



# Gifford Park's Pride

*Gifford Park Neighborhood: A Great Place to Live, Work, Learn and Play*

November 1999

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

## Community Walks Held in October

During three evenings in October, Gifford Park neighbors have participated in a "community walk" along the 33rd Street business district between Cass and Burt Street. According to the GPNA Executive Board, the idea behind the walks is to demonstrate to those living in this area and those passing through that people who live here are interested in what is going on in the neighborhood and are committed to maintaining a safe environment. In addition, those gathered for the walk acted as an adjunct to the GPNA Watch Group which routinely monitors the area. Walkers who chatted with neighbors living along 33rd Street encouraged them to report illegal or suspicious activity directly to the police or to the GPNA through the "Take Back 33rd Street" project.



*Several members of the original GPNA Watch Group joined other neighbors for the first community walk on October 8th. Pictured above from left to right are Kathy Rose, Mike Caban, Rich Exline, Chris Foster, Harry Dirgo, and Ron Yates. (Photo by Terry Wilwerding)*

## Next Meeting

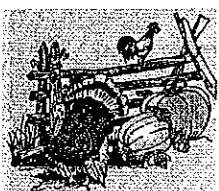
**Thursday, November 4  
7:00 P.M.**

**Guest Speaker:  
City Councilman  
Subby Anzaldo**

**St. Joseph Hospital  
Dining Rooms A, B, and C**

## PKA-GPNA Baseball-Softball Clinic Held in Gifford Park

Fifteen area children participated in a free baseball-softball clinic sponsored by the GPNA in conjunction with the Pi Kappa Alpha (PKA) Creighton fraternity on Saturday morning, October 2nd. Approximately a dozen fraternity members helped provide coaching and instruction in hitting, throwing, pitching, and catching. After the drills, an actual game was played. Prior to the clinic, fraternity members, GPNA volunteers, and the participants helped to clean the park. GPNA members who assisted at the clinic were Ron Frey, Jim Wilwerding, Brad Bogard, and Chris Foster. A good time was had by all!



*Happy Thanksgiving !*

**from the Gifford Park  
Neighborhood Association**

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*Editor's note: If you have something that would be of interest to our neighborhood, we encourage you to submit an article for our monthly newsletter. Editorials must be approved by the GPNA Executive Board. Articles can be left at the GPNA Office; please include your name and phone number. Contact Sue Wilwerding (342-2795) or Chris Foster (342-6006) for information regarding the newsletter.*

**From the Desk of the President**

You've probably noticed lately the increase in police presence along 33<sup>rd</sup> Street. This is part of an effort to make our neighborhood safer by focusing efforts on 33<sup>rd</sup> Street, since this is where many of our neighborhood's problems occur. At our last general membership meeting **Omaha Police Chief Don Carey** responded to these and other concerns from residents. In mid-October several GPNA members met with **Deputy Chief Steve Coufal, Criminal Investigation Captain Don Thorson, Lt. John Friend, Lt. Dan Komor and Sgt. Jeff Baker**. This was a very effective meeting with specific goals established and a strategy for accomplishing these goals. As you may have read on page 1, another part of our effort to make our streets safer were the three neighborhood walks by concerned neighbors. Contacting property owners about specific problems has also been part of this effort. We are very encouraged by the action steps taken by both the police department and local residents to work on solutions to our neighborhood's concerns.

Also at the October meeting, Chief Carey spoke about the 911 system and how emergency calls are prioritized. The following information about 911 was obtained from **Mark Conrey**, Chief of 911 Operations:

911 was started in the United States in February of 1968 as a system by which the caller could call an easily remembered phone number to report an emergency. The city of Omaha activated its system in 1970 making it one of the first larger cities to implement 911. In that first system the call was routed to the 911 answering point like any phone call. The 911 operator had to obtain the callers name, phone number and location. In 1993 Omaha implemented enhanced 911 which automatically displays the phone number and address of the caller to the 911 operator when the call is answered.

