

# The Pocket

FREE

VOLUME 7

JUNE 2005

## Spring Brings More Trouble to Phin Park

By Barbara Shaw

When a local resident took her son to play in the park between rain showers in early May she expected to find a puddle at the bottom of the slide. What she did not expect was small shards of glass that seemed to be deliberately placed where a child would be injured.

Police and Parks officials were notified and a basic clean-up was done of the area but it was local residents who spent hours sifting through the sand around the play structure which resulted in a bag of broken glass being collected.



“I am used to broken glass on the pavement and I can live with that,” said the woman who discovered the glass and who wants to remain anonymous. “I

have never seen this level of disregard for others. I’m sure we didn’t get all the tiny shards. Many babies and toddlers eat the sand.”

Residents are being encouraged to keep a watchful eye on the Park as the good weather arrives and people start using it 24 hours a day. Last summer we had to deal with an assault in Phin

Park and unfortunately it seems as though we will have to remain vigilant for another season.

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## Community helps keep TTC Green Space Green

By Susan McMurray

In late 2004, the community learned that the TTC had plans to sell part of Oakvale Green, the plot of land of approximately four acres around Oakville, Lydia Court, and Queen Victoria. Known to

some as the “Dog Park” and to others as the “TTC Yard”, the official name is Oakville Green. The TTC announced that it no longer needed the property and eventually made a proposal to sell the

land for housing development. But the people of the Pocket rallied against this. City Councillor Paula Fletcher organized a community meeting on November 29, 2004. More than 125 (cont’d on page 2 )



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

TTC GREEN SPACE 2

JONES CEMETERY 3

BLAKE SCHOOL 4

POCKET WEBSITES 5

CALENDAR BOYS 6

NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION 7

PEPPERS 8

## Community helps keep TTC Green Space

By Susan McMurray

Residents of the Pocket showed up to hear details of the TTC proposal. Community members explained the importance of the parklands to the Pocket, as both a buffer and a park.

The TTC responded to the community a couple of weeks later. In mid-December 2004, Councillor Fletcher notified Pocket residents that TTC staff would be recommending to the Commission that the space be retained by the TTC and not be declared surplus.

However, the staff

### Green Cont'd

recommendation still required confirmation by the Commission itself. At its January 12, 2005 meeting the TTC Commission heard presentations by community members as to how important the park is to them.

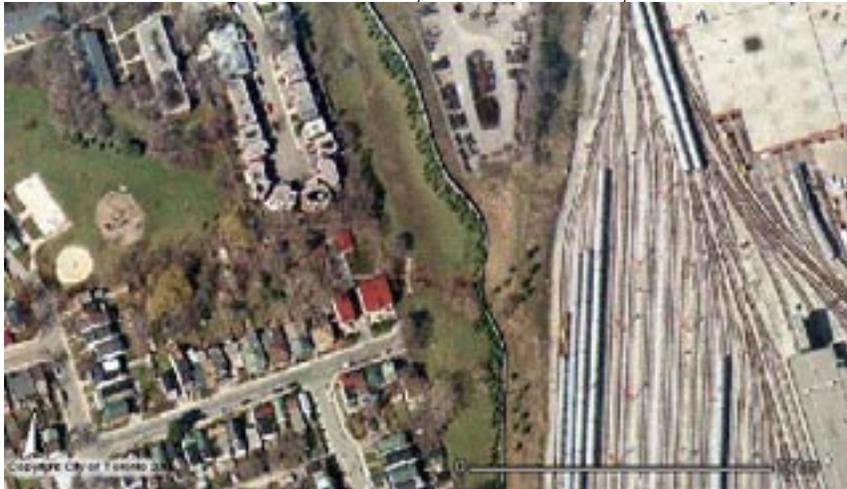
“We surrender,” said TTC chair Howard Moscoe. As a result, the Commission voted formally to accept the staff recommendation. The surplusage has been reversed and TTC staff has been mandated to negotiate a maintenance agreement with Pocket residents.

Later in January at a community

meeting, residents established a Pocket Community Working Group to ensure the maintenance of the park. Resident will work with the TTC on this issue and the Pocket will now keep its beloved green space.

On April 23rd, the community held a neighbourhood party to celebrate the arrival of spring and its successful efforts to keep community green space green.

