

CLEVELAND PARK



Voices

VOL. 3, NO. 2

NEWSLETTER OF THE CLEVELAND PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FALL 1989

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CPHS's New President Brings Us up to Date

By Kathy Wood
President
Cleveland Park Historical Society

Summer, usually a quiet time when only the developers are busy, brought some changes in 1989 for the Cleveland Park Historical Society. In June Mayor Barry nominated our President, Tersh Boasberg, to one of the five positions on the D.C. Zoning Commission. Tersh's acceptance necessitated his resignation as CPHS President. Vice-President Peggy Robin agreed to be Acting President. On September 19th I resigned as Executive Director and was elected President.

In his August 8th farewell to the Board of Directors, Tersh wrote:

"It's hard to believe that four years ago this August, the Park and Shop developers gave eviction notices to their tenants and thereby precipitated a chain of amazing events which saved our neighborhood. It's even harder to believe that I am now a member of the very commission before whom we went as a supplicant on bended knee barely two years ago. Such are the mysteries!

I thank all of you for the help you gave to me and our community. You were really extraordinary. I will miss the camaraderie and closeness.

It was nice to see the neighborhood draw together—and it was nice to win! Thanks for being part of one of the best experiences of my life.

Tersh Boasberg"

When Tersh approached me in the summer of 1984 and said he wanted to help get Cleveland Park declared an historic district and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, I never imagined what could be accomplished through his leadership. I personally am grateful to have worked with him through the past five years. I've learned a lot and had fun along the way. I know that as a neighborhood we will long be grateful for Tersh's foresight and leadership which led to Cleveland Park's historic district designation and the subsequent rezonings on Connecticut and Wisconsin Avenues. We have established a precedent of what is possible when communities work together and stand up for what they need to maintain their quality of life.

New Secretary Hired

I feel honored and a bit scared as I take office as your President. Tersh has big shoes to fill, plus an office of efficient secretaries. To help keep us organized and efficient, I requested and received authorization from the Board to hire a secretary. Caroline Rosell, a neighbor from Connecticut Avenue, miraculously appeared, thanks to Kathie Kenety who discovered her. She is now in the CPHS office in the Cleveland Park Congregational Church at 34th and Lowell Streets every Wednesday from 9 to 12 (sometimes longer), helping

Continued on next page

New President's Update

Continued from preceding page

with our mailings, letters, and files. She is available Wednesday mornings to answer questions, sell our publications, and distribute CPHS materials to anyone who stops by. Do drop in; she wants to meet CPHS people. She has Louise Mann-Kenney's new book on Rosedale and Eleanor Oliver's beautiful Cleveland Park note cards for sale; both make great Christmas presents (see box, page 6). *Our new CPHS phone number is 363-6358 (leave messages when Caroline is not there).*

Historic District Signs

You are surely enjoying our handsome new signs marking the Cleveland Park Historic District boundaries on Connecticut and Wisconsin Avenues and 34th Street. Thanks are due to Monnie Peters, Lou Stovall, and Tersh. Lou transformed a drawing by Washington artist Margie Burks into the template for the signs and CPHS paid the D.C. Government to fabricate them.

April Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting on April 24th was a smashing success. More than a hundred members gathered in the Pilgrim Gallery of Washington Cathedral for a reception and spectacular sunset view over the city. Will Sherk, General Manager of the Cathedral, welcomed us and reaffirmed the importance of the ties between the Cathedral and its neighbors. Retiring CPHS officers and Board members were recognized with Certificates of Appreciation designed by Sharon Fessler, a neighborhood friend. Another certificate was prepared to honor Philip Stone, who has lived in his Macomb Street home all his 82 years and is "the father of Cleveland Park history," as Rives Carroll wrote in the Spring 1989 *Cleveland Park Voices*. We all turn to Phil when we have a question about Cleveland Park's early days and he searches his remarkable memory for an answer.

The Architectural Review Committee (ARC), having reviewed all the building permit applications presented to it since it began in May 1987, recommended six projects for CPHS's first annual Cleveland Park Preservation Achievement Awards (see box, this page). Slides of the

winning projects were shown, and ARC Chairman Whit Peters presented certificates to the homeowners and architects. Three of the architects, Cal Bowie, Dickson Carroll, and Harry Montague, are Cleveland Park residents.

