

Tower Grove Heights Gazette

Volume 19, No. 4

Grand to Gustine

Arsenal to Utah Place

Winter 2008



ORPHEUM CLEANERS - *Another Crown Jewel*

BY JOHN PAPA **A**nother jewel in the crown that is the Tower Groves Heights Neighborhood would best be described as a 24 carat version of the American Dream. Earlier installments of this series have focused on entertainment, educational and architectural subjects, all integral parts of a quality environment in which to live. No community can exist, however, without a vibrant commercial sector, and the Heights has been home for 70 years to one of the most useful, enduring enterprises in St. Louis, the Orpheum Cleaners.

As a boy of 14 years in the early days of the 20th Century, Nicholas Psaris looked to America for opportunity and freedom. He lied about his age to enter the United States in Massachusetts, and he gradually worked his way down the East coast over to New Orleans as a waiter. Waiting tables not only provided income, Nicholas found it a perfect classroom to learn English.

A brother-in-law owned a dry cleaners on Dumaine Avenue in the French Quarter. The building remains to this day and with its mosaic style white and black tile floor, it bears a striking resemblance to the Orpheum at 3199 Grand Avenue.

Nicholas learned the skills of dry cleaning, tailoring and making hats and shoes in New Orleans. He found a bride, as well, and they moved to St. Louis in 1918. With

resourcefulness, ingenuity and a keen business sense, the Psaris' opened a dry cleaning and tailor shop next door to the Orpheum Theater that year.

The Orpheum Cleaners enjoyed immediate success servicing the theater wardrobe department cleaning, repairing and tailoring the costumes of the performers. It remained at its initial location in Grandel Square until 1938, when a fruit and vegetable stand on the Northwest corner of

Wyoming and Grand Avenue became available. Nicholas moved south to a thriving residential neighborhood to continue his business and raise a family. His son Dennis and two daughters began working side by side. In those days clothes were placed in a barrel of cleaning

solution, drip dried and pressed. The barrel was long ago replaced with a state of the art, dry cleaning machine still in use today. Over the years both Nicholas and Dennis used creativity, invention and an occasional kitchen pot or pan to improve the efficiency and purity of their cleaning processes.

Dennis took over the shop in the late 1950's, and a new generation of Psaris children (all nine of them!) were "pressed" into the service of the family business at the age of 12, unless they needed to correct their direction earlier. Sometimes this meant helping out at 8 to 10 years of age.

The fifth of those children, Laurie, now manages the business with help from her sister, Cathy. As is common in successful neighborhood stores, Dennis continued to work regularly until his death three years ago at the age of 78. While serving as a local historian and friend to many sitting on the wooden bench above the steam heated register just inside the front door, Dennis provided warmth and comfort to his many customers. After teaching Laurie to sew at the age of eleven, he also

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photo credit: Marjie Kennedy - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mbk/>

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The Gazette is a non-profit publication published quarterly by the Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association. For information concerning advertising rates and layout planning email Gary Kushinsky at gazette-newbiz@towergroveheights.com

Your letters and comments are always welcome at the Gazette.

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RECAP OF AUTUMN FEST in the Heights 2008

Saturday, October 11 was a beautiful early fall day, with great, St Louis tepid weather. A leisurely gathering of neighbors, returning guests, and new faces, made this event one of the premier events for the Tower Grove Heights neighborhood. The familiar venue of wine tasting varied only slightly this year, featuring the generous participation of four residential homeowners, in the 3700-3800 of Utah Place. Registration

began at the #3706 home of Robert and Pauline Ashton. Food contributions, coordinated by Deborah Ervin, from several local merchants, filled the dining room of this wonderful home. Pauline's expansive garden provided an inviting setting to sample an array of wines, featuring five very distinct offerings



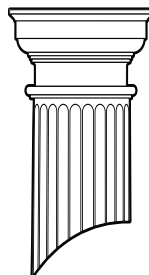
of Cabernet, Shiraz and Malbar reds; Chardonnay and Pinot Grigio, whites.

Guests were offered a traditional carriage ride around Utah's center boulevard to a second home on the northwest corner of Utah at Spring,

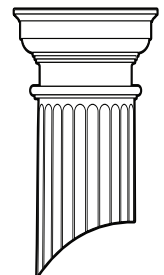
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owned by the chairpersons of the event, John Papa and Pat Edwards. Awesome desserts were available, prepared delectably by Pat Edwards, (chef extraordinaire), which certainly spiked the sweet tooth of all the indulgent. The carriage ride continued around the 3800 block median



to a third location that offered the adjacent backyard gardens of Ray Marklin and Fred and Kay Hildebrand 3806 and 3810 Utah. Their manicured gardens are connected by a shared gate, allowing visitors to meander through and purchase a favorite wine by the glass or bottle, from selections chosen at the earlier tasting and then relax and enjoy conversation throughout the rest of the evening.

