



illuminations

A quarterly publication of the Historical Society of University City

Prize-Winning Stories

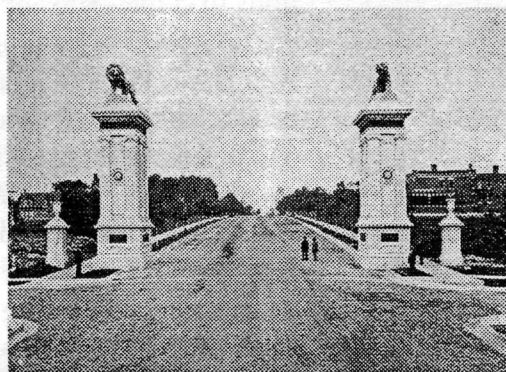
As part of the celebration of the U. City Lions' Centennial, local students were invited to write an essay about "what the Lions have seen in the past 100 years." The three winning essays, all by University City High School students, are reprinted in this issue.

First Prize Winner

Bravery on the Boulevard
by Robert Evans III

As I sat on the top of my stone pedestal one morning, I examined a peculiar occurrence, one that has remained with me throughout my century of observation and residency in the greatest community in St. Louis. Everything appeared to be at peace in the area, as usual. The sun shined brightly on the glistening dome of City Hall and heated the busy boulevard below. Students played loudly at the school on Kingsland. Cars scurried this way and that, left, right, to and fro, driving around in a million little circles enjoying the beauty of the day.

My sister and I were the lucky onlookers and appointed guardians of the successful community. We were the guards of the structures and values surrounding us, the mascots for what we had seen rise from the country dust half a century prior. We were fortunate to have the best view in the entire city. It seemed like just another gorgeous day. Nothing to disturb the peace and comfort of the moment, nothing could be going



The Gates of Opportunity, 1909

wrong in this model suburb.

And as the sunbeams danced down the boulevard, I began to notice something that struck me as unusual. To the casual passerby, it probably wouldn't have looked like much to reflect on. A young child playing at the school probably wouldn't take a look up from their game of ball, nor would the St. Louis businessman slow his daily commute for the occasion. But I have seen much more than they have. I watched the town every single day and night, protecting it from harm and representing the strength of community.

What I saw were large trucks passing through my gates. They were filled up to the brim with boxes and belongings, couches and beds, box after box of everything possibly imaginable. People rode in the trucks, waving farewells to pedestrians and looking sentimentally at buildings fluttering past their windows. More

soon followed, the same capacity and items smashed inside. I was very confused. What was this flight? Why were so many people leaving University City, the paradise and perfect community I presided over? More and more trucks came, more and more confusion mounted as they departed for other corners of the city.

Days passed and the confusion only grew. My sister and I began to eavesdrop on the discussion of pedestrians strolling on the boulevard. They spoke of selling their homes and finding residence in the nearby suburbs, all less appealing and interesting than our home. They spoke in hushed whispers about things like 'integration' and 'desegregation.' Fear was reflected in their pale, white complexions as they would hurriedly walk away, as if something ominous was chasing them from what they loved.

I turned to my sister, wondering what was going on in the land below. We observed more and more people talking about what they identified as issues, we saw more and more trucks take citizens away. Soon, though, others began to trickle in through the gates. They came in smaller trucks and had less belongings. They passed through in awe of the diverse architecture and the beau-

continued on p. 2

A Message from the President by Ed Nickels

Summer is almost over and fall is right around the corner. Vacations are fond memories to cherish and the kids are back in school. What all this means is that we are approaching our September "Annual Meeting" banquet. You will not want to miss the event on Tues., Sept. 22 in the Library Auditorium. Robbi Courtaway, author of the book "Wetter Than The Mississippi," will relate stories from her book on the early years of Olive Street Road. Early, meaning before University City was a city!

