



Coventry Village News

JANUARY, 1982

NEWSLETTER OF COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC.

Vol. VIII No. 1

STATE OF COVENTRY VILLAGE

The year 1981 saw many positive developments in Coventry Village. Our commercial and residential areas have continued their renaissance. The rebirth of the neighborhood that in the late 1960s was called "aging Coventry" and "Cleveland Heights' first slum," is spectacular and everywhere to be seen. Coventryard was rebuilt, erasing the last vestige of a series of fires that depressed but didn't break our spirit. In front of Coventryard, the mini-park has been given a new look and a new life as our local town commons. Across the street, the Coventry Library became a "full service" library again by moving back home into the front of the building. With Deborah Graves at the helm, the Coventry Library will continue to grow and prosper.

Improvements at the Coventry Schoolyard are nearly complete. New Playground structures have been installed and landscaping work should begin this spring.

Coventry Village residential areas are also showing improvement. The new Berkshire Lane condominiums on Euclid Heights Boulevard are nearly complete; it is very commendable that most of the trees on the site were retained. Restoration fever is catching on. The Coventry neighborhoods, each with their own unique style of architecture, are very attractive to those tired of bland suburban living. How nice to know your neighbors and live within walking distance of stores, recreation and the RTA!

While things are undeniably improving in Coventry, much remains to be done. The northerly entrance to the Coventry commercial area needs upgrading. The open Pantry-Revco complex needs landscaping in order to soften its harsh visual image. For many who travel Mayfield Road, Open Pantry-Revco is all they see of Coventry - not what one could call a progressive urban environment.

So much could be done with this site! The "Coventry Village Improvement Program Guide," developed by Neighborhood Design 3, offers outstanding design improvement suggestions that Open Pantry-Revco could adopt. Across Coventry the "Taj Mahal" building, "a diamond in the rough" is prime for quality commercial restoration. Someone with vision, sensitivity, and money could turn this building into a city landmark. Elsewhere, Carroll Drug and Coventry Pizza could use a facelift, and Irv's should continue to correct the social problems that have been associated with the popular deli and bar. This list is not complete, of course, but it does cover the major problem areas.

In the Coventry residential areas, firm and fair code enforcement needs to become more consistent. What some

(Continued on page 2)

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 * C.N.I. MAKES MOVE *
 *
 * After many years of meet- *
 * ing at the Unitarian Society of *
 * Cleveland on Lancashire Rd., CNI *
 * is moving its monthly meeting to *
 * the Coventry Village Library. *
 * The Library is located at 1925 *
 * Coventry Rd. at Washington Blvd. *
 * The next meeting of CNI will be *
 * held on Tuesday, January 12, 1982 *
 * at 7:30 PM in the Library Meeting *
 * Room. Parking is available across *
 * from the Library in the Coventry *
 * School parking lot on Washington. *
 * We hope to see all of our old friends *
 * (and new ones too!) at our new home. *
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CRIME PREVENTION TASK FORCE COMMITTEE REPORT. . . . Bruce M. Hennes & Debbie Heller

The Crime Prevention Task Force is a committee of Coventry Neighbors, Inc. Its goal is the maintenance of a safe community through education and the promotion and encouragement of responsible citizen involvement in crime prevention and crime resistance activities. Its slogan, also adopted by Coventry Neighbors, is "COVENTRY VILLAGE. . . We Watch Out For Each Other."

At its November meeting, the Task Force clarified its objectives and the means for reaching them: 1) EDUCATION AND OUTREACH. A. The Task Force will sponsor a continuing series of workshops for both men and women. The first workshop, tentatively scheduled for February, 1982, will focus on how to avoid becoming a victim and what to do should you become one. B. Crime prevention literature and posters will be distributed to all single and multiple family dwellings in the Village. The business community will also be approached. C. Outreach activities to various community groups, such as the PTA, churches and Musician's Tower are projected.

2) LEGISLATIVE AND JUDICIAL LOBBYING. A. The Task Force will continue to be involved in the lobbying for the creation of new legislation and monitor the enforcement of existing laws. B. The Task Force may serve as a friend of the Court and monitor the disposition of certain cases.

