

The West End

By and for the
West End Neighborhood

December 1993

WHAT HAS THE WEST END DONE FOR YOU LATELY?

-- An Inquiry by Wendy, the West End Windbag

Well, for openers, it's not every neighborhood that has an annual Christmas party to which everyone is invited and at which the gentlefolk who show up are glad they did. This year's tasteful affair at the home of TV personality Judy Hunt and her kept man David Wallace maintained Ye Olde Traditions. Except for the jerk who brought a store-bought box of pretzels, this season's party-goers created a delicious feast of home-made savories and sweets which over the years has made West End celebrations the envy of the civilized finger-food world. And, oh yes, what about that lovely Christmas tree standing proudly in the gazebo at Grace Court? This season's tree was donated by our neighborhood's very own Ron Rash (1304 W. 4th), who owns Rash's Tree Patch, on Reynolda Road, right behind Piedmont Craftsmen (Craftspersons?).

Let's not forget the pleasure that comes when good neighbors become better neighbors. My good friend, Ann Freeman, dropped over for lime tea and Madeleines the other afternoon, and she was giddy with praise. "I've lived next door to the YMCA property for 41 years. Was it 20 years ago they built?" She took a sip of her tea. "Anyway, my Little Folks all watched. At first, it was all unfriendly cement and brick, and the West End said 'Plant something!' They did -- I've counted 172 trees and many shrubs -- and it helped a lot. There's a new director, Bob Caldwell -- a splendid man, very neighborly and congenial. He's started two small Japanese gardens." Ann paused to ingest her third Madeleine. "I've tried to help by adding a holly hedge, and I hope to do something for the side yard." You can bet old Wendy is going to come over and check out the work.

Speaking of Things Past, I was reminiscing Wednesday evening with some of the younger people in the community -- well, they're well into their 40's, but everything's relative, including one's aunts and uncles. Which is what we were discussing, how ten years or so ago, there was a most wonderful effort known as the West End Baby-Sitting Co-op. Kathy Welch and Martha Harper had a lot to do with getting it started. The thing was so called-for, it quickly grew to about two dozen families. The way it worked was, if you needed a baby-sitter, you had this long list of Co-op members, and you'd call around until you could get someone. You wouldn't pay money to the sitters; instead, the sitters would rack up "points," based on how many hours they had to spend sitting, and how many kids you had, and whether they were keeping them at your house or theirs. And "Super-points" were handed out for over-nights. And once a month, folks would get together for a pot-luck and the kids would run around and the adults would enjoy each other's company and bring everybody up to date as to how many points (plus or minus) each family had. The beauty of it was, everybody helped raise everybody else's children, like aunts and uncles, which was a lovely thing.

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IF THE NEW YORK TIMES CAN DO A "YEAR IN REVIEW,"
WELL, SO, TOO, CAN THE WEST ENDER!

In January, West End volunteers congratulated themselves for a successful Christmas House Tour the month before, and homeowners celebrated or lamented the striking increase in our appraised property tax values. February saw annual elections as well as the official approval by the Planning Board and Aldermen of the West End as a Local Historic District, after a decade-long struggle. In March and April, guided by re-elected High-priestess Wanda Merschel, activists explored ways of building bridges, both within our community and between the West End and other neighborhoods. In the merry month of May, zoning decisions, parking problems, and concerns about crime commanded the attention of your Association's Board. Discussion of these matters continued throughout the summer months, which was marked by another enjoyable West End Fourth Street of July Party. September was highlighted by the third annual Festival in Grace Court, a remarkably successful event. October was a lovely, quiet month in the life of our community. In November, the new

UDO -- Unified Development Ordinance -- and its likely impact on the West End became a warm topic of discussion. Wendy has told you all about December's festivities.

If all this seems rather sleepy stuff, perhaps "no news" really IS "good news." Yet, as this edition was all set to go to the printer, we read in the Journal of the act of murderous violence in an otherwise peaceful apartment building on Forsyth Street. And we read an article about FIRST and its encouraging beginnings, citing the controversy it sparked in our neighborhood. Stressing the need for more such programs, a Corrections spokesman stated "There could be a FIRST in every neighborhood." Yet, further down, the reporter mentioned that the new zoning ordinance would forbid such programs in single-family residential districts, while allowing them in districts such as ours. Dear reader, do you notice a certain (predictable) inconsistency here? Your editor, a person who makes a significant portion of his livelihood trying to help society's so-called "losers" in the Criminal Courts, personally supports efforts like FIRST. I don't subscribe to the NIMBY or BANANA syndromes ridiculed by a resident of Bermuda Run, of all places. But still I ask "WAMBY? -- Why Always My Back Yard?"

The beat does go on. So relax, take courage, pray for wisdom, and have a happy New Year.

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

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Notice: the January Meeting of the West End Association will take place at the Merschel's house at 1211 W. 4th St. on Tuesday, January 4th, at 7:30 p.m. The Annual Meeting, which features elections and a special presentation, is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, February 8th, at 7:30 p.m., at a spacious "public" locale to be announced.

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Chuck Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities

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