Today when a call is received by 911 the operator will answer with the statement "911, what is your emergency?" They want the caller to tell them the exact emergency they have so they can get the appropriate fire, medical or police response going as soon as possible. If the caller states that they need a fire or medical response, the call is transferred to another room in the 911 center. These calls are then answered by dispatchers who are trained in fire and medical emergencies. They have certain questions that must be answered as well as verifying the address. Most of the time while one person is asking questions another person is dispatching the fire engine or rescue squad. So even while you are being questioned help is started. The fire dispatchers have the capability to give certain medical instructions to help stabilize the victim before help arrives. In severe cases they are trained and have the capability to direct a caller on how to give CPR, deliver a baby, or help with a victim who is choking. What is important to remember is that the questions they are asking are necessary and that it does not slow the response. The Fire Department has maintained a 5 minute response average over the past five years.

If the caller identifies a police emergency to the operator the call is immediately handled by the operator who answers the phone. They too will ask several questions to try to get the exact information needed to classify the call according to priorities that have been established by the Omaha Police Department. The operator needs to verify the address and phone number of the caller to make sure that the information displayed to him or her is correct. The information given by the caller is then used to classify the call. A **Priority 1** call is the highest type of call and will be dispatched before all others, these calls include kidnapping, armed

*continued on page 3*

## From the Desk of the President

*continued from page 2*

robbery, crimes of violence that are life threatening, drownings and personal injury accidents. **Priority 2** calls require immediate responses and are dispatched as soon as there is an available officer. Priority 2 calls are when a life threatening or extremely dangerous situation exists to a person and are "in progress" at the time of the call. These include assaults, auto theft, burglary, child abuse, disturbance, gunshots in the area, robbery, sexual assault, suicide and suspicious activity. **Priority 3** calls are those calls which are report-type calls, where the suspect has left the scene, where there are no injuries and the caller wishes to be seen by an officer. Examples of these calls are auto theft over one half hour old, barking dogs, destruction of property, theft, Loud Party Complaints, noise disturbance, prostitution, threats and vandalism. These calls won't get dispatched until all priority 1 and 2 calls have been dispatched. Normally the caller will be advised of a possible 2 to 4 hour delay before dispatch depending on the activity that is occurring within the precinct at that time. On priority 3 calls such as noise complaints the caller may request not to be seen because they do not want the people to know who called in. In those cases of noise complaints where the caller does not wish to be seen they will be classified as **Priority 4** and can take up to four hours before an officer can check on the complaint. Usually the caller will not know if the police responded.

There are some additional things that should be pointed out. Not all 911 operators speak Spanish even though we would like to hire bilingual operators. To overcome this problem we use the AT&T language line. When an operator answers the phone and recognizes the caller does not speak English they will ask the caller not to hang up. They will dial into the service and request an interpreter who speaks the required language. Through the interpreter the questions will be answered and the right response will be initiated. 911 wishes that we wouldn't have to use this service but we take in calls from several different languages in addition to English and Spanish. We have Vietnamese, Lithuanians, Czechoslovakian, Russian and Italian members of the community who all rely on 911. We take this very seriously and try to ensure we meet the needs of all callers. In addition, every 911 position is equipped with a TTY machine for the deaf so we can communicate with the hearing or speech impaired caller.

The 911 center answers over 600,000 calls a year. We have maintained the ability to answer about 85% of those calls in under ten seconds. But there are times when the number of calls that come in to 911 are beyond our capability to answer. This normally occurs when an accident happens and all the drivers with cell phones call 911 to report the same accident. Since we get no information

about the caller, the location, or the phone number these calls take a little longer to answer and process. The important thing about this is that if you dial 911 and it keeps ringing do not hang up; the calls are answered in the order they are received. Someone will be with you as soon as possible. If you hang up your call, instead of being answered next you will be answered as the last call received.

It is appropriate to call 911 when you have an emergency or appear to be in danger. If someone is trying to enter your house or walking around outside without any reason this is suspicious activity and should be reported. If your life is being threatened or you could be in danger, call 911. If you are reporting something that has already happened and your life is not in danger, you will get a police response but it won't be immediate.

*by Chris Foster*

## Charles R. Kilgore Jr. Attorney At Law

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## Historically Speaking...