3) CREATE A CLIMATE OF CITIZEN AWARENESS, SURVEILLANCE, AND REPORTING. A. Through its educational, outreach and lobbying activities, the Task Force will continue to serve as a liaison between the Coventry community and the Cleveland Heights Police Department. This will also enable the group to effectively function as a rumor control force. B. The Task Force will monitor certain community troublespots and take appropriate corrective steps. C. The Task Force will implement a program that encourages citizens to report crime before or as it is happening.

At press time the next Task Force meeting date was not available. Please call Bruce Hennes, 321-4670 for this information.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS REPORT. . . . Charles J. Owen, Chair

Meeting Note: Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 2, 1982 at 7:30 PM at the Hubbert residence, 2191 South Overlook. Telephone 321-1268 or write to Coventry Neighbors, Inc., 2745 Hampshire Road, Cleveland Heights, 44106 for details on how you can improve Coventry's environment.

STATE OF COVENTRY VILLAGE (Continued from page 1)

building owners (usually absentee landlords) get away with is an insult to the entire community. Everyone should play by the same rules!

Finally, the City's bulk pick-up procedures need fine-tuning. Couches and trash bags seem to line certain streets (and certain buildings) as a rule, not an exception. An unattractive neighborhood will not draw desirable residents, to the detriment of all.

As Coventry Neighbors, Inc celebrates its tenth year of incorporation, we rededicate ourselves to the goal of informing and involving the community of the issues that affect Coventry's future. As long as residents, merchants, landlords, and government communicate and work with each other, Coventry Village and Cleveland Heights will continue to blossom.

-- Charles J. Owen
President

(The "State of Coventry" message, traditionally delivered at the October meeting is presented here instead.)

COVENTRY NEIGHBORS INCORPORATED -- 1981

In the past year, Coventry Neighbors, Incorporated hosted the first cable-telecast Candidates' Night in Cleveland Heights history; conducted yet another exuberantly successful Coventry Village Street Fair; rewrote its Constitution; and continued publication of the highly regarded neighborhood newsletter, the Coventry Village News. The organization put into effect a committee structure that permitted its members to concentrate their energies on the particular community matters that they wished to address.

The Crime Prevention Task Force of Coventry Neighbors, Inc., got the management of Irv's Deli into serious discussion of the negative aspects of the "scene" outside that establishment and, together with the Police Department, has effected some change. Conducted a women's self-defense workshop; arranged for circulation of descriptions of suspects in neighborhood crimes and in the process, got more single-family Coventry homeowners involved in Coventry Neighbors than ever before.

The Environmental Concerns Committee invested many summer weekend person-hours in the planting and shoring-up of flowers and flower soil on the commercial strip; fostered Community Development Block Grant applications for mini-park benches and bike racks, benches along the shopping route of elderly residents of Musicians Towers bike locks for commercial strip parking meters, trash containers and wrought-iron decorative fencing for trees at the mini-park; as well as sponsoring a neighborhood Clean Up Spruce Up Day.

The Planning and Zoning Committee led Coventry Neighbors to back the Coventry PTA in opposition to a video games parlor in Coventry, an action that eventually developed into a blanket anti-video-parlor position by Coventry Neighbors, Inc.

Coventry Neighbors, Inc., saw this year the completion of an exquisite mini-park at Coventry and Euclid Heights Boulevard, embodying a design supported by the Coventry Merchants Association and the developer of adjacent Coventryard; this park has received a Community Improvement Award. Coventry Neighbors supported the development of Section 8 upgraded apartments in the community, with a reservation that the Section 8 units not all be concentrated in one neighborhood.

Coventry Neighbors, Inc. maintains a regular Council-watch and, through the Coventry Village News, has kept residents of Euclid Heights Boulevard informed of upcoming changes during the reconstruction of their street.

(This report was prepared by CNI's Heights Community Congress Trustee, Dave Burwasser, for presentation at the Height's Community Congress 1981 Annual Meeting.)

