

# Belmont-Hillsboro News

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### PLEASE NOTE:

This newsletter is not to be put *in or on* mail boxes, according to the U.S. Postal Service.

Belmont-Hillsboro News is a publication of Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors, Inc., a tax-exempt, non-profit corporation  
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Nashville, TN 37212  
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Printer: Fred Von Colln, Midtown Printing, 120 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue South

## Block party continues to evolve

by Keith Durbin

For the past decade, Belmont-Hillsboro neighbor Bill Ramsey has celebrated his birthday and that of legendary fife and drum musician, Otha Turner, with a party at his home on Sweetbriar Avenue. This musical festival has grown over the years into a charity event, with proceeds going to Nashville's Second Harvest Food Bank.

Sadly, Otha Turner died this past February at the youthful age of 94, so this year's theme is "An Ode to Otha." The music starts at 4 P.M. Bands include Rising Star Fife and Drum (Otha's family carrying on the tradition), Bare Junior, Delicious, Mel and the Party Hats, Slick Ballinger (Blues), Lynette Vantrease, Chakra Blue, Cluster Pluckers, and more.

### *An Ode to Otha*

Saturday, May 31  
2:00 to 10:00 P.M.  
Sweetbriar Avenue  
between Hawthorne and Oakland  
Live music, food, drink, and  
activities for kids.  
Admission is a \$25  
donation.

For the first time ever, Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors is co-sponsoring the event, along with the Nashville Bar Association, the law firm of Neal and Harwell, IOStudio, and Big Guns Catering.

All Belmont-Hillsboro residents are invited to attend the event which will be held on Saturday, May 31, on Sweetbriar Avenue between Hawthorne and Oakland, from 2 to 10 P.M. There will be live music, food, drink, and activities for kids.

Admission is a \$25 donation at the door, but kids under 14 get in free. The cost of admission includes membership to

Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors, if you so desire. If you are already paid up for the year, you may request that your membership be covered for the coming year.

Make plans to join your Belmont-Hillsboro neighbors for this unique and memorable neighborhood event. ☎

## Tour of Homes 2003 planning begun

Planning is once again underway for the annual Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors Tour of Homes. The tour will be held on Saturday, October 4, from 11 A.M. to 5 P.M. As usual we will showcase about ten homes with a variety of early twentieth-century styles, including Victorian cottages, foursquares, Tudors, and bungalows.

Gary Bynum is chairing the committee, which kicked off its activities on April 27. If you are inter-

ested in taking part either by volunteering the day of the tour, suggesting a home to be on the tour, or being a part of the organizing committee, please contact Gary at 385-7015.

We are also looking for a graphic artist to design and produce the home tour materials, a real plum in a portfolio. If you are a graphic designer and are interested, please contact Staci Gannaway at 297-1502. ☎



# Cleanup day draws volunteers, nets trash, impresses work details

Our Spring Cleanup Day on April 19 topped last year's event. This year not one, but two rolloff dumpsters, both from BFI, were arranged by Joe Kovalick. Thanks also to Helios Artglassworks, Belmont Antiques, and Belmont Bi-Rite for "hosting" the dumpsters behind their stores. The poster announcing the event was designed by Sunday Camp. Coffee was graciously donated by Portland Brew on 12 South.

Neighbors were assisted by workcrews from the Sheriff's Office and Juvenile Court; they commented that our neighborhood had less junk than most they had cruised, and this may be the result of regular cleanup activities.

Others who did heavy lifting include

- Gary Bynum
- Corina Collins
- Beverly Chowning
- Keith Durbin
- Bobbie and Edward Hernandez
- Joe Kovalick
- Larissa Lentile
- Deanna Moore
- Melinda Newpher
- Maria Salas
- Penny and Gene TeSelle. ☎

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# 2700 Belmont brouhaha continues

by Gene TeSelle

The commercial buildings at the corner of Belmont and Dallas have been in the news lately. The reason is that the property is zoned Residential, the same as the houses around it; the commercial buildings have continued as a "non-conforming" use, because they were there before the first zoning ordinance in 1933. There has been plenty of "deferred maintenance"; the land and buildings were appraised at only \$111,900, far less than most nearby residences.

