardoza) in 1926. With aspirations to be a writer, he chose to study at the University of Wisconsin because of his admiration for the liberal-thinking people of Wisconsin and for the strong spirit and independence of their senator Bob La Follette. But his stint at college lasted only nine months, as he was called back to Washington to help his ailing father with the family business, Gichner Sheet Metal and Roofing.

As if being robbed of a formal college education created an insatiable hunger for knowledge, Gichner is an impassioned self-educator. He is a reader; he is a doer. There seems to be very little that doesn’t interest him. Perhaps he was fortunate not to receive an education beyond high school but to be forced to claim it for himself. He explains, “I had great excitement in educating myself, which I do consistently. If it were my last second in life and I could learn something, I’d grab hold of that knowledge and take it into the next

world with me so I’d be more acceptable there. If you want to say something nice, just say I’m a student. The only thing that has any meaning is what you get by your own efforts.”

Gichner is the only child of a doting mother and a resourceful father who immigrated from Vienna in about 1885. As a coppersmith in Austria, Ernest Gichner was a journeyman, but when he and his 12 brothers and sisters settled in the Washington area, he opened a little sheet metal shop on 13½ Street where the District Building is today. As a metalworker, his father admired the silverwork of the English, bronzes of the French, copperwork of the Russians, pewter of the Germans, and what he considered the finest metalwork of all — that of the Japanese and Chinese. Living with his father’s collection gave Gichner a knowledge and an appreciation of these fine arts which were to hold him in good stead later.

When Lawrence Gichner’s world fell apart in 1958, in his characteristically positive manner, this optimist, then 52, picked up the pieces and made an even better life for himself. The road was not smooth. He struggled to hold his business together. But today, Gichner talks about the failure of his sheet metal and roofing company as a blessing. He says, “Fortunately, I lost it.” Thanks to Hurricane Hazel and the destruction she wreaked on an uninsured building still in the process of being roofed, Gichner lost the business where “I had worked hard for 35 years of sweat, blood, and anguish. I applied myself frequently 18 hours a day, because in America to be a success you’ve got to be big and I wanted to be big. So I built up to 180 employees. If I had been a success, I wouldn’t be talking to you now; I’d be dead. The stress and strain of conducting business, meeting with the unions, making contracts, payroll every week, trying to keep the thing rolling — it’s a killer.”

Despondent at not finding employment during a six-month search, Gichner was encouraged by a friend to capitalize on his avocation, collecting art and antiques. Fortuitously, during a job interview, he was offered the opportunity to sell some Japanese ivories, and since both he and his father were ivory collectors, he felt comfortable with the challenge. Soon other people were calling him to sell their bronzes, scrolls, and Chinese furniture. And over 30 years later, the calls are still coming.



Lawrence Gichner

Photo by Sally Halvorsen

During our conversation, we were interrupted frequently by the telephone beside his bed — requests for both appraisals and sales of antiques and art.

Gichner found a niche for himself, and happily there was room for two. Gertrude, who died in May, was his wife “for 48 glorious years of honeymoon” and his partner in the antique business. They met in Santa Domingo on a cruise. Gichner explains, “That’s where Columbus discovered America and I found her. And between the two of us, I got the best deal.” Together they frequented flea markets, auction houses, and frequently traveled around the world to uncover salable items. Gertrude had an eye for fine porcelains and Lawrence often selected bronzes. The furniture and artifacts in their house are proof of their affinity for Oriental art — its “sophistication, its detail work, the grace, the composition, and the folklore that goes with it.”

Juxtaposed with the decoratively carved Chinese chairs and gilded Buddhas in his living room are a slidescreen and projector, evidence of work in progress. In addition to collecting, appraising, and selling antiques, Gichner also gives slide lectures with titles like “Adventures in Attics,” “Collectors and Their Collections,” and “Hunting Antiques Around the World.” But his talks are not limited to the field of antiques. The day before our interview, he had spoken on West Virginia caves. And during his trip to Paris he planned to update his talk called “Paris on Her 2000th Birthday.” He has been on the national lecture circuit for decades, having missed only one state — Alaska. And you guessed it; he hopes to talk

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## Shoppers' Delights on Connecticut Avenue

By Samuel W. Friedman

During the first sunny days of autumn I walked along Connecticut Avenue between Macomb and Porter Streets to explore the many businesses in this Cleveland Park neighborhood. I discovered that these merchants frequently offer a unique blend of goods and services which often are not associated with businesses of their type. This diversity of more than 40 businesses is further broadened by nearly 20 restaurants, fast-food and carry-out establishments offering a selection from ice cream cones to Asian, European, and Mexican cuisine.

