

Memories of Skinker-DeBaliviere

In November, 1999, The Times of the Skinker DeBaliviere sponsored a party which was held at the home of the Renards in Parkview to celebrate the past and the future of our neighborhood. It was titled "Once and Again." At the time we handed out forms that people could fill out to capture their memories from the past. (Where a name is not included under a question, the respondent left that section blank.) Respondents included:

Joan **Bender**, 6100 block of Kingsbury, 31 years

Bette and Joe **Botz**, 6100 block of Kingsbury, 39 years

Joyce and Demarcus **Brown**, 6100 block of Westminster, two weeks

Karen **Bynum**, 6000 block of Pershing, 25 years

Jane and John **Cross**, 6100 block of Kingsbury, since 1961

Roberta **Dearing**, 6300 block of Waterman, all her life

Anne W. **Dollimore** (formerly Anne Judy), 6300 block of Pershing, 30 years

Sarah **Drexler**, 6100 block of Kingsbury, 3 1/2 years

Joe and Linda **Edwards**, 6300 block of McPherson, a since September 1975

John (Jack) **Flynn**, 6200 block of McPherson, 40 years

Greg **Freeman** 5700 block of DeGiverville, 17 years

Margaret **Hermes**, 6100 block of Kingsbury, 22 years

Gene and Dolores **Hoefel**, 6100 block of McPherson, in the neighborhood for 26 years (in 1999)

Dorothy and Ann **Hogan**, 6100 block of McPherson, 54 years

Richard and Venita **Lake**, 5800 block of Waterman, 25 years (since July 1974)

Virginia **Leguey-Feilleux**, 6100 block of Kingsbury 33 years (since September 66)

Tom **McPherron**, formerly 6100 block of Kingsbury, 25 plus years

Eric **Mumford** and Devora **Tulcensky**, 6100 Westminster, 1 1/2 years

Bob and Betty **Newsham**, 6100 block of Kingsbury, 36 years

Sara and Talmage **Newton**, 6200 block of Waterman, since 1975

Hitch and Mary **Powell**, 6100 block of Westminster, 18 years

Mimi Renard **Roach**, 6200 block of McPherson, all her life

Arthur and Dorothy **Santen**, 6100 block of McPherson, living in the neighborhood since April, 1960

Mary **Schmit**, 6100 block of McPherson, 30 years (since 1969)

Jan **Scott**, 6200 block of Washington, 30 years

Ann **Stapenhorst**, 6100 block of McPherson, 54 years

George and Rosemarie **Storey**, 5700 block of Waterman, 45 years

Ed **Stout**, 6100 block of McPherson, 27 years

Ernest W. **Stix** Jr., 400 block of Westgate,

Nan **Thomas**, 5700 block of McPherson and 6100 block of McPherson, 26 years

Arline B. **Webb**, 6100 block of Pershing, 51 years

Their responses are grouped below by each of the questions.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE?

Bender: My husband Rick was offered a teaching position at St. Louis University

Botz: Familiar neighborhood, 2 aunts and uncles and parents had lived in the area. Loved the houses and church.

Brown: Adored the house

Bynum: Affordable housing -- integrated neighborhood

Cross: St. Louis University. Professor Thomas Neill in particular

Dollimore: The neighborhood and the architecture

Drexler: The house and the diversity

Edwards: Beautiful architecture; caring, progressive, tolerant and proactive neighbors.

Flynn: We outgrew a small house in Glasgow Village and wanted to be close to a parish school and church

Freeman: We just moved here to live in DeBaliviere place. We loved the old rehabbed buildings.

Hermes: My (now ex) husband got to a job teaching at St. Louis U. Law school

Hoefel: To teach at wash U. school of Art after a Chicago advertising career

Hogan: My mother and father moved from a North St. Louis neighborhood in July 1945

Lake: Sharon McPherron and cheap large house

Leguey-Feilleux: 1 . St. Roch's clock tower and bell; it gives the area a closeness of community
2. The school to which our children could walk. 3. Grace Methodist whose well maintained property makes us all look pretty good.4. The ability to catch a bus or Metrolink to almost anywhere in the St. Louis area.

