

University Oaks Newsletter

April 2003

**Next meeting of the University Oaks Civic Club: Wednesday, April 9th at
7:30 pm**

at the home of Linda Lord and Ken Hillstrom, **4601 University Oaks Blvd.**

**ANNUAL "BREAKFAST ON THE BAYOU" to take
place Saturday, May 3rd, from 8:30 until 11 a.m.**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello & Greetings,

I sincerely hope you and your families are well.

Spring has arrived. We can appreciate the beauty of the season in all the colorful flowers, shrubs and trees. It is a pleasant sight among our street construction project.

I cannot emphasize enough how much I and the other Board Members appreciate your cooperation in complying with the deed restrictions and the continued improvements to your properties. THANK YOU.

We are blessed in this community; we have an abundance of extraordinary individuals. I encourage you as individuals to look on your block and see if anyone needs assistance -- putting or taking in garbage cans, bags of leaves, errands, visitations, etc. If so, please let me know. I want to form within our neighborhood a "HELP THY NEIGHBOR" COMMITTEE.

Also, I am placing a suggestion box on my front porch (4372 Fiesta Lane) where you may place your suggestion, comments, criticisms, praises, etc. You do not have to sign your name if you chose not to do so, but all the items will be answered in the newsletter or by letter. Like the entire Board of Directors, I was elected to serve you, the members of this community. We welcome your feedback.

I would encourage one and all to attend our Civic Club Meetings -- do not let personalities override principles. Do not let differences of opinion preclude your participation. We need you to attend these meetings and participate by volunteering for committees.

In closing I want to say it is an honor and privilege to serve as your President.

Sincerely,

Larry N. Bahn
President

METRO LIGHT RAIL / RAPID TRANSIT

As always, all community members are invited and encouraged to attend this month's meeting of the Civic Club. However, **this month we will have a distinguished guest: Dr. Carol Lewis of Harvest Lane.** Carol will discuss the present and future of Metro and how both affect our neighborhood.

Dr. Carol Abel Lewis was appointed to the METRO Board by the City of Houston in May 2002. She is Chairman of the Future Programs Committee.

Dr. Lewis is Associate Professor and Director, Center for Transportation, Texas Southern University. She previously held the position of Transit Planner; Manager, Capital Planning; and Director, Service Development for METRO.

She holds a B.A. in sociology and an M.A. in urban planning with emphasis in transportation planning, both from the University of Iowa, and a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Houston.

Her appearance was arranged by Dr. Lewis herself and others still unknown to me. Let's have a good turnout to welcome Dr. Lewis - I hope you will make every effort to come and join the discussion.

-- Tom Burton

Gardening in University Oaks:

April, 2003

Instead of "tips", this month's report is on current and projected activities and undertakings by this committee. Comments are welcome, especially in the form of positive suggestions.

Gina Blakemore has undertaken researching information into what is needed to obtain matching grants from the City of Houston for neighborhood improvement. We have two projects in mind.

The first and most obvious is the removal of the present "commons plantings" on the corners of University Oaks and North MacGregor and on the corners of Wheeler and

Rockwood. Some of the plants are salvageable and the Board of Directors has instructed the contractor to give them to me for distribution to anyone interested in having them. At present the extensive planting of paradise ginger sit in my garden in pots waiting to be pruned and divided. There is probably enough to satisfy a request from almost every homeowner. Within the month we will also remove salvageable plants from the Wheeler corners and will list those in the next newsletter for distribution. The Board of Directors has requested that my committee ensure a fair distribution of giveaways and we request that no one remove these prematurely. The contractor has been instructed to bring the "diggings" to my house.

We have submitted a request for proposal to five landscape designers with particular expertise in native plantings using hardy and colorful trees, bushes, and perennials. The design and estimates are due this month in time for the next Board of Directors meeting. We have specified that the plantings show year-round seasonal color in the form of blooms, foliage, and berries. We have requested the installation to include drip irrigation since water meters exist in each installation. We have also requested a bid for quarterly or bimonthly maintenance. And we have also requested that the design allow for optional annuals in case anyone desires to take that project on in the future.