Almost half of the merchants in the neighborhood are one-of-a-kind businesses, like Artmaster Printers at 3402 Connecticut. The others are businesses where there is more than one to choose from, such as the two liquor stores and four grocery stores.

### One-of-a-kind Businesses

Town Jewelers, near the intersection of Connecticut and Macomb, is the first stop on my tour of one-of-a-kind businesses. All watches, jewelry, and clocks are repaired on the premises. Continuing up the east side of Connecticut, I find Brother Sewing Machine and Vacuum, where there is a full complement of sewing notions. Along with sharpening scissors, they will service your vacuum so it will run well, similar in concept to an oil change for a car.

If you need to have a fine Oriental rug washed, repaired, restored, or shipped, Adabi is just a few steps away. Adabi also accepts trade-ins of old Oriental rugs. Peoples next door, along with offering drug store services, also has pet and automotive supplies, gift candies, and paper goods.

Upstairs at 3333 Connecticut are the offices of The Learning Annex, specializing in all kinds of adult education classes. Sharing this upstairs floor is the Vic Daumit Dance Studio, which is known throughout the city for ballroom dancing.

Farther up the block at street level is Artisan Lamp Company, already in the neighborhood for 12 years. Along with restoration and repair services for all lamps and light fixtures, this shop also has an extensive selection of picture frames. At the corner of Connecticut

and Porter is the Exxon station, where handicapped drivers can have their gas pumped for them at self-service prices when they pull up to the self-service pumps.

Across the avenue and upstairs at 3514 Connecticut is the Guitar Gallery, which also offers personalized lessons in Flamenco, jazz, blues, bossa nova and classical guitar. Also upstairs in this block, the Better Buys Thrift Shop carries men's, women's, and children's clothing. This shop is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, staffed by volunteers, and the revenue goes to various charities in the metropolitan area.

National Shoe Rebuilders, besides shoe repair, also will restitch a leather purse and put taps on your dancing shoes. Upstairs at 3508 Connecticut is the Acacia Animal Clinic, a full-service animal hospital. Also upstairs, at 3504 Connecticut, is Uptown Travel, whose professionals with round-the-world travel experience provide personalized services, Saturday morning hours, and ticket delivery.

Transcendence-Perfection-Bliss has recently relocated next to the Uptown Theatre, after being at an upstairs location in the neighborhood for several years. This specialty card and gift shop also wraps gifts if time permits. Behind the marquee of the art deco Uptown Theatre is the largest movie theater in

Washington, with 1,120 seats and a balcony with terrific sightlines. If you want to watch a movie at home, Potomac Video at 3418 Connecticut, along with a regular movie library, has an ever-increasing selection of foreign films.

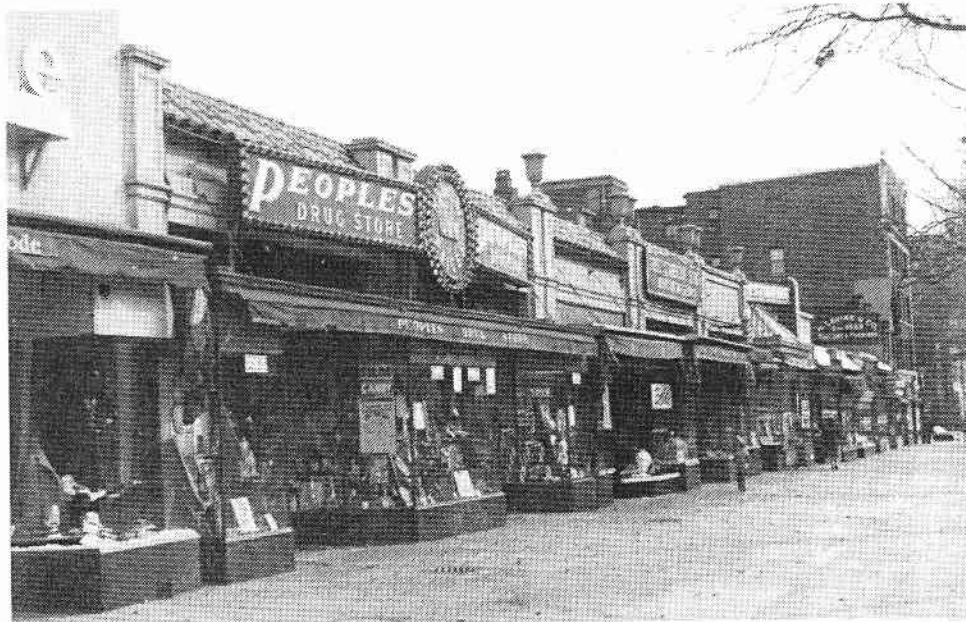
The last of the one-of-a-kinds, in the corner of Connecticut and Newark, is Artmaster Printers, which is a full-service printer of stationery, newsletters, and invitations, besides being our neighborhood copy center.