Look for more on this. The Pocket Community Working Group will be getting in touch.



## History of the Greenwood Subway Yards and TTC Green space

The yard sits on a large interglacial clay deposit. Formerly, a ravine and a river ran through part of the land.

19th to 20th century – site of a former clay pit. Clay was excavated from the pit for use in local brickyards. Later, part of the area was used as a dumpsite.

Mid-1960s – 31.5 acres of land were acquired by the TTC at Greenwood and Danforth and some houses were demolished to build a subway yard. The yard was designed for storage, maintenance and repairs of the Bloor-Danforth trains. Proximity to railroad tracks allowed direct delivery of new subway trains.

1966 – Bloor-Danforth line of subway opened (Keele to Woodbine); Greenwood Subway Yard opened at the same time as the Bloor-Danforth line (the first leg of the subway – the Yonge St. line – opened in 1954)

1992 – TTC planned significant expansion of the facility

Mid-1990s – after consultation and negotiation with community, agreement was reached regarding the Oakvale section of green space (limited parking, retention of dead-end street) and improvements to Lydia/Seymour/Queen Victoria section of green space (visual and sound barriers, including landscaping)

2002 – TTC declares Lydia/Seymour/Queen Victoria section as surplus to its needs

2004 – Community meeting to discuss TTC plans to sell the land and have it developed

2005 – TTC recognizes commitment to community regarding both green space areas, and rescinds declaration of surplus lands and authorizes negotiation of a maintenance agreement with the community

## Jones Avenue Cemetery Reveals City's Hidden History

By Glenna Kennedy

You would likely think you are walking right into long bygone days when you first set eyes upon Jones Avenue Cemetery (or Goel Tzedec Cemetery) with its weathered white stucco buildings and high walls topped with barbed-wire fencing.

This second oldest Jewish cemetery in Toronto is located on Jones Avenue just south of the Danforth, and the landmark's peoples come from origins "pretty well forgotten", according to the cemetery's president, Joel Kurtz.

The plot of land was acquired from a farmer in 1880 by the then Jewish community, which comprised of three peoples – Galacians, Russians and Poles. The people from Galacia (which no longer exists and is Kurtz's land of ancestry) were first in this group and they

were called "Shomrai Shabos" meaning Observers of the Sabbath.

Built in Eastern European fashion, most of the similar cemeteries in Europe were destroyed in WW 2, according to Kurtz. Back in 1880, the land was poor for farming and was not yet even part of the city. (Incidentally, it was illegal to build a cemetery within the city limits after 1880.) The cemetery was consecrated in 1896. Eventually it became two cemeteries, north and south, the other being Beth Tzedec which has long been full.

Joel Kurtz himself comes from a long line of supporters of the cemetery. His great grandfather's brother-in-law was the first Orthodox rabbi to emigrate here. Joseph Weinreb was a very

honoured man and is graced with a special monument. Many other notables also rest there. Kurtz's forefathers were instrumental in keeping up the cemetery and so it is something he has inherited.

More poignant though, when walking through Jones Avenue Cemetery, are the headstones themselves (approximately 700 are buried there). Many are those of children and infants. One wonders what happened to Rosie Palter – born 1894 and died in 1897 – just 3 years old. And Charlie Brodie who

is to ensure that all the stones now are of regulation size. "I like to be objective", he says.

Although many customs and traditions have also been lost through time, traditionally a man or woman could not be buried next to someone they were not married to. This might be "grounds" for gossip. Nor were flowers allowed at gravesites. Flowers were to grace the living – not the dead.

The two small buildings on the property, adorned with stained glass windows and which were at one time used in preparation for burial, are used now for gardening and landscaping tools.

Kurtz asked to make sure to thank the "lovely" people in the neighbourhood, especially those on Jones Avenue near the site, for watching over the cemetery, such as the time when they whitewashed the walls after someone had

painted graffiti on them.

There are 60 plots left in this beautiful cemetery and are spoken for by descendents of those buried there. Then the cemetery will be full. Although he doesn't look nearly ready yet, Joel Kurtz will also find his resting place here – and the legacy will continue on.

NOTE: You may take a walk through this part of our history by going to the house just two doors north of the cemetery and getting the key to the chain lock. Please be respectful by not disturbing the grounds and lock up and return the key right after your visit.