### Jessie Lowe

This month we go way back in time, almost 150 years, to find the subject of *Historically Speaking*: Jesse Lowe, first mayor of Omaha, had a rather checkered career. He was a commissary officer in the Mexican War of 1849, became a paymaster, a land owner, an Indian negotiator, a banker, a real estate broker, a school board member, and much more. He may even have been captain of a robber band in Texas. As such he lived dangerously and received numerous cuts and scars and gunshot wounds. It is said a Bowie knife was once pushed right through his body. It is also rumored that he had four wives and that he didn't have a divorce from the first one before marrying the others.

Jesse looked like one of the Smith Brothers pictured on the old cough drop box. He was born in Raleigh, NC, on March 11, 1814, into a Quaker family. In later life he was baptized and became a member of a mainline church. He studied law at Indiana State University and was admitted to the bar in Nebraska but never practiced. He came to Council Bluffs (old Kanessville) in 1853 with his brother Enos, who was a receiver of public money (public treasurer). One day as Jesse and his brother were looking across the Missouri River, Jesse pointed to the present site of Omaha and predicted that it was the spot for a great city. Acting on his prediction, he and his brother crossed the river. At that time it was very wide, shallow, and full of marshes and snags. The boat in which they were attempting to cross became mired in the mud and he and Enos had to finish their crossing by wading the river. They staked out a claim and built a cabin. The city of Omaha was surveyed and platted early in 1854 and in 1857 Jesse became the first mayor. It is said that he gave Omaha its name.

"Well what has that to do with the Gifford Park neighborhood?" you ask. That claim of Jesse and Enos Lowe, first a quarter section of land at what was then the western end of Cuming street, added by purchases of three other quarter sections making in all 640 acres, covered our neighborhood. The Lowe's "ranche" as they called it, stretched west beyond 40th street, south to about Dodge, and east to about 25th—Gifford Park, Bemis Park, Orchard Hill and the Walnut Hill neighborhoods. The Bemis Park neighborhood has placed historical street signs proclaiming 40th Street as Lowe Avenue. If you read your own land abstract you will probably find the name of Lowe as an early owner.

Jesse's ranch was large. Within a week after his first purchase, he had a man with a mule team at work on it. He later called his ranch "Oak Grove Farm." His land contained pasture and timber. Most of the timber was sold to the Mormons when they were building their winter quarters in Florence. Because of a spring of pure cold water, Jesse built his own home at 33rd and Izard (not standing today) by what is now Bemis Park. By 1880 this district was developing into a high-class residential addition. George Bemis, who also became an Omaha mayor, was the developer.

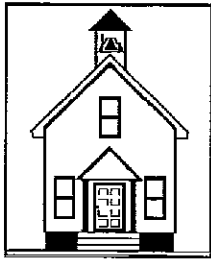
Jesse built the first bank in Omaha, a fine brick structure, probably the first brick building in Omaha. His bank later evolved into the old U. S. National Bank.

Jesse died April 3, 1868 at the age of 54. He is buried in Forest Lawn even though, among his other businesses, he sold lots at Cedar Hill Cemetery.

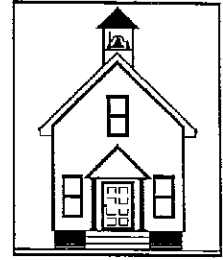
Jesse's widow, Sophie (his fourth wife), moved downtown to the Paxton Hotel. In an interview in the **World-Herald** in 1904 she talks about her old neighborhood and about her first days in Omaha. She came in 1854, one of the first white women to settle in the area. One of her early recollections of Omaha was riding in a buggy with her husband and seeing a white child playing in the street. The sight of a white child was so rare during this time period that Jesse stopped the buggy to stare at the child. Jesse and Sophie had four children of their own, Frederick, Charlotte, Jesse and Howard.

Mrs. Lowe also tells of the Orchard Hill Improvement Association, a forerunner of our neighborhood associations. This organization worked for paved streets, boulevards, trees, flowers and one-family homes. They particularly discouraged land speculators. Mrs. Lowe died February 8, 1906.

