



Gifford Park's Pride

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

February 1997

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

Why the Difference?

A controversy now exists in which the rights and obligations of landlords versus tenants are being debated. Most owners of rental property in our area are reliable and responsible persons, bent on doing the best job they can of managing their property. A few, however, stand out as not fitting this description. Certainly many tenants are also responsible. Some do not take proper care of their apartments and lack concern for rights of others, neighbors as well as owners.

It is interesting to note the difference in operation of rental property in the neighborhood. Most properties are well maintained; lawns are cut, shrubs trimmed, paint is renewed, and the overall appearance is attractive. Some, on the other hand, go with snow unshoveled, are mowed erratically, bushes are untrimmed, paint is peeling, and concrete is crumbling. **Why the difference?**

Most landlords are careful about screening their tenants. They rent to people who often end up occupying the same apartments or houses for years. These are generally quiet, responsible and respectful neighbors. A few landlords meanwhile apparently do not screen tenants carefully or satisfy their needs, as tenants appear to come and go as if through a revolving door. Many of these tenants are also a detriment to the neighborhood. This is evident through noise, litter, and parking violations. **Why the difference?**

It would seem that attractive and well-maintained property, carefully screened and responsible tenants, and consistently leased units would be just good business. Many landlords in our area have thrived and their properties have added to the value and prestige of the neighborhood through just such operations. Others remain unattractive, ill-maintained, and obviously a liability. **Why the difference?**

Next Meeting

**Thursday, February 6
7:00 P.M.**

Guest Speaker:

**Attorney David Smalheiser
City Prosecutor's Office**

**St. Joseph's Hospital
Dining Rooms A, B, & C**

FREE PARKING

Historically Speaking...

Rose Blumkin

If you live in Omaha and don't know who Rose Blumkin is or what she does, you must have just arrived or else you never read the newspaper, listen to TV, or shop for furniture or appliances. "Mrs. B" is perhaps the best known Omahan in the country with maybe the exception of Warren Buffett - - and Warren and Rose are good friends and business associates. Mrs. Blumkin is the legendary founder, owner, and salesperson of the Nebraska Furniture Mart and Mrs. B's Warehouse. At 103 years she is still a person to be reckoned with in the business world and a super saleswoman in her stores.

Much has been written about Rose Blumkin, but to us in the Gifford Park area we remember her as the resident, with her husband and family of four, of 3523 Davenport just to the southwest corner of the park.

Mrs. B says, "The house on Davenport Street was our first nice house. I paid \$50 down for it. We lived there about 20 years from 1930 to 1950. The kids went to Lake School, Yates School, and Central High." Frances Batt, Mrs. B's daughter, says about that time, "We had no

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**Happy
Valentine's
Day!**



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What's Happening in the Neighborhood...

Everyone is encouraged to attend the next general GPNA meeting **Thursday, February 6, at 7 p.m. at St. Joseph's Hospital.** The guest speaker will be **Attorney David Smalheiser** from the **City Prosecutor's Office.** You do not have to be a GPNA member to attend. As always there will be plenty of refreshments.

The January 22 edition of the **Omaha Metro Extra** featured the Gifford Park Fall Cleanup held last October. The "Picture This" column included photos of cleanup activities along with a short article. Congratulations to one of our younger volunteers, **Austin Sweazy, 11,** who was featured in one of the photos. Thanks goes to **Linda Chapman,** GPNA Public Relations Chairperson, for sending these pictures to the **Omaha World Herald.**

GPNA "veteran" **Tom Rose** was part of a **KETV** news story on January 9. For the past three years Tom has been an instructor with the **Omaha Housing Authority (OHA) Step-Up Program.** The program is a partnership between **Metro Community College** and **OHA.** It is a training program designed to introduce students to the various building trades by constructing a small-scale house. The experience gives students a better feel for which trades they are interested in pursuing. The Step-Up Program has been very successful with over 100 students exposed to the program. The program was also featured on **NBC's Dateline** news show.

We offer our sincere condolences to the family of **Dr. Harold Gifford Jr.** Dr. Gifford passed away in late December. We have an article on page four about his life.