We plan also to subcontract for appropriate signage; Mary Jenewein is working on some design samples that would be size appropriate for the median planters at both ends of Rockwood and University Oaks. Carol Antill has been working with the planting in the Graduate Circle cu-de-sac. There we have requested the contractor to try to keep the same square footage in a different shape since the present circle must be "shaved" to allow for school bus, fire-engine, and garbage truck turnaround in the small existing space. Until the storm sewer installation is completed, the story on that remains in progress. We will probably also deal with the chosen landscape contractor to install lighting and have already requested that reflective paint be prominent on the curbing. Since no electrical outlets exist, we are thinking about solar powered lighting. If any of our residents have either good or bad experiences with such and especially any specific recommendations, please come forward with your expertise. We are all inexperienced in this domain.

The civic club has been spending two hundred dollars or more each month on maintenance and the only resident supervisors have been the Antills who have overseen the Graduate Circle commons for many years. We are hoping that this kind of installation will be more cost effective for maintenance in the long term.

Some complaints about the median planters have been made, and I myself nearly ran into one on a foggy morning when cars were parked nearly to the end of the block on the Wheeler exit from University Oaks. The objective in installing these has been to slow traffic for safety and to discourage the overuse of this street by university traffic. On dark nights I am terrified I will inadvertently run into a pedestrian going to or from classes. Perhaps we can persuade the University to construct a student walkway in the easement area in back of the homes on the east side of University, which would lead into the newest parking lot off Wheeler?

A second project is to have a professional arborist evaluate the native trees in this neighborhood and to make recommendations for improving their health, removal, and/or replacement. We are hoping to persuade a professional person to undertake the whole area so that we can get a better deal than if each owner dealt with his own trees independently. We also hope to get some funding to undertake this reforestation of the neighborhood oaks project. There are non-profit organizations to assist with the cost of trees for neighborhood improvement and several conservation groups also support efforts to maintain native habitat for wildlife. We have an enormous number of birds and butterflies and also our fair share of possums, squirrels, mice, and rats. One sees falcons making lazy circles overhead and there are reports of a few resident owls. I personally love seeing the gulls and egrets in the bayou area. But one *caveat* is in order: pigeons carry diseases transmittable to humans and should not be encouraged.

This committee is also interested in beautification and reforestation of the bayou from Scott to Calhoun and will initiate a cooperative request to Trees for Houston or another appropriate non-profit reforestation group to make our bayou banks as beautiful as those along Memorial Drive and Allen Parkway. Some members are interested in having wildflowers sown along the banks of the bayou and also perhaps along the slopes adjacent to Spur 5. We will turn fuller attention to those projects when the median plantings are finished.

Our membership is a bit heavy on the Fiesta Lane side. Neighbors who have volunteered to serve on this committee are Gina Blakemore, Rosemary Gray (after she retires as a Galena Park teacher), Jeremy Bauer (who will take on a plant exchange program among neighbors), Carol Antill, Evelyn Broussard, and Madeleine Williams. We would like at least one volunteer to come forward from Faculty, Varsity, and Harvest.

My next-door neighbor Danita Czyzewski reports on the pruning workshop. This is my "third lesson" from the same expert so I can hardly be objective. Thanks, good neighbor for the following:

"On Sunday, March 23, neighborhood observers may have noticed a small gaggle of gardeners trolling up and down Fiesta, pruning tools in hand. Mary Lou Malakoff had arranged for friend and arborist, Ciro Viamontes, to give a basic lesson in the science and art of pruning. Several Fiesta neighbors had volunteered to let us practice upon their out-of-control shrubs. Some of the most important points stressed by Mr. Viamontes were:

- Keep pruning tools clean and sharp. He cleans his pruning shears and saw blades with hydrogen peroxide, alcohol, or bleach after every use to prevent spreading diseases from plant to plant. Sharp tools prevent excess damage to the plant.