Illustrated by Anita Advani

died in 1910 at the age of only 2 months. The only assumption here can be that the child mortality rate was much higher back then due to disease. In some cases there are more than one baby in a single plot. Some of the babies were not even named yet, such as the baby in the 13<sup>th</sup> row of the south cemetery.

Some of the headstones of the past were made in large ornate granite that have withstood the ravages of time, while others are smaller, of lesser quality stone and the etchings have faded long ago into the past. Some gravesites are marked with a simple plaque. In the early days it was considered to be more prestigious to be interred close to the path that divides the cemetery in half. But these days, things are fair. One of Kurtz's jobs

## Is Blake a good school?

By Amanda Smith

### Amanda Smith interviews Jodie Church to find out the truth.

I think it's fair to say that The Pocket prides itself on being a strong community. What makes up a community? Parks, neighbors, shops, schools... However, I've heard very few good things about our local public school. Blake Street Public School (21 Boulton Ave) does not have a great reputation. Very few, if any of the families I know on my street send their children to Blake. That got me thinking.

I know a number of teachers who have taught at Blake. I asked them point blank what kind of school it was. All of them said it was a great school with great kids. What is the connection between the rumors and the realities of Blake Street Public School?

My friend and Pocket resident Jodie Church is a dedicated teacher at Blake. She too is distressed by the number of wonderful families who have made a very conscious decision to send their children out of district. I asked her to answer a few questions about the rumours I have heard about Blake:

#### Q: Blake is a rough school

Jodie: *I've heard that a lot. No, Blake is not a rough school. Any of the schoolyard mishaps that happen at Blake can be found in any of the schools across the Toronto District School Board. Many of the kids at Blake have experienced extreme socio-*

*economic hardships and some have been brought to Canada due to well-documented political and religious turmoil around the world. The wonderful thing about Blake is that these children, from such diverse backgrounds, come together, and not only enjoy their school community but enrich the social fabric of the wider community as a result of this diversity. The kids at Blake enjoy school. It is a happy and safe place to be.*

#### Q: Discontent with the Principal and Administration at Blake

Jodie: *We recently had a change in administration at Blake. The current principal is David Hampton. Mr. Hampton is extremely supportive to the staff and cares deeply about the Blake students. He has also extended an open invitation to any resident of the Pocket to come and meet with him to discuss any concerns or ideas on school improvement.*

#### Q: There isn't a strong parent council at Blake

Jodie: *Unfortunately that rumor is true. There is not a strong parent council at Blake. But I know that it can be better. I have seen tremendous community spirit from this neighbourhood since my husband and I moved here one year ago. I know that if we had some of that energy and spirit on our parent council we could make Blake an even better place to be. We've got a great staff, wonderful kids and a*

*strong desire to make Blake Street the hub of its community. We need your support.*

#### Q: There is too much emphasis on ESL children and this holds English-speaking students back.

Jodie: *The teachers at Blake strive to support all students with a range of needs (i.e. ESL, Learning Disabilities, Gifted) within their classroom. Many strategies that teachers use to assist ESL learners such as visual cues, simple language and scaffolding are beneficial to all students. Students with a high need for ESL support are withdrawn from the 'regular' classroom and participate in small group instruction with an ESL specialist teacher. It is only a small number of students who require this special support. The remaining ESL students are able to meet the curriculum requirements at their grade level.*

I have found it inspiring that the principal and teachers from Blake are so dedicated to their school. I believe this says a lot about the quality, passion and loyalty that the students help inspire. Our Pocket has changed and developed over the years for the better. This is an indication that communities can change - and so can schools.

**David Hampton, Blake's principal can be contacted at: (416) 393-9415**

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## Fun and interesting websites in the pocket

By Susan McMurray

Next time you're browsing the net, check out "Leo's Website" at [www.nancykembry.com/leo](http://www.nancykembry.com/leo). The site belongs to "Leo", a young Norfolk Terrier who moved to Condor Avenue last summer when he was just a puppy.

Nancy Kembry, Leo's adopted "mom", describes the origins of the website: "Leo was just so amusing that when people wanted to see pictures of him we could see a story board emerging and this seemed to be the easiest

way of sharing the pictures and his story." The website includes Leo's



biography and a slide show of Leo at play with Jackson (a Golden

Doodle – cross between a Golden Retriever and a Poodle – who lives with Liza and Chris on Ravina Crescent).