The GPNA is considering a **Spring Garage Sale,** maybe in April or May prior to the annual Spring Cleanup. If you have items of value (no clothes please) that you would like to donate, please call **345-1433.** We will have more information in next month's newsletter.

GPNA Historian **Eva Swanson** would appreciate suggestions for the names of prominent individuals who have lived in the Gifford Park neighborhood to be featured in future articles. Contact Eva at **345-1707.**

NEEDED:**HELP WITH
NEWSLETTER
DISTRIBUTION**

The GPNA is looking for anyone, any age, interested in delivering newsletters in the Gifford Park Neighborhood.

Call 344-3233

**Free Tax Help Is Here Again
For Third Year in a Row!**

Mark your calendars for **FREE** tax help at the **GPNA Office** located next to **J'N'J Grocery, 33rd & California Street.** **Everyone is welcome!** Again this year **I.R.S.** representatives will provide free tax help for our neighborhood. Processing of basic tax returns will be available. Electronic filing will not be available this year. Walk-in appointments are welcome, but priority will be given to those who call to schedule an appointment. Free tax help will be available on the following Saturday dates:

February 8, 15, 22 - 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

April 5, 12 - 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.



For more information or to schedule an appointment call **551-3629.**

Historically Speaking...Rose Blumkin

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money to speak of as children - - you got a nickel for a movie, but we had what I'll call a rich tapestry of childhoods. Our parents were fun. There was a lot of music. Anybody who could sing, sang. We'd go swim in Carter Lake, where it didn't cost any money. We thought it was heavenly." Romance flourished in those days also. Son Louis married Frances Veitzer who lived on 35th Avenue.

The Jewish Press, in 1994, described Mrs. B as "sharp, astute, genius, honest, entrepreneur, hard-working, directed, determined." At the same time they described her as being synonymous with "warmth, caring, generosity, understanding, future, preservation, and inspiration." Her latest gift to Omaha, the Rose Blumkin Performing Arts Center, is an example of her generosity and preservation. Her rise from a penniless immigrant from Russia to a retailing phenomenon is an inspiration.

From time to time Mrs. B has been interviewed in newspapers and on TV. The following are quotes from some of these interviews:

"I'm the Queen of Furniture Sales and I'd rather be that than the Queen of England." - National Enquirer, 1995.

On the occasion of a gift of one million dollars for the Jewish Home she said, "Let people think before they die to do the best they can for others while they are still alive."

About her famous golf cart: "Besides, it's fun, I never had a bicycle, or even a kiddy car."

A quote from an article in the World-Herald in 1993: "I think people should never forget when they were poor and how they struggled, and always feel for other people; and

people who are stuck-up are no good, because when bad luck strikes you, who are you? Nobody. So they should always think of that and thank God that the family is well and they are happy. That's the main thing - money isn't everything."

In 1983 when she sold the majority interest in the Furniture Mart to Warren Buffett for 60 million dollars on the strength of a handshake, Mr. Buffett said, "I would rather have her word than that of all the Big 8 Auditors. It's like dealing with the Bank of England."

In October of 1962, a reporter asked her what advice she would give to fellow Americans (she became a citizen in 1956). She said, "The people who were born in this country don't appreciate all these wonderful things like those who came from out of the darkness. People who always had everything think it is coming to them."

Asked for advice for aspiring millionaires by the Washington Post, she said, "First, honesty; second, hard work. Next, if you don't get the job you want right away, tell them you'll take anything. If you're good, they'll keep you. If you're rotten, the first time you go for coffee, you talk on the phone, the next day, even with a college education, they'll throw you out."

And for those looking forward, the words of one looking back: "You struggle, you work hard, you hope, sometimes your wishes come true, sometimes not."

For you, Mrs. Blumkin, your old neighbors in the Gifford Park Association wish you a Happy 103rd Birthday!

by Eva Swanson

Household Hints... Sink and Tub Drains- Care and Maintenance

In sinks or tubs where hair is washed, use a plastic or metal "hair catcher" or screen to catch hair before it gets into the drain.

Do not pour grease down kitchen drains; pour liquid grease from cooking into empty tin cans and set in refrigerator until solidified; put can into tightly closed plastic bag, wrap in newspapers, and put into trash bag.