Nancy Witherell of the D.C. Historic Preservation Office and local architect Amy Weinstein then treated us to an illustrated joint talk, "New Designs in an Old Context," on how to design additions and alterations for historic buildings.

Park and Shop Update

As CPHS Executive Director and now President, the question I'm most often asked is, "What is happening at the Park and Shop?" Ted Pedas, now co-owner of the site at Connecticut and Ordway, recently assured me that they are researching possibilities and will soon be working on designs. He said, "We want to do something we're proud of and the neighborhood is proud of. But it has got to work economically."

Looking Ahead

We have much to do. We hope to plan another large neighborhood gathering next spring, similar to our 1988 Twin Oaks event. We are also developing a program to beautify our commercial areas and support our neighborhood shopkeepers. I welcome volunteers for both projects (244-1276). Also Rives Carroll, our Director of Programs, would be happy to have suggestions and offers of help (363-6556).

I want especially to thank Kathe McDaniels, our new Membership Chair, who did a fabulous job this summer reminding members to renew. Also Gerry Gleason, outgoing Treasurer, who struggled all summer with our 1987 tax return, and Monnie Peters, new Treasurer, who is dealing with our 1988 tax return. My job as President is made a lot easier with such great neighbors offering their valuable time and talents.

I would like to close by expressing my deep sadness, for myself and our Cleveland Park community, at the passing of two neighbors, Frances Swift Diem (see "Our Neighborhood Shopkeepers," page 5) and Bishop John Walker. They will be sorely missed by all of us. Our neighborhood will not be the same without their quiet generosity.

Cleveland Park Historical Society
OFFICE

Cleveland Park Congregational Church
34th and Lowell Streets N.W.

Open Wednesday mornings, 9-12
Caroline Rosell—new secretary

Telephone: 363-6358. Leave message
when office is closed.

**Winners of
the 1989 Cleveland Park
Preservation Achievement
Awards
sponsored by the
Architectural Review Committee
of the
Cleveland Park Historical Society**

Judy and Ross Ain residence
3512 Newark Street N.W.

Architect: Cal Bowie,
Bowie, Gridley Architects

Cornelia and Craig Biddle
residence

3225 Highland Place N.W.
Architect: Dickson Carroll

Carolyn and Philip Cohan
residence

2955 Newark Street N.W.
Architect: Harry Montague

Andrea Hatfield and Howard
O'Leary residence
3518 35th Street N.W.

Architect: John Blackburn, Smith,
Blackburn, Stauffer Architects

Judith and Harry Martin
residence,
fence

3501 Idaho Avenue N.W.

Washington International School,
gate

3100 Macomb Street N.W.

RETIRING CPHS OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

Tersh Boasberg, President, 1985-89
Gerry Gleason, Treasurer, 1985-89
Noelle Beatty, Secretary, 1985-88
Margaret Hare, Secretary, 1988-89
Danny Ince, Membership Chair, 1985-89
Bryan Leithauser, ARC Chair, 1987-88
Whit Peters, ARC Chair, 1987-89
Mary Jane Belber, Board Member, 1985-89
Natalie Black, Board Member, 1988-89
Kate Perry, Board Member, 1987-89
Judy Hubbard Saul, Board Member, 1985-89
Kathy Smith, Board Member, 1985-89
Jim Voelzke, Board Member, 1988-89

Cleveland Park Personalities

Tersh Boasberg

By Rives Carroll

"My values and the things that I consider important are very much a part of my law practice. I've always felt that one's life and one's vocation should not be separate," says Tersh Boasberg, founding president of the Cleveland Park Historical Society, who recently resigned to become a member of the D.C. Zoning Commission.

One common thread that runs through both his personal life and his legal work is Tersh's keen interest in history. The Civil War, in particular, has influenced his studies, recreation, and career. While at Yale, class of 1956, and at Harvard Law School, class of 1959, he studied the War between the States. When James Emanuel Boasberg, the first of his four children, was born, Tersh dubbed him "Jeb," after Jeb Stuart, the Confederate cavalry general who distinguished himself at the first Battle of Bull Run (Manassas). And last year, when the Manassas Battlefield was threatened by the construction of a shopping mall, Tersh brought together his personal and professional interests to successfully save the historic site, which includes Stuart's Hill. Today he works with a Civil War preservation group to protect other battlefields.

