



MANOR NEWS

WINTER

2015

For safety and sociability

Create a Block Club (and Other Tips)



Photo: Jim Peters

Neighborhood block clubs was the main topic at the semi-annual meeting of the Ravenswood Manor Improvement Association (RMIA) on October 21st at the Horner Park Field House. In attendance, in addition to more than a dozen residents, were Ald. Deb Mell (33rd Ward) and her new chief of staff, Jason Hernandez.

Homeowners on the **4400-block of North**

Francisco Avenue explained how they had recently formed a block club by first creating a phone and email list that allowed residents to quickly communicate with one another in the event of an emergency, such as a power outage or criminal activity.

According to RMIA board member Suzy Thomas, once the email list was developed, residents began to organize monthly social gatherings, which now rotate between different houses on the block. About 20 people attend these “meetings,” which have enabled neighbors to get to know one another much better.

“One of the other things our block club allows is neighbors helping neighbors with tasks,” Thomas says. “We shared a list of skills that each of us has so we can call on one another for help.” This neighbors network also helps to keep more active “eyes on the street,” which ultimately has helped to prevent criminal activities, Thomas added.

On the **2800-block of West Leland Avenue**, one neighborhood family hosts a monthly “Soup Night” during the winter months, where residents share potluck dishes during a time of year when socializing often is limited. This Sunday night tradition has spread into the summer months, when three other neighbors—with adjoining yards—host a monthly “BBQ Night” potluck. These social activities have helped form a closer network on the block, residents noted, including shared snow blowing of sidewalks in the winter (see photo above).

Alderman Mell also stressed the value of block clubs as a valuable aid to the police. Among the other suggestions she and her staff brought up were:

- Install house numbers on the alley side of your garage. This can help police and fire officials to quickly identify addresses in an emergency.
- Call “911” if you spot anything “remotely suspicious.” Don’t hesitate to do so, the alderman stressed, noting the importance of tracking crimes or disturbances for the targeting of police patrols.
- Identify other deterrents to crime, such as an overgrown tree that blocks a streetlight. Call in these issues either to “911” or “311.”
- Call in complaints about loud aircraft noise, urged the alderman’s chief of staff Hernandez. This allows the City and the Federal Aviation Administration to track the location of aircraft noise. He noted the following on-line forms for registering complaints, either at chicagonoisecomplaints.com or at https://servicerequest.cityofchicago.org/web_intake_chic/Controller?op=csrform&restrict_loc=Y&invSRType=AVN.

A view from 1992

One More Time Around the Block

By Katharine Byrne

Walking around the block must have some purpose. Unless you are a power walker wearing your power shoes and your personal stereo, you just don’t walk around a block alone. In Anne Tyler’s “Saint Maybe,” a recently retired man takes his old dog for more walks than it wants to take, because “he would have felt foolish strolling the streets with no purpose. This gave him something to hang on to.”

I have walked these clean streets every day for almost 50 years, give or take a few days off for vacations, blizzards, childbirth or the time I had pneumonia, and I have always had something to hang on to. I have pushed baby carriages and strollers, held the hands of small children, guided tricycles, balanced a two-wheeler on its first wobbly trip without training wheels, hung on to a husband’s arm in February’s ice storms and to the leashes of a succession of dogs in all seasons. A couple of these, at least in their youth, were wild assertive beasts, street fighters looking for trouble and hard to handle. Now I walk with Daisy, an age-appropriate found-object of my affection, found shivering under a parked car. Timorous at the sight of anything larger than a squirrel, she wants to head for home. (See “Around the Block” on page 4)

Event Calendar

Monthly Meetings

RMIA Board: 2nd Monday of the month, 7:30 p.m., Horner Park Field House, 2741 W. Montrose Ave.

Horner Park Advisory Council: 1st Monday of the month, 7:30 p.m., Horner Park Field House, 2741 W. Montrose Ave.

CAPS-17th District, Beat 1724 (south of Wilson Avenue): 3rd Wednesday of the month (starting in January), 6:30 p.m., Horner Park Field House, 2741 W. Montrose Ave.

CAPS-17th District, Beat 1713 (north of Wilson Avenue): 4th Wednesday of the month (starting in January), 6:30 p.m., Magnuson Campus Center, North Park University, 5000 N. Spalding Ave.

Special Events

Manor Spring Fling: Saturday, March 19th, 2-5 p.m., BreakRoom Brewery, 2925 W. Montrose Ave.

