



The Rockhill Times

President's Letter

Summer 2024

Rockhill's Unsung Heroes

In the last issue of the Times, I presented a brief description of the many battles that our neighborhood has fought against outside forces during the last seventy years. Most of the residents involved in winning those battles were well-known and appreciated at the time – in fact, many are still among us. These residents often had power in the city, knew powerful people, and knew how to get things done – they were the known heroes who were sung about, and for good reason. They made Rockhill a better place for all of us to live. Another group of less visible residents is also invaluable, however, in making our neighborhood a great place to live. These are the unsung heroes, residents who quietly, often privately and independently, go about setting straight what they perceive to be awry. These are the heroes whom I would like to fete in this column.

I salute our residents who routinely pick up litter along our streets during their daily walks. One resident even considers it his responsibility to routinely de-litter Theis Park. In fact, this same resident privately purchased and installed attractive litter containers on Rockhill Terrace and in our pocket park; and, he empties them as necessary. This frequent de-littering may become even more valuable following installation of bike paths on Cleaver, as city cleanup equipment does not readily deal with the barriers usually associated with bike paths. Distinct from removing litter, other residents quietly and without fanfare, shovel snow from the sidewalks of their less able neighbors, making life not just easier for those neighbors, but for all of us using those sidewalks.

A significant number of neighbors have remained involved in maintaining The Narrows and our Pocket Park. The chores they perform are those that we all routinely perform in our own yards: weeding, mulching, pruning, edging, and picking up branches. Although this volunteer work is now under the aegis of our Homes and Gardens Club, it has been performed routinely by volunteers since well before Susan and I moved here in 1997. For a very long time, RHA volunteers have worked to make our entire neighborhood more attractive, not just their own homes.

There are also many Rockhill neighbors who call 311 on their own when they note something amiss, such as a load of trash dumped beside Rockhill Terrace, a large broken limb partially blocking a street, an abandoned auto, a large chuckhole, etc. – things that detract from our neighborhood.

Although members of the RHA Board of Directors are expected to serve on committees, there are also residents from outside the Board who periodically volunteer to serve on RHA committees, allowing RHA to function more smoothly. Moreover, unrelated to Board activities, volunteers have stepped up on their own to organize activities to foster interactions among our neighbors, such as the monthly potluck dinners after the tennis club closed and the current periodic coffee club gatherings to bring us closer together.

Galen Mussman recently sent me a quote from an interview with Phil Levine on the importance of picking your neighborhood. Levine said: "Most neighborhoods in your city you might never step foot in. They might as well be in the other side of the country. But the things in your immediate vicinity are the things that are going

to dominate your life. So picking and influencing your neighborhood is really important....the neighborhood determines quite a bit about our life and our happiness." I wouldn't deign to guess the motivation of all our unsung heroes who make Rockhill a better place to live, but they do just that in our small, but wonderful, piece of Kansas City.

Gerry Carlson
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Cleaver II Update

By Jim Wanser

The Cleaver II Committee comprises Nancy Abraham, Karen Moninger, Rick Crawford and me. Our committee has been working with Bailey Waters from the City Public Works department. Ms. Waters initially indicated work on the Cleaver II project would start in June, but a delay in assembling estimates has pushed the project to late July or early August. She will notify us when the schedule is more specific.

The project area extends from Troost Avenue to Oak Street. It will not complete the connection of the Gillham bike lanes to the Trolley Trail. That will require an additional segment to the project. The design has remained consistent with what I shared in the Spring newsletter, i.e., a multimodal bike lane on each side of the street, one lane of traffic in each direction, and a center turn lane. For the section affecting our neighborhood (Troost to Rockhill Road), two pedestrian activated crosswalks will be installed with a flashing yellow light on a small island in the center turn lane. Two additional crosswalks are planned between the Nelson Atkins and Theis Park. In addition to the crosswalks, a left turn signal will be added for those going east on Cleaver II and turning north onto Rockhill Road.

We have worked with Ms. Waters to provide noise level readings for traffic on Cleaver II, as well as feedback on the proposed bollards to be used. The proposed bollards are basically a black version of the white ones used in similar projects around the city, but there will

be fewer of them, with a bollard at the ends of each segment of the protective barrier for the multimodal bike lanes. There will still be lots of bollards as the protective curbing will start and stop for each street and driveway. We asked for a more historic look, sending examples of those that were more consistent with the historic character of the neighborhood; however, the suggestion was rebuffed citing the need for City crews to provide maintenance of the bollards.