[graphic showing Leo's business card – when layout starts, ask Susan for card]

Do you know of fun or interesting websites in the Pocket? Let us know at [thepocket@sympatico.ca](mailto:thepocket@sympatico.ca) or drop off information at 18 Boothroyd or 34 Condor.

## Preserving Peppers in the Pocket

By Marieke Meyer

On a weekend last fall, the heady scent of roasted red peppers filled the air at Ravina Crescent. For the fifth year, a group of Pocket neighbours met at Rod Cohen and Claire Watson's house to roast and bottle four bushels of peppers.

For Rod, the tradition has been going on for many more years. He first became interested in roasting and preserving peppers when he had a Greek neighbour who taught him how to do it. Naturally, when he moved to the Pocket, the annual ritual came with him.

Rod picks the date each year, depending on the maturity and quality of the peppers, which he has been keeping an eye on for weeks. Finally we all get the call to gather, and a troop of neighbours lugging barbeques, canning jars, and food and drink to sustain us for the day, march down the street to Rod and Clair's house. Their four-year-old daughter Tabitha was on hand to greet us with a free form dance to the music of her favourite song "La Bamba."

And then the work began. The peppers' red skins blackened under the intense heat of the barbeques as the cooks patiently turned them. After they were thoroughly and evenly burned, they went into a paper bag - a sort of mini sweat lodge for peppers. And of course, as they roasted, that heavenly smell permeated the neighbourhood.

Meanwhile, in the kitchen, the table was covered with a plastic cloth, the air already steamy from the jars and lids being sterilized on the stove.

When the bags of peppers had cooled, it was time for the next stage. We sat at the kitchen table - four or five of us at a time - and peeled away the black skin and removed the core and seeds from the peppers. Rod made sure that we saved as much sweet pepper juice

as possible. Then all that carefully rendered juice and all the strips of succulent peppers went into a large sterile bowl, waiting to be jarred.

That was Clair's job. She ladled peppers and their nectar into the bottles, and then processed them in boiling water for 20 minutes.

It was hard, hot work, but somehow, there weren't any complaints. Maybe the wine, beer and snacks helped. Maybe it was the neighbours who drifted in and out throughout the day, each with fresh stories and enthusiasm. Maybe it was the anticipation of sweet roasted peppers to savour that kept us going. In any case, before we knew it, all the peppers were in jars, and it was time for the potluck feast.

And what a feast it was! Steak, ribs, chicken, shrimp, vegetable casserole, roasted potatoes, salad, and yes, a glass or two more of wine. And, did I mention dessert? Home baked brownies, butter and lemon tarts, chocolate chip cookies to die for ... we ate until we could eat no more.

It felt like a bit of the country in the city; it felt like a good old-fashioned neighbourhood party - with kids and teenagers, parents and grandparents. Good food, good smells and good company. This is why we love the Pocket.

And after the barbeques were carted home, the dishes washed and the wine bottles put in the recycling box, we all got a dozen bottles of sweet roasted peppers to remind us of a perfect Saturday in the Pocket.

Marieke Meyer is a producer with CBC Radio who lives on Ravina Crescent in the Pocket.

# Calendar Boys at the Court Jester

By Marc Strange

A few years ago, a group of brave British women did a nude calendar to raise money to fight leukemia. They were so successful that a movie, *Calendar Girls*, was made of their efforts. More importantly, they raised millions of pounds for their cause.

With this inspiring story in mind, a number of regulars at Danforth Avenue's Court Jester pub recently decided to create their own nude calendar. Proceeds from calendar sales would go towards the Shiraz Bagli Memorial Fund for ovarian cancer research at Princess Margaret Hospital. This Fund was established in memory of the wife of one of the Jester's clan who succumbed to the insidious disease.



It's such a good cause, that when I was approached to pose for the calendar, I found myself saying 'yes'. Squirm as I might I was unable to come up with a solid excuse to get off the list.

Eric Roberts, the man responsible

for suggesting the scheme in the first place, figured a nude "Men of the Court Jester" calendar might raise a few thousand dollars.

To some of us, even that modest aim seemed a bit optimistic - attractive Englishwomen, sure, 13 beer drinkers without a single six-pack among them, unlikely.