The St Louis Carriage Company provided two horse drawn carriages. Both of these nostalgic carriages were made available through the generous sponsorship of Gazette's advertisers, Shamus Dowling and David Goodson of Korzendorfer-Bick Frame Shop, and Kurt Wolfgram of Wolfgram and Associates

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One of the things making **Autumn Fest in the Heights** an interesting and premier event has been the many donations offered by several of our area **restaurants and food merchants**. This year is with no exception! If you frequent any of these establishments, and enjoyed one of their specialties, please take a moment to thank them for their contribution.

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2009 TGHNA Election of Board Members

The TGHNA November calendar includes an election of officers for 2009. At the meeting, October 21st, Robert Ashton, Association President, took nominations for the Association Board members, 2009. Elections will take place at the November 25th meeting of the members.

This year's President-elect, Mark Froese, will serve as next year's President. Robert Ashton, current President will become next year's Past President. The following nominees complete the slate which will be voted on by a show of hands from members present at the November 25th meeting.

David Bruns,
nominated for President-elect

Jan Clinite,
nominated for Treasurer (incumbent)

Claudia Seifert,
nominated for Secretary

Pauline Ashton,
nominated for Membership
Secretary (incumbent)

At the November meeting of the board, current Secretary, Diane Hurwitz informed the board that she did not intend to run as incumbent for the position as Secretary. Diane has served on the Board of TGHNA for the past 13 years. The board thanks her for her past service as secretary, and wish her well in future endeavors.

ORPHEUM CLEANERS - *Another Crown Jewel*

- CONTINUED -

explained how to keep the vintage Singer sewing machines in good repair and lowered the plumbing pipe clothes racks so that his petite daughter could reach them.

In some respects the Orpheum Cleaners is a living museum and a cultural melting pot. The Singer machines near the front windows date from the 1800's. Motors were added in 1935. The cash register is a working antique built in the mid-nineteenth century. Laurie learned how to make and clean hats on equipment dating to her grandfather and she has a rare hole punch device for leather belts. Immigrant artisans from Europe and Central America have found work at the Orpheum, and many had careers there of 25 years or more.

The Orpheum has remained a jewel in our neighborhood because of an unwavering commitment to personal service and convenience. Their simple motto "Quality is higher than price" remains true to this day. Next time you pass by, admire the beautiful gown, suit or uniform freshly cleaned and pressed that hangs behind the counter. Think of the ingenious wisdom passed on by Deunis Psaris to Laurie. "Why advertise in the paper when you have such large picture windows on Grand Avenue?" After three generations what a perfect example of the pride and confidence produced by realizing the American Dream.



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Wednesday: Charitable Events Night

A Charitable Organization-501(3) c may schedule an event for a Wednesday night, 7-10 pm. The organization will receive 20% of CASH sales for the evening. Please arrange at least two weeks in advance.

Thursday: Acoustic Open Mic Night

Come on in with your instrument/musical voice. Acoustic only, please. 7-10 pm. Please arrange at least one week in advance.

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Birthday Parties can be scheduled any time during the day until 4:30 pm. Up to 10 children or adults. Please arrange at least one week in advance.

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REHABBING WITH RICH

SPACE, the Final Frontier

BY RICH IEZZI

When people move into their city houses, they fully occupy the first and second floors and use the basement as the family Laundromat. But what about that third floor?

Tower Grove Heights homes are fraught with third floor problems. Our homes are considered 2 ½ stories because the roofline consumes much of the third floor footprint. Knee walls (the short, vertical walls from the floor to the roofline angle) make furniture placement and picture hanging challenging and third stories are notorious for being hot in summer and cold in winter.

That's probably why Tony and Ann Balsamo's third floor languished so long in their home in the 3800 block of Connecticut. Ann and Tony rented from Jean and me eight years ago in TGHT's, then bought their Connecticut house in 2001. It's a beautiful home with miles of natural woodwork and a large dining room bay that makes part of that room look like it disappears into never-never land.

Ann described the original third floor as 'lame and useless' but things changed with the birth of their son Wesley. "The new baby took up living space on the second floor so gaining space on the third floor would produce a 'net zero'", Tony explained. Ann was also expecting a visit from her sister, a circus clown, who stayed with them during the off season. "We all needed our privacy", Ann concluded.

