



THEATRE GOES STRAIGHT

HEIGHTS ART RENAMED COVENTRY CINEMA \$2 ADMISSION AND POPULAR FILMS

by Larry Beam

Small children and their parents were a large portion of the crowd that formed to buy tickets for the 7:30 show at Coventry Cinema, formerly Heights Art Theatre, on Friday, August 24. That showing marked the first time since 1978 that Coventry's own neighborhood movie house, at 2781 Euclid Heights Boulevard, had shown a film that appealed to whole families.

For the past six years a hard-core adult movie house, the theatre had been closed for a week, while crews repaired the marquee, installed a new sign, painted and scrubbed the lobby, created a new mural, and got rid of racks which had offered sexually-explicit video tapes and magazines in the lobby. The sign stating that no one under 18 would be admitted was scrapped; the new minimum age is three.

Films booked for the near future include *Ghostbusters*, *Gremlins*, *Purple Rain*, *Walt Disney's Jungle Book*, and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. Admission will be \$2.00 for evening shows and \$1.50 for Saturday and Sunday matinees.

During its years of showing sex films, Heights Art had kept a low profile. Only rarely were the names of the films being shown displayed on the marquee. Suggestive posters were never displayed in the showcases around the theatre's entrance. The age minimum was rigorously enforced. And the sorts of deviant behavior one might expect as-

sociated with such an establishment were unheard-of.

Yet concern about the presence of a pornographic movie house in Coventry Village was constant to residents and merchants here. Such an establishment, no matter how cleanly run, was seen as a sign of decay and as a threat to neighborhood stability and housing values. Its location across from an elementary school compounded the image problems that the theatre presented, especially to families with children.

The mid-August announcement of the plan to change format was met with outspoken enthusiasm; comments like "it's wonderful, fabulous—the best news for the neighborhood in years" were heard over and over again.

Alan Rapoport, Mayor of Cleveland Heights, said that he is "very excited about the change." He continued: "Families here often lack places to go. This provides a new one. It will encourage people who haven't come here in the past to come. I expect the change will have beneficial effects on other merchants, especially restaurants."

No organized opening-night festivities marked the theatre's new beginning, and the film shown that night, *The Never Ending Story*, was not well-known. Box-office revenues that evening still exceeded all but a small number of the busiest days when the theatre showed adult films, according to George Fitzpatrick, its manager. Candy stand rev-

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MEETING NOTES

CNI Trustees will communicate to the board of the Coventry Youth Center their upset with the image of Coventry portrayed in a fund-raising letter distributed by the Center.

CNI Trustees will write to former Cleveland Heights Police Lt. Commander Les LaGatta, congratulating him on his appointment as Police Chief in Chagrin Falls. LaGatta served as Police detail commander for the 1977 to 1983 Street Fairs, and has many friends in this neighborhood; he will be missed.

STREET FAIR A HIT; THANKS, VOLUNTEERS

Despite the threat of rain on Saturday, everything went on as scheduled. Sunday was hot and humid, but everyone had a good time. Over 60,000 people participated in the 1984 Coventry Village Street Fair.

The Fair would not have been possible without the hundreds of volunteer workers. We wish to thank each and every one of you for watching barricades, distributing the fair guide, organizing and playing the music, selling t-shirts, and cleaning up. Thanks, too, to the members of the Committee before and during the fair. Without the volunteers, there could not be a fair.

Thanks is also due to Deputy Chief Ronald Salcer and his officers from the Cleveland Heights Police Department.

To Debbie Heller we express our thanks for taking care of a lost child all day on Sunday. Bob Heuster kept the trash picked up, and had a great crew for sweeping the street. Coventry looked cleaner after the Fair than before. Jan McKay was emcee for Family Programming, helped keep everyone on time, and was a great help in many ways.

Special appreciation is also due to Central Bank, Pick-n-Pay, and the Inn on Coventry.

Finally, thanks to the vendors and merchants who participated.

GROUP SEEKS CLEAN STREAMS

The newly-formed Clean Streams Committee seeks to clean up the streams which run through our parks. The independent group, headed by Hampshire Road resident Richard Miller, has already achieved a small success in reducing the volume of raw sewage being dumped into Dugway Brook, in Forest Hills Park, near Superior and Hillcrest Roads.

Miller hired a private laboratory to analyze water samples he'd taken from a 30-inch storm sewer which empties into Dugway Brook. In two of Miller's three samples, the laboratory found fecal coliform bacteria "too numerous to count"; the count in a third sample was far beyond the acceptable level. The presence of coliform bacilli in a water sample is a sure sign of pollution with raw sewage.