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LEGISLATION ACKNOWLEDGES CITIZEN ASSOCIATION ROLE

Among the items of legislation passed by Council on December 21, 1981, was an ordinance amending the Zoning Code to cover permits for the placing of outside murals in Cleveland Heights. Provision is made for the customary public hearings, with the additional requirement that:

" . . . notice of the public hearing shall also be delivered to the president or chairperson of all local merchant associations and neighborhood associations that are known by the City to be active in the immediate vicinity of the proposed location (of a mural)."

This appears to be the first specific acknowledgement in Cleveland Heights legislation of a planning role played by neighborhood associations per se.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT . . .

DECEMBER C.N.I. MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

President Charles Owen announced a decision by the Board of Trustees that future meetings of CNI will be held in the Community Room of the relocated Coventry Branch Library. A resolution of thanks to the Unitarian Society was passed for its generous hosting of Coventry Neighbors for so many years; the new arrangement will permit the Society to rent for profit the time slot which it has donated free to CNI.

of the Trustees, a motion was adopted that only voting members of CNI may vote in deliberations of committees of CNI. This is NOT intended to discourage involvement of non-members in CNI committee business. It only provides that, when a controversy arises over the direction a committee should take, the decision be made by voting members of the parent organization. (Which, let us face it, is not all that hard to join).

CNI also extended congratulations to former Cleveland Heights City Manager, William C. Lahman upon his appointment as General Manager of the RTA. Mr. Lahman is a current member of the CH Planning Commission, and a personal acquaintance of a number of older CNI members.

-- Dave Burqasser

CRIMESTOPPERS NOTEBOOK. Bruce Hennes

The following is abstracted from "Operation Crime Alert" published by the State of Ohio. This continues the section on rape started in the December CVN.

Your first, and best defense is noise -- scream long and loud. People will react to a scream of FIRE more readily than for HELP.

Your second best defense is to take a Rape Prevention/Crime Resistance course. Such a course is now being planned by the Coventry Neighbors Crime Prevention Task Force for early 1982. Please look for an announcement in the next issue of the CVN.

IF RAPED: Always report any rape or attempted rape to the police. If you are actually attacked and raped, don't panic. Notice every detail you can about your assailant.

Try to determine his height and approximate weight as well as all physical characteristics such as clothes, hair, any scars or other distinguishing marks, age, eye color, and the direction taken when leaving.

If a vehicle is involved, note the year, make, model, color and the first few digits of the license number if possible.

Try to remember everything about the surroundings if you are raped someplace other than your home. Leave your fingerprints everywhere you can, as well as some personal item which can be identified as yours such as a button, earring, ring or lip-stick.

Call the police immediately and BE WILLING TO PROSECUTE. Do not, under any circumstances, bathe, change or wash clothing, clean your nails, or apply any medication. Your body holds important evidence which will be used in the prosecution of the attacker.

Police officers must conduct a thorough investigation of the crime. Although it is often unpleasant to recount, the incident must be discussed and explored in detail.

Ask a friend, if you desire, to accompany you to the hospital for examinations and tests. If you feel more comfortable talking with a policewoman, ask if one is available.

Cleveland has a Rape Crisis Center (391-3912 that will provide counseling and legal advice to you.

STAND FIRM! Only your testimony can convict the rapist and reduce the chances of

COUNCIL PROPOSES COIN-OP GAME ORDINANCE

Cleveland Heights City Council, on December 21 passed amended ordinance #123-1981 governing the coin-operated amusement business in our City.

Regular CVN readers are aware that CNI has stood against the proliferation of such businesses, and has been incessantly lobbying City officials to control such enterprises for some months.

The new Ordinance deals only with commercial operations, and does not limit the non-profit use of electronic games within private homes. It provides that a maximum of three game machines will be allowed in any business, unless the Board of Zoning Appeals issues a conditional use permit for more than that number at a Public Hearing. This provision applies only to new game license applications; those businesses legally operating more than three devices as of October 5, 1981, may continue to do so as long as they do not increase the number of games on premises. Such an increase would make that entire operation subject to all provisions of the new Ordinance.

Application for a game license will now need to include a floor plan showing that code-defined clearance space exists between machines and interior structures. The annual license fee will increase from \$25 to \$100 per machine. Any license issued for premises within 1,000 feet of a school will stipulate that the machines be rendered inoperable during regular school hours.

