

The Corner Forum

for the 1200 and 1300 blocks of E, the 400 and 500 blocks of 13th,
Duncan Place and Emerald Street NE

Issue #26
Monday, April 7, 2003
37¢ + 2¢ D.C. sales tax
<http://www.thecornerforum.org>

Reminiscing About Kingsman Elementary School

BY ELLERY "EL" VADEN, 1348 EMERALD ST. NE
Interviewed by Marc Borbely, 536 13th St. NE.

Mr. Vaden, 40, spoke to me yesterday about his memories of attending Kingsman Elementary School. He also described his plans and hopes for another basketball tournament for kids this summer, and for a block party on Emerald Street.

How long have you been living here?

I've been living here since I was a baby — from when I was in my momma's womb, 'til now.

40 years. That's a long time.

Umm hmm. Generations. Seen people come and go. My family went to Kingsman—just about everybody around here went to Kingsman. It was a good school, nice teachers, good principal. Even though we had our good times and our bad times around here too.

What do you remember about Kingsman? You went there, I guess from first grade —

— Yeah, all the way to the sixth grade. Everybody in the neighborhood went to Kingsman. You either went to Kingsman, or you went to Miner, or you went to Maury, or Lovejoy. Those were the four area schools you went to, so everybody knew everybody around here. It was pretty decent.

Who were some of the other people that went to Kingsman?

When I went, it was a guy named John Smith, who used to live over there at 63, a guy named Coly who used to live at 61, Stephen Webb — he used to live up the street, Mr. Webb's son. Clayton Hunter, Billy Hunter's son, Bigelow's sons and his daughter. My brother and my sister went. The Oxleys went, the Youngs went, used to live on the [north-west] corner [of 14th and Emerald], on this side of the block. The Smiths used to live at 63.

Did they go around the same time that you did?

Yeah.

So some of them were in the same classes as you.

Yeah. Not the same classes, but the same school, same time.

And who were your close friends?

This guy named John Smith. We were like the comedians. We'd go in there and jone on the principal. We had an assembly — I'll never forget it. We did the little alphabetical thing — throw out initials. Like, what do "BHMM" mean?

What does it mean?

It means "Bald Head Mr. Moore!" Because our principal had a big bald spot in the back of his head. We had to do two weeks of detention after that.

You got up and said that in the assembly?

Well, we were sitting in the assembly, but we started laughing after we said it. And he was like, "Who said it?" So John and I got in trouble. [The principal] made us give a little 10-minute speech on how to treat your fellow man. And after that, that's when we had to do two weeks detention.

What grade was that?

That was in the fifth grade.

That was you and John. He doesn't still live there.

No. Just about everybody moved on.

Do you still keep in touch with any of them?

I see a couple of them every now and then. In my travels, I see them every now and then.

So that was a little bit about Kingsman.

Umm hmm. That's why we stay around there all the time. It's like a landmark for us. Those who went there — it's like, you look at it, you start thinking back when you used to go to this school. It's funny, but that's what actually happens when you look at the school. If you went there,



Ellery Vaden

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and you graduated from there, it's like, man, I used to have fun up in here!

What other things do you remember? When you look at that school, what kind of things do you remember?

Let's see. I remember I did a play when I was in fourth grade. My teacher's name was Ms. Pittman. We had to do this play called "Wade in the Water." I'll never forget it. I was the man who had to stroll around the stage area, give a little speech, then go off stage.

What was the play called? "Wade in Water?"

"Wade in the Water." Just like the old Negro song "Wade in the Water." We did it during Black History Week. That's what they called it.

Most of the kids were probably black that went there.

Yeah.

Everybody? Or were there some white kids?

You had like one or two that were white in there. Everybody else was all right, you know? We didn't look at it like a segregation thing. We didn't know nothing about racism, because we were just kids in school. Kids don't even think about all that negativity about it. You just see a person, you play with him, you're friends, you know? And that's how we felt back then as kids. We didn't give no thought to it.