Miller and his group gathered more than 200 signatures on a petition objecting to the situation. They presented the petitions to the East Cleveland City Commission on August 21. A few days later, a crew from the City of East Cleveland removed a blockage from a sewer pipe in the area. The blockage had apparently caused the flow in a sanitary sewer to become mixed with the contents of a storm sewer.

Miller, pianist with Oroboros, a popular local band, says the situation has improved substantially but remains a problem.

Miller, who says he loves to hike in the stream beds because they are relatively untouched nature, wants to continue and expand his efforts to reduce pollution in the streams. Persons wishing to become involved in these efforts should contact Miller at 371-4104 or 371-9094.

HCC CHIEF IN RUSSIA SEEKING SISTER CITY

Lana Cowell, Executive Director of the Heights Community Congress, is in Russia. With four other Heights residents, she is attempting to persuade one of several Soviet cities to become a "sister city" to Cleveland Heights. Her trip is part of a project called City-to-City, which seeks to establish an on-going, non-political exchange of people, letters, arts, and cultural or educational exhibits between Cleveland Heights and a comparable community in the Soviet Union.

The purpose, Cowell writes, is "to open communications between citizens of the two countries, as a small step in countering the dehumanization of 'the enemy' that fuels the arms race."

CNI ELECTIONS COMING UP

The annual election process of Coventry Neighbors, Inc., will begin at the meeting of September 11. Nominations for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, two Trusteeships, and representative to the Heights Community Congress will be accepted at that meeting.

Nominations for those offices will be accepted again at the October meeting, when the vote will be held.

Nominees must be members in good standing of Coventry Neighbors, Inc., and only persons who have been members for thirty days or more may vote.

HALLOWEEN PARTY SET FOR OCTOBER 27

A tentative date of Saturday, October 27 has been set for the Third Annual Coventry Village Halloween Party.

Watch for more details in the next issue of the Coventry Village News.

THEATRE . . . continued from page 1.

enes, Fitzpatrick said, set a record.

Fitzpatrick, who has managed the theatre since 1963, is confident that the new policy is a wise business decision. "The X films were doing okay; the theatre was making money. But we will do much better with popular films. Coventry Village is a strong market for family entertainment. Big name films for \$2.00 is just what the Coventry neighborhood wants to see, and that's just what I want to show. We are looking forward to being a positive asset to our neighborhood."

The R-rated *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, now in its seventh year of Saturday midnight showings, will continue.

The theatre was built as the Heights Theatre in 1916. In the mid-20's, its owners fought for—and won—the right to be open for business on Sundays. It was purchased by the Bexley Art Theatre Guild, its present owners, in 1954. In 1958 its manager was jailed for showing *The Lovers*, a film that could easily be shown on broadcast television today. In 1963 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the City law under which the *The Lovers* had been banned was unconstitutional. Midnight movies began in 1968; these were at first mostly most the work of university cinema students and experimental filmmakers.

The Cleveland Heights Local Development Corporation (LDC) has made a preliminary commitment to a \$1,000 subsidy to the nearly \$1,800 cost of Coventry Cinema's new sign, on the front of the marquee. The LDC has a standing offer of such assistance to merchants in most of Cleveland Heights.

HERITAGE TOUR IS SET FOR SEPTEMBER 16

The eighth annual Heights Heritage Tour will be held on Sunday, September 16. Preview activities, including a dinner at Beaumont School, catered by Pamela Grosscup, will be held on Saturday evening, September 15. This year's tour has been titled "Viewpoints."

Houses selected for this year's tour range from a modest split-level, to a indoor pool house converted to a residence, to a baronial fortress hidden among trees on Fairmount Boulevard. Participants in the Saturday preview will tour General Electric's Lighting Institute at Nela Park, where cocktails and hors d'oeuvres will be served.

Sunday's activities will begin at 8:30 AM with a five-mile run through scenic Heights neighborhoods. Prizes will be awarded to couples in four categories who finish in the shortest combined times.

Tickets for the Sunday tour are \$7.00 (\$5.00 for senior citizens); \$20.00 tickets for the Saturday evening preview include the cocktail party at Nela Park and an escorted tour; \$45.00 tickets for Saturday evening include these things plus dinner at Beaumont.

For tickets and full information, call the Heights Community Congress at 321-6775. Tickets are also being sold at High Tide/Rock Bottom, 1814 Coventry Road.

LIBRARY GOINGS-ON

The Friends of the Library will hold a paper back book sale Monday and Tuesday, September 24 and 25. Large numbers of paperbacks—fiction, non-fiction, children's books, mysteries, and more—will be priced at 25 cents. This sale is one of the uses to which the Library puts the books generously donated by area residents. The proceeds of the sale will be used by the Library system for programming purposes.