- To keep plants looking natural, pick the spot to make the cut based upon the structure of the branch. Cut right below a node on a branch at a sharp forty-five degree angle such that the bud on the node is at the tip or the cut. Or cut a branch off cleanly from the limb. to prevent multiple sproutings from the pruning site. (Think "crepe murdercide" as the quintessential illustration of pruning that causes unnatural looking growth.)

- Prune to remove no more than 25% of the foliage at any one time. Not only will more severe pruning stress the plant by decreasing the leaf area, but also such severe pruning may actually begin a biological process to accelerate growth and thus defeat the purpose of pruning.
- When pruning to repair damage that has been done by prior poor pruning, one has to think of the repair process as a gradual effort over several years - - All the more reason to be prudent with any use of shears! The garden should never look pruned, only indefinably better, after artful, judicious pruning.

"The demonstration was a pleasant and informative way to spend time with some UO neighbors. For an illustrative example of a restorative pruning, take a gander at the old *Duranta* in the front yard at 4378 Fiesta."

Mary Lou Malakoff (713-748-0096)

Current events and issues:

The following books are included in this month's newsletter to give neighbors additional sources for info on the Middle East:

Editor's Note: none of these works or their content necessarily reflects any belief or viewpoint of the UOCC board of directors or its members. Also, no specific title is intended to pertain or refer to the current conflict in Iraq. Rather, the list is offered as a general survey of recent literature with varied emphasis on terrorism and extremism, as well as history, culture and religion to the extent that these works provide a greater insight into the current political climate of the "Middle East." Thanks to Pat Wycliff for compiling this list. - Tom Burton.

Jane Corbin's *Al-Qaeda* (Nation *Books* , \$24.95, 315 pages) combines a history of the group with an account of the 9/11 plot and admittedly fragmentary information on the fate of Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants in the wake of the war in Afghanistan. Corbin, a BBC producer, suggests the al-Qaida leadership is not only alive but is also plotting another major terrorist act in the near future.

Several *books* begun well before Sept. 11 survey the rise of militant Islam and assess its danger to the West.

Militant Islam Reaches America (Norton, \$25.95, 309 pages) by Daniel Pipes collects nearly two dozen essays organized around two themes. One is the distinction between mainstream Islam, which does not pose a threat to the United States, and "militant" Islam,

which does. The second theme is the growing influence of the latter in this country. Pipes is the author of 10 *books* and director of the *Middle East* Forum.

Through Our Enemies' Eyes (Brassey's, \$29.95, 394 pages) is a study of the political and religious motives of Osama bin Laden. The author, "Anonymous," is supposedly a senior U.S. intelligence official.

M.J. Akbar, an Indian Muslim, tries to explain the concept of jihad and the centuries-long conflict between Islam and Christianity in *The Shade of Swords* (Routledge, \$25, 272 pages). The chapters on the 20th century are thin, but the earlier sections are entertaining and well worth perusing.

In *The War Against the Terror Masters* (St. Martin's, \$24.95, 262 pages), political analyst Michael A. Ledeen argues in favor of targeting the regimes in Iraq, Iran and Syria. Harvard University law professor Alan M. Dershowitz vigorously attacks the idea of any compromise with terrorists in *Why Terrorism Works* (Yale University, \$24.95, 271 pages).

Malise Ruthven's *A Fury for God: The Islamist Attack on America* (Granta, \$16.95 paperback original, 324 pages) is a particularly sober examination of the evolution of Islamic extremism in this century and of the crucial role played by Egyptian writer Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), "the intellectual father of modern Islamist terrorism."

Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, both former Clinton administration National Security Council advisers, assess why the government failed to come to grips with Islamic radicalism in the 1990s in *The Age of Sacred Terror* (Random House, \$25.95, 336 pages), due in October.

Among the most-hyped *books* of commentary is *Longitudes & Attitudes* by New York Times columnist Thomas L. Friedman (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$26, 383 pages). The first three-quarters comprise Friedman columns published after Sept. 11. (A few pre-9/11 pieces are also thrown in.)

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

April 9 –11: The Houston Suitcase Theater at UH presents *The Break of Day*, a Play by Dr. Elizabeth Brown-Guillory. The play features Lucious Guillory and John Lewis, all of Harvest Lane (see attached flier).

Join your neighbors on **MAY 3** for our annual **BREAKFAST ON THE BAYOU**. Bring names for the Good Guys list and any other recommendations you might have to drop in the suggestion box. Please contact Pat Wycliff for more information.

May 17 is the **Annual Trash Bash** to be held at **MacGregor Park, which will be the permanent site for this annual event**. Presented by the Houston Bar Association &

"Lawyers Against Waste," the event will take place from 8 am till noon. Please contact Tom Burton for more information.

"Block Captains" still needed for each street. Please contact Larry Bahn to volunteer. Block captains serve this community by welcoming new residents, organizing community-wide social events, and by serving as liaison between the city or community-at-large and concerned residents of each street.

LAST CALL: for **names of new contractors and area businesses for UOCC "Good Guys" List.** Please share names that you have used and trust for addition to this list. If there are names that should be deleted please inform as well. Contact Pat Wycliff with any information.

The **Deed Restrictions Committee** wants to publicly express our gratitude to all of the owners who have responded so promptly and positively to recent letters from the DRC addressing various violations and deferred maintenance. Letters of appreciation will be forthcoming, as will any necessary follow-up letters. A year-end report on the DRC's progress will be published in next month's newsletter.

STREET UPDATE

The Streets of University Oaks - March

During the month of March the progress on the streets has move forward faster than anticipated in the schedule issued in last month's news letter. I wish that I could take the credit for it, but it was mother nature and Pedco finally getting the stormwater line under North Macgregor. As of March 31st they have laid all the stormwater line on Faculty and Fiesta and have laid the line from Graduate Circle to Harvest. This is three months ahead of schedule on the stormwater drain. There is still work being done on University Oaks and Varsity and it will continue through April. The relocation of the light poles has not been planned as of this time; hopefully we will have information for the May Newsletter. If you have any concerns or problems with the street construction or crews you can contact me at work at 281-862-5484 or home at 713-842-7368.

Additionally below is a reprint of the procedure for the placement of the sod repairs on the streets.

The backfilling next to the new streets, curbs, driveways and walkways will be done in the following manner.

This work will be done in several steps will be done over a period of time. The first thing to be done after the roads, curbs, driveways & walkways are poured the placement of initial fill dirt will be made to minimize the amount of standing water next to the newly poured areas. This dirt will come from the excavations done around the neighborhood. The most common fill under our streets is a sandy clay fill that is a reddish sandy brown color. Around trees we will use the available topsoils excavated during the initial excavation of the street and resloping to make the lawns tie-in to the new curb heights. Where existing topsoil is not available around trees the fill will be a sandy loam or topsoil that will be provided by the subdivision. Next all yard mechanical repairs will be performed on the street that has been completed. This

will include the repair of sprinklers, drains and some water and electrical work. Upon the completion of the mechanical work the replacement of the landscaping and sod will begin. First the sandy clay areas will be cut down to 4" to 6" below the new proposed grade. This area will be backfilled with topsoil or sandy loam that is being purchased by the civic association. Over the new fill sod or landscaping to match the existing will be provided. The placement of the sod or landscaping is guaranteed by the contract and will be replaced if it dies. The contractor is responsible for watering the new reworked area after the initial planting and watering is done. Each of you can assist the contractor by watering you section of the repair and this should give the new grass a better chance of survival as we approach the summer.