Tersh chose a career in law like his parents, who had a mom-and-pop general law practice in Buffalo, New York, where he grew up. He is a pioneer in the field, as was his mother, who led the way as the only woman at Stanford Law School in the class of 1926. His success in combining history and law is a boon to the relatively new field of preservation law. Since opening the firm of Boasberg and Norton in 1985, many of Tersh's legal cases have involved endangered historic sites and communities. Whether rural or urban, most often the issues are similar: controlled growth and land use. He has worked in Annapolis, Waterford (Virginia), Charleston, Savannah, Galveston (Texas), and Boston. His

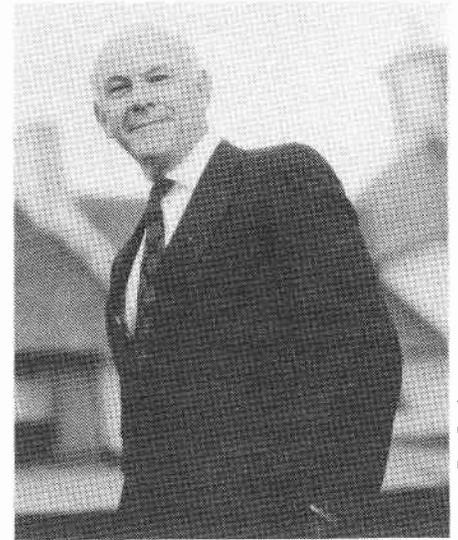
newest case involves development which threatens Thoreau's Walden Pond. As Tersh says, "You really can't get much more gratifying work than this kind of stuff."

When asked which preservation issues most interest him, Tersh typically replied with a well organized three-part answer. First, preservation has to be for public benefit, not just for the owner or a few people. Second, the site must have aesthetic as well as historic value, whether it be architecture or countryside. And third, he likes the questions of growth and management: who decides, controls, and organizes in questions of land use, zoning, transportation, and livability.

Tersh's route to preservation law was circuitous. He was influenced by broadening travel in the U.S. and Europe, by his own restless and questioning nature, and by the needs of his clients. When Tersh finished law school, preservation law did not exist. Most graduates expected to go into corporate law, which Tersh dutifully practiced for five years in San Francisco. Not satisfied by corporate law, Tersh moved to Washington, with his wife Sally, where he worked for the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) from 1965 to 1968.

Visiting many communities in this War on Poverty "opened my eyes to a world beyond law school and law. I saw firsthand the difficulties that neighborhoods, neighborhood organizations, and poor people had in trying to deal with the affairs of their lives." Tersh questioned the conventional wisdom of the 1960s approach to urban renewal, which displaced people and destroyed whole neighborhoods. Clearly, his interest in empowering neighborhoods to protect themselves started long before Tersh began organizing his Cleveland Park neighbors.

Traveling in England during his honeymoon, he was "dumbfounded by how the English had controlled their sprawl and expansion, retained their towns, villages, open spaces, and green lands, and made them available for all the people." This planned growth and land management saved the countryside, as a "greenbelt," immediately accessible to the cities. Tersh would like to see a similar greenbelt surround Washington, encompassing the Shenandoah Valley, already existing battlefields,



Tersh Boasberg

Photo by Dan Borris

and towns such as Gettysburg, Antietam, Harper's Ferry, Sharpsburg, Culpeper, and Fredericksburg.

When Tersh opened his first law practice in 1968, to represent OEO-type nonprofit organizations such as neighborhood economic development groups, a client first directed him toward preservation. She was Mary Ann Beinecke, whose husband is credited with the preservation of Nantucket. Her goal was the conversion of the old mills in North Adams, Massachusetts, to a crafts center. Although that project was aborted, today these mills are slated to become the new Massachusetts Museum of Modern Art.