Mumford/Tulcensky: Job at Wash U./preference for city life

Newsham: Diversity, beauty, convenience, history and great people and kids.

Newton: We'd moved from Germany -- stayed at the old Chase -- loved the area.

Powell: We had looked for houses in University City. Skinker DeBaliviere was more affordable.

Santen: St. Roch Church and School

Schmit: The neighborhood, a rich, diverse mix of all kinds of people

Scott: Lots of rooms, location, low taxes

Stapenhorst: Our parents were looking for a home and liked the area where our cousins lived on 6100 block of Waterman

Storey: Parents bought a six family apartment on 5700 Kingsbury. Moved to parents' apartment building to be near them

Stout: We were living in a two bedroom duplex out by UMSL with our three year old daughter and, Bea, when we found out, on the delivery table, that child number two was actually numbers two and three (twins). We needed larger quarters. When Mary V. heard that 6182 McPherson was up for sale, she said: "We'll buy it!" I thought we ought to look at it first, but she explained: "I know the neighborhood. We don't have to look at it."

Thomas: We liked the neighborhood. It was close to church and school. The large houses with gracious rooms were ideal for family. The homes were reasonable.

Webb: My parents

WHAT ARE THE MOST SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

Bender: Besides the lovely houses, the people, who are diverse, caring, interesting, and active.

Botz: The loyalty of neighborhood groups. The history and beauty and strength of the church and school

Brown: Friendly neighbors, pleasant atmosphere, centrally located

Bynum: Socioeconomic diversity, geographic convenience, are to throw history, real sense of neighborhood.

Cross: Centrality; geographical, ethnic, social class, cultural, architectural diversity and historicity and vitality.

Dearing: The young children everyone tending to leaf- raking etc. The kindness and consideration of the neighbors

Dollimore: Trees, architecture, convenience, proximity to Wash U., Loop, friendliness of neighbors, mix of backgrounds, absence of undue pressure to "keep up with the Joneses."

Drexler: It is a crossroads of city and county, black and white, rich and poor.

Edwards: The same things that brought us here: beautiful architecture; caring, progressive, and tolerant and proactive neighbors. Plus wonderful shopping districts and entertainment within walking distance. Excellent schools, churches, neighborhood organizations -- even a fine neighborhood newspaper! Plus excellent representatives in government through the years

Flynn: 1. Relative isolation from through traffic. 2. Proximity to Forest Park at Washington University. 3. Easy access to any direction from here, i.e. north, south, east or west, good roads. 4. Enforcement of zoning and occupancy codes. 5. Quality construction of the buildings when built 6. Proximity to public transportation. 7. The one-way streets 8. It was originally a Catholic ghetto of large families who couldn't afford to move.

Freeman: Its diversity is its greatest asset. People of every color and every economic class live here, and in relative harmony. The old homes have been maintained, giving the neighborhood its unique flavor.

Hermes: Best place in US to celebrate Halloween; longest running neighborhood newspaper

Hoefel: The closeness of the neighbors -- the churches -- the unique architecture and the homogeneous look of the total place -- the heritage of the World's Fair and closeness of Forest Park, downtown, etc.

Hogan: The convenience of getting anywhere in the St. Louis area in about 15 to 20 minutes. The park with all the wonderful places to go. The wonderful friendly neighbors and the beautiful homes which make our area so attractive.

Lake: Diversity – economic, cultural, ethnic, "we are close" to everywhere

Leguey-Feilleux:1. St. Roch's clock tower and bell; it gives the area a closeness of community. 2. The school to which our children could WALK. 3. Grace Methodist is well maintained property makes us all look pretty good. 4. The ability to catch a bus or Metrolink to all most anywhere in the St. Louis area.

Mumford/Tulcensky: Diversity, architectural quality

Newsham: Diversity, beauty, convenience, history and great people and kids

Newton: The neighbors, who we all know. The friendliness (unlike NYC where we lived before Germany) the great old homes; living in the city -- Forest Park, the Muny, walking everywhere- no commute! No -I64)

Powell: St. Roch school and parish

Roach:

Santen: Houses, institutions, near highways, Forest Park, central location of Metropolitan St. Louis.