Among the reasons for which an application can be denied, or for which a license can be suspended or revoked are: 1) conviction of the applicant of a felony, violent misdemeanor, or unlawful gambling activity; 2) willful misrepresentation of facts on the application; 3) the City Manager's determination that the operation of any particular game (s) has created a public nuisance, or has contributed to the delinquency or unruliness of a minor.

Individual members of CNI have praised the City for its swift action and positive response to neighborhood concerns. As one member stated publicly, "We don't want Cleveland Heights to become a boardwalk."

-- F. David Gill

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Dear Editor:

May I commend you on your October newsletter's response to the Plain Dealer's hatchet job on Cleveland Heights' Inspectional Services Department. I had most of the same feelings and thoughts expressed so well in your newsletter, and, in fact, wrote a letter to the editor of the PD. However, it was not printed, and I understand that only one letter from a reader on that topic was printed at all.

Thanks for your good words.

Sincerely,

Anne S. McFarland.

Heights Community Congress

Defense Fund Party II



Live music by
CARR AND SPAIN

Saturday, 8:00 pm
January 23, 1982

St. Louis Church Social Hall
2475 N. Taylor Road

(B.Y.O.B.)

Free food and beer

\$5.00 per person

Defense Fund Party II

We are planning to attend the Defense Fund Party II.
Please reserve _____ tickets at \$5.00 each. I have enclosed
a check payable to the Heights Community Congress in the
amount of \$ _____.

I regret that I cannot attend the Defense Fund Party II.
Enclosed is my donation to the Heights Community Congress Defense Fund.



Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Send to: Heights Community Congress, 2163 Lee Road, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118

SNOWY WALKS A HAZARD

Over the Holidays I had occasion to visit friends and attend parties in various sections of Cleveland Heights and have more than once been terrified by the sight of a pedestrian looming up out of the swirling snow, seen but dimly through a frosted windshield. Pedestrians, walking in the road because the sidewalks were impassible. This has given me a new slant on what was to have been some relaxed reportage on snow shoveling. We are dealing here with a major winter hazard.

By city ordinance, each property owner is responsible for the removal of snow from his walkways. Failure to do so may result in a warning and, if the situation is not corrected within ten days, a citation. If found guilty the party may be subject to a fine of up to \$100.

The enforcement of this ordinance is one of the many responsibilities of the Health Department with its staff of two inspectors. As a result, there is no routine inspection and usually action is taken only as the result of a complaint. Complaints come in to various departments of the city and are investigated by the department which takes the complaint; sometimes the police, sometimes inspectional services, sometimes the service department. The investigating department sends its findings to the Health Department. Sometimes building inspectors will file a complaint in the course of their routine inspection if it is warranted. What results is spotty, inconsistent enforcement that does little to encourage compliance.

Snowfall presents a quandry, too, for the homeowner. Snow seldom falls conveniently, when there is time to shovel out before work, or energy enough after. The days when you could get a schoolboy to shovel your walk for a "buck" are long gone. Finding someone willing to take on the task is very difficult and expensive. It's easy enough to hire someone with a jeep to plow out your driveway, but jeeps are seldom equipped to do walks. Failure to clear walks is hazardous and a misdemeanor, but where can you get help?

In some neighborhoods streets or blocks get together and plan for snow removal cooperatively. They purchase or lease snow blowers jointly and share the use of them. In others, neighbors get together, define what they want to have done, set a price on it and offer the same going rate to youngsters who live on the street - an hourly rate or a piece rate that is constant throughout the block. Making a contract with a church youth group or a Y group could get the walks cleaned and enrich the group's treasury for some planned project.

Community bulletin boards are a good place to look for help with snow removal. Such boards can be found in Pick-n-Pay, Carroll Drug and Coventry Books. There are frequently ads for employment - try calling one of them. Any young person wishing to earn some money in this way may contact CVN and we will publish a list of names and phone numbers in our February issue.

Businesses, too, are often at fault. Enforcement in the business sector is charged to the Building Department. The responsibility for snow removal lies with the building owner, but may become the responsibility of the business owner if it is in the rental contract. The Building Department does not inspect for snow removal except on complaint. When a complaint is made an inspector is sent out, a warning is issued and the owner has 10 days to comply.

