

University Oaks Civic Association

Monthly Newsletter

April 2007

The next meeting of the UOCA will be held on Wednesday, April 11, 2007
at the home of John and Nancy Preston at 4366 Harvest Lane at 7:30 P.M.

President's Letter

Dear Neighbors,

On Tuesday, April 10th, METRO will show a committee from our neighborhood some revisions they have in the works for the Wheeler corridor. Dr. Bruce Webb and Mr. Wilbert Taylor will be taking the lead for our community in evaluating METRO's proposed revisions. METRO also owes us a letter that will address concerns about METRO's plans for the future with regard to University Oaks. My understanding is that the letter will be available tomorrow and as soon as I have the letter I will publicize it for all to see. On both fronts Representative Garnet Coleman has taken an active role in educating METRO about our community and the issues that we care about.

Please be sure to review the ballot that is attached to this newsletter and if you feel that your questions about METRO are best answered by having an attorney speak to the issues let us know by filling in the ballot and returning it.

Please don't be a stranger. If you have a thought or suggestion or if you just want to chat about METRO's plans please email me at derwing@tanglewoodtitle.com or you can call me at 832.466.4201. I would love to hear from you.

Yours,

Douglas A. Erwing

President, University Oaks Civic Association

Growing Up in University Oaks

A Cow in the Neighborhood and Other Stories

By Carole Marcely

I was born in 1941 to my parents Quintus and Catherine Cato who lived at 4375 Faculty (then called Wentworth Street) – one of the earliest houses to be built in the neighborhood. My father was a chemical engineer who later became a dentist and my mother was a housewife. My brother and I were raised on Faculty Lane and we lived there until we left for college. My parents lived there from the time they were married in 1939 until they left for a retirement facility in 2003 – a total of 64 years.

My paternal grandparents lived at 4381 Harvest (formerly Ruth Street). My grandfather was an architect, my grandmother a housewife. I have wonderful memories of being at my grandparents' house – staying overnight, cuddling with my grandfather in his big easy chair, sharing toast and milk in the breakfast room, and washing my grandfather's socks on Saturday to earn some extra change to supplement my allowance. He'd look for any excuse to give me a few extra dimes!

In 1962 I bought our current house at 4370 Varsity where my children Doug and Jennifer were raised and I've pretty much lived in the neighborhood ever since.

University Oaks was a great place to grow up with lots of friends and caring adults and as kids we were free to play throughout the neighborhood. We were safe and we felt secure without knowing what that meant. There are lots of stories about growing up in the 1940's and 1950's and more specifically in University Oaks. Here are just a few of them.

~ A cow in the neighborhood? Well, let me tell you. There was a stockyard located across Calhoun between the MLK bridge and what is now the UH Wellness Center. Did it smell? Yes, it was awful when the wind blew from that direction. Anyway, occasionally a cow would escape from the stockyard and rampage through our neighborhood. Mothers would yell to the kids – “Quick, get in the house.” This exciting event was accompanied by police and personnel from the stockyard trying to corral the wild animal. Fortunately the authorities always won out with no injuries to man or beast. But we kids sure talked about it the next day.

~ University Oaks was a fun place. Boy, we kids could play. We were everywhere in the neighborhood riding our bikes, playing cowboys and Indians, climbing trees or skating. There were no bike helmets or knee guards. Sometimes you’d crack your head or skin your knees. You felt kinda dumb that you’d had an “accident” and vowed to take the corners easier the next time. There were lemonade stands and cookie sales and parties where we acted goofy.

~ There were many vacant lots with trees and underbrush which made wonderful hiding places or locations for forts. Some of the kid’s favorite vacant lots were located on the west side of Rockwood near N. MacGregor; also 4359 and 4364 Graduate Circle; 4363, 4369, 4372, 4373, and finally 4377 Faculty - where it was vacant all the way to University Oaks except for the University Oaks’ developer’s house at 4381 N. MacGregor. Some other favorites were 4379 Fiesta and 4380 Harvest. And all the kids knew the secret spots where you could cross through backyards without going around the block. Mothers were not concerned about the kids unless they were late getting back home for dinner.