Plans were made for a full third floor bath but this is always tricky. The only area of full ceiling height also contained the stairs. Knee walls limited storage possibilities and the new bathroom couldn't block ingress and egress between both third floor rooms.

But when I saw the completed bathroom, it was like it wasn't even there. Measuring only 4 feet by 7 ½ feet, it's completely out of the way. I was interested in the shower because many European showers are so tiny you can't pick up the soap if you drop it. This one is a very adequate 30" by 30".

continued on page 15


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Troubled Times

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This year has been one of incredible ups and downs. We have all felt the financial turmoil in some measure, but imagine if you were on the brink of financial disaster all the time and then lost your job or developed a major illness. The Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood is once again adopting two families from the 100 Neediest Cases for the holidays and they need us more than ever this year. I know this year will be tighter than past years for everyone, but I hope you can imagine how hard it will be for families who were barely making it before the financial situation our country is facing. For the fifth year we have selected two families in the south St. Louis area who need help this season and I encourage everyone to give what you can.

You can help by contributing a gift or monetary donation to one or both of the families. Both families are having trouble paying bills, but would also like to

shelter their children from those adult issues with several nice holiday gifts. In the past we have provided gifts for everyone in the family, a big box of household goods including grocery store gift certificates, and paid hundreds of dollars of utilities bills to give families some joy and comfort during a difficult time.

If you would like to contribute this year, helping is easy!! Either donate a new unwrapped gift that fits one of the family members or themed baskets or donate cash (or check – made out to TGHNA) which will be used to buy gifts and help our adopted families pay for utilities. Donations of gift wrapping materials (holiday paper, ribbon, tape, name tags) are needed as well. Drop your donations at the drop point and we take care of the rest. All gifts will be wrapped and distributed to the families.

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Grandmother: (60) Size Small Top; Size Medium Coat; Size 5 Pants

Daughter: (21) Size Medium Top; Size Large Coat; Size 18 Pants

Daughter: (12) Size X-Large Top & Coat;
Size 18 Pants

Son: (4) Size 4T Shirt & Pants;
Size 5T Coat

Special Requests: Towels, blankets; utility payments; food gift certificates

Family 2: Single Mother in school part-time; just lost her job, but is looking for another; one child has severe asthma; the children are sleeping on mattresses on the floor.

Mother: (32) Size 22 top and dress; Size 24 Pants and Coat

Son: (12) Size X-Large Shirt; Size 40 pants; Size XX-Large Coat

Son: (10) Size Large shirt; Size 6 Coat;
Size 14 Pants

Son: (6) Size 8 Shirt and Coat

Daughter: (4) Size 7 Top and Coat

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Entertainment Basket – Consider: age appropriate books, family games...

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In past years, the donations from the neighborhood have occasionally resulted in duplicate gifts. Any duplicated gifts will be contributed to the shelter.

There is always a need for volunteers to help distribute flyers to the neighborhood and to wrap the gifts. If you are interested in helping to wrap or flyer, contact Ellen.

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If you attended Autumn Fest-2008 you may have sampled a delicious offering we called pumpkin soup. There were many enthusiastic comments about this delightful treat, and several requests for the recipe. Norma Schmitz, a resident of Tower Grove Heights prepared this appetizer and agreed to pass the following along.

Autumn Pear & Pumpkin Soup

- 1 Cup Bacon, chopped - cooked: (save grease)
- 1½ Cup Onion, chopped
- 1½ Cup Water or Chicken Stock
- 6 Tsp Instant chicken bouillon granules
- 3 Cans 16-ounce/can pumpkin
- 7 Cups Half and Half
- 3¼ Cups Pear or apricot nectar
- ¾ Tsp White pepper

In a large saucepan, sauté onion, bouillon granules and cooked bacon in bacon grease. Reduce heat and add water or stock. Simmer covered about 10 minutes, until ingredients are tender. Cool slightly and then transfer mixture into food blender and add pumpkin. Cover and continue to heat the mixture in saucepan. Stir in half and half, pear nectar, ginger and white pepper. Cook contents and stir over low heat. Soup may be served warm and inside a cleaned pumpkin: A terrific Thanksgiving surprise that serves 18.

Submitted by:
Norma Schmitz, 3860 Arsenal St.

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REHABBING WITH RICH

SPACE, the Final Frontier

By RICH IEZZI

The bathroom sits in the middle of both third floor rooms and trespasses into an existing closet a bit for the shower area but you'd never know it. To gain additional storage space, Ann and Tony built out over the stairway. This is always a brilliant idea as that space at the top of the stair wall is just wasting away. A stair ceiling was built that followed the stair pitch, making the ceiling look original and enabled a linen closet to be installed directly across from the bathroom. To conquer the too hot/too cold problem, additional fan capacity was added to boost heating and cooling.