AROUND COVENTRY . . .

COMIC BOOK . . . Hampshire Road resident Harvey Pekar has published the ninth *American Splendor* comic book. Like the earlier editions, this one contains stories "from off the streets of Cleveland," all written by Mr. Pekar. One of these stories begins in the 1982 Coventry Village Street Fair; that story is called, "A Semi-Bummer Weekend." Art in this edition is by, among others, Kevin Brown and former area resident Robert Crumb.

NO CONDOS (YET) . . . Work has not begun on the Turkey Ridge condominium project, proposed for a steep wedge of land on Edgehill Road near the Cleveland border. City staffers and (apparently) the developers still hope that the project will go forward.

PARKING LOTS . . . Bids will be opened on September 4 for the 45-space parking lot to be built on the point of land where Lancashire Road and Euclid Heights Boulevard come together. The new lot will not, as had been hoped, involve any of the land owned by the Unitarian Society and just to the west of their building at 2728 Lancashire. Construction may begin as early as the end of September; City officials hope for completion before winter.

Meanwhile, City Council has given the City Manager authority to begin eminent domain proceedings to acquire the vacant and dilapidated house at 2722 Hampshire Road, just east of Musicians Towers. A City offer of \$22,500 for the property was rejected. The site and probably some adjacent land would be used for parking.

A proposal by the ownership of Coventryard to build a private parking lot behind the mall, on Lancashire Road, was withdrawn after City Council refused to endorse the idea. A vacant, fire-damaged apartment building at 2764 Hampshire would have been razed for that parking lot. In late June, when that

proposal was announced, owners of the building told City officials that they would begin immediately with its renovation if the parking lot plan were dropped. No work has yet begun, and reports of children playing in the building continue.

MOVED . . . Mac's Backs Paperbacks has re-opened in the former location of Ascherman Gallery, 1785 Coventry. The shop buys, sells, and trades paper back books and a few hardbacks.

Rack & Ruin, which offers vintage clothing for men and women, has opened in Mac's old space, upstairs at 1846 Coventry Road, Room 2.

FAREWELL . . . Ella Holly, the the City's Community Relations staffer who worked with Coventry Neighbors, Inc., has left the City to accept another job.

OPENING . . . A collection of photographs by Nicholas Hlobeczy will open September 7, 7:30 to 10:30 PM, at the Ascherman Gallery of the Cleveland Photographic Workshop. This opening will be the first such occasion for the Gallery in its new, much larger location—1846 Coventry Road, Suite 4. That's the former location of New World Haircuts. Proprietor Herb Ascherman says that the very large windows of the second-floor studio make him one of only a few Cleveland photographers who can use natural light in their studios.

UNITARIANS . . . The Unitarian Society building on Lancashire has an attractive new sign and substantial, neatly-done landscaping in its front yard. The work is part of an on-going renovation effort. . . . The Society's spiritual leader, Rev. Chris Bailey, was recently injured in an automobile accident while visiting her children on the West Coast. Though she remains confined at Brookside Hospital in San Pablo, California, she is up and able to walk. She hopes to return here soon.

AN OPEN LETTER TO COVENTRY MERCHANTS

Dear Merchants,

What was the Heights Art Theatre has become the Coventry Cinema, a very respectable, family-oriented neighborhood theater.

Night after night, the change will bring many hundreds of new people to this neighborhood. Many of the theatergoers will wander about, before and after the show, shopping. That means a continuous boost to neighborhood merchants.

What will Coventry's merchants--especially the non-restaurants--do to keep these folks coming back here to shop? They cannot simply rely on the theatre to book one blockbuster movie after another.

Will these new shoppers find dirty windows, littered sidewalks, and stagnant window displays?

Or will the merchants begin doing more to clean up in front of their stores? Will merchants work collectively to clean up areas like Muni Lot 20, next to Coventry Beverage and Pizza and the mini-park in front of Coventryard? Will merchants, individually or collectively, begin paying more attention to the planters, which now too often just gather garbage? Will the service merchants, all of whom are closed at night, clean up their windows and storefronts, so that the window-shopping theatre-goers see more to attract them back to Coventry?

For at least twenty years, The Heights Art Theatre was not a "neighborhood" theatre. It did not attract a broad base of local residents and suburbanites. Before it became a porn theatre, Heights Art offered esoteric art films and midnight movies. The audience for these offerings often came from far away.