There are no pat answers for dealing with this problem. Certainly householders should take the responsibility for snow removal seriously, and many do. Of the ones who don't shovel there are two kinds; the ones who can't and the ones who won't. Senior Citizens or the disabled may call the Office on Aging, and if they are registered in the program federal monies are available to hire people to provide this service. For the ones who won't, call and complain. But make sure your walk is cleared before you do.

Maybe the new Council's Public Safety and Health Committee should take a closer look at this seasonal problem.

CITY, LANDLORDS DISPUTE PARKING FEES

by
David R. Burwasser

A complicated land-packaging arrangement, which permitted the City to build the Hampshire Road parking lot near Carroll Drug, has led to a three-way dispute among the City, adjacent landowners, and the tenants of the latter.

In order to secure adequate space for the parking lot, the City had to add land to each side of the main lot where a frame two-family once stood. This the City secured in the form of easements--agreements by one party to permit use of its land by another party--giving the City access to driveway territory on each side.

In return, the City agreed to set aside a certain number of parking spaces in the new lot for those landowners, with the expectation that they would in turn be rented to tenants living in the adjacent buildings.

The City has recently found that those landlords are charging tenants \$15 per month per parking space, rather than the \$10 per month charged by the City. The City regards this as a violation of the easement contract, and has taken legal steps to stop the practice and recover excess charges.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: C.N.I. COMPLACENCY RAPPED

To the Editors:

At the December 8 meeting of Coventry Neighbors, Jeff Chernin, a member of the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign, sought the group's endorsement of the campaign's Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race. To his great astonishment (my own and others', too), Coventry Neighbors refused to endorse the call. A local councilman deemed it inappropriate for the group to take a stand on the issue. One area resident disdained the effort because, after all, he insisted, you can't trust the Russians.

What this foolish complacency shows, I think, is that this community is not the repository of liberal ideals it likes to consider itself. Perhaps tree planting and trash removal are the toughest issues Coventry residents can confront. After all, nice trees and clean streets are visible indicators of how much a community cares about itself, right? Let's hope they continue to be visible through the fallout.

--Shelley Bloomfield
Coventry Road, C.H.

YOU may become a member of COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, Inc. simply by filling out this tear slip and returning it with your check, made payable to Coventry Neighbors, Inc., to 2747 Hampshire Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44106.

Check one of the following classes of membership.

Individual (\$5.00) Family (\$7.00) Senior (\$3.00)

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____ ZIP: _____

I am now receiving COVENTRY VILLAGE NEWS by mail. Yes No.

PUBLIC LAND IN COVENTRY VILLAGE UP FOR ZONING REVIEW

by
David R. Burwasser

The zoning (land-use) classification of every piece of public land in Cleveland Heights formerly zoned "AAA"--including parcels in Coventry--will be redefined and reviewed in 1982. This process was begun by legislation adopted by City Council on December 21, 1981.

Each parcel of public land will first be rezoned to be the same as "...the contiguous parcel of private property that bears the most restrictive land use classification..." As the legislation did not have an emergency clause, it will take effect in mid-January. Law Director Don Barclay stated that "contiguous" includes land uses across a street, not merely those adjacent on the same side of the street. Land use behind a given lot or parcel is also "contiguous."

Councilmember Dick Weigand cast a sole vote against the measure, protesting the reduction of citizen involvement in land use decisions when the public is the landowner. Other Councilmembers expressed sympathy with Weigand's position but supported the measure as an improvement, albeit imperfect.

December's legislation is only the first step in a process that may extend over all of 1982. The most-restrictive-neighboring-category zoning is merely a holding pattern; City staff will review each parcel and recommend appropriate changes. Those will be Zoning Code amendments, requiring public hearings and assent of the Planning Commission. Theoretically, those hearings could be the last that ever need be held on the use of these land parcels.