The entire project took ten weeks and was contracted out except for one crucial task: "I picked out the tile", Ann beamed. As for living through the project, Ann explained, "It's like being pregnant---once the baby arrives, you forget the pain and suffering". When I inquired about other future projects, Ann declared that they are "Done and done". And you can bet she's not clowning around.

- Rich Iezzi

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*Dr. Daniel O. Reiter
Dr. Alexia M. Hampton*

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This 2008 Autumn Fest, sponsored by Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association, was the fourth consecutive year for this chosen venue. Prior events have included additional activities including art exhibits with live demonstrations, art sales and raffled items. Each event has been well attended by neighbors and local dignitaries. The primary purpose of the event has been to stimulate "friend-raising": Providing residents with an opportunity to renew acquaintances from the neighborhood; and share a casual evening together; so often neglected in our busy lifestyles. †

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10:00 a.m. main church
& 5:00 p.m. chapel

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phone - 772.3970

www.towergrovechurch.org
email: info@towergrovechurch.org

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Did you know

that the TGH Gazette is delivered to your door, as a resident of Tower Grove Heights? Did you ever wonder how it gets there? Well, the staff of the TGH Gazette would like to thank the many **BLOCK REPRESENTATIVES**, throughout our neighborhood, who distribute the Gazette in such a timely manner. They **perform a very important part in the success of this publication** and we are very grateful for their service to TGHNA and to the many individuals and businesses who advertise within these pages.


Among other opportunities, in lending a hand within TGHNA, there are **openings for Block Representatives along Arsenal St. (3600/3700 and 3800), and also along Humphrey (3600/3700)**. If you have an interest in becoming a Block Representative and wish further information, please go to our website at www.towergroveheights.com for a full description and contact information.

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TOWER GROVE HEIGHTS

Neighborhood Association Contact List

Monthly meetings 7:15 pm on 4th Tuesday (except December),
First Church of Divine Science on 3617 Wyoming Street

BOARD

President:Robert Ashton
President-elect:Mark Froese
Past President:John Papa
Secretary:Diane Hurwitz
Treasurer:Jan Clinite
Asst. Secretary/Membership:Pauline Ashton

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Block Representatives:Tom Reitenbach
New Business/Gazette Advertising:Gary Kushinsky
Fund Raising/Events:Kathryn Heitzenroeder
Webmaster - towergroveheights.com:OPEN

BLOCK REPRESENTATIVES

3600/3700 Arsenal:Recruiting!
3800 Arsenal:Recruiting!
3600/3700 Hartford:Mark Abbott/ Sherri Craven
3800 Hartford:Rich Iezzi
3600/3700 Juniata:Lynne Casey
3800 Juniata:Tom Reitenbach & Kim Cole
3600/3700 Connecticut:Jodie Heliker
3800 Connecticut:Virlene Reichert
3600/3700 Wyoming:Gen Obata
3800 Wyoming:Theresa Mithen
3600/3700 Humphrey:Recruiting!
3800 Humphrey:Erin L. O'Reilly/ Georgiana Grant
3600/3700 Utah Place: ..Christy Andrews/ Susie Gudermuth
3800 Utah Place:Pat Edwards/ Jim McClaren

www.TOWERGROVEHEIGHTS.com



TOWER GROVE HEIGHTS NEEDS YOU!

The Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association can only be YOUR association if you join.
 With your participation, TGHNA will be a reflection of what YOU want the Heights to become.
 So please don't delay in joining or rejoining.

- To find out what is happening in the neighborhood • To make the Heights a cleaner and safer place
- To have a liaison with City Hall and other agencies • To better protect our property values
- To make the neighborhood a more interesting and fun place to live

Please indicate your membership level choice:

- ___ **Individual (1 vote) \$10/year**
 ___ **Household (2 votes) \$15/year**
 ___ **Associate (non-voting) \$10/year**
 ___ **Lifetime (1 vote) \$100 single payment**
 ___ **Business (1 vote) \$25 /year**
(entitles member to a 10% discount on TGHNA Gazette Ads for one year)

NAME(S) _____
 ADDRESS _____

 PHONE _____
 EMAIL _____

PLEASE PRINT:

- ___ Yes ___ No, Include my name, address and contact information in the TGHNA Buzz Book
 ___ Yes ___ No, Please add my email address to the Neighborhood Forum Email notification list



Return this form and tax deductible gift to your block representative or send to:
Tower Grove Heights Neighborhood Association • 3706 Utah Place , Saint Louis, MO 63116
(TGHNA is a tax exempt 501c3 organization)