What was it like when they closed it? I guess it was like 10 years ago or so.

Well, they closed it right after they remodeled it. They tried to stop it from being closed, but they couldn't do it. But now I saw in the paper where a charter school bought it, so I hope they let the name live on, instead of changing it.

Yeah, I've been wondering about that — whether they're gonna keep the name.

I hope they do keep the name.

After Kingsman, what did you do next?

After Kingsman, I went to Eliot, went there for a couple of years. Then I went from Eliot to Bell, up in Northwest. But I think the best thing was Graduation Day — I'll never forget when we graduated out of sixth grade. I'll never forget that one.

Tell me about it.

It was like your senior prom, your college graduation. That's how it felt. It was like, everybody you grew up with graduated at one time. It was nice!

Probably real proud.

Yeah! It was an achievement moment in my life.

Sometimes I look back in our old photo album. I have a picture of a group of us that graduated from up there.

Any special teachers that you remember?

Let's see. There was Ms. Humphrey, that was my kindergarten teacher. There was Ms. Shelton. There was Ms. Lane. There was Ms. Pittman. That was the only ones I really got along with. And my science teacher, Mr. Egress.

He was cool?

Yeah. He taught me a lot about science. Pretty cool dude.

What are some of the things you like to do?

Right now, all I really do now, once I come home, I like to relax, listen to music — oldies but goodies. Hang out, talk to some of the old guys who used to live around here. We all meet up on Friday nights around here. We just sit back and talk about old times. Basically, we'll go out, go to a club, go get something to eat, go out to a bowling alley — just do something. We try to keep the bond tight that we had when we were little, coming up around here.

Those are guys who grew up around here? From this street, too?

From this street, from F Street, E Street. There are a couple of people who come around here.

James, is he one of them?

Yeah. That was like my little god brother. I'm proud of him. He's doing good.

You said when you come home. Where do you come home from?

Well, right now, I'm just going back and forth, checking on my dad — he's in the hospital. So once I come home, I relax, come out, sit down, talk to some of the neighbors, probably go up to the basketball court with my godson Janell, mess with him and his friends for a little bit — but other than that, that's about it.

In these 40 years on the street, how have you seen the street changing?

It changed for the better a little bit.

Back when we were all growing up, we used to have block parties, which was the highlight of our summer. Now, we still have block parties, but Granny [Rev. Bego] has the

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A Happy Birthday Wish

I'd like to wish Marc Borbely (536 13th St. NE) a happy 30th birthday: April 6!

—Tammi Cioffi (536 13th St. NE) §

Contact the Corner Forum: ph. (544-2447); voicemail (517-9128); e-mail (news@thecornerforum.org); mail (536 13th St. NE). Help assemble and plan the Corner Forum every Saturday at 10 a.m. at the Northeast Branch Library, at 330 7th St. NE.

COPS — the religious block party.

We were talking about — a couple of buddies of mine — to see if we could just have a regular block party this year. We could alternate and have a religious block party one year, a regular block party the following year. Don't get me wrong. I like churches like the next man, but there's a time when you get too much church, too. So hopefully, we could do that.

Are there any historical things that happened since 1964 that you've seen?

Our ex-mayor, Marion Barry, used to live around the corner on [the 1200 block of] E Street. You've still got one congressman — I think he's a congressman, I'm not sure: Mr. Bohim — he still lives over here on Tennessee Avenue.

I think the best thing I could honestly say with my 40 years, is to see all the old people come back, and just sit down and talk about old times. I finally realize what my dad always tells me: Once you get older, you appreciate the times that you have with your friends, because you get to sit back and reminisce on your old times. My sister kids me because I listen to a lot of older music, but it's because I hang around a lot of older people. I listen to them, conversate with them. Like Mr. Hunter, Mr. Bigelow. I sit around there, conversate with them. You learn a lot from a lot of older people, you know?