CVN has been assured by responsible City Hall sources that the classifications of Turtle Park and the Hampshire Garage are more a reflection of the haste with which the City's own list was compiled than any planning for future use of those spaces. (TABLE OF PUBLIC LANDS FORMERLY ZONED "AAA" IN COVENTRY will be found on Page 10)

PUBLIC HEARING WILL DISCLOSE COVENTRY SEWER LINE PLANS

The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS) will hold a public meeting on Wednesday, January 13, 1982 in Room A of the Main Branch Library at 7:30 PM. The public is invited to learn about, and comment on, NEORS's current plans for the Heights. These include a LARGE pipe--"big enough to drive a semi through," according to one planning source--to be laid either beneath Coventry Road or closely parallel thereto. Pre-construction schedule runs through October, 1983, so construction will probably start no sooner than Spring, 1984.

MORE "ABSENCE OF MALACE" FROM PLAIN DEALER

Cleveland Heights is replacing Parma as the suburb to scorn among the sophisticates at the Plain Dealer. PD Reporter Thomas S. Andrzejewski out does the comparable James Neff in a rambling ventilation attacking both Cleveland Heights and the Sunbelt (don't ask how he connects them!) on the December 31 Plain Dealer Forum page.

Andrzejewski makes clear his disdain for our neighborhood integration programs, our college-educated females, our community-promoting bumper stickers, our taste in foreign cars and our physician and lawyer residents.

Congratulations to the Plain Dealer for giving this clown 30 column inches to expose his bigotries! When he "reports" henceforth on race, women's issues, community pride, the self-destructing domestic auto industry, medicine or the law, astute readers can judge his "coverage" in terms of his know prejudices.

--Dave Burwasser

PUBLIC LAND FORMERLY ZONED "AAA" IN COVENTRY*

MUNICIPAL OFFICES

City Hall Complex, Mayfield/Superior (two- families on Hillcrest)
 Police Academy, 1427 Superior (single family)

MUNICIPAL PARKING LOTS

Two on Coventry commercial strip (commercial)
 Two at Overlook/Kenilworth and Coventry (multi-family)
 Eight on Mayfield between Kenilworth and Coventry
 (cemetery across street)
 Three on Hampshire (multi-family); one of these is the City Garage
 Two on Lancashire (multi-family)

OPEN SPACES

Two at Rock Court and Euclid Hts. Blvd. (single-family)
 One each at Lancashire & EHB, Hampshire & EHB (Turtle Park) (multi-family)
 Mayfield near Kenilworth (multi-family) and Edgehill & Overlook at the rim of the Heights (single-family)

OTHER GOVERNMENT UNITS

Coventry Elementary School, Coventry Branch Library (single-family)

*Most restrictive adjacent land use is given in parentheses. See related story on page 9.

PRE-SCHOOL OUTREACH

The Community Relations Department of the CH-UH area is canvassing the Coventry School district to identify families with children from infancy to the pre-Kindergarten year. There will be programs in the Spring to acquaint parents with the neighborhood school and the services it can provide for you. If you have a child in that age bracket and have not already been contacted, please call Coventry School at 371-7110 and have your name placed on the mailing list.

-- Julie B. Alandt

POTTERS SCHEDULE CLASSES

Pottery and Sculpture Classes for all ages will be given by the Guild Potters Cooperative of the Coventry Library building from January 18 through March 27. There is a new ramped entrance to class location. Pick up registration at the Library or call 371-0240 for information.

-- Judy Turbow, Registrar
 Guild Potters Co-Op

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCHDOG: DEALING WITH IMPOSSIBLE FAMILIES - REPORTS OF UN-SUCCESS

CASE # 1 - By the summer of 1981 Mrs. Y and her neighbors had suffered years of trouble with some neighboring teenagers. Frequent calls to police had no effect. One evening, Mrs. Y saw some youths at her front gate. Then she saw fire. Investigation showed that a figure, clearly resembling a family member, had been burned in effigy. When she protested, verbal threats were made against her family. Many attempts to arrange an appointment with the prosecutor finally succeeded. She and her husband, who had taken off from work, arrived for the appointment, but the prosecutor was ill. After much confusion and few satisfactory explanations, the Ys were referred to the Youth Prosecutor. He said Mrs. Y could not file a complaint unless she had actually seen the boy light the fire. The fire chief kept the burned figure as evidence, but nothing ever came of Mrs. Y's attempts to get action. This was especially sad, since she is the only one, of all the terrorized neighbors, courageous to sign her name to a complaint. Mrs. Y lives with fear and bitterness. She believes that the city fears "that family," because of their complaints that the neighbors harass them. She believes that the police are almost blind to what most people would view as "evidence."