Sept. 11-13 will be a special weekend. Join former City Manager Charles Henry as he discusses what it was like in University City in the late 50s and early 60s. The program will be at 10 a.m. Fri. in the Library Auditorium and will be hosted by your Historical Society. Saturday will feature a party atmosphere in Heman Park with the "Puppy Pool Party" and the vintage base ball tournament to determine the Missouri Cup champion. The tournament will be played under the rules of base ball during the 1860s and all teams will be attired in period uniforms. If you have never seen a vintage base ball match, now would be the perfect time to root your home town University City Lions on to victory after winning the

"Bravery" continued from p. 1

ty of the area. Their darker faces filled with hope.

Gradually, not as many trucks left and a small few still trickled in. The two types of citizens, new and old, white and black, were rarely seen together. They went to different restaurants, went to different movie theatres, and were almost always separate. They would exchange nervous glances, if anything at all. A strange tension began to surround the community.

One day, after a considerable time had passed, a white man was riding his bike down the boulevard. He passed through my gates and a few feet later, the bicycle hit a curb and the man took a tumble. He fell onto the hot pavement, obviously in pain, and grabbed his knee with a wincing expression.

Out from under the patches of sunlight, partly shadowed by trees, another man began to walk by. He was black, predictably the two exchanged nervous glances, both said nothing. It appeared as if he would continue on his way, but the man stopped and turned around, looking afraid to say anything. He simply offered his hand to the white man who accepted it

cup last year. All events are free. Sunday is the U-City In Bloom garden tour, including the historic home at 15 Princeton. As a special treat, each garden will be watched over by one of the decorated "Lions" you have seen around the city marking the celebration of the Lions' hundredth birthday.

Seven of the Lions will be auctioned off to the highest bidder on October 10 at a gala in City Hall. All proceeds from the auction as well as the special lion quilt raffle will go to your Historical Society to be put into a fund to maintain and preserve the Lion Gates for generations to come. Bids on the lions will start at \$500. If you are interested in bidding on a lion, or know of someone who is, please contact me. Tickets for the quilt raffle will be available at our banquet or through all board members. (Also, tickets for the Circle in the Square Quilters' quilt co-sponsored by the Historical Society will be available.) The drawing on the quilt will take place October 10, as well as a silent auction benefiting the Parks Foundation which is co-sponsoring the event. You will want to wander through City Hall and see the poster-size birthday cards for the lions that the Lions Birthday Committee received from other local cities. The posters will also be on display for viewing at Centennial Commons during the festivities on Saturday. Mark these dates and plan to join the fun to benefit preservation of the Lions for generations to come. We need your support and I hope to see you at all the events.

with a smile. The wounded man was helped to his feet and the two began walking together slowly down the street, the bike left propped up against my stone pedestal. The invisible tension had broken.

The moment filled me with happiness. Today, I still overlook the same view I have seen for one hundred years. However, there is a difference in human interaction. People in this community look past the color of one another and interact with everyone they possibly can, embracing diversity and variation. I see people that celebrate one another's cultural differences, people that celebrate living in this land of sharp, positive contrast. We celebrate what has become of University City and the citizens that chose to make a change in the community.

"Atascadero: The vision of one—the work of many" by L.W. Allen is a 151-page, lavishly illustrated oversize paperback that retails for \$30, but is available for a limited time to HSUC members for \$20. Email Archivist Sue Rehkopf at ucityhistory@hotmail.com

First Prize Winner (tie)

Dear Mary Louise

by Zoë Maffitt

May 24, 1906

Dear Mary Louise,

My wedding is a week from today. It distresses me greatly that you are not able to attend. I have missed your companionship a great deal these past few years.

My dear friend, I am only too happy to oblige your request. I daresay I would have poured out the details into your ear like honey into tea, just like old days, even if you hadn't asked!

It all started with a magazine, of all things! Mama had a subscription to the wildly popular *Woman's Magazine*. Mr. E.G. Lewis (the editor) had set up a tent city for the World's Fair. I'm sure you remember Mama's penny-pinching ways, forever trying to build my and little Susie's dowries. It just so happened that this "hotel" was inexpensive enough that she consented. (No chores would have gotten done with all our whining, and she never *can* resist Susie's begging eyes.)