My exploration takes on a new twist when there is more than one business offering similar goods or services, because the distinctions between each often vary in unusual ways. There are six pairs of businesses, two threesomes, and a four-of-a-kind and a five-of-a-kind. We do not yet have a full house.

### The Six Pairs

The Frame Mart Gallery on the east side at 3307 Connecticut specializes in custom picture framing with an extensive selection to choose from, and also offers art supplies. Across the avenue at 3432, Nonomura Studio, along with framing, specializes in antique restoration of all fine art objects.

The neighborhood also has a pair of banks. American Security has a notary public, while Perpetual has an ATM Most machine that is just across Ordway from the Metro elevator. Another pair offers tax services. Upstairs at 3433 is the Tax Center and at 3337 is



A stretch of Cleveland Park's Connecticut Avenue shopping area as it appeared in the 1950s. Photo courtesy of the Wymer Collection, Historical Society of Washington, D.C.



H & R Block, which offers tax courses. The fourth pair are realtors, Thos. D. Walsh, next to Artmasters, and Tsintolas Realty, next to Ivy's Place, both specializing in property management and residential and commercial property.

Some pairs may complement each other. Crown Books, a discount, specializes in current and updated in-print books and has magazines. Next to the Uptown Theatre, Calliope Books, with knowledgeable employees, is a comfortable place to browse and continues to have great remainder books that are always on sale.

Cleveland Park Liquor & Seafood on the east side at 3423 is one half of the sixth pair. This shop has fresh and cooked fish and a fine selection of California wines and imported beer. On the next block north at 3529 is Ambassador Liquors. This shop's owner is a gourmet chef and a certified wine consultant who will select the perfect bottle of wine for your next dinner or special occasion.

### The Threesomes

Both of the threesomes take care of what we wear. Cleveland Park Valet at 3303 Connecticut also makes household and car keys, while its neighbor, Uptown Cleaners, offers one-hour dry cleaning service. Across the avenue at 3420, International Valet specializes in altering and cleaning neckties. The other threesomes are merchants who offer custom tailoring. C & Y Custom Tailor, which is upstairs at 3510, and European Custom Tailor at 3432 provide only tailoring services, while Kowloon Fashions at 3331 also has a selection of travel clocks and other items.

### The Four-of-a-kind

The four-of-a-kind is about the food we eat. Vace, the dean of the neighborhood's grocers and known for its fresh pasta, also has a delicatessen offering freshly sliced Italian meats and cheeses and heavy cream. Yes! Natural Gourmet, along with organic and natural foods, offers cruelty-free body-care items and cosmetics, recycled paper products, medicinal and culinary herbs, and organic baby food. The store that's always there when you need it, 7-Eleven, also has ice, stamps, and an indoor ATM. Most machine. Brookville, the neighborhood supermarket, offers telephone order delivery service for

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The Foursquare, an archetypal family house, was built in its many incarnations throughout Cleveland Park from 1908 to 1930. Drawing by John Wiebenson.