To keep kitchen drains clear, flush daily with scalding water. For grease buildup, dissolve 1 pound washing soda in 3 gallons of boiling water and pour down the drain. To avoid burns from boiling water, hold water container close to drain and pour slowly and directly into drain. For heavy grease buildup, use a commercial drain opener.

Periodic use of a drain cleaner will prevent accumulations in the pipe. Be sure to read and follow directions on the container. Do not have your head over the drain when you pour the cleaner into the drain. The violent reaction of the cleaner in water can blow up in your face.

Drain cleaners are very hazardous so be very careful in using them.

by Tom Rose

Dr. Harold Gifford Jr. Remembered

Whether hiking in Fontenelle Forest as a young boy or riding his motorcycle to work at age 90, Dr. Harold Gifford Jr., his friends and family agree, never sat still for long. But on December 29, 1996, less than a month shy of his 92nd birthday, Dr. Gifford's long life of activity and exploration came to an end. He died of heart failure in his sleep at his home at 3636 Burt St., said his son, Charles Gifford of New York City. Services will be sometime in the spring, Gifford said, but the date and place are to be determined. The family hopes to have the service outdoors, where Dr. Gifford spent much of his time and where his legacy to the area he loved is most evident.

Dr. Gifford spent his life embracing the paradox of nature and civilization. He loved to be in the woods but often went there on his motorcycle. He loved the farm he inherited from his family but had no interest in agriculture per se. He loved solitary sports immersed in nature, such as sailing and skiing, but also enjoyed hobnobbing with the social elite in Omaha and around the world.

Born in 1905 and the youngest of four brothers, Harold Gifford Jr. - known universally as Hal - inherited a world of mansions, servants and noblesse oblige. His father, Dr. Harold Gifford Sr., was one of the founders of Methodist Hospital, the

Omaha Medical College (the precursor of the University of Nebraska Medical Center) and the Fontenelle Forest Association. His grandfather was Ezra Millard, the namesake of the former city that now encompasses much of southwest Omaha. "They were real Victorians," Jessie Gifford, Dr. Gifford's daughter, who also lives in New York, said of her father and grandfather. "You didn't just go see your parents - the servants brought you to see them."

Dr. Gifford would follow his prominent father not only into medicine but into the same specialty - ophthalmology. He attended his father's alma mater, Cornell University, before returning to Omaha for a half-century medical career that lasted until 1981 and included a six-year stint during the 1960's as chairman of the department of ophthalmology at the University of Nebraska College of Medicine. In 1993, the medical center dedicated three ophthalmologic research laboratories in honor of Dr. Gifford, brother Dr. Sanford Gifford (also an ophthalmologist) and their father, who died in 1929.

At a party in May 1936, Hal Gifford

met his future wife, Mary Elizabeth "Emmy" Jonas. Miss Jonas had grown up only a few blocks from the Giffords' house on 36th and Burt Streets. Her father was a widely known physician. The couple were married a few months after the party in May. While Mrs. Gifford would go on to be known as the matriarch of Omaha's Children's Theater, her husband came to be known for his contribution to the local study and enjoyment of nature.


In the early 1970s, the couple formed the Gifford Foundation with the sale of more than 1,700 acres of largely undeveloped land southeast of Omaha that the senior Dr. Gifford had purchased in the 1920s. Most of the wooded land became Gifford Point, a state-owned recreation area. In the late 1970s, 280 acres was incorporated as the Gifford Farm. The farm today is owned by Educational Service Unit No. 3, which administers programs for area school districts.

The Giffords have been on the boards of many major civic and philanthropic organizations in Omaha. In 1977, Dr. Gifford was crowned the king of Ak-Sar-Ben.


In addition to Mrs. Gifford, his son and daughter, Dr. Gifford is survived by three grandchildren. He was preceded in death by son Harold M. "Hoddy" Gifford.

Editor's Note: Dr. Harold Gifford Jr.'s parents, Dr. Harold Gifford Sr. and his wife Mary Louise Gifford gave the portion of Gifford Park east of 35th Street to the City of Omaha on December 25th, 1912. Quite a nice Christmas present! Then in November 1916, they added the portion West of 35th to make Gifford Park what it is today.

Information provided by the Omaha World Herald.



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 _____

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

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

Signature _____ Date _____