As the funds for anti-poverty law were drying up in the 1970s, the area of preservation law was growing. Having worked with nonprofit organizations such as strawberry co-ops, manpower development and training, and community action agencies, Tersh chose to spend more time in the expanding field of preservation. His vision and foresight have made him a leader in the field. He started Preservation Action in 1973, a lobbying organization, and the National Center for Preservation Law in 1978, which produces a newsletter to increase awareness of preservation issues. New preservation tax legislation proliferated. With his partner, Tersh wrote the three-volume work, *Historic Preservation Law and Taxation*. He has been a trailblazer in preservation law.

As one of the three zoning commissioners appointed by the mayor
Continued on next page

CHPS's Architectural Review Committee At Age Two

By Whit Peters

Two years ago, in May 1987, Cleveland Park celebrated its designation as a National Register Historic District. But that designation was only the start of the day-to-day effort necessary to protect our neighborhood.

Under D.C. law, every building permit issued in an historic district must first pass through preservation review. That process requires the staff of the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) to seek opinions from each historic district each month on each building permit application coming from within its district. The HPRB staff is guided by that opinion within the general bounds of good preservation practice and HPRB precedent. It became the daunting task of the Cleveland Park Historical Society's Architectural Review Committee (ARC), starting in May 1987, to define and implement the goals of historic preservation in concrete cases in Cleveland Park, *and to do it every month!*

The ARC's first task was to determine by discussions within the ARC, within the community, and with the HPRB staff what our views were or should be on hitherto largely unconsidered issues of details. We learned that with important exceptions, the turn-of-the-century "look and feel" of a block is much more important to our neighborhood than preservation of the details of individual houses, and that the soaring prices of Cleveland Park real estate made it essential to permit alterations of existing structures, particularly in areas not visible to the public. As some 200 permit applications came through the ARC in our first two years, the importance of setbacks, side-yard clearances, and zoning codes to the look of our neighborhood also became apparent. Most importantly, the ARC learned that our neighbors and their architects needed to know the insights we had gained, since the troublesome aspects of proposed projects almost always stemmed from unwitting violations of good preservation practice—violations that generally could be, and were, corrected at little

cost and with no detriment to the purpose of the project.

In these first two years, CPHS and the ARC have accomplished four significant goals. First, the ARC has evolved from a group of concerned but novice citizens into an institution capable of fielding each month a quorum with both substantial expertise in preservation and an understanding of the renovation needs of our community. Second, in the process of evolution, the ARC has determined (and the HPRB has implemented) a number of "rules of thumb" that will ease the burden of regulatory compliance. Third, the ARC has started the important task of community education through wide dissemination of its flyers on obtaining building permits and, more recently, through its Cleveland Park Preservation Achievement Awards (see page 2). Fourth, through negotiation and education—and the good will and tolerance of you all—the ARC and the HPRB staff have resolved all but about five of over 200 permit applications without the need for formal presentation before the Historic Preservation Review Board.

As the ARC enters its third year, a booklet on good design practices is in the works, a quorum of the committee continues to meet monthly to implement the preservation goals of our neighborhood, and virtually all permits move through the application process without substantial delay or annoyance. I urge everyone considering a renovation project in Cleveland Park to view the ARC and the HPRB staff as resources rather than as enemies, and to make use of the ARC's hard-won experience by getting a copy of its building permit flyer from the CPHS office (see page 2), by consulting members of the ARC (see list at right), and by submitting plans to the ARC for comment as early as possible in the design cycle. Also call Nancy Witherell, the D.C. staff person for historic preservation, to discuss your plans (727-7360).

Whit Peters, a lawyer, chaired the ARC during its first two years. Current chairs are Eleni Constantine (537-1456, home; 331-5156, work) and John and Susan O'Sullivan (362-6211, home). Other members, also all volunteers, are: Kathy Wood, Robin Roberts, Cherrie Anderson, Peggy Robin, Jim Bayley, Ed Fleischman, Jim Fowler, David Grimstead, Sally Halvorson, Bill Ince, Kathie Kenety, Mark Leone, Fred Martin, Ruth Montague, Eleanor Oliver, Whit Peters, Dottie Stimpson, Jim Voelzke, and Laura Weiss.