By Cherrie Anderson

## Foursquare Style

*This is a second example of the ten house styles featured in CPHS's forthcoming Guide to Cleveland Park House Styles. ("Queen Anne Style" appeared in Voices, Spring 1990. To consult the complete pre-publication guide, call Kathy Wood at 244-1276.) Cherrie Anderson, author of the guide, is an interior designer and member of CPHS's Architectural Review Committee; illustrator John Wiebenson is an architect.*

One of the most popular houses of the early 20th century, the Foursquare has a solid, comfortable shape and a wide, inviting front porch. This is an archetypal family house. Although the basic form is simple, it can be found dressed up with a multitude of materials and ornamental details based on styles ranging from Colonial to Craftsman. The Foursquare in its many incarnations was built throughout Cleveland Park from 1908 to 1930. Some typical examples are the houses at 2739 Macomb (1909), 3431 Porter (1913), and 3519 Lowell (1916).

### Basic form

- Compact, boxlike, square massing;
- Low-hipped roof, with front dormer and often side dormers;

broad overhanging eaves;

- Usually off-center front entrance, with asymmetrically placed windows;
- Full front port, sometimes wrap-around; sometimes a second-story balcony.

### Materials

- Wood shingles, pebble-dash stucco, fieldstone, brick, or narrow wood siding, or a combination thereof;
- Originally wood shingle, slate, or clay tile roof;
- Wood porches, doors, windows and trim;
- Sometimes brick, stone, or stuccoed porch piers (square column supports).

### Details

- Double-hung windows with one-over-one sash (single glass panes above and below) or six-over-one sash (six panes in top half);
- Shallow bay windows;
- Sometimes Palladian windows;
- Sometimes diamond-shaped panes;
- Louvered shutters;
- Classical, (especially Tuscan) porch columns;
- Square Craftsman porch piers with sloping sides;
- Arched Spanish Revival porch openings;
- Square balusters (handrail supports) on porches and balconies;
- Ornamental brackets supporting wide eaves.

## Living in a Historic District: Two Views

I have lived in Cleveland Park since I came to Washington in 1941 as a member of my aunt's family. That was in the 3500 block of Porter Street. I returned to Porter Street a few years later with two children and moved to 34th Place in 1957 with three children.

Last year the Cleveland Park Historical Society, of which I am a member, spent its time patting itself on the back. I sat quietly and listened but was disturbed by what I perceive as a trend toward conformity. This year I want to speak up.

When I moved to the neighborhood, I spotted a red brick apartment building on Macomb Street across the street from what is now the International School and thought that I'd like to live there when I grow old. Would the Historical Society put up with that building now? Would it put up with the apartment buildings at the foot of Newark Street and across the street from the hairdresser on Newark where I serve Meals on Wheels? How about the I.M. Pei house on Ordway? Would the Historical Society have tolerated that?

Last year I heard that roof raising is frowned on these days, but our neighbors raised theirs and the house looks fine. At the same time someone down the block also added a story, but later permission was refused to a family on Rodman Street who had to move on that account, although their next door neighbor in an otherwise identical house had raised theirs. Our present neighbors fought the order and we signed up to help them argue their case, which was time-consuming, difficult, and more complicated than an ordinary person could deal with. They are remodeling their house, restoring some of the original lines and rooms, and ridding it of termites. It stands in splendor, cuts off no one's light, view, or air, and I fail to see why I should object. Nor do I object to neighbors' fences, garages, driveways, steps, or swimming pools. Incidentally, there is a new little house on Porter Street which has a lovely garden. It is obviously built in what was the backyard of a proud brick house. Would it be allowed now?

At the time the neighborhood was deciding whether it should apply for historic district status, meetings were convened and some people warned that the Historical Society could rob us of needed freedom. Although, at that time, I considered them Cassandras, I wonder whether, in retrospect, they were right or whether the present zeal will wear off in time.

One more point. Cleveland Park used to be a diverse neighborhood. We had drunks who peed in our bushes and fought on the street. We had a charming man who lived

with his sole piece of furniture, a cot, and played his records all evening long. We had newspaper reporters and writers who hadn't yet succeeded.

Given the prices and the problems of living in Cleveland Park, I doubt that we will again see their like and I shall miss them.

