

SOCIETY HILL REPORTER

An independent newsletter published by the Society Hill Civic Association
in cooperation with the East Philadelphia Sun

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NOTES from SHCA President

The DOG DAYS are here... at least that is what August used to be called. Summer rushes to a close, but we get an extra week with Labor Day falling on the 7th of September. Here are some observations for those NOT on vacation.

One of the more interesting parts of this job has been the informal meetings of the President's Coalition, South Street Neighbors, Queen Village, Bella Vista, Washington West, and ourselves. About once a month, we have 60 to 90 minute sessions to communicate. We try to keep up with what is happening, work to-



ward consensus and find compromises on frequently difficult issues where not even the members are in agreement and the general interest of the community and business lies in some yet unrealized middle ground.

Such an area is the problem and opportunities opened up by Councilman's Vignola's introduction of drastically changed traffic and related ordinances for the South Street corridor. We have been hammering out a compromise for several months. It is not yet final, but we are thinking about a trial "regulation" that would change vehicle access for a limited category of vehicles for a limited period of time. This would give us a chance to try something new, fine tune it, and hopefully benefit all. It has been interesting, exasperating, challenging, and hope-

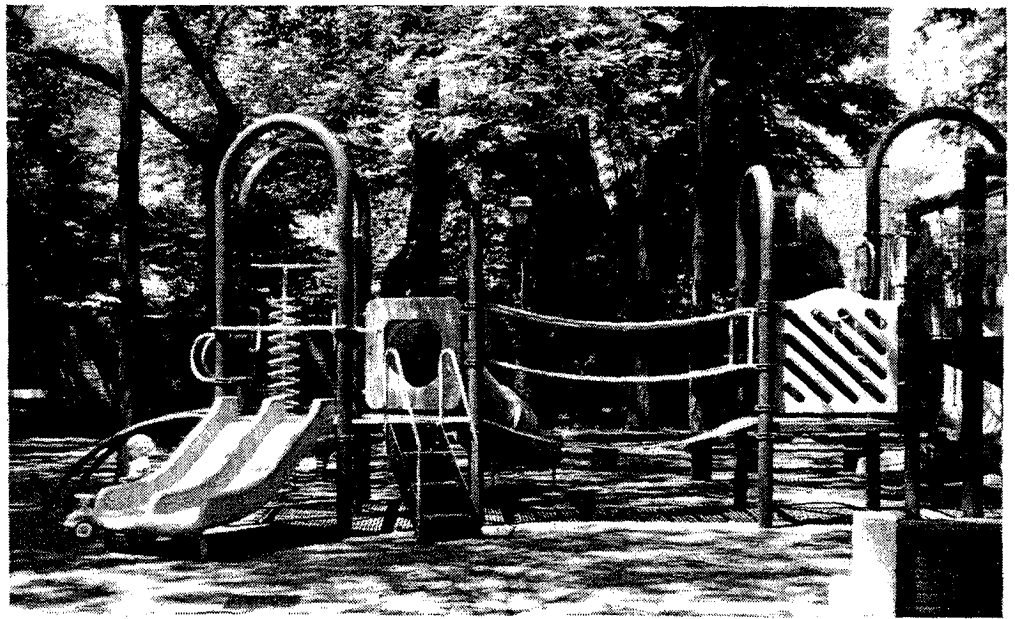
fully quite worthwhile doing.

Project Street Trees will begin the official census taking in September. If you have volunteered, you will be hearing from Jean Bodine shortly. If you would like to volunteer, call 629-1288.

If you like military bands, the West Point band will be here on October 3 for the unveiling of a State Historical Marker on Pine Street near Sixth Street for FRANK JOHNSON'S PLACE. SHCA is planning our fall family picnic to the event. We expect to adjourn to Starr Garden for hot dogs, soda, and games AND A SPECIAL SERENADE by the band before they head back up to the Hudson River.

Please come to the Wednesday, August 19th Board Meeting at Old Pine Community Center and share your thoughts. Let's make this the best urban residential community in the country!

—Dick Ostrander



It is fun, but is it art? The size, scale, color and aesthetics of this playground equipment is at the heart of the Three Bears Park controversy.

It's Bears, But is It Art?

The Three Bears Park battle rages on and on. Here is another trumpet sounding in the fray. This speech has been prepared by Dr. Gerald Deye of Delancey Street to be presented at an August meeting of the Philadelphia Art Commission about the Park on Delancey Street.

There is an abrupt and dramatic change in the character of the park.

The expansion of the play area and the equipment, as well as some of the other changes has altered the focus of the park. Now, not only is a larger space dedicated to play equipment but the much larger crowd this draws during the day consumes a proportionally larger percentage of the total park and makes those not connected to this use feel like intruders.