Nonetheless, once the idea had been expressed it took on a life of its own. A photographer was engaged, studio space was made available, props and themes suggested, months assigned. For some reason, it was decided to have a 13-month calendar with January 2006 added for good luck I suppose. That's how your 63 year-old neighbour - namely me - got roped in.

On Tuesday, November 24, 2004, the MEN OF THE JESTER calendar was unveiled at a gala launch emceed by Valerie Gibson of the Toronto Sun. Even though it was a blustery, wet night, a crowd was lined up on Danforth Avenue waiting to get inside, buy a calendar and join in an evening of warm community feeling.

The Launch was a big success. We made three local newscasts and received a lovely email message from "Miss April" - one of the original Calendar Girls in the UK. Miss April wished us well.

The Jester was packed with generous and supportive people, dozens of whom gave freely of their time and resources, printing (at cost) collating, mailing, supplying gifts, food and cash.



Laurie and Steve, co-owners of the Court Jester, donated the entire night's receipts. The outpouring of love and good fellowship moved even my flinty heart. Not to mention the fact I sold a dozen personal autographs. My ancient buns were a big hit with the over-60 crowd. In fact, one of the autograph-seekers couldn't have been a day over 55.

To date, the calendar has raised over \$20,000 - about ten grand in direct donations to Princess Margaret Hospital, eleven hundred bucks in calendar sales, autographs, T-shirts and assorted graft, and back orders for another 100.

Of course, I must now live with the fact that I'll be hanging on 500 hundred walls in my birthday suit for the next year or more but, as Mr. January 2006, at least they won't get around to me for a while.

For anyone interested, there's a website ([www.menofthejester.ca](http://www.menofthejester.ca)).

	<p><b>Paula Fletcher</b> City Councillor, Ward 30</p>
	<p><b>Environment Day at Canada Day!</b></p>
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# Notes on a Neighbourhood Association

By Sierra Gardash and Michelle Newton

Community Worker Students, George Brown College

It's easy to focus what's not working in Toronto. Newspaper headlines tell us that the city is plagued by violence, health and social services are struggling for life, and that our municipal system is wasting our tax dollars.

After spending the last three months learning about The Pocket neighbourhood, we see that there is hope for the future of this city.

Part of our time as George Brown College Community Worker Students is spent on a field placement with a community organization. We have been working on projects with one of your neighbours, David Langille, who runs the Centre for Social Justice.

One of our projects was to assist with neighbourhood organizing in the Pocket. Our work in the Pocket involved: helping to set up a neighbourhood association and accompanying Web site, creating a neighbourhood directory and helping organize community meetings.

Through our experience with residents of this neighbourhood, we've concluded that the Pocket is a great place to live. We have walked up and down your streets handing out flyers, attended meetings, met with residents and dug into The Pocket's history.

You live in a vibrant community and we're proud and lucky to have learnt about what you do to keep it that way. You know how to have your voices heard at City Hall and are able to organize quickly around issues that concern you.

But what about the Pocket's future?

How do you make sure that residents continue to mobilize around issues and maintain a sense of community spirit?

A Pocket Neighbourhood Association might just be the answer.

In early January, we held a meeting for people who were interested in setting up such an association. About twenty people showed up to discuss issues they felt would improve the quality of life in the Pocket. Topics discussed ranged from the dumpsters on Phin Park Avenue to cleaning up Phin Park itself, setting up a community garden and continuing to have street parties and special neighbourhood events.

Overall it was a good response. Even though the Pocket neighbourhood is relatively well off, there is always room for improvement. So we encourage you to share your community spirit and get involved with the fledgling Pocket Neighbourhood Association.

For more information, contact David Langille at [langille@socialjustice.org](mailto:langille@socialjustice.org)

## The Pocket

Issue V

[Thepocket@sympatico.ca](mailto:Thepocket@sympatico.ca)

Publisher: Nate Hendley

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## Layout and Design:

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Marc van Beueskom

Illustrator: Cecilia Booth, Anita Advani ( illustration of Joe)

## Distribution:

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Many thanks to all that have been involved and to all that read the newsletter. Drop boxes are located at 18 Boothroyd Ave, 34 Condor Ave. You can email us at [thepocket@sympatico.ca](mailto:thepocket@sympatico.ca)

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