NAOMI D. ROTHWELL

*These comments were prepared for delivery at CPHS's April 1990 annual meeting.*

Last August, a developer tore down part of the house next door to mine on 35th Street and started building a large rear addition, completely without permits for exterior work. The city issued stop-work orders within 24 hours, but the demolition had already been done. I soon discovered that this was the second Cleveland Park house project for which this developer had received stop-work orders for illegal work. This experience prompted me to put down some comments about what our neighborhood's historic district status stands for.

As owners or residents in the Cleveland Park Historic District, we are the guardians of an architecturally and historically significant community, with houses ranging from Sears Roebuck bungalows to Rosedale, a unique 18th century farmhouse. But we are guardians of more than just buildings; we are guardians of the essence of the community. The friendly and informal character of Cleveland Park is directly affected by the physical layout of the neighborhood in the natural landscape and by the balance of built and open spaces along the streets. Preservation of this physical fabric helps to prevent significant changes in land use as well as to deter increased intensity of land use within the community.

A neighbor pointed out in the September meeting of CPHS's Architectural Review Committee that historic district status limits our absolute freedom but it also provides a community framework for respecting the rights of others and the interest we all have in the character and appearance of our neighborhood. It gives us all a level of assurance that the neighborhood we have chosen to live in will not be irreparably or dramatically changed.

This level of assurance takes the form of a dialogue among ourselves as neighbors and with the city's D.C. Historic Preservation Office before building permits are issued. This is not a hidebound or bureaucratic process. It involves, instead, a certain amount of give and take. The process works best among neighbors, and works least well with a developer who has no stake in the community. In the latter case, our role as neighbors is to serve as monitors on behalf of the larger community.

Does the historic district curb diversity by making houses unaffordable? It wasn't historic district status that caused the rise in

prices; the prices were high before that status came into effect, in May 1987. They would have gone even higher if speculative land purchases had been encouraged by rising profits to be made within the residential core of the neighborhood and if commercial and high-rise apartment development had continued to be profitable along our edges. Historic district status has given us, as neighbors and residents, a voice in the process.

Historic district status is not intended to be—and is not—inconsistent with economic, racial, or cultural diversity. The process doesn't inhibit original or imaginative solutions to architectural problems. The goal is not conformity, but harmony. As a resident of Cleveland Park, I recognize that historic district status has its minuses as well as pluses. But in my own experience, I am thankful that the developer working on the house next to mine has to go through the process of getting a building permit and working out the design of his addition with a qualified architectural historian in the D.C. Historic Preservation Office.

SAMUEL HASTINGS-BLACK

### Simeon's Has a New Name

CLEVELAND  
LAND  
PARK  
BOOK  
SHOP



3706 MACOMB  
STREET NW  
WASHINGTON  
DC 20016

New proprietess Janie Hulme has adopted a cartoon of President Grover Cleveland and a new name, Cleveland Park Book Shop, for the former Simeon's in the neighborhood's Wisconsin Avenue shopping area. The shop is also now open seven days a week: Monday-Wednesday, 10-6; Thursday-Saturday, 10-9; Sunday, noon to 5.

## Our Neighborhood Shopkeepers

### Hal Lake of The Zebra Room

By Rives Carroll

"The place is me," explains Harold Lake, owner of the Zebra Room, a neighborhood restaurant at the southwest corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Macomb Street. Seated in a booth against zebra-striped wallpaper, Hal, as most people call him, fits comfortably into the friendly and informal setting. He pauses frequently to speak to customers as they pass. "I have a philosophy," he adds. "It takes seven muscles to smile and 14 to frown. So why exert yourself?"

Soon after buying the Zebra Room in 1960, this former sales manager for the District House of Wines found that the coat-and-tie restaurant he had bought was not lucrative. Consequently, he closed the doors for the first of his six remodelings and reopened with a new face, a new menu, and some new promotion. "I love gimmicks," he says, referring to his half-price enticements and his daily specials. The gimmick that turned his business around was a mass mailing of menus offering a half-price meal if the customer arrived with the menu in hand. Today, all that remains of his original offers are the half-price pizza and all-the-spaghetti-you-can-eat.

The half-price pizza nights have a history of their own. On Tuesdays, "I used to have half-price pizza-to-go. People would buy a half dozen pizzas and put them in their freezers. So I said, 'Okay, I'm going to put a stop to that. I'm going to charge them for the box.' Some people would bring the boxes back. So then I said, 'Okay, only half-price pizza on the premises.'" His success was accompanied by long waiting lines and hectic evenings, which led Hal to add Thursdays. Now many customers return every Tuesday and Thursday for half-price pizza.