But the owners took out a building permit to make renovations costing \$400,000. It was only then that their representatives contacted BHN, because they wanted to add "medical services" and "restaurant" to the uses already grandfathered, and this must be approved by the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA).

BHN and Council Representative Ginger Hausser convened at least three public meetings, where most nearby residents declared their opposition to any intensification of land use, while others, mostly nearby residents but also including several in the restaurant industry, spoke in favor of a restaurant. The debate was intensified by uncertainty about parking requirements: under the old ordinance, 32 spaces would be required, while under the Urban Zoning Overlay, passed in 1998 to help the reconstruction of East Nashville after the tornado, almost no spaces would be required, and residents wondered how far on-street parking might reach.

At the last meeting, on the night before the hearing before the BZA, representatives of the owners agreed to a number of conditions concerning hours of operation, exterior appearance, storage of trash, and the like. They removed the requests for medical services and restaurant uses, although they hinted that they might seek permission for a restaurant after the first three-year leases expire.

But then a funny thing happened on the way to the BZA. Because the restaurant and medical office uses had been withdrawn, zoning administrator Sonny West ruled that the existing uses could continue, and he said that any type of business in three classifications already there (general office, general retail, and personal care services) could be operated. The owners withdrew their appeal, since they could get what they wanted, at least in the short run.

Several questions for BHN remain open. First, it is unclear how far the conditions agreed to will be observed; certainly there will be no legal force behind them. Second, West's ruling seems to be "new law," and some of the affected neighbors are talking about testing it in the courts, or at least seeking clarification. Some of them have argued that this "non-conforming use" should be phased out (which is the intent of state law) and that a building permit should never have been issued when the value of the repairs was far larger than the value of the buildings.

We haven't seen the last of controversy! ☎



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# Forget it. You'll never be this good.

by Judy Isenhour

When you meet people do you ever compare yourself to their most obvious qualities? You know, you meet someone and think, *I'll never manage money that well. I'll never be that energetic. I'll never be that well-read.*

If you're like that, when you meet Bonnie and Bill Meyers of Oakland Avenue, you think, *I'll never be that good!*

Bonnie, for example, teaches English as a Second Language for Metro Schools. She got started on her career as a saint many years ago when she reunited the son of one of her students with his parents after a two-year separation. The mother said when they left him in Germany, he was a boy. When they were reunited in the U.S. she had to look up to look in his eyes.

Bonnie helped another student diagnosed with thyroid cancer get surgery. Since then she has shepherded dozens of immigrants, who happen to land in her classes, out of problems. Maybe her two degrees in Sociology from Fisk University gave her inside knowledge of navigating bureaucracies. On the other hand, maybe she born with the angel gene.

And then there's Bill. For starters, he's been a full time, free-lance illustrator all his life. Think about how hard that must be. One of his most recent projects is a 10-foot mural installed in the Vanderbilt Law School café, titled Equal Justice Under Law. It represents landmark challenges to the Constitution dating from the Indian Removal Act of the 1830s and includes cases such as the adoption of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment, the Civil Rights Act, and Roe v. Wade. He has two other murals at the law school, the Scopes Trial and the Leopold and Loeb Trial.

