The view from here

Most things seem to work pretty smoothly in the University Grove, but there are always some troublesome “issues” that never seem to go away. Parking and traffic are two of those persistent issues. Usually they’re just minor inconveniences, but both seem to be getting worse.

Streets and parking spots are public places. We share them with everyone else in the community. Decisions about where to park or how fast traffic should be allowed to go are decisions made by the city, sometimes the county or state. Still, our concerns, opinions and attitudes about the streets that run through our neighborhood are certainly very strong, much stronger than casual guests, visitors or students.

Among the many important subjects to be discussed at this year’s homeowners association annual meeting (Thursday, Oct. 30, 7 p.m., Falcon Heights City Hall), parking and traffic will be high on the agenda. We will learn more about what is involved in a safety study from Heather Worthington, city manager. We will also gather neighborhood attitudes and ideas about these issues in order to define possible next steps. The meeting should be interesting and informative. Please try to attend.
—Nevin Young, president

A house of a different color

Fred Cooper and Helen Foster’s colorful addition to their Close-designed late 1950s home is more than a “drive by.” It invites the curious and nonchalant to speculate. “We didn’t do it to be outlandish,” said Fred, a professor of Greek and Roman art and archeology. “We wanted to preserve the integrity of the original house by making the addition distinctive.”

The two-story, 16x16 addition is connected by an isthmus containing a bath and the stairway. Although Fred worked closely with the architect (Gar Hargens of Close Associates) and builder (Marvin Michlitsch) on the addition, it’s Helen’s library-study. Helen is a folklorist and teaches African-American art in the departments of art history and African American and African studies.

The addition has a full basement, unlike the original house with its four-foot crawl space. A soaring, two-story ceiling creates a towering room accented with a metal catwalk balcony for access to the upper west wall of books.

Fred’s restoration of ancient architecture taught him that the quality of current architecture is often far below the original. He knows firsthand architectural limitations having recently completed a study of medieval, Greek vernacular architecture and is currently restoring a Greek temple at Messene.

“Good architects do not try to imitate great architecture,” he said. While the couple liked the simplicity and minimalist interior of their home, the sloping roofline limited design ideas and storage solutions. Ultimately, their addition isn’t all that different from the boxy, linear homes characteristic of the modern part of the Grove: The Boss-Riggs home next door (also Close-designed) has a similar panel/batten exterior. The Shepard home across the street is painted in block-style pastel colors. The Mertef-Hegg home at the end of the block has bright primary colors on its exterior as well.

“Fred painstakingly built a model of the exterior walls for the color schematics he chose. The abstract placement of color is influenced by Le Corbusier, a famous Swiss architect of the International Style known for its geometric shapes, and Josef Albers, (with whom Fred studied under at Yale) for his theory on the interaction of color with light and shadow. The surrounding trees inspired the green hues and Helen wanted the warm coral on one interior wall. The coral on the outside draws the eye to the inside wall. The exterior metal strips cover the construction joints and frame the rectangles three-dimensionally.

Fred and Helen thank neighbors for their support of the addition, even if they don’t like it, and offer anyone a welcome tour.
Two lives in the Grove

Mary Shepard’s claim to fame is having lived in two Grove homes designed by two famous architects: Edwin Lundie and Ralph Rapson. Mary has lived in the modern, multi-pastel colored Rapson home at 2197 Folwell since her marriage 22 years ago to the late Jerry Shepard (see obituaries). Previously, she lived for 17 years in the Lundie-designed Colonial Revival house at 2292 Folwell (now the Senauer house).

Mary is an alumnus of Denison University as was her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

Mary Shepard is an alumna of Denison University as was her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

Married to two prominent University professors in her 82 years, Mary has lived two lives. She met her first husband, John Turnbull, in 1941 while he was teaching economics at Denison University in Ohio, where she grew up. They married in 1943 and lived on Beacon Hill in Boston while John pursued his Ph.D. When John collaborated with Grove resident Phil Raup on a study on European post-war economics and recovery in the early 1960s, they lived in Brussels and Paris with their three children. Her children still happily recall those four months abroad as a defining part of their youth.

When they moved to Minnesota, they lived in St. Anthony Park on Doswell facing College Park. Having outgrown that home, they bought the Lundie house in 1965. Mary loved the colonial’s charm and livability: gracious proportions, big paneled doors, custom brass accents, detailed moldings — all trademarks of Lundie’s style as an in-demand residential architect. After raising a family, John and Mary divorced in 1972. She remained single for nine years until a new suitor called.

Jerry Shepard was retired and 69 when he asked Mary on a date. “He was charming and we had so many things in common,” said Mary. She knew his first wife, Fran, who died after a long illness, and they had the same friends. “It was a very easy marriage to come into,” she said. “The hard part was moving a house full of furniture into a house full of furniture.” Mary’s collection of family antiques didn’t fit in with the 1950s house of glass walls. What antiques she kept, are in her study under the garage where mementos of life with Jerry, his paintings, photos of his three children and her’s are displayed. With the bedrooms on the lower level (a concept that Jerry’s father disapproved of as an architect and builder from York, England); Jerry managed to walk the steps daily until the last week of his life. Mary said, “he did really well for being 92 years old and we had a wonderful marriage together.”

News you can use

- Grove residents Veryl Andre, Bob and Sue Gehrz, recently completed a 20-hour training program to qualify for being on a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

“I participated in the CERT training and found it excellent, both as a review and summary of information and actions crucial for saving lives and mitigating injuries and damage in an emergency or disaster.”

A “response team” is considerably more effective when more residents are trained. The cost is only $15 and the sessions are nearby at City Hall. The benefits include not only the training but a generous supply of equipment. Call City Hall (651) 644-5050 by Oct. 16 to enroll.” —Veryl Andre

- A total of 85 families paid their 2003 dues, up from 75 families in 2002. Thanks for demonstrating your tangible commitment to our neighborhood. Dues for 2004 are due at the annual meeting.

- Wanted an empty garage stall for a vintage car, contact Dudley Riggs, 651-647-6748.

- Marty Dworkin has a housesitter contact for anyone interested, please call 651-645-4198 for more information.

- The City Arborist advises residents to water boulevard trees on the north side of Folwell well into the fall. It will help with tree stress and growth next spring.

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Kudos to:

Kate Winters, volunteer taught filmmaking to gifted and talented sixth grade students at Edgerton this past spring. Their film, “My Teacher Hates Me,” screened to the public at the IFP/MSP Central Standard Film Festival in September.


Fred Cooper, classical and Near Eastern studies, is working with the Minneapolis Crime Lab to develop a system to aid criminal and terrorist investigations by digitizing images of fragmented window glass and other surfaces.

Barbara Reid, emerita, theatre arts and dance, was inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre at the Kennedy Center, one of the highest honors theatre educators and professionals confer on peers.

Eric Schiffman, dentistry, is leading an $8.3 million study to diagnose TMJ disorders using a standardized method among three universities.

Kristen Swanson for compiling the list of neighborhood youth helpers attached to this newsletter.

Nevin Young, plant pathology/plant biology, received a $10.8 million grant from the NSF to sequence the genome of a model legume plant known as Medicago truncatula. He will collaborate with researchers at the University of Oklahoma and The Institute for Genome Research (TIGR).

University Grove Newsletter Board

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