Hal describes his first eight to ten years of ownership as rough. He recalls, "I opened and closed this place seven days a week. If I wanted to see my kid, my wife brought him to me down here." As business improved,

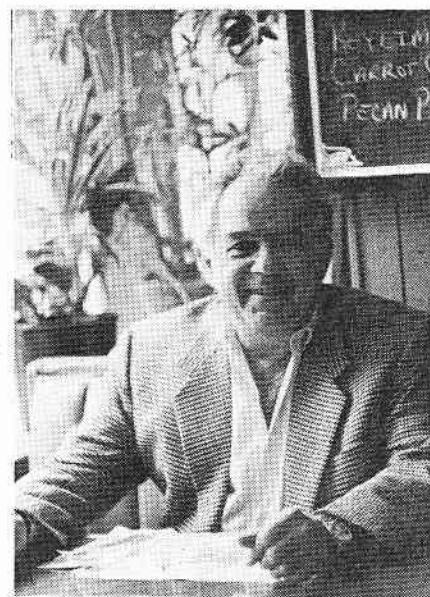
Hal was able to establish more balance between his family and work. "What happened was one day one of my children got sick and I came home and put him to bed and he says to me, 'Dad, we don't do it like this here.' That's when I realized that I was a stranger in my own house. And my children did not need the money at the time; they needed me. So I said, 'Okay, I'm going to start taking some time off.'"

Hal and his wife Hannah, a social worker with offices in both Georgetown and their Potomac home, raised four boys who are now grown with their own careers and families. The oldest, whom Hal was grooming to take over the business, was killed on the Beltway 13 years ago. To this day, the hammer-head shark that hangs on the wall of the restaurant is a memorial to Gary, who caught it in Florida when he was a teenager.

Hal himself was only 17 when he met 13-year-old Hannah in their hometown, Brooklyn. In 1947, at 18, he joined the army to benefit from the GI Bill for college assistance. After a year and a half in Japan, Hal was discharged to Washington, where his parents had moved and owned a grocery store at Second and P Streets N.W. Finding himself unable to concentrate on his studies at George Washington University, Hal opted for marriage to Hannah, now his wife of 41 years.

Hal describes them both as workaholics. "We both love working." And over time, they both have become fond of zebras. Some pieces from their zebra collection are displayed over the bar. Hal does not know why the Gerachi brothers, who owned the restaurant before him, chose that name and symbol. But he has perpetuated it. Even the recently constructed red, black, and gray addition facing Macomb Street suggests zebra colors and stripes. This expansion is an indication of the long lease he has signed with the Kramer sisters, who own the entire right angle of commercial and retail properties at this corner of Wisconsin and Macomb.

The Zebra Room welcomes customers as early as 8:30 am for breakfast and as late as 1 am for a wide selection of subs, hamburgers, dinners, snacks, and pizzas. Thirty-three employees share the duties: seven cooks, five dishwashers, a bartender, a night manager, a day manager, and over a dozen waiters and waitresses. This year, for the first time, most of the waiters and waitresses are



Hal Lake

Photo by Sally Halvorson

college students from American University, Georgetown, Catholic, and Maryland, rather than professionals.

In the early days, most of Hal's regular customers came from the old dormitories of McLean Gardens. Today, you can find all ages at the Zebra Room. Neighborhood people meet there. Most of the people at the bar are retired. If a regular doesn't show up for two or three days, Hal will call to check on him. Busloads of tourists and children arrive after visiting the Cathedral. Families return regularly. Off-duty police and FBI and Secret Service personnel come frequently. Singles are welcome. College students study there. And college alumni gather there to relive old memories. Birthday parties and even a wake have been held there. "Most of the people who come in here I know by face," says Hal. "I knew them before they got married and now they're bringing their children back. And now I know their children. It makes me feel young and old at the same time."

To celebrate his 25th anniversary at the Zebra Room, Hal chose another gimmick. One day he reduced all his prices to those on the 1960 menu. Hamburgers and beer sold for 25 cents each. The restaurant was mobbed and the police were out front directing traffic.