When the mayor was living around there, did you ever see him?

Oh we used to see him all the time. We used to see his wife Effy. She used to come around here. The lady that used to live right here at 59, Ms. Jones, was a friend of hers, and she used to come around here.

What were they like, as people?

The Jones's were really nice. Her husband used to come out here and play football with us. And the red house, 57, my old babysitter used to live right there — Alice Johnson. My godfather, David Lewis, his sister Opal. They live there now — 1353. They've been around for a while. Mr. Johnny, right here at 44, he's been around. The Spencers have been around for a while. The Webbs, the Hunters, the Bigelows, Granny [Rev. Bego] — Ms. Bird — she lives down the street. Ms. Smith.

And in this house, you live here with your aunt?

My mom and my dad.

And when you were young, you had brothers and sisters living here too? How many?

One brother and one sister.

They live in D.C. still?

My sister lives in D.C. My brother lives in Maryland.

So what we've started to do now is — a couple of guys from around the neighborhood are getting a little [basketball] tournament going up at the playground, like we had last year. We had an article in the Washington Post about it. It was pretty

successful — we didn't have any big fights or anything. When we had that, it was like everybody that grew up around here, came up here — people we hadn't seen 10, 15, 20 years — were up there.

And you're gonna have another one this summer.

We're trying to. Probably in June. I'm going to talk to my buddy down the street, Samuel Tilley, to see what we're gonna do. And if so, I'll get back to you and let you know everything.

Cool. Is there anything else that people should know or could know about you or about the street or the neighborhood?

I'll put it like this, when I was living around here, the sidewalk was made of brick. The walls were made of brick. I was when they transferred this whole street — they put all this down. So it has a lot of history here. I remember when they used to have the trolley cars going up 14th Street.

They went up 14th Street? I didn't know that!

They had it on East Capitol Street, 14th Street, D Street too.

What did they look like?

They looked like a regular trolley car! That's what it looked like.

They had tracks?

Yeah, they had the little tracks in the street. They just rode it down the street.

Would you ever take them?

Well, my dad took me on a couple of them. But by the time I started going by myself, that's when the buses came up — they got rid of them.

Well, thank you very much.

All right. §

Your Submissions Are Needed

The Corner Forum still needs many more people to submit their thoughts, ideas and stories.

Thank you to everyone who has submitted information so far, and to those people who have been willing to be interviewed in these pages.

This newsletter can only work with your help.

Need some ideas for what to submit? (Everything is welcome.)

- Birthday announcements
- Items for sale
- Tips
- Interviews
- Concerns §

Calendar of Upcoming Events

If you attend any of these events, please send in anything from a few lines to a long article about what happened.

And if you know of any upcoming events that other readers might be interested in, send them in!

Events are free, unless otherwise noted, and open to all.

— COMPILED BY MARC BORBELY
536 13TH ST. NE

Monday, April 7

7-9 p.m. Public Interest Civic Association. Monthly Meeting. At Calvary Episcopal Church, 800 6th St. NE.

Tuesday, April 8

8 p.m. Overbeck History Lecture. “If you’ve ever wondered what Capitol Hill looked like before it had a Capitol, you won’t want to miss [this lecture]. ... George Washington University professor and longtime Hill resident John M. Vlach will take us back to Capitol Hill Before L’Enfant — to the woods, streams and plantation land that were here before the grand design for a federal city was superimposed. Some signs of that era remain, he says, if you know where to look.” At the Naval Lodge Hall, 330 Pennsylvania Avenue SE. Reservations required. RSVP, Kristen Miller, 544-1845 (provide your name, phone number) or info@CapitolHillHistory.org.

Wednesday, April 9

6:30 p.m. Board of Library Trustees. Monthly Meeting. At Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, Room A-5, 901 G St. NW, 727-0321. <http://www.dclibrary.org/calendar/thismonth.trustees.html>.