~ During WW II people were encouraged to plant a “victory garden”. It was a morale booster and provided some food for the household. A resident at 4382 Fiesta had a backyard which faced a large open area on Faculty (now 4377) and he planted a huge garden in that field. He had rows and rows of corn, strawberries, lettuces, cucumbers, okra, tomatoes, etc. That’s when I first learned that strawberries don’t grow on trees and that you can tell when corn is ready to be picked by checking the tassels.

~ Most of our neighborhood streets had different names then. The civic association decided to change our street names so that we were more closely identified with the University of Houston. Graduate Circle was then called Arbor, Faculty was Wentworth, Fiesta was Blodgett, Harvest was Ruth, and Varsity was called Rosewood.

~ Few people had air conditioning or TV in the 1940’s. The norm was floor, ceiling, attic or window fans for circulation and the radio for entertainment. Most people had hand-cranked wringer washers and they would dry their laundry by hanging it on the clothes line in the backyard.

~ It was rare to have a separate phone line for your home. And you had only one phone in the house, usually located in the downstairs hallway. Most people had “party” lines where you shared a telephone number with one or more neighbors. If you picked up the phone and heard your neighbor talking with someone, you were supposed to say “sorry” and immediately hang up – no listening in on a neighbor’s conversation. Of course if there was an emergency at your house, you’d ask your neighbor to hang up and give you the line.

~ My mother had a “nursery school” at her 4375 Faculty Lane house. She drove around and picked up the children and took them back home when the day was over. The playground equipment was hand built by my maternal grandfather and that’s probably why we got so many splinters off the stuff. There were no licensing guidelines at that time but the children all lived through it and since most mothers were stay-at-home moms, it gave them some time off.

~ Beginning around May every kid was asking “When can I go barefoot? When can I go barefoot?” Going barefoot was ultimate freedom. You knew the long summer days had finally arrived when you could go without shoes. When that time came, there was a painful period before your feet “toughened up.” But finally you were ready – ready to squish your toes in the grass, step on all manner of sticks and gravel and even brave the burning street with your bare feet. Ahhh, summer at last.

~ Braes Bayou was quite different then. It was not concreted and was much curvier. The bayou was like a small river with steep dirt embankments, wild with trees and bushes and there were places where you could swing out toward the bayou on tree vines. Scary but exciting!

~ It was a big deal when the MacGregor Park pool opened. Wow! We could actually walk over there in our swimsuits, play around for several hours sans parents and walk home.

~ About twice a year the “knife man” would come around the neighborhood. He wasn’t the cleanest guy you’d ever seen and of course he was interested in knives so he was *spooky*. But you came to understand that he was there to sharpen your mother’s sewing scissors and kitchen knives. I noticed my mother was happy to see him. She acted downright grateful and even gave him some money. So he must have been OK.

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*These are just a few stories from the 1940’s and 1950’s. There must be lots and lots of things you long-time residents could share with us. Please let me hear from you and we’ll publish your stories in future newsletters. Carole Marcely at 4370 Varsity Lane, 713-440-7995 or email me at CCMarcely@aol.com.*

### **Crime in the Neighborhood** - By *Jim Marcely*

The February HPD Crime Report contained the four felonies reported in our March Newsletter, and nothing else of significance. Three involved entering unlocked cars and rifling through the contents.

In March, two incidents of rifling through unlocked cars were reported, one on Varsity and one on Faculty. Both occurred during the night, one of them after 1:30 AM. My opinion is that we have a single thief whose *Modus Operandi* is to sweep through the neighborhood in the middle of the night, find unlocked cars, and look for items of resale/pawn value. His persistence suggests that he “lives” in our area

### **Trees for the Neighborhood** - by *Jim Marcely*

All our live oaks are sprouting new leaves and spurting new growth! We had a dry fortnight after they were planted, but since then we’ve had good rains at good intervals: a great start for our new trees.