Describing his work, Hal says, "It's been great. I don't have to fight myself to come to work. I love my clientele. My help is extremely good to me."

With Hal at the helm, the Zebra Room is more than a restaurant; it is a neighborhood institution.

## Shoppers' Delights

*Continued from page 5*

\$3.00 and will carry your grocery bags to your car (within a reasonable distance) at no charge. This supermarket also offers late-evening, early-morning and weekend facsimile service.

## The Five-of-a-kind

Next in frequency to the nearly 20 restaurants, there are five merchants who will cut, style, or shape your hair. Andrews Hairstylist at the corner of Connecticut and Macomb has stylists from Cuba, Portugal, England and Cambodia. Tropea's Custom Barber at 3321A is a family-owned business that has been at the same address since 1928. This old-fashioned barber continues to offer complete services, including men's shaves. Upstairs at 3518 is Mona Lisa Coiffures, with stylists from Sweden, Korea, Spain, and Japan. Supercuts at 3416 Connecticut has a family-oriented service and is open seven days a week, including evenings. The fifth is Shawn and Charles, offering full service for men, women, and children in the corner of Connecticut and Newark.

My venture onto Connecticut Avenue has opened my eyes to a vast number of goods and services from near and far that are readily available to all Cleveland Parkers. For many of us, these shops are within a short walking distance, and if not, during the day parking is adequate and inexpensive. While a number of merchants will deliver to your home, others are happy to help carry your bags to your car. The Connecticut Avenue merchants look forward to providing all of us with

friendly service, and day or evening, a stroll along Connecticut Avenue can always be a shopper's discovery.

*Samuel Friedman, CPHS's new Administrative Coordinator, is a consultant in visual merchandising, including window displays, and retail store planning.*

## Lawrence Gichner

*Continued from page 3*

there next summer.

Clearly, Lawrence Gichner has had his share of obstacles. But he has no use for regrets. His focus is on the good parts and his expression of gratitude for them seems to give him energy for more. He describes his 83 years as "exciting, intensely vibrant, and meaningful. If it's a happy life, I've got it. If there's a happy man, who is the richest man in the world, you're sitting next to him — grateful for the myriad of blessings."

*Rives Carrol, author of the profiles of Lawrence Gichner and Hal Lake, is CPHS Director of Programs. Among her other current activities, she leads walking tours of Cleveland Park for the Smithsonian, runs the summer day camp and the lecture series at the Cleveland Park Club, and teaches geography at John Eaton School.*

## CPHS's 1990-1991 Lecture Series 200 Years of History in Cleveland Park

Monday evenings at 8 pm  
Cleveland Park Congregational Church  
34th and Lowell Streets N.W.

CPHS members: free Guests: \$5.00

Monday, November 26, 1990  
Summer Houses and Country Retreats  
in Cleveland Park, by Kathleen  
Sinclair Wood

Monday, January 28, 1991  
The Growth of Washington Suburbs,  
by Kathryn Schneider Smith

Monday, February 25, 1991  
Cleveland Park: The Queen of  
Washington Suburbs, by Kathleen  
Sinclair Wood

Monday, March 18, 1991  
Chevy Chase: A Bold Scheme for a  
Suburb, by Judith Helm Robinson

Monday, April 22, 1991  
Cleveland Park: The Growth of  
Neighborhood Shopping

Spring date to be announced  
Lecture and Tour of Rosedale, by  
Louise Mann-Kenney

## Join or Re-Join the Cleveland Park Historical Society

The Cleveland Park Historical Society, founded in 1984, won its initial battles to have our neighborhood declared a historic district and protect the low-rise commercial sections along Connecticut and Wisconsin Avenues.

Now we are focusing on increasing neighborhood interest in historic preservation, as with our current lecture series and guidelines on getting a D.C. building permit in Cleveland Park, and other community projects, such as saving our trees and helping to revitalize our shopping areas.

If you are not a current member, please join or re-join us now. Membership also assures you regular mailings of our newsletter *Voices* and other materials to keep you up to date on neighborhood development and preservation news, plus invitations to special events and programs.

Send your check for \$25, payable to Cleveland Park Historical Society, to:

Kathe McDaniels, Membership Chair, CPHS  
2952 Newark Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008

## Cleveland Park Historical Society

Newsletter Editor

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