The progressed schedule is attached for your information.

-- Shawn Coleman

Book Club News

BELOW IS THE BOOK SCHEDULE THROUGH JUNE. CALL ROBYN WEBB FOR MORE INFORMATION.

MAY 7. THE BOOK: *Lovely Bones*. THE HOST: Susan Wegner who lives on Rockwood.

JUNE 4. THE BOOK: *Bel Canto* by Ann Patchet. THE HOST: Donna Scott who lives on Harvest.

University Oaks Web Site

In late 1999, through the City of Houston and a community resource called Neighborhood Link, University Oaks Civic Club was offered access to a free web site. Neighborhood Link is locally underwritten and offers free web sites to civic associations throughout Houston and other cities throughout the U.S. that have access to the service. Through the NL resource, our web site is www.neighborhoodlink.com/houston/uocc. At the time this site was offered, I volunteered to be coordinator for the site

The web site as provided has a fixed-format, but offers space for a variety of neighborhood information such as announcements, newsletters, our deed restrictions, etc., etc. The site also contains information about our city officials and links to city offices such as the Police and the Planning Department.

Just about any material can be posted to the site. Just let me know if you have an announcement or other material for posting and I will be glad to work with you to see that it gets there! Newsletters and our deed restrictions are posted under the "Hot Links" section.

So, when you have a minute check into our web site. Happy surfing!

Linda Lord

Web Site Coordinator

Here's some late-breaking news from Mike Barret (what's a chipper-shredder?) :

A couple of items.

I have no add'l information from Centerpoint on street lighting. I will continue trying to expedite that and hope to have something by the meeting.

I have a form for the neighborhood to petition the city to do a traffic study on UOaks. This will be available at the meeting.

Hey, does anyone remember the chipper-shredder? If anyone who was an original member of the coop is interested, the machine has been reconditioned and is working again. We will probably need to meet to consider adding members to the original group. It is currently in residence at my house; Jim Williams was the last person "in charge" of the machine. My phone number is 713-741-1318.

Pet Sitting & Red Cross Certified Babysitting available in University Oaks evenings and weekends; reasonable rates - babysitting in your home or mine; pet sitting in your home (I have big dogs).

Merisa Caine-Barrett - 14 years old - freshman at HSPVA; contact me at 713-741-1318 or funkypunk@sbcglobal.net

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- **Civic Club meeting: 2nd Wednesday of each month. Next meeting is April 9th at 7:30 p.m., to be held at the home of Linda Lord and Ken Hillstrom, 4601 University Oaks Blvd.**
- **Recycling: every other Tues. (next pickup April 15th)**
- **Garbage pickup: every Tuesday**
- **Heavy trash pickup: 2nd Tuesday of each month.**

PLEASE DO NOT PLACE HEAVY TRASH ITEMS ON STREET MORE THAN 3 DAYS BEFORE PICKUP (Next pickup April 8th)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

President	Larry Bahn	
Vice President	Robyn Webb	
Vice President	Tom Burton	
Secretary	Wilbert Taylor	
Treasurer	Ken Hillstrom	
Director at Large	Pat Wycliff	
Director at Large	Tom Whitaker	

Mailing address (NOTE NEW P.O. BOX):

University Oaks Civic Club

P. O. Box 321324

Houston, TX 77221-1324

University Oaks webmaster:uoaks@aol.com

University Oaks fax line: 713-741-4144

Email for Newsletter items: "tburton@pgordonlaw.com"

The UOCC NEWSLETTER is now posted online:

www.neighborhoodlink.com/houston/uocc

under the 'Community Hotlinks' section.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"Give me the money that has been spent in war and I will clothe every man, woman, and child in an attire of which kings and queens will be proud. I will build a schoolhouse in every valley over the whole earth. I will crown every hillside with a place of worship consecrated to peace." ~ Charles Sumner