Tersh Boasberg

Continued from preceding page

and confirmed by the D.C. City Council, Tersh looks forward to learning more about zoning issues. Although his law practice will not include zoning cases in the District during his tenure, it will become somewhat broader as he takes cases that involve both preservation and zoning issues. More and more, the two are intertwined.

Already designated Vice-Chairman of the commission, Tersh would like to see the zoning process become more open and more materials made available to help citizens understand and become involved in the process. He sees affordable housing as one of the most crucial urban issues.

He points out that today we are benefiting from the planning and reasonable limitations that were set for us one and two centuries ago. We have green parks, open space, a height limit on buildings, and development on a human scale because of the foresight of citizens before us. In 1791 L'Enfant gave Washington its grand plan of streets, avenues, circles, and squares. And today we still enjoy the spaciousness of the Mall, walks through Rock Creek Park, and picnics beside the Tidal Basin because of the McMillan Plan of the 1890s.

Tersh appropriately asks, "What is our generation going to add and leave? What is our legacy?" As is his style, Tersh continues to question the status quo. Just as he mobilized us to preserve our Cleveland Park neighborhood, he will use his energy, creativity, and knowledge of history and law on the Zoning Commission to oversee intelligent planning and imaginative contributions to Washington's future.

Thank you, Tersh, for your service to our community and our city.

Our Neighborhood Shopkeepers

Frances Swift Diem: In Memoriam

By Rives Carroll

The death of Frances Patterson Swift Diem in an automobile accident in France on September 2, 1989, is a tragic loss for the Cleveland Park neighborhood and the small Macomb Street shopping community where she owned and managed Simeon's Book Shop. Frances, as her customers knew her, grew up in Mt. Kisco, New York. She had two children by her first husband, Carleton Swift, a U.S. diplomat. They are Mathew, 20, and Liberty, 18. At the time of her death she was married to architect Andrew Diem.

A low-keyed and quiet person, Frances "seemed to draw people to her like a magnet," said Ruth Chatfield, former owner of Simeon's. "She made you feel right at home." The large amount of repeat business at the bookstore is proof of the customers' satisfaction and Frances' thoughtful responsiveness to their book requests.

She liked her work and she liked helping others. Her book selection reflected the pulse of the people. "She knew books," said Mrs. Chatfield. She knew the most recent books as well as the classics. At Simeon's, customers often find books they are unable to find elsewhere.

She was "very willing to help," commented Hajna deKun, owner of the photo shop next door. If Frances arrived at work first on snowy days, she often would shovel the walk in front of both shops.

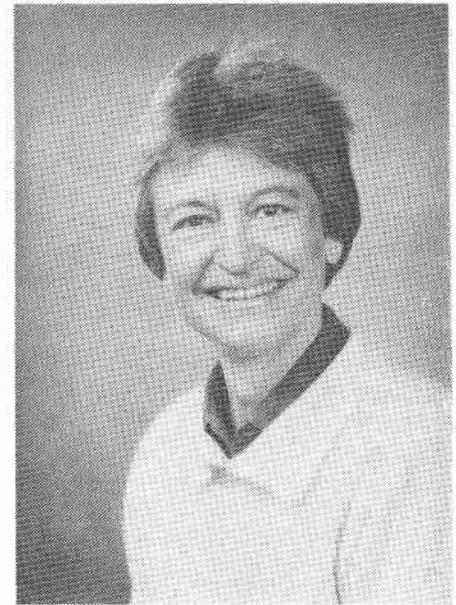
Knowing her shop was a fixture in the neighborhood, she preferred retaining its informal and personal tone to financial growth. She voiced her concern for the neighborhood in her articulate testimony at last year's Wisconsin Avenue rezoning hearings.

Said Kathy Wood, a customer and President of the Cleveland Park Historical Society, Frances "went out of her way to be helpful . . . constantly ministering to others in quiet ways. She operated behind the scenes."

There is no question that the neighborhood will miss Frances

Diem and her friendly welcome at Simeon's.