Based on what we have learned, the committee thinks that the Cleaver II Project will result in a significantly safer street for everyone.

Fall Picnic (Save the Date)

By Ed Straley

Put a big circle around October 6th on your calendar. That is when we'll be getting together for the 2024 edition of the Rockhill Neighborhood Picnic. Don't worry, the Chiefs game is on Monday night that week. Back to the picnic - it's a wonderful chance to catch up with old and new friends and to get acquainted with neighbors who have recently become part of our wonderful community.

We'll be gathering at the same place as the last few years: the "pocket park" at 45th and Kenwood from 4:00 to 7:00 PM. We will start eating around 5:30. PLEASE PLAN TO COME – it won't be the same without you.

Let's Identify Our Champion Trees

By Rockhill Homes and Gardens Club

Do you have a champion tree in your yard? A champion tree is one that stands out from the crowd. It may be an exceptional example of the species due to size, age, rarity, or historical significance. To qualify as a champion tree in Missouri, a tree must be a native to the region and visible from the street. The Missouri Department of Conservation keeps a list of existing champion trees and their location. Here in Kansas City, the Heartland Tree

Alliance at Bridging the Gap manages the champion tree program. There are several champion trees in our area, including at Linda Hall Library, Kauffman Memorial Garden and Loose Park. If you think you might have a winner, notify Jim Sager (saggrrr@sbcglobal.net) or Karen Moninger (kmoninger@gmail.com). They will come to your house to measure the tree and submit it as a candidate. Meanwhile, to learn more, go to <https://mdc.mo.gov/blogs/discover-nature-notes/50-years-champion-trees>.

May We Include Your Home?

By Rockhill Homes and Gardens Club

A Gardens & Architecture Tour of Historic Rockhill will take place May 17, 2025 to celebrate our 50 years as a National Historic District. The tour is intended to feature select gardens and the unique and diverse architecture of our district homes. Please let Karen Moninger (kmoninger@gmail.com) know by August 1 if you would like your home featured on the tour. She will request information about your home to be included in the tour brochure. All homes featured will be viewed only from the exterior.

In an exciting prelude to the tour, Brian Ball (brianball@gmail.com) has finished working with neighbors to obtain plaques that indicate our national historic designation.

In a subsequent newsletter, we will ask for volunteers to assist with the event. There will be numerous opportunities to join us in creating a wonderful day of celebration for Rockhillians.

Who Can Host Our Next Coffee Club?

By Jeffie Mussman and Karen Moninger

We've thoroughly enjoyed our coffee gatherings thus far and would like to set up hosts for three events per year. We have a volunteer to host in February or March of 2025, but we need a neighbor to host sometime in September or October and someone for late May or early June. Join forces with another

neighbor if you like! We will be happy to help get the word out on the time and place. If you are interested, please contact Jeffie Mussman at Jeffiemussman@gmail.com or Karen Moninger at kmoninger@gmail.com



Celebrating Gloria Everhart

By Galen Mussman



This young woman was 10 years old when the photograph above was taken. It will not surprise you to learn that she lived by the motto "*fashion* is looking at a magazine, but *style* is what YOU make it yourself." She went on to become nationally and internationally

known as director at the Fashion Group International, a consultant to Saks Fifth Avenue, and a consultant and speaker for Who's Who in Fashion. She became best known locally for founding and operating a Kansas City landmark, Act II Boutique, which flourished for nearly 60 years and was known across the U.S.

By now many of you know the little girl was Gloria Everhart.

Gloria and her husband, George, lived in Rockhill for many years. George had an opportunity to buy seven "mid-century modern" homes on Rockhill Road. They were sold as one plot and zoned multi-family. Mr. Everhart rezoned the properties to single family, sold five and kept one for a rental property. He and Gloria lived in 7th, a home on 45th Street. They loved the location being right across from the Rockhill Tennis Club and the Nelson-Atkins. Gloria immediately put her fashion and design skills to work. The result was a home that was featured in numerous news and magazine stories and was part of the Vanderslice Homes Tour.