Schmit: Its people, its friendliness, its leadership, it's housing, most of all my wonderful

Scott: Age of houses, spacious homes, trees, quiet good neighborhood administration (Parkview agents), location location location

Stapenhorst:

Storey: Easy accessibility to anywhere -- uptown, downtown, east or west via bus or Metrolink. Forest Park in all its treasures, golf, Opera, Zoo and Art Museum and History Museum. St. Roch's Church and School

Stout: The neighbors. The architecture. The institutions. The close proximity to anything and everything you could ever want or need. And, the neighbors.

Thomas: 1. The people who lived in the area were the best 2. It was a real community atmosphere.3. There were many children in the neighborhood and many programs for them sports and cultural.4. Most of the residents were pretty much similar financial level.

Webb: Its central location; neighbors who become friends; continuity -- people grow up, move away, come back and raise their families here; the many bus lines and Metrolink; the architecture

WHAT ONE OR TWO EVENTS DO YOU THINK WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

Bender: Citizens taking charge of their lives in neighborhood by organizing a Residential Service when realtors began to block bust in 1968. Also, organizing the first community newspaper in St. Louis called "The Paper" to ensure communication among neighbors

Botz: Social mood of church activities, Skinker DeBaliviere and Washington Heights organizations binding neighbors together, church support, Phil Lucier and many leaders' contributions.

Bynum: Art Fair/House Tour; Residential Service; Four Corners project

Cross: The 1904 World's Fair. Founding of the Central West End Savings and Loan. Recently the balloon race in Forest Park renewal (hopefully)

Dearing: Grace United Methodist Church deciding to stay in the neighborhood -- and the "good works" of the Skinker DeBaliviere members

Dollimore: The organization of the Central West End Bank. The work of Leon Strauss.

Drexler: Courageous, visionary people in the 60's buying houses, fixing up, moving in

Edwards: The decision by many to embrace diversity and in the process not only stabilize, but strengthen the neighborhood

Flynn: 1) West End Townhouse and its eventual transfer to St. Roch's after Philip Lucier's death 2) decision of Washington University to utilize apartments for student housing and assist employees who buy in the corridor near the campus

Freeman: The decision in the late 60's or early 70's to maintain the neighborhood, to fight to preserve it from decay. Also, the decision by Leon Strauss to rehab DeBaliviere place

Hermes: Annual Art Fair

Hoefel: The support of Central West End Bank in securing loans, the organizations, the integrated nature of the total place, the quality of the people

Hogan: The architects who designed houses for the Skinker DeBaliviere area; the merchants who owned and operated stores in the area

Lake: The Paper/The Times, of course; Residential Service; Monsignor Peet and the churches' involvement in the 70s

Leguey-Feilleux: Do you mean bringing the neighborhood back from the ashes? The Art fair, the expansion of Washington University and its higher profile nationwide when a long way in stabilizing the neighborhood

McPherron: I've said for a long time I thought the single most important act in "saving" the neighborhood about 1970 was John Roach being elected alderman. John and others deserve credit for that. John was able to get private mortgages and that was the key. FHA and VA would have destroyed us. Formation of West End townhouse,

Mumford/Tulcensky: 1904 World's Fair; redlining by federal agencies and local banks (1930's on)

Newsham: Art Fair and Residential Service which brought many people into the neighborhood and residents showing houses for sale

Newton: Joe Edwards and the "Loop"-- our children's mall. Also Leon Strauss's redevelopment within Pantheon to the East Mary Strauss and Leon at the Fox

Powell: Getting rid of the laundry mat and rehabbing Nina Place

Santen: Cooperation between Delmar Baptist, Grace, St. Roch, and Wash U.. Formation of Rosedale, Washington, Parkview Association, and SDCC

Schmit: Art Fair and House Tour annual events; the existence of The Times of Skinker DeBaliviere

Storey: Formation of Skinker DeBaliviere community council; development of Nina Place condos; Washington University student housing (apartment renovation)

Stout: The Paper. The annual dinner theater productions. The founding of the Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council

Thomas: 1. The cooperation of many homeowners to work together for betterment and improvement 2. The care and concern of neighbors for each other