This once quiet space with a few small children playing has changed into a teeming noisy playground. One can argue that this is only a part of the park's time but the intrusion of the large equipment; the filled-in fountain and change in lighting, and the destruction of the park's beauty are constant and take away from the use of the park all the time.

There are those who equate using the park with physically being in the park, but the visual beauty, quiet and ambience of the park were enjoyed from the street, from neighbors'

windows and by people passing through as pedestrians year round. This represents to me a more extensive general use of the park than the time the play equipment is used.

At the time we were taking pictures of the park around noon on Sunday, there was a couple with an infant in a stroller sitting on a bench. A woman with two toddlers was watching them as they played on the equipment. While there, another couple strolled in with an infant and a four year old who were returning to the park on a sightseeing tour down memory lane. They had moved to the suburbs two years ago and were delighted by the changes. The husband recalled a broken fountain with trash in it that had been a hazard to his small son. His wife admitted she had not liked moving to Philadelphia until she discovered Three Bears and that she had met many nice people in the park. Both parents were delighted by the "improvements."

Hopefully a compromise to this controversy can be worked out soon as it has distressed a number of people, all of whom are good neighbors. Let's change what we can and learn to accept what we cannot change, particularly if it brings joy to children.

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SHCA Calendar

(clip & save)

Wednesday,
August 19, 7:30
SHCA Board Meeting
Old Pine Community Center
Board Meetings
are open to all

Salsa by the Riverside
Saturday, August 15
Penn's Landing Great Plaza
Info: 923-8181

Classical Music Day
Sunday, August 16
Penn's Landing
Info: 923-2061

Hispanic Fiesta
August 29 & 30
Penn's Landing
Info: 923-8181

Craft Festival
Continues weekends at
Head House

NEIGHBOR WHO KEEPS ON GIVING Edith Stern

An evening piano recital honoring Mrs. Edith Stern was held as a "special thanks" to a rare and wonderful person. Charles Gangemi, an international, Philadelphia-born pianist and composer, performed at the Jessica Berwind Gallery on Cherry Street on April 28. The event was organized by fellow realtors and Society Hill neighbors Carol Feuerborn and John Portaland. It was attended primarily by realtors, who in 1990 awarded Mrs. Stern a lifetime membership emeritus in the Philadelphia Board of Realtors.

Many neighbors remember that

after 75 years of service in our community, the Oscar Stern Realty Company closed its doors in 1990. At that time, Edie Stern said that although she had been around for a "million years," she planned on remaining in the house on Pine Street that has been home to family and business all these years.

"She's in her nineties, but she's still everybody's mother," said Mabs Woods, of her former partner and close friend. According to Mabs, people still marvel at Edie's "compassion and her uncanny insight. Best of all was her remarkable adherence to the Code of Integrity."

Although Edie is now homebound, she is still as quick and bright as ever. Just as she played a leadership and active role in Society Hill's revitalization during the 60s, she still keeps tuned in on the pulse of what happens here. The following letter, sent to Mrs. Stern on June 19 bears witness to her ongoing commitment and care for our neighborhood.

SHCA MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to these new members:

Business Members

Philadelphia Society for Preservation of Landmarks
Travel Anywhere

Household

Mr. & Mrs. M.A. Chomitz
Louise & Judy Courtney
Dr. Alan Edelson
Nancy Grace
Brooks Honeycutt
Martha Moore
David Nugiel & Lisa Simon
Richard & Gail Watson

THE SOCIETY HILL CIVIC ASSOCIATION

If you didn't receive a 1992 membership renewal letter...it means, naturally, that you were not a SHCA member last year
WE WANT YOU TO JOIN US THIS YEAR!

Your membership and your voice will make a difference in our neighborhood.

Tear off and mail to:

Society Hill Civic Association
P.O. Box 3, Philadelphia, PA 19105

Attention: Treasurer

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Household \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership Renewal | <input type="checkbox"/> Business/Corporate \$50 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Sponsor \$100 |

Name _____

Address _____

Zip _____ Phone (day) _____ (eve) _____

I(We) would be interested in working with the following committees:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Liquor Control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> Town Watch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recycling | <input type="checkbox"/> Reporter/Sun newspaper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Zoning | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |

YOUR HOME IS YOUR PRIMARY INVESTMENT. PROTECT IT!

Dear Mrs. Stern:

On behalf of the board of directors of the Head House Conservancy, I want to thank you for your very generous donation that came to us today by way of the piano recital held in your honor on April 28.

Yesterday I was very surprised to receive a phone call from John Portaland telling me that you have asked that all gifts given to you as a result of the recital be forwarded to the Conservancy—to be used for the restoration project at historic Head House, a landmark structure that is the centerpiece of Society Hill.