Seeing the elegance and beauty around Gloria might give the impression that this all came easy. But before jumping to that conclusion, think about the time when Gloria was growing up and the societal attitudes when she would have been starting her business. Gloria's daughter, Galen Everhart-Clark, explained how things really were:

"Mom was an overcomer and a visionary. She had determination that could not be thwarted by anything. In the beginning of their marriage times were tough, especially financially. With five children at home, she was somewhat trapped as far as contributing to the urgent financial need.

As a little girl, around the age of three or four, I remember her taking us on little red wagon rides through the neighborhood around 50th terrace in the Westwood area. She had devised a plan to collect the unused clothing of the neighbors and then resell them. Her bargaining chip was that she would keep half and they would keep half. So, holding my baby brother in my arms, we chartered through our

neighborhood, knocking on door after door, collecting unused clothing in the little red wagon.

She would wash the clothes and then hang them on the back porch that was a part of the dining room. Before long she had collected several racks of clothing and the word got out that this was a fabulous secret place to pick up a quick bargain.

Then she quickly surmised that traveling to the wealthier neighborhoods would engender a far greater return, and the customers and gals in the neighborhood would not recognize someone wearing their once cherished item.

Eventually this business model would become Act II. After the family moved to 55th Street just a few steps away from Loose Park, Gloria's operation continued to expand as she utilized a space in a carriage house on the property. A neighbor gently explained to Gloria that she wouldn't be able to operate a business in a residential area, but then went on to help her move to a property on West 47th Street with zoning that permitted commercial activities. "The rest is history".

Gloria made everyone who came to her store feel important. She shared insights into how to recognize quality designers and fabric so her customers were able to not only dress well for less, but to make purchases that would last and remain in style.

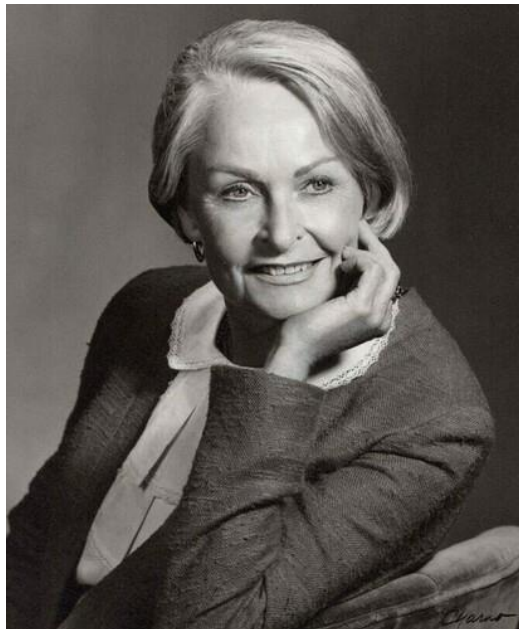
Gloria gave of herself serving on numerous boards. She befriended young women trying to find their way in the business world (just ask my wife, Jeffie). Gloria had tremendous energy and was determined to use it. She was asked in an interview how she did it and answered by saying, "I don't sit down. If I sit on the couch, I will want to hang out and stay there, and its harder and harder to get up. So I just don't sit down." This helps explain why you could regularly find Gloria – well into her 90's – outside her beautiful 45th Street home tending to landscaping, sweeping the driveway, or heading to Costco, always dressed immaculately with a smile on her face.

No story about Gloria would be complete without mentioning what motivated and guided Gloria in all she did. In Gerry Carlson's

“President’s Message” he lauds what he calls the unsung heroes in the neighborhood. All those have praiseworthy reasons for their kind acts of service. For Gloria, her Christian faith was what sustained her and encouraged her to love, humility and good works.

What a life. One week short of 98 years, having passed away May 10, 2024.

Living in Rockhill is like being in a diamond mine. There are many precious gems in our midst if we’ll just do a little digging. Gloria is no longer with us, but there are many other neighbors with their own incredible stories. Let’s do all we can to share them sooner rather than later.



One Stop Shop for Rockhill News

By Tom Winter

Be sure to check out the RHA website: <https://rockhillkc.org> where you can find current events, links to neighborhood news, and shortcuts for City services.

The Fall edition of the Rockhill Times will be distributed in early October. If you have information to share, or notices of recognition or events, send them to mussmang@gmail.com please. Previous issues of the Times can be found at www.rockhillkc.org/archives.html