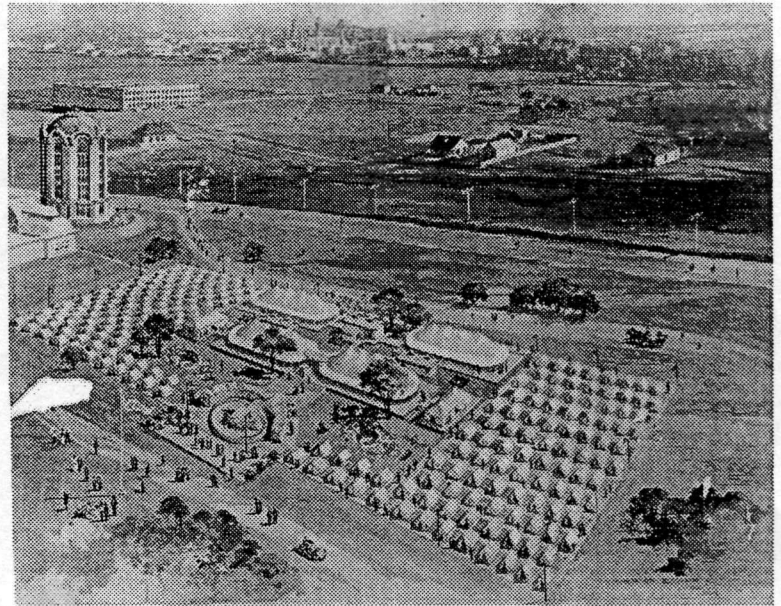
Therefore, for \$2.00 a night, paying for the three of us plus my older brother, Charles, we set off to the fair for a week. That initial sight of Lewis Town off of Delmar was spectacular. There were hundreds of crisp white tent flaps blowing in the wind like seagulls, or mayhap mounds of snow surviving the spring thaw. There were boardwalks connecting everything and keeping Mama's and my skirt hems clean. You had to watch for the children, though. (Mr. Lewis banned alcohol to ensure the family-friendliness.)

We immediately headed for the fair in these horse-drawn omnibuses which were provided for guests.

The famous Ferris Wheel towered over the sprawling grounds. It looked like a giant's water-wheel, though with dazzling lights.

Somehow, while Charles and I were in line to get on, we were separated. I am ashamed to say how frightened I was. I didn't know which vendor Mama and Susie had gone to or where Charles was. The press of bodies and the heat mayhap should be credited.

It was all for naught because the most handsome gentleman came to my rescue. It was like one of the stories in the magazine, it was so utterly perfect. Instead of the fashionable straw hats, he held a jaunty fedora over my head to keep the sun off my



Camp Lewis, 1904

face as he addressed me.

"I noticed you are distraught, miss. May I be of assistance?"

I gestured vaguely around, fighting off tears, I'm abashed to say. I explained my predicament. He frowned slightly.

"Would you do me the honor of accompanying me to that vendor over there?" I nodded timidly. He proceeded to buy me tea, though it was iced. I took a cautious sip but found it refreshing. He chuckled, having been watching my face.

"Do you think we may be able to spy them from up there?" He pointed. I nodded dumbly, dazzled by him.

The idea proved unhelpful. All the women wore uniform; modest white blouses, ankle-length black skirts, and pinned-up hair, while all the flat circular tops of the men's hats put me in mind of bubbles. I still enjoyed the ride. My panic was desisting, my awe of the view taking precedence.

When we exited the ride I recognized Charles' white face. When we reached him he addressed the mysterious gentleman.

"I thank you for watching after Eliza, Mister...?"

"Leo." He grinned, shaking my brother's proffered hand.

"A pleasure."

I finally spoke up, fearing Leo's departure.