7-9 p.m. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A Alcohol Beverage Licensing & Public Safety Committee Meeting. Agenda includes a presentation by “WOW,” a division of SARH Venture Inc., and a presentation by the Metropolitan Police Department on its Partnership for Problem Solving program. At Miner Elementary School, 600 16th St. NE. Info, ANC 6A06 Commissioner Jessica Ward, 396-3193.

Thursday, April 10

7-9 p.m. ANC 6A Monthly Meeting. Preliminary agenda includes proposed traffic studies for the 800-1500 blocks of C Street NE and for the 200-300 blocks of 14th Street NE. At Miner Elementary School, Student Dining Room, 600 16th St. NE. Info, ANC 6A Chairman Joseph Fengler (6A02), 423-8868. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/anc6a>.

7:30 p.m. Old City Capitol Hill Neighborhood Association. Monthly meeting. At St. John’s Church, 1301 H St. NE. <http://oldcitycapitolhill.org>.

7:30 p.m. Capitol Hill Restoration Society. Monthly meeting. “Representatives from the Architect of the Capitol, the Supreme Court and the Capitol Police Department will provide updates on security and construction issues under their respective authorities — a great opportunity for neighbors on Capitol Hill

to come hear first hand about what effect the new heightened security measures in place for the Capitol and Supreme Court will have on Capitol Hill residents. We will also get an update on the progress of the Capitol Visitor’s Center and Supreme Court renovations.” At St. Peter’s Church, 2nd and C streets SE. Info, CHRS, 543-0425 or CapHRS@aol.com.

Saturday, April 12

8 a.m. - 2 p.m. A Conversation on Health Care. “Is the healthcare system in DC working for you? Are there opportunities for improvement?” Breakfast will be served. Childcare provided. With Mayor Williams and DC Council Chairman Linda Cropp. At Payne Elementary School, 305 15th St. SE (Metro: Potomac Avenue). Info, Anthony Fautroy, 727-8001 or anthony.fautroy@dc.gov.

9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Annual Spring Household Hazardous Waste Drop-off. By the District Department of Public Works. “DC residents can bring items including old cleaning and gardening chemicals, small quantities of gasoline, pesticides and poisons, acids, varnish, oil-based paints, solvents, aerosols, wood preservatives, spent batteries of all kinds, roofing tar, chemistry sets, automotive fluids, and asbestos floor tiles to the collection site for environmentally safe disposal or recycling. A professional hazardous waste contractor will remove materials from the residents’ vehicles. A licensed hauler will take the waste to an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved facility for processing.” In the Carter Barron Amphitheater parking lot, 16th and Kennedy streets NW. Info, 727-1000. http://dpw.dc.gov/news/2003/mar/hhw_03_20.shtml.

10 a.m. Corner Forum weekly meeting. Participate in the planning of next week’s issue. Northeast Branch of the Public Library, meeting room, 330 7th St. NE. Info, 544-2447.

11 a.m. - 1 p.m. The Mikado: Auditions. By the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered Arts Consortium and the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop. “Be part of a new adaptation/production of The Mikado and liven up your summer! Seeking singers/actors, all voices and abilities, for lead roles and for choruses of school chums and dykes for The Mikado to be presented for two weekends in August, beginning July 31. Rehearsals (a mixture of Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays) will begin April 23. Please prepare 10-16 bars of a song and bring music for the accompanist. You will be asked to do a cold reading from the script. (Very, very non-threatening auditions.)” At Capitol Hill Arts Workshop, 545 7th St. SE. Info, 546-1549. <http://www.geocities.com/dcglbtarts/audition.html>

Noon. National March to Stop the War on Iraq. “The whole world is watching to see if the people of the United States can intensify the power of the anti-war movement at the moment that the Bush Administration is intending to slaughter tens of thousands of Iraqi people and occupy their country.” Brief rally at Washington Monument, Constitution Avenue between 15th and 17th streets NW, followed by a march. §