As a relative newcomer to Society Hill, I have never had the pleasure of meeting you, though I have heard about the legendary work you have done over the years which helped make Society Hill the wonderful urban area it has been for the past thirty years.

The Conservancy is very grateful to you for your continuing interest in the community, as exemplified by your significant contribution to our cause. Your gift totaling \$1300 comes at a very fortuitous time as we complete our first phase of emergency repairs to the roof and cupola. Someday we hope to

install a plaque that commemorates the special friends who have made the preservation of Head House possible. Your name will, of course, be on it.

Meanwhile, the Conservancy will work to continue the tradition of community spirit and care that you began years ago. Again we send you our deepest thanks and heartfelt best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

Bernice T. Hamel, president

When asked why she had turned over this gift to the Conservancy Mrs. Stern simply said, "My husband and I earned our living from Society Hill all those years. It was good to us, and now I want to give something back."

Mrs. Stern, or Edie as she is known to her friends, is, indeed, a rare and wonderful person. And she wants everybody to know that she loves receiving calls and visitors, just now too early in the morning!

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SOCIETY HILL TOWERS Bus Stop Full of Troubles

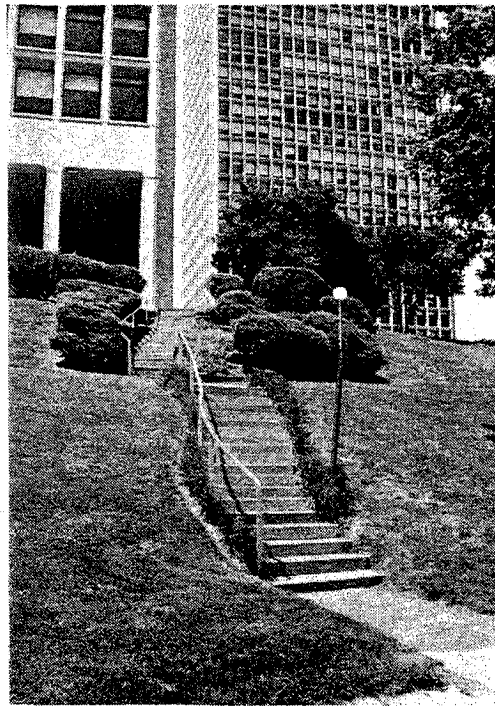
Controversy arises when people perceive different positive or negative results from the same set of circumstances. Often value judgments determine this perception. This is the controversy—where is the best location for the Route 42 bus to idle before it starts back up spruce Street? The choices are Mattis and Spruce or Second and Spruce Streets. The controversy is between historic preservationists and property owners against Society Hill Tower residents who are concerned with safety, security, and convenience.

Several months ago, Joyce Halpern, the curator of the Man Full of Trouble Tavern museum, pleaded passionately with the Board to keep the bus stop at Mattis and Spruce Streets and asked SEPTA to enforce the rule that their drivers not be at break time at Spruce and Second Streets. She described the deterioration of the foundation from the vibration of the buses, the damage to the paint from the

fumes, and the danger to the Delft china from the consequent shaking of the building. The SHCA board voted to ask SEPTA to keep the stop at Mattis Street, eliminate the Second Street stop, and train their drivers not to idle at Second Street. After all, one of the few common values shared by most members of this community is their

interest in historic preservation. However, once this was accomplished, other issues emerged. The move to Mattis Street necessitated neighbors in the Towers going down a fairly steep flight of railroad tie steps. The lighting is perceived not to be as bright. It has been tested by the city and found to be brighter than the other stop, but the perception remains the same. It is across from one of the last undeveloped parcels of ground in Society Hill, which is overgrown with high weeds, has an abandoned building, and has been the site of street crimes. The Second Street stop seems to be safer and provide easier access for the Towers. But the noise and noxious odors there have destroyed the peace and pursuit of happiness of at least one neighbor.

The issues are clear: historic preservation and tranquility versus safety and a feeling of security. SEPTA is willing to do whatever the community wants. However, they can do only one thing, nor should they become the arbiter of a neighborhood concern. If anyone has a viable compromise, please come forward at the next SHCA meeting (the third Wednesday of every month at Old Pine Community Center) or call 629-1288.



Society Hill Towers has two options to catch the Route 42 Bus:

(Left) Now Tower residents must climb down steep stairs to the stop, which does not "appear" as well lit as the Spruce Street stop.

(Below) This bus pulled up for the sign and pulled right away as he should. Just behind the rear of the bus is the Man Full of Trouble Tavern. (Photos: Marian Darlington)



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
Family Picnic
October 3
Fall Clean Up and
Attic Sale
Project Street Trees
Call 629-1288

The Project Street Trees census will begin in September, too late for this unfortunate 'bush'.



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