"Sir, would you be so kind as to dine with us?" With a kind smile, he nodded.

This we did with Charles finding Mama and Susie.

We were just finishing the supper provided by the

continued on p. 4

"Mary" continued from p. 3

much-acclaimed Chicago caterer when we heard a commotion outside. All those in the dining hall (including ourselves) rushed to the opening to see what was causing the disturbance.

There on the roof of the octagonal headquarters of Mr. Lewis's magazines was the most brilliant light I have ever seen. It was as if I was standing mere feet away from a powerful star, shining its light as if a beacon into the heavens.

The crowd around me murmured in awe. Leo moved to my side and offered a supportive arm to hold as we started walking toward the building. As we did so Leo informed me of the rumors going around.

"My favorite 'explanation' is that the leader of Russia commissioned the most powerful searchlight in the world, but due to complications in war, was unable to pay for it. Then Lewis must have purchased it."

As fascinating as this was, I was distracted. I could feel Mama's and Charles' eyes boring into my back. I knew that Mama's expression would be speculative, Charlie's protective and suspicious, despite his former gratitude.

I smothered a smile and continued on with the dashing gentleman.

The following week passed as if in a whirlwind. Being courted for the first time made my thoughts swirl around in a frenzy, my heart patter like hail on a tin roof. I tried to be wary of summer romances, but caution was thrown to the wind.

As luck would have it, Leo was under Mr. Lewis's employment. (I discovered this on the first Sunday of the fair when he gave me a personal tour of the largest printing press in the world.)

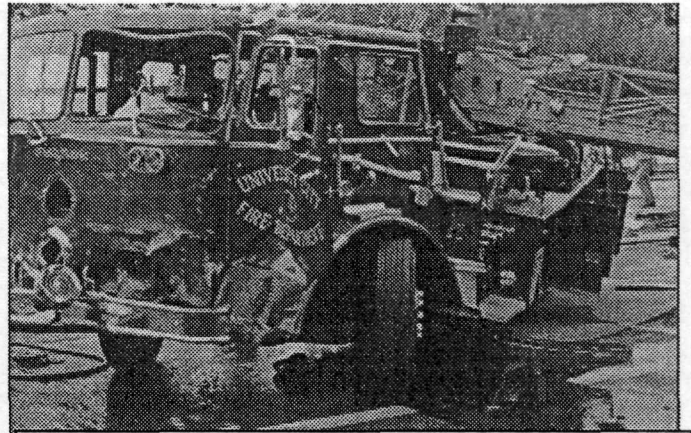
When things became more serious I hired on with Mr. Lewis, as well.

Mr. Lewis was, at that time, developing a subdivision of housing. Leo bought a quaint house, nestled right into one of the smooth curves of the road. Once he was sure he could support me, he proposed. (That was three months and twenty-four days ago.)

Oh, Mary, I so wish you could be here and meet Leo. This correspondence shall just have to do. Make sure to come visit me in a few months, once I've had time to set the house to rights.

Fondly yours,
Eliza

illuminations page four



The truck after the crash, 1976

Honorable Mention

Just Flames

by Anya Dodgson Klooster

It is September of 1976;
U-City is painted red and brown.
We sit in our station relaxed and at ease.
Until the alarm sounds.

We fly through the city;
Our sirens scream "out of the way!"
We hang a right, then swing a left
And feel the flames licking our brains.

We're getting closer, almost there...Bang!
Crash!
Screech!
Smash!

One vehicle doesn't listen
To our siren's thundering screams.
A Bi-State bus slams into us.
It feels like a terrible dream.

Raymond Shipley lies unmoving;
Our hearts beat double time.
We see that he is breathing—
Thank goodness he's alive!

One fractured skull, two punctured lungs,
Two blood clots in the brain;
Broken ribs and collar bone,
His injuries too many to name.

Ten months pass and Shipley heals,
But the suffering does not end.

continued on p. 5

He cannot raise his arms too high;
His ankles are weak and bend.