CASE #2 - Mrs. S and other neighbors were all willing to file citizens' complaints after their long summer of suffering was not effectively dealt with by numerous calls to the police. In one phone call, when she attempted to alert the police to a riot, the planning of which had been overheard, they said nothing could be done prior to an offense, and according to her she was scolded for her bad attitude. In another call, she was told if the police were called twice in one day for the same offense they could issue a citation and make an arrest without having witnessed the offense. When asked why this had not been done, she was scolded again, she said. She protested that she, an innocent, law-abiding, tax-paying citizen was given less protection and consideration than "that family." She believes the police need better communication within their department about these problem families. It is so frustrating to have each complaint be received as if the officer had never heard of the family before. Mrs. S did call the prosecutor who told her nothing could be done unless the police made an arrest. He said she could fill out a complaint form, but felt she had no grounds for a criminal charge. Mrs. S asks what evidence was necessary, when the youths involved were obviously "stoned."

My own consultation with an attorney and a judge indicates a citizen witness can swear out a complaint, and a police witness or arrest is not required. The prosecutor is the one who must determine whether the citizen actually witnessed the offense and can make positive identification. If the complaint is filed, a misdemeanor warrant is issued, but not often followed up because the over-worked police and prosecutor are too busy dealing with felons. They are also sensitive to possible charges of harassment. The burden of proof is on the complainer. What is required for successful filing of citizens' complaints is "persistence, guts, luck and possibly a little pressure on the landlord."

FROM THE OTHER SIDE: perspective from the prosecutor, Warren Perl, and the Chief of Police, Martin Lentz, both Coventry residents, each of whom give hours of their time, to help us bridge the gap between citizens' expectations and understanding, and the realities of legal constraints within which they must work.

Laws are based on the principle that it is better for the guilty to go free than for one innocent to be falsely accused. The same laws which, at times, seem to protect the "impossible family," also protect their victims from harassment by the impossible family. An act is a criminal offense only if it meets the existing legal definition of an offense, is actually witnessed, if the offender can be clearly identified by the witness, and only if it can be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. Police can make arrests only when these conditions apply, and only when they have witnessed the offense. The prosecutor can accept a criminal filing only when these conditions apply. The burden of proof is on the complainer. No one can be charged for a potential or intended offense, but only for an actual offense. (Continued on page 12)

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCHDOG: (Continued from page)

Mrs. Y. was not a witness to a chargeable offense of arson unless she actually saw the youth light the fire with the match, and could identify him beyond any reasonable doubt. Since there was a group present, she could not do this. Mrs. S would have to be able to witness the actual drunken fight, identify who did what, and provide other legally acceptable evidence of intoxication or drug influence. Although there is no legal way to charge a person before an act is committed, once alerted, the mere presence of police did head off a planned riot.

Citizens are not alone in their helpless rage at these "impossible families." Their legal sophistication and street wisdom enables them to keep their actions just short of criminal. As a result, the police and prosecutor receive constant complaint and spend many hours trying to deal with them. Occasionally tempers flare on both sides. Since filing a criminal charge is an action available only in very limited situations, and is often ineffective, it seems clear more creative approaches are needed. Some are available, about which the public is inadequately informed.

When the prosecutor says you can fill out a complaint form, he does not mean it to sound as fruitless as it may sound to the upset victim. He means that unless you send in the form, he can do little. Even though the complaint may not be accepted as a criminal charge, a prosecutor, on receiving one for each episode, builds up a record that can be effective as a warning to "cool it." New complaints provide opportunity for periodic review that may reveal changes in the situation that make possible a criminal charge. The prosecutor, like the judge, may be able to help by making referrals to helping agencies for family therapy, crisis intervention or conciliation. However he cannot force acceptance of the referral.