### **UOCC Book Club Schedule**

April 18 – The Samurai’s Garden by Gail Tsukiyama  
Host – Nancy George

May 16 – Child of the Dark by Carolina Maria de Jesus  
Host – Nancy Preston

June 20 – The Last Song of Dusk by Siddharth Dhanvant Shanghv  
Host – Susan Wegner

July 18 – A Fine Balance by Rohinton Mistry  
Host – Pat Wycliff

August 15 – State of Denial by Bob Woodward  
Host – TBA

## Recipes to Share

Two sweet treats

- submitted by Louise Alexander, Graduate Circle

### DATE BARS

Easy, Quick and Good -

An Old Texas Recipe

|                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 egg                      | ½ cup flour                |
| ½ cup sugar                | ¼ tsp salt                 |
| ½ cup melted shortening    | ½ tsp baking powder        |
| 1 cup pitted chopped dates | powdered sugar for dusting |
| ¼ cup chopped walnuts      |                            |

Beat egg, add sugar, mix well. Add cooled shortening and mix well. Add dates and walnuts and stir. Last, add the flour sifted with the salt and baking powder. Mix well and spread in a greased 8x8x2 pan. Cook in preheated oven at 325 degrees for 30 minutes. Cool, cut into bars and roll in powdered sugar.

### OATMEAL COOKIES

This is a Winner!

|                   |                           |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 2 cups flour      | 1 ½ cups brown sugar      |
| ¾ tsp baking soda | 2 eggs, well beaten       |
| 1 tsp salt        | 1 ½ cups rolled oats      |
| ½ tsp cinnamon    | 1 cup chopped pecans      |
| ½ tsp cloves      | 1 cup cut raisins         |
| 1 cup shortening  | ¼ cup sour or butter milk |

Mix and sift flour, baking soda, salt and spices. Cream shortening until fluffy. Stir in well beaten eggs and brown sugar. Add oats, nuts and raisins and mix well. Stir in sifted dry ingredients alternately with milk. Drop by teaspoons on greased baking sheet and let stand a few minutes. Flatten dough by stamping with a flat bottom glass covered with a damp cloth (or just dip bare glass in ice water between each stamp). Bake at 325 degrees for 10 to 15 minutes. Yields 6 dozen. Yum!

## UOCC Board of Directors (Board@UniversityOaks.org)

|                   |                |                 |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| President:        | Douglas Erwing | H: 713-440-9205 |
| Vice President:   | James Pierce   | H: 713-748-1743 |
| Secretary:        | Wilbert Taylor | H: 713-747-3347 |
| Treasurer:        | Jim Marcely    | H: 713-440-7995 |
| Director-at-Large | Clyde Leuchtag | H: 713-398-0855 |
| Director-at-Large | John Preston   | H: 713-748-1814 |
| Director-at-Large | Vacant         |                 |

### Other Contacts

|                                                                 |                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Architectural Review Committee                                  | ArchitecturalReview@UniversityOaks.org |
| Deed Restriction Enforcement                                    | deedrestrictions@universityoaks.org    |
| Security                                                        | security@universityoaks.org            |
| Welcome Committee                                               | welcome@universityoaks.org             |
| Directory Changes/Updates                                       | directory@universityoaks.org           |
| Newsletter Entries ( <b>submit in MS Word attachment only</b> ) | newsletter@universityoaks.org          |
| Webmaster                                                       | webmaster@universityoaks.org           |

**Heavy Trash Pick-Up: Tuesday, Apr. 10; Recycling: Apr. 10, 24; Weekly Trash Pick-Up: Apr. 10, 17, 24**

**Deadline for newsletter entries: last day of month.** Submissions in MS Word attachment are preferred. If you are unable to submit in a Word attachment or do not have computer access, please send submissions to Deborah Thompson a few days prior to the end of month deadline.

## An Announcement about Urban Planning Corridor Workshops

- submitted by Charic Daniels

**The City of Houston Planning Department extends the following invitation:**

### **“Save the Date” Urban Corridor Planning April/May Workshops City of Houston**

Dear Citizens:

Enclosed are details (location, timings, parking information) for the Urban Corridor Planning community workshops. **If you plan on making it to any of the meetings, please drop us a line at [urban.corridor.planning@cityofhouston.net](mailto:urban.corridor.planning@cityofhouston.net). Please indicate all events you are attending.**

Urban Corridor Planning will change how the City regulates development and designs its streets and other infrastructure along METRO's light rail and guided rapid transit corridors: Main Street, Uptown, East End, North, Southeast and University.