Webb: The establishment of St. Roch church and school; the extension of streetcar lines "Way out West" bringing cheap transportation here

Describe one or more special memories you have of your life in the Skinker DeBaliviere neighborhood

Bender: All through the 70s, we had an annual Art Fair on Mother's Day on Kingsbury Avenue to introduce people to the area in conjunction with the Residential Service. There was also a House Tour of at least eight area homes each year on that day. There was never a shortage of enthusiastic helpers to set up or take down the Fair. The children really enjoyed helping and the Boy Scout Troop #98 operated a garden restaurant in our backyard. Our children look back on his era with great happiness and pride

Botz: St. Roch's Church and School (Father Peet). Our memories revolve around our children and the good life they had in the neighborhood. The opportunities they had -- Girl and Boy Scouts, swimming lessons, the wonderful sports programs -- volleyball for men and women in the gym, school picnics were so special and simple and great. The Church organizations -- men's club, mothers club, all bazaars were such fun. The men's White House retreats and women's retreats. Eighth grade graduation dinners. The wonderful Art Fair. The progressive dinners -- such fun. Wonderful access to all areas north southwest we loved it. And all the wonderful friends we made and kept!!!

Bynum: Walking preschoolers to story our red pear library. Working on The Paper. Helping neighbors run for elected offices. Serving on historic district committee. Bike riding in Forest Park. Christmas house tour

Cross: 150 kids living in the 6100 block of Kingsbury -- their parents found R & R in progressive dinners, and watching for the doorbell thief. 10 years of the Kingsbury Art Fair. The midblock repository for worn-out sneakers -- the infamous and odiferous "shoe tree"

Dearing: On Halloween -- being scared of the empty house you could see through at 6212 Waterman and the race of all of us to get to the Sterns at 6306 Waterman because they gave away full and new boxes of candy. Caroling on Christmas Eve. The iceman, the lamplighter, the shared janitors, Mike and Charlie, Mr. Ribori, our nightwatchman

Dollimore: Performing in melodramas created by town clear -- we did one at Grace Methodist and one at New City School, although there were certainly more than these two productions. These productions were wonderful for getting to know neighbors of all ages!! Another special memory was Kathleen Hamilton, always so outgoing and cheerful at the bank.

Drexler: We haven't lived here long but I have been overwhelmed by the kind in warm welcome we have received as a family. Folks who've been here for years or 40 and reached out to us and made it seem like "our" street from the first day. Many older residents that have given us interesting glimpses into our house's past and into the personality of its owners (previous 43 years)! Long-time residents have specifically welcomed our children, as they say "filling up the streets again." The City of St. Louis does very little to make our choice of the city of good one, but the "'hood" has made it all worthwhile.

Flynn: 1) The shoe tree on 6100 Kingsbury 2) the fact that we bought from the original owner (a 50 years) on a handshake deal without paperwork or realtor. There were no problems. We moved in 10/1/59 and on about 12/22/59 the original owners showed up at our doorstep with bags of Christmas presents for the children. They were so glad that we really wanted and needed their house and got it! 3) all 11 of our children graduated from St. Roch's grade school 4) Grandma Dryden and two of her sisters (the Karst girls) lived here with us for many years until they passed away. Two of Mr. Dryden sisters also lived here (Celeste and Isabel Dryden) in the neighborhood, but not with us, until they passed away. 5) I was active in the Rosedale Skinker (preexisted Skinker DeBaliviere) group.

Freeman: I have fond memories of going for walks with my young son. We had good times, walking throughout the area discovering the area in a having wonderful talks.

Hermes: The (apparently effortless) effort by Monsignor Peet to engage all residents and include them in the life of the parish, whether Catholic or not. His presence, warm and reassuring, throughout the neighborhood during more turbulent years, e.g. seeing him abroad on nighttime jaunts, stopping and chatting with residents. A familiar story: when moving here from Boston, I explained to the real estate agent they were looking for a house a) in the city, b) in an integrated neighborhood, c) near a university, d) with close access to public transportation. She kept taking us to Kirkwood. Found our house through a classified ad.