by Eva Swanson



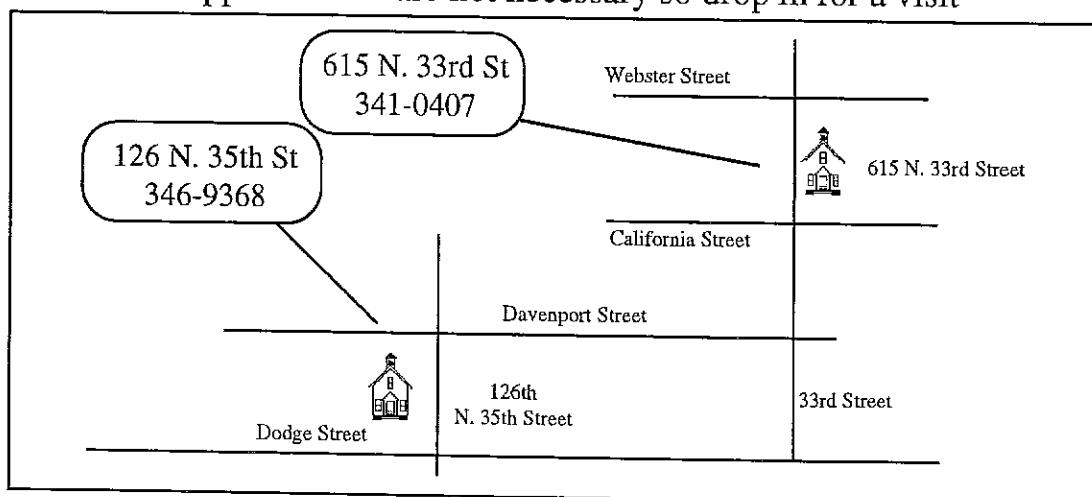
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## 1999 Fall Cleanup Report

The GPNA Fall Cleanup was another big success. In past years, the fall cleanup had been limited to three dumpsters. This year however, in the early afternoon it became evident that three dumpsters were not going to be enough to contain all the trash being brought to the park. **Chris Foster**, GPNA president, made an executive decision authorizing the purchase of one more dumpster (guess that's why he makes the big bucks!) Ken Labs, the company supplying the dumpsters, was able to accommodate this change.

The grand totals for the day's activities: 4 20-cubic yard dumpsters filled, 5100 pounds of scrap metal hauled, 15 old tires hauled, 16 new memberships, 150 pumpkins given away, and last but not least, 90 hot dogs consumed by the volunteers.

We had a significant representation of volunteers who helped to make short work. These dedicated individuals unselfishly volunteered a Saturday to help make our neighborhood a nicer place to live. Several volunteers used their own vehicles to drive around and pick up trash from neighbors that were unable to bring it to the park. A big thanks goes out to all the volunteers contributing to this year's cleanup: **Roger Freeman, Jim Kyler, Ben & Austin Sweazy, Bob & Virginia Hutton, Mike & Candy Bacome, Jim & Kathleen Wilwerding, Rich Exline, Chris Foster, Leo Wilwerding, Kirk & Jean Peck, Harry Dirgo, Lloyd Canfield, Terry, Sue, & Steve Wilwerding, Brad Bogard, and Mic Whelan.**

A special thanks goes out to these businesses who helped make the cleanup possible: **Loren Johnson**, owner of **J-N-J Grocery** and **Wayne and Peg Hill** of the **California Bar** for providing the food and drink for the volunteers. **Bakers Grocery** at **50th and G** gave us a good price on the pumpkins given away. **Ken Labs Trash** supplied the dumpsters and accommodated our miscalculation of the number needed. The **City of Omaha** allowed us to take over the parking lot for a Saturday. The downtown location of **Firestone Tires** disposed of the old tires collected. **Terry's Hauling** collected the scrap metal and hauled it away thus saving us valuable dumpster space.

by *Mike Wilwerding*  
Cleanup Chairman



*GPNA President Chris Foster and Cleanup Chairman Mike Wilwerding spent a day in the dumpsters packing trash collected from all over the neighborhood. A total of 4 dumpsters were filled.*



*Where else can a teenager treat furniture like this and get away with it? Volunteer Austin Sweazy enjoys demolishing this old sofa as Mike Bacome looks on.*



*An annual tradition associated with the fall cleanup is a pumpkin give-away. Here neighborhood children are picking out their Halloween pumpkins. Thanks goes to Baker's at 50th and G for giving the GPNA a great deal on the pumpkins and to Leo Wilwerding for transporting them.*

**Date Set For GPNA Holiday Banquet**

Start the holiday season out right by planning to attend the annual GPNA Holiday Banquet. This year, the dinner will be held on **Thursday, December 2**, at 7:00 p.m. Once again, St. Joseph Hospital will host the event, which will be held in the **Becic (glassed-in) Dining Room**. The dinner is free to all GPNA members, and it takes the place of the December General Meeting. If you would like to attend, please call Jean Peck (344-0722), Sue Wilwerding (342-2795), or Chris Foster (342-6006) to make reservations. Hope to see you there!