Rives Carroll, author of the profiles of Frances Diem and Tersh Boasberg, is CPHS's Director of Programs. Among her other current activities, she leads walking tours of Cleveland Park for the Smithsonian, runs the summer day camp and organizes the lecture series at the Cleveland Park Club, and teaches geography at John Eaton School.



Frances Swift Diem

Photo by Tomas deKun

Citizens Tackle City Tree Troubles

By John Poole

Those of you who have noticed the sad state of trees on City property in the District will not be surprised by the revelations that have begun to come out about the City's tree programs. Professor Gerald Lanier of the N.Y.U. School of Forestry has charged that the D.C. Department of Public Works is incompetently implementing a program to deal with Dutch Elm disease. Those charges were aired at an oversight meeting held October 16th by Councilwoman Nadine Winter.

Whether or not the charges of incompetence are valid it has become clear that the City's tree budget is inadequate. A *Washington Post* article of September 15th stated that over the past ten years the staff of the Tree Maintenance Division has dwindled from 100 to 28 people and that last March the City simply stopped replanting new trees for lack of funds and workers. The City has also closed its tree nursery—to make room for a Metro parking lot. The City has employed some outside contractors to supplement the work of its diminished staff, but the dead and

partially dismantled elms and other trees one can find all over the City are testimony to the fact that they have not done an adequate job.

What To Do

It seems likely that even if the City's tree budget is increased, neighborhood groups and funds will have to take a greater role in ensuring that city trees are adequately cared for and that dead trees are promptly replaced with trees of the best possible quality and suitability. The CPHS is presently studying further steps that we might take in this regard. I would be pleased to have your comments and suggestions (966-8329).

An effort is also under way to create a citywide citizens organization to coordinate efforts to keep up trees on public and private property. The organization is called Capital Trees and is being put together by Robert Krughoff of Capital Hill. He can be contacted at 546-6974.

John Poole chairs CPHS's tree committee. He has spearheaded the battle to save neighborhood trees from the gypsy moth scourge.

New Cleveland Park publications available from CPHS

Rosedale
The Eighteenth Century Country Estate
of General Uriah Forrest
Cleveland Park, Washington, D.C.
By Louise Mann-Kenney

The author of this just-published book about Cleveland Park's most historic landmark lives in Cleveland Park and has been doing research on the neighborhood for some 15 years.

\$10.95 from the CPHS office, Wednesday mornings; \$11.95 by post.

There will be a book-signing party for *Rosedale*, on Saturday, December 2, 4 to 6, at the home of Kathy Wood (see address and phone number below).

"Historic Cleveland Park" note cards by Eleanor Oliver

Charming sketches of our firehouse, the Uptown Theater, Zebra Room, and three distinctive residences by one of Cleveland Park's most talented artists. Set of 12, \$10.95; set of 6, \$5.50. Add \$1.00 for postage.

Other Cleveland Park publications for sale

Washington at Home: Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital
Edited by Kathryn S. Smith
 Includes a chapter on Cleveland Park by CPHS President Kathy Wood.
 \$30.00. Add \$3.00 for postage.

Historic District Application for Cleveland Park
 Photos, history, and architectural styles of Cleveland Park
 \$20.00. Add \$1.00 for postage.

Publications prices shown are for copies picked up Wednesday mornings at the CPHS office (see page 2). Add \$1.00 each (\$3.00 for *Washington at Home*) for postage on publications ordered by mail. Send orders to:

Kathy Wood
 3101 Highland Place N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20008
 Tel: 244-1276

Checks payable to Cleveland Park
 Historical Society

Cleveland Park Voices: A Social History
 Reminiscences of life in Cleveland Park since the early 1900s, as told by our neighbors.
 \$8.00. Add \$1.00 for postage.

1904 Real Estate Brochure for Cleveland Park
 Reproduced from the original 1904 sales brochure.
 \$4.00. Add \$1.00 for postage.

Join the Cleveland Park Historical Society

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

Now we need to turn our attention to consolidating our position, monitoring the design of new development, especially at the Park and Shop site, and increasing neighborhood interest in historic preservation and other community projects, such as saving our trees and helping to beautify our commercial areas.

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

Send your check for \$25, or more, payable to Cleveland Park Historical Society, along with your name and address, to:

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