Hoefel: Watching our children walk to St. Roch's and Neighborhood School as well as walking as a family to Grace Church; midnight Christmas Mass, the marching between Grace Church down the blocked off Waterman to St. Roch's, part of the Thanksgiving service at both places, the special Halloween parties, salmon dinners and other parties and closeness on our end of the 6100 block of McPherson, the opening of Charing Cross library

Hogan: As a teenager in the 50s and 60s meeting out sites outside St. Roch's church after 11 a.m. Mass, half of the kids in the area were on the corners of Rosedale and Waterman at noon. Walking to the Tivoli and Varsity shows with five or six friends on Friday night and Saturday afternoons. Having the Parkview Food Basket (a grocery store) and Sherman drugstore (later Feldberg's) on our corner was so convenient. The soda fountain was a great place to meet and have fun. Talking with "Madison" when I'd bring my car into the Sinclair gas station on our corner. Madison had been there forever. Everybody knew him and he knew everybody. He was one of the nicest persons I've ever met. Playing in Forest Park and calling it "our backyard."

Lake: The day we moved in we were greeted by a number of neighbors for several different blocks will help us unload our truck in July heat and carry things upstairs, even to the third floor which, of course, was where the books and old world top desk was to go. Many were council members or otherwise acted in neighborhood matters and became good friends. We had a good time while we worked together on a lot of things to revitalize the neighborhood -- Art Fair/House Tour, The Paper, dinner theater, political campaigns, post senior prom, parties at St. Roch's.

Leguey-Feilleux: For two years (about) the St. Louis Fourth of July Celebration was held over on Art Hill, (a mere walk outside of our neighborhood). It was so beautiful! Not rowdy, not commercial, just families. It was almost exactly like the Fourth of July celebration at the foot of the Washington Monument back in Washington where we came from. The lake, the symphony the setting sun, the fireworks, and then we walked home with the crowd in the semidarkness. If only that could all come back again someday, just for that one night!

McPherron: St. Patrick's Day with Father Peet, Memorial Day at the Lorenzes', many days with Betty Klinefelter, etc. etc.

Mumford/Tulcensky: Friendliness of neighbors on arrival

Newsham: The shoe tree which was in front of 6138 Kingsbury. The kids would throw their old shoes tied together up into the old maple tree which had a funny shape. Grandchildren from out of town would bring their shoes with them whenever visiting grandparents to throw up in the shade tree. People would drive by or walk by and really couldn't believe a maple blossoming with shoes. One day after quite a few years the shoe tree just fell down.

Newton: Nearly 17 years ago, when our firstborn son began riding those "plastic monsters" of Big Wheels up and down the sidewalks of Waterman. Later, joined by neighborhood friends, their "limit" was the "Big Bump" (a pushed up sidewalk caused by a mighty American elm) and this top sign for a school crossing at 6212-17 watermen. Daughter later joined this. As the "Big Wheels" died away, bikes came out but, just this summer (1999), there are again the noises of plastic wheels driven by determined children. I find I love the "noise" once again. And toddlers stomping with glee in the puddles our old sidewalks ensure. Neighbors chatting over fences! [The Big Bump on 6300 block south is] No longer there -- was fixed when sidewalks were redone. Ah, My!! It was common consensus that the clicker- clackers were cut off the wheels that was just too much!!

Powell: Paul, Katie [Kurtz], Mary and I used to count, bundle and drop off with The Times to the block volunteers for delivery. Then either the husbands or wives would cook dinner (we switched off each month). We have built a friendship that has lasted 17 years and we still try to get together on the first Friday of the month just like the old days. Breakfast at Neville's [Vatcha] house after TheTimes fundraiser. Halloween on the corner of Rosedale and Westminster with Sam Green. The Battling Beagles men's softball. We lost most of the games but we always had fun.

Roach: The 60's and 70's were never dull! At 6200 McPherson we had a ringside view of civil rights parades and demonstrations. A favorite place to hang out was along the stone wall in front of the Walshes' house on the corner of Skinker and McPherson. Sometimes as many as 20 of us were perched along the wall, and we had a ball doing nothing at all. Pajama parties were frequent at my house. One night we snuck out and did cartwheels in the street in our pajamas and Officer Barton caught us. He was our guardian angel. I could go on forever but space does not allow.