You think, *I signed a petition once against the Vietnamese War.*

Some of his most recent honors include two Addy Awards: one for a poster for the Nashville Opera and one for a cigar box and cigar band for C.A.O. Brazilia, a cigar manufactured by C.A.O. International, Inc. His work for C.A.O. also won the 2002 SAPPI Award, a gold medal, for excellence in packaging. *You remember the last award you won: perfect attendance in your third grade Sunday School class.*

When you look at what they've done for the neighborhood, you think, *Im a slug.*

Some of the battles they fought started many years ago. They fought I-440 and succeeded in getting it



*Bonnie and Bill Meyers were early activists for Belmont-Hillsboro Neighborhood causes. Bonnie, sometimes pregnant, sometimes with babies in tow, went door to door asking for signatures. "Nobody wanted to sign anything," she said. But she gradually won their trust, and once-suspicious neighbors would greet her asking, "What are we signing now?"*

changed from its original design. It was to cross over Belmont Boulevard 60 feet in the air! Bill drew the landscape from many vantage points to illustrate how disrupted the environment would be. He recalls that once in Lamar Alexander's office the governor asked what kind of highway would be acceptable to the neighborhood. Bill said, "Well, a tunnel." Bill says today that I-440 isn't a tunnel because it isn't covered, but it's dug out like a tunnel. That dampens the sound and doesn't interrupt sight lines.

They fought for Historic Registry designation.

They fought to enforce the Metro housing code.

They fought against allowing giant NES utility poles down Beechwood Avenue.

One of the biggest shows of neighborhood support, they said, was the fight against rezoning Belmont Boulevard. It was to be rezoned from RM4 to RM8, which meant quadplexes could be built. It would have doubled the population, Bill said.

They see that the work they did years ago has paid off, but they don't see themselves as heroes. In fact, they laugh at themselves and their mistakes, most notably The T-Shirt Incident.

One year Bill designed a t-shirt to sell at the Tenth Anniversary Fair for the founding of Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors. He took a photograph of a neighborhood house and drew it as the primary image

continued on next page



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## Meyers, continued

of the t-shirt. The t-shirt printer asked him if he had permission from the owner to use the image of that house. He didn't. Bonnie stepped in and called the owner, who didn't want his house used and quoted a Chinese proverb as justification: "The nail that sticks out gets hit."

Bonnie talked the homeowner into giving his permission. Bill disguised the house somewhat with new shrubbery. The t-shirt was printed, delivered, and sold like hotcakes at the neighborhood fair. The next week, the man's front porch furniture was stolen! ☹️

## Coming up next: trash pickup day

Metro Beautification, in cooperation with Public Works and the Sheriff's Office, will pick up old appliances, furniture, lumber, or other bulk items On Wednesday, May 21. They will not pick up anything that needs to be shoveled. Be sure to have it at the street by 6 a.m. They may not come by that early, but it ought to be ready. ☹️

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## The \$50,000 yard sale poster

Did you know that a poster for a yard sale could cost \$50,000? It's true. All those music performance, lost pet, yard sale, and personal service posters attached to lamp posts are misdemeanors, subject to a fine of up to \$500!

Section 10.24.120 of Metro Code says "No person shall post or affix any notice, poster, or other paper or device, calculated to attract the attention of the public to any public lamp post, public utility pole or public shade tree, or upon a public structure or building, except as may be authorized or required by law."

Each day the poster stays up is a new offense and is punishable separately. This means

that 10 posters that stay up 10 days could theoretically net a fine of \$50,000.

We all have a responsibility to keep the neighborhood clean and free from this visual noise. Help out by removing any illegal signs from utility poles, traffic signs, public trees or public right of ways. Anyone can take them down.

The best way to deal with repeat offenders is to report them to the Codes Hotline at 862-6590. Codes will call, and gently remind the sign-posters of the code, and what is not allowed.




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### Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors Membership

Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors, a tax exempt, nonprofit corporation, is composed of residents (both renters and owners) working to make our neighborhood a good place for everyone, encourage good relations, preserve its residential quality, and maintain neighborhood diversity.

#### How to Join BHN

If you agree with the aims of Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors and would like to

join (or renew your membership), please send your name, address, telephone number, email address, and \$10 dues (\$15 for a household) to

Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors, Inc.  
P.O. Box 120712  
Nashville, TN 37212

To find out more about Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors, e-mail questions to [info@belmont-hillsboro.org](mailto:info@belmont-hillsboro.org) or call the hotline at 386-3711.