Now the potential audience includes the kids down the block, the folks in Musicians Towers, and people from Lynd-

hurst, East Cleveland, and University Heights.

This change in the theatre's fare represents a very unusual chance for strong economic revival in Coventry. Coventry Neighbors, Inc., and the Coventry Merchants Association have worked for years towards the goal of economic revitalization. The change at the theatre is a breath of new life for the work of merchant and neighborhood groups.

I have no doubt that merchants who take pride in their shops and in their neighborhood will continue their activities. I also have no doubt that other merchants will jump on the bandwagon and begin improvements. But I doubt that the marginal merchants will keep up these activities on a continuing basis, and I am positive that all the merchants will continue their 1960-ish attitude of not exerting peer pressure on their reluctant neighbors.

First appearances do count. First-time theatre-goers might venture to the corner of Coventry and Mayfield, and walk back down the other side of the street. But if the street is littered and shop windows dirty, those potential regular customers won't walk around the neighborhood when they come back--if they come back at all.

I live on Hampshire, near Wilton; most of my neighbors are home-owners. Many of these neighbors haven't been on Coventry Road in years. Many of these potential customers don't even know who the Coventry merchants are! But now they are talking about the theatre, and they are excited. The Coventry Cinema will bring them back.

The ball is in your court, merchants of Coventry. Seize this opportunity.

Bruce M. Hennes, President
Coventry Neighbors, Inc.

SCHOOLS' REORGANIZATION EXPLAINED

by Maureen Weigand

"And now, for the finale, we will send a teacher into orbit." There are those who would suspect that this drastic attempt at educational reform, proposed by Ronald Reagan, originated in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights school administration building. It is, after all, only slightly more bizarre than what our Superintendent proposed and what our board approved, isn't it? Skepticism is understandable; it is based for some in the feeling that you "don't fix what ain't broke" and for others in the fear that the neighborhood school will be eliminated.

Since I have been one of the most vocal proponents of need for change and of the plan as approved, this will be an attempt to outline its programs and, in some places, to defend its components.

In May the Board unanimously requested that Superintendent Abramovitz draft a school reorganization plan based on building stronger educational programming in light of decreased enrollment. On June 11, at a series of public meetings, the plan was unveiled. Subsequently, three public hearings were held, one at each of the junior highs, to present the plan and to solicit citizen input. These hearings were, not surprisingly, very well attended. Reaction was vocal and intelligent, if somewhat mixed. It became clear that the most controversial portion of the plan was the proposal to divide the elementary grades almost in half, housing grades kindergarten through second in four buildings, and the third through fifth grades in the remaining four buildings. In the end, clear public opposition to this proposal contributed to the Board's decision to eliminate it.

On August 21, by a four to one vote, the Board adopted the reorganization plan to be implemented in September, 1985.

"Fine," say the skeptics (I know

because I tend to be a skeptic myself), "how will this affect my child's education?"

In short, from the top down, ninth graders will be "real" high school students now. They will be housed at the High School, with facilities not available to them in junior high buildings. Without ninth graders, the middle schools can tailor programs to students without being tied to "Carnegie units"—40 minute periods for each subject. Children will be able to spend time where each most needs to spend time. The possibility for more individualized instruction in the middle schools, and the fact that sixth graders will now be students in a building which allows them facilities for further study in science, for example, is most exciting. Elementary students (kindergarten through fifth grade) will have a choice—an enrichment program outside their neighborhood or the neighborhood school.

The new wrinkle in all this is the Board-administered pre-school/early childhood program. More and more families are need day care and pre-school programs. The school system can provide educationally and developmentally sound programs in the neighborhood elementary schools, introducing pre-school families to the system with an eye to keeping them in the system for the elementary grades and at the same time keeping the cost manageable for parents. As a former early-childhood myself, I am most excited about this aspect of the plan.

And for those without children in the schools, what's in it for you? Would you believe improved quality of education at no greater cost? A school system which will attract young families who care most about quality schools? Change for the sake of change? NO! Change for the sake of better education for every child? I believe so!

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COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC. General Meeting, Tuesday, September 11, 7:30 PM in the Community Room of the Coventry Village Library. The public is invited.

COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC. Trustees Meeting, Thursday, October 10, 7:30 PM at 2910 Hampshire Road. Committee Chairpersons are asked to attend. The Trustees meeting is open to all dues-paid members of CNI.

NOW is the time to join COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC. Membership includes a subscription to the *Coventry Village News*. All memberships expire on December 31 of each year. The form below may be used for renewals.

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Class of membership:Individual (\$2.50)Family (\$3.50)Senior (\$1.50)

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