Never again will he fight fires;
His career is over, so fast.
He puts in a request for pension;
His injuries were so terrible and vast.

July 21, the pension board meets
To vote on the issue of Shipley.
The poll is taken, the results are read:
Three to one he will receive nothing.

What? No, that can't be right!
There must be money available.
No, the pension board explains,
He's only twenty percent disabled.

Anger! Shock! Pain! Sadness!
How can this be happening?
We risk our lives for you each day
But you won't give us anything?

Injured in the line of duty;
Offered no support.
We know this cannot be allowed;
We know we must speak out.

July 22, we take our stand.
We walk out and form a line.
In front of City Hall we stay.
We tell them we're on strike.

We strike for justice and our rights.
We strike for our own safety.
We strike for Shipley and our wives.
We strike for what we believe.

"Go back to work" they tell us all,
"Or lose your jobs instead"
But these empty threats mean nothing to us;
They can't get inside our heads.

July 24, the middle of the night:
The dreamy star bright sky
Is blotted out by smoke of black
That climbs so high, so high...

The victim is Plastic Bottle Co.

A historic building, certainly,
Built by E. G. Lewis himself.
We regret its destruction fervently.

Orange flames of brilliant fury
Lick the walls so old.
And E. G. Lewis's building crumbles
Under our strike so bold.

It hurts to watch, to see it burn;
It hurts to know we could stop it.
But we must stand strong, we must hold fast;
It's too important to drop it.

And so the small flame that started 'round back
That could have been stopped in ten minutes,
Burned ten hours straight, burned that building down
And pushed our will to the limit.

One by one, the fire trucks come
From our surrounding cities—
Clayton, Olivette, Ladue and Webster
West Overland and Rock-Hill;

They come and see our building burn
But cross our picket line they won't.
They know the risk we take each day;
They know what others don't.

Some say we threatened and scared them off.
Others say that they felt sympathy.
But we believe they knew our fight
Was for more than Raymond Shipley.

Our fight, our strike, our stand, our war
Was fought for every man
Who braves the blaze and knows the ways
The fire can hurt, it can.

If we go in and don't come out
Or if we come out wrong,
We must know that our families are safe,
That they'll have a way to get along.

So they stood and watched that building burn;
They stood with us all night.
And as the morning lit the sky
We hoped the city would see we were right



The Historical Society of University City
6701 Delmar Blvd.
University City MO 63130

ucityhistory.org

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
PERMIT NO. 1729

Inside

President's Message
Annual Dinner Sept. 22

David Linzee
744 Syracuse
University City, MO 63130

"Flames" continued from p. 5

We hope that you, the pension board,
Will reconsider your choice.
We hope no other buildings will die
Before you have heard our voice.

To you, Mr. Berger, owner of Plastic Co.,
We would like to apologize.
We regret your loss and the misfortune that led
To your building's fiery demise.

On July 28, around 8:30 a.m.,
Ye Old Kingsland grille bursts into flame.
We see the smoke and come a runnin'
For we know lives may be at stake.

Three stories of apartments built up above
Fill fast with thick black smoke.
We rush and evacuate the thirty inside
But the fire we leave for other folk.

U-City Police and Clayton firemen
Work to drown the flame
While we stand and watch, feel guilt and pain
Of another building ablaze.

We hate this strike; we want it to stop;
We wish it was over now.
If only an agreement could be reached at last
If only, somehow...somehow...

But wait, what's this? A meeting last night?
Our bargaining agent recognized?
City officials met with union officers
And our hopes may soon be realized?

But no offers were made, from their side or ours
Not yet, that is to say.
For an agreement made while on strike may not last;
Duress may get in the way.

It is understood that should the strike end
The issue of pension will soon be corrected.
So we gather outside our Firehouse 1
To see if our strike will be ended.

In a unanimous vote the strike is over!
We cheer as we rush inside.
We climb in our shiny red fire truck
And drive, oh baby, we drive!