Schmit: Block party -- 6060 6100 McPherson in the 1970s at Bill and Judy Crees House. Lawn and street party. (It's now Andy and Linda Cross's house). It was summer!! Two to 300 seemed like maybe less what fun! New!! Remember Dave's Schmit barbecuing. Games relay races prizes and ribbons for kids by Kate Robinson.

Scott: As a grade schooler riding my bicycle through Parkview

Stapenhorst: Sherman drugstore -- Skinker and McPherson. Glazier drugstore -- Skinker and Pershing. A & W. Root Beer stand on our way to and from the Varsity and Tivoli. Busy Bee candy store -- DeBaliviere and Waterman . Dorr and Zeller bakery -- DeBaliviere and Waterman. Then changed to the Mural Room -- KO Coverly (former boxer) proprietor. Garavelli's -- DeBaliviere and DeGiverville for delicious dish sandwiches and kosher pickles. Greenlea ice cream store -- DeBaliviere and DeGiverville. Walking to Forest Park and going on boat rides. A & P on Delmar and DesPeres and Dudley's (bar) next door. Gardenia shop on Millbrook and Skinker

Stix: Two commercial enterprises that served the community admirably in the 1920s (when I was a young boy living on faraway Forsythe) and warrant recognition are: Bender's drugstore, on the southeast corner of Skinker and Delmar and Sansone's (pronounced Sansonee's, rhyming at that time with "Al Capone"), a grocery or more properly a produce market specializing largely in fruit and vegetables, on the southeast corner of Delmar and Rosedale, graced by a very active Mrs. Sansone.

Storey: Walking to the Jefferson Memorial in the summer with our eight children for summer programs related to St. Louis history. Washington Heights Mother's Day flower sale on our front porch. Holiday celebration parties at St. Roch for parishioners and "social" Catholics. Thanksgiving Day combined service at Grace Methodist, parades starting at St. Roch's with mounted police and scouts carrying flags. Kingsbury Art fair. The diversity in our neighborhood of all educational, financial, social and ethnic backgrounds. Our children were exposed to rich

and poor, black and white, professors and street cleaners which, which enabled them to become wholesome individuals with great understanding.

Stout: 1. The day we moved in, our three-year-old daughter was overwhelmed by the enormity of the house and its rooms, compared to a little duplex from which we had moved. As she ran around and around in the dining room to the hallway to the living room and the dining room again and again she proclaimed: "Look, Daddy! I can run' round in a circle without stopping!" We knew if we had found our home. 2. The night the whole cast of the dinner theater melodrama, all decked out for dress rehearsal in cowboy outfits with guns and everything, ran out of Grace Methodist Church down alleys and over backyard fences, chasing a mother of one of the cast members.

Thomas: to me and my family, this is the greatest neighborhood that ever existed. It was a fun area and there was always something going on. The neighbors were loving and caring. When Bill had his heart attack, everyone seemed to come to our aid. This is typical as there were many crises in the area. When something great happened, all shared the joy. It was like a great big family. Bill and I and our children made wonderful lifetime friends there. St. Roch's picnic, the mom and dad's picnic, Mother's Day Art Fair and House Tours, Halloween, St. Patrick's dinner, neighborhood parties, the progressive dinner, etc., were all great events. St. Roch basement [Scariot Hall] was a special place. This was a gathering spot for meetings, special events and socials. St. Roch was a leading place in the neighborhood. Skinker DeBaliviere was like a small town within a city, offering the best of both. It had the intimacy of a small town., where everyone knew each other and all the advantages of a big city. This section of St. Louis housed the greatest people ever. We love the neighborhood and memories of it will always fill a part of my heart.

Webb: 1. Going to Mr. Steins IGA on the corner of Kingsbury and DesPeres for a loaf of bread all by myself when I was six. We lived at 5933 Kingsbury in an apartment my parents owned. 2. Going to watch the Veiled Prophet prayed on Lindell on a fall night. 3. Going to all the great different kinds of parties we've always had in the neighborhood -- Halloween, melodramas, wine tasting, new neighbors, "Times", four corners, etc. etc. etc.. We know how to party here.