The police, also, can do many other things, even if they don't arrest. They notify the Health and Housing Inspections Departments of violations. They work closely with community relations workers. In Mrs. S's situation, Commander McKeen spent an evening at the S home, talking with the upset neighbors and hoping to witness one of the disturbances. We have since learned that a warrant's check revealed outstanding arrest warrants on the youth; he was arrested and spent several days in jail; Commander McKeen had serious talks with him; health and housing violations were reported and are being processed. However, due to a communications breakdown, the S family and their neighbors were not aware of any of this, and saw only that little had changed.

Our conference focused on the importance of planning an intervention strategy making use of many agencies, including the Crisis Intervention Service, about which I will report to you next month. If these non-police, non-court approaches are used earlier, when complaints are minor, the situation is still open to talk and they have greater chance for success. The police and the court should be viewed as a last, limited resort.

In my view the biggest problem appears to be the communications breakdown - which involved all sides. The prosecutor mails out complaint forms, but they are not returned by the victims. To the citizen it appears useless, not the strong measure hoped for. The citizen complainers do not clearly understand they should initiate the follow-through with the police. They wait for a call-back letting them know what the police have done. The police believe they have given clear explanations that the citizen should keep in touch, especially if there is further trouble. Citizens don't keep calling if little improvement results; if citizens don't keep calling, the police assume the situation has improved. It would be logical to suggest a close working relationship with the community worker, who might act as coordinator, follow-upper, and communicator. But life is not that simple. Community workers, police and prosecutors, so over-burdened, do lose track of things. The suffering citizens are also over-burdened by the many demands of life and are also bogged down in discouragement and anger. We may dream about what ought to be. The reality is that the one who suffers has to be the one who keeps the initiative going.

(Continued on page 13)

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCHDOG: (Continued from page 12)

Here is a suggested solution that might be built into the structure for the benefit of all sides: 1) If you are considering making your first complaint to the police, or if you have made repeated, unproductive calls to the police, or if you feel that nothing is being done and you are getting the run-around, call the community worker. 2) Ask the CW to arrange a conference between the victims (you and your neighbors), the police, the prosecutor, the CW, and any other agency likely to be helpful, for the purpose of creative strategy planning. 3) After a plan has evolved ask for a follow-up conference for a month or so later - for the purpose of reviewing results, jogging slipped memories, planning next steps, and ensuring that effective communication is taking place. Face-to-face meetings are often helpful, but the follow-up is the missing ingredient. You, the victim, have to ask for it.

-- June Wortman

BOOS AND BRAVOS

BRAVO: Coventry Neighbors marked its first decade of service to the Coventry Village community as a corporation on December 1, 1981.

BRAVO: Sixty years ago on December, 1921, the first Coventry neighborhood library opened in the old Coventry School. On December 13, 1981 the landmark Coventry Village Library (erected in 1926) reopened its doors to the community in "top hat" fashion.

BRAVO: Congratulations to RAINBLUE, 1866 Coventry Road, on their tenth anniversary.

BRAVO: Congratulations to the Forest Hill Church Housing Corporation, better known as the Challenge Fund, on their tenth anniversary of service in preserving the Cleveland Heights housing stock.

BRAVO: The new Cleveland Heights "Lennox-Surrey" municipal parking garage has a "good neighbor" design that incorporates function with good looks. Let's hope Coventry is next in line for help with its parking problem. So many of our plans for the future will fall apart without adequate parking.

BRAVO: Many thanks to the Unitarian Society of Cleveland for providing Coventry Neighbors with a regular meeting place over the years. While Coventry Neighbors is moving to the Coventry Village Library this month (see article on page 1), we will always remember the Unitarian Society for their assistance. Best wishes to the Unitarians for a prosperous new year.

-- Charles J. Owen.

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CVN

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PERSONS wishing to submit items for the February issue of CVN may do so by sending them to the Editors, Coventry Village News, 1621 Eddington Road, Cleveland Heights, no later than January 22, 1982. Please include your name, address and phone number. While unsigned items will not be published, your name may be withheld upon request.

CNI

COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC: General Meeting; Tuesday, January 12, 1982, 7:30 PM in the Community Room of the Coventry Village Branch Library. The public is invited to attend.

COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC: Trustees Meeting; Thursday February 4, 1982, 2910 Hampshire Road. Dues paying members are invited to attend.