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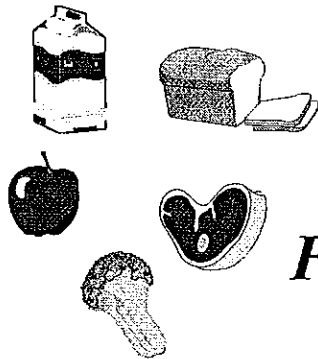
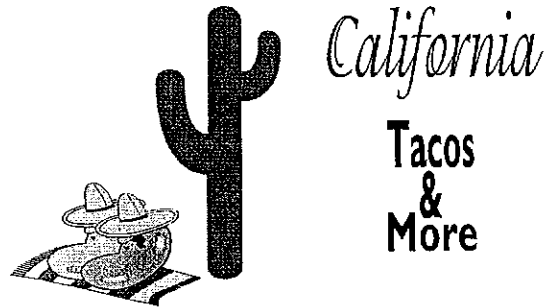
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## What's Happening in the Neighborhood . . .

The GPNA would like to thank **Police Chief Donald Carey** for addressing last month's general meeting. Chief Carey provided GPNA members with information concerning plans for redirecting police efforts in our precinct and use of the 911 system and the non-emergency police number. He also was available for a question and answer session afterwards. Don't forget to attend the next general meeting on **Thursday, November 4th, 7:00 p.m.** at **St. Joseph's Hospital**. **Subby Anzaldo**, the city councilman who represents the Gifford Park area, will be present. Refreshments, courtesy of St. Joseph Hospital, will be served.

At the October general meeting **Dana Carlton**, Kellom School Liaison, announced that the pen-pal program that was started at Yates Academy last year would resume at Kellom this year. Dana is in the process of recruiting volunteers from the GPNA and matching them to an appropriate classroom.

An update concerning **Kent and Ross Windorski**, who were seriously injured in a recent car accident: the family reports that they are both out of the hospital and are on the road to recovery, and they would like to express their appreciation for the neighborhood's care and concern over these last few weeks.

The next Saturday Night Alive contemporary jazz worship service will be held **Saturday, November 20th, 5:00 p.m.** at **Augustana Lutheran Church, 38th and Lafayette**. The service, offered each third Saturday of the month, blends the spirituality of jazz with the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Come to worship and stay afterwards for a light meal gathering. For information, call **551-4728** or e-mail Augustana at **augustan@novia.net**.

## Beware - Dishonest Repairmen Working Our Neighborhood

Every spring and fall we seem to be visited by a rash of shyster repairmen going door to door soliciting work on houses. Numerous property owners end up with shoddy workmanship, incomplete work, and unpleasant confrontational situations all costing far more than work done by legitimate craftsmen. A few rules to guard you from this kind of grief are:

1. Do not allow persons going from door to door to do any work on your property.
2. If repairs are genuinely needed, ask your friends to recommend persons who have done similar good work for them.
3. Insist on references and check with the Better Business Bureau before allowing any work to begin.
4. If possible, get several bids from legitimate companies.
5. Never give any money for work, materials, permits, etc. before work begins - legitimate people have lines of credit or company capital for these things.
6. Take your time to be safe - not sorry.



### GIFFORD PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION 532 N. 33rd Street, Omaha, NE 68131 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION *(Please print clearly)*



Membership year: \_\_\_\_\_ *(Membership year runs from June 1 through May 31)*

Type of membership: Single (\$5) \_\_\_\_\_ Family (\$8) \_\_\_\_\_ Business (\$25) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of business \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First)

Spouse \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First)

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Home) (Work)

In case of an emergency notify: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name) (Address) (Phone No.)

May this information be included in the GPNA Neighborhood Directory? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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