Your input will help determine the plans and policies that will create a quality urban environment in your area. **We hope you can join us for the kick-off workshop for all six corridors on Saturday, April 14, 2007** (details below). Come and discuss general guidelines that may be applicable to all six corridors.

Each corridor workshop will run for two consecutive days and is an interactive working session where participants will work in small groups to respond to questions and complete activities from the design team. On the first day, join us to discuss some of the key opportunities for change in the corridor. The second day builds on information gathered from the first day. Join us on the second day to discuss preliminary design ideas and concepts for your corridor. We hope you can join us for both days.

Both days of the workshop begin at 6:00 pm. If preferred, you can drop by either day between 11:00 am and 5:00 pm to speak to a member of the design team one-on-one.

For more about this initiative, go to [www.houstonplanning.com](http://www.houstonplanning.com) and click on Urban Corridor Planning. Sign up to receive updates about schedules and locations. Email us at [urban.corridor.planning@cityofhouston.net](mailto:urban.corridor.planning@cityofhouston.net). Please include your name, address, phone number and email (required). Updates will only be posted online and sent via email.

Please note: Urban Corridor Planning will not affect METRO's decision on transit alignment. The University Corridor workshop will be held after METRO has selected the final alignment.

#### **Kickoff (all 6 corridors): Saturday, April 14th**

8:30 am to 12 pm

George R. Brown Convention Center

1001 Avenida de las Americas

Houston, TX 77010

The Convention Center is located in eastern downtown, near the intersection of Avenida De Las Americas and Dallas. Follow the signs to the correct room. Parking is available on area streets and in the parking garage just south of the Convention Center.

**East End: Monday & Tuesday, April 16 & 17**

6:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
Marbella Banquet Hall  
6632 Harrisburg Road  
Houston, TX 77011

The Marbella Banquet Hall is located on Harrisburg near S. 66th Street. Parking is available on the area streets and behind the Banquet Hall.

**North: Wednesday & Thursday, April 18 & 19**

6:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
Reid Memorial United Methodist Church  
5203 Fulton St.  
Houston, TX 77009

The church is located on Fulton, just north of Cavalcade, near the intersection of Fulton and English. Parking is available on the south side of the church as well as along area streets.

**Southeast: Wednesday & Thursday, April 25 & 26**

6:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
Holman Street Baptist Church  
3422 Holman Street. #B  
Houston, TX 77004

The church is located near the University of Houston campus, just west of Scott Street, between Alabama and Elgin. Parking is available in the church parking lot and on area streets.

**Main Street: Monday & Tuesday, April 30 & May 1**

6:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
Palmer Memorial Church  
6221 Main Street  
Houston, TX 77030

The church is located on Main Street between Sunset Blvd. and N. MacGregor Drive. Taking the Metro Light Rail is encouraged. Take the Hermann Park/Rice U stop. If driving, parking is available on Fannin, along Hermann Park, and in the Memorial Hermann Parking Garage, located at Main and N MacGregor.

**Uptown: Wednesday & Thursday, May 2 & 3**

6:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
The Pavilion at Post Oak  
1800 Post Oak Blvd.  
Houston, TX 77056

The Pavilion at Post Oak is located on Post Oak Blvd at the corner of Ambassador Way between San Felipe and Westheimer. Ample parking is available in front of the building. The meeting will be on the second floor of the Pavilion.

**Presentation of Preliminary Findings (all 6 corridors), Wednesday, May 23**

6:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
George R. Brown Convention Center  
1001 Avenida de las Americas  
Houston, TX 77010

The Convention Center is located in eastern downtown, near the intersection of Avenida De Las Americas and Dallas. Follow the signs to the correct room. Parking is available on area streets and in the parking garage just south of the Convention Center.