Easter Egg Hunt: Saturday, March 26th, 10 a.m. (prompt), LaPointe Park, Giddings and Manor

Fall Tree Planting



Photos by John O'Connell and Mary Valentin

Many thanks to the volunteers who helped plant two dozen new parkway trees on Saturday, October 10th. This was the third phase of the "Manor Centennial Trees Project," a program designed to help replace some of the neighborhood trees that have been lost to old age, storm damage, or the Emerald Ash Borer. The two-year project, which resulted in the planting of more than 60 new parkway trees, was cosponsored by the Manor Garden Club, Openlands TreeKeepers, and the Ravenswood Manor Improvement Association, under the leadership of Anne Rozmin. Those interested in requesting a tree for the parkway in front of their residence should contact the City of Chicago's Bureau of Forestry by phoning 311.

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Mosaic News



Courtesy of Jo-Anne Conroy

A detail of one of the four proposed mosaic designs that would be installed on the concrete walls of the Wilson Avenue bridge (top).

Even as one mosaic—at the Francisco “L” station—undergoes restoration, fundraising is underway to fabricate and install four new mosaics on the approaches to the Wilson Avenue Bridge.

However, unlike the “L” station mosaic, which was installed on a flat walkway ramp subject to continual maintenance issues, the proposed Wilson Bridge Mosaics will be stained glass installed on waterproof panels affixed to the four vertical concrete bridge abut-

ments, facing both east and west, along Wilson Avenue. This type of installation, according to mosaic experts, has been proven to be extremely durable, with low maintenance costs and long-term life.

The four mosaic panels, which were designed by East Albany Park artist JoAnne Conroy, depict scenes of life along the Chicago River. They will be installed under the supervision of the Chicago Mosaic School, a premier center for mosaic training and education.

The aldermen representing the two sides of the river—Ald. Deb Mell (33rd Ward) and Ald. Amaya Pawar (47th Ward)—have pledged their financial support, as well as the RMIA. However, additional donations are needed to meet the \$45,000 cost of the project, half of which goes to the Chicago Mosaic School for its technical assistance, use of its studio space, and project direction.

To donate or to learn more about the Wilson Bridge Mosaic project, go to www.wilsonbridgemosaic.com or visit its Facebook page. And if you know of any available work space near the bridge (i.e., garage, yard, etc.), please contact Tracey Lowenthal at tracey-lowenthal2@gmail.com

“L” mosaic update

In October, the Chicago Transit Authority installed masonry grout to help stabilize the two large portions of the “Carpet” mosaic (Ellen Harvey, artist) that had seriously deteriorated since its installation on the Francisco “L” station’s entrance ramp in 2007. According to the CTA, a more permanent fix will be created next spring under the direction of the artist.

These recent improvements came less than a month after the RMIA had sent a letter to the CTA, urging immediate repairs and expressing its concern that “if repairs are not completed—while weather conditions still permit—this artwork may suffer irreparable damage this winter.”



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Around the Block (cont.)

Occasionally we are joined by one of my agreeable grandchildren. Among these, one who is mathematically gifted has estimated with the aid of an atlas that I have made this trip about 12,000 times, the distance between Copenhagen and Istanbul and back. Or from here to Bogota.

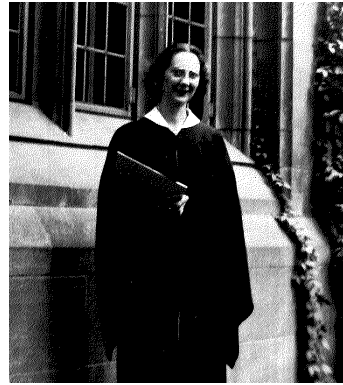
Although these children are too polite to complain, one of them did observe recently, “Kate, all the people you talk about are dead.” It is true that as I walk past these familiar houses, I may see other times and other people. Some of the homes have layered looks. Here is a deck that smells of new cedar and oregano in a terra cotta jardiniere, but I see an old open porch, a swing hanging from the ceiling, morning glories twining around the banister. Who lives here now? I don’t know. To me it is “the Andersons house.”

A man is hurrying from the next doorway. Young, prosperous in a vested suit, carrying a handsome briefcase, he strides toward the “L.” But I see Herbert long ago, in baggy corduroys and frayed cuffs. A reclusive man, he used to live here with his mother, the widow of a policeman. She carried Herbert’s white shirts to the back yard in a huge wicker basket. After her death, Herbert’s white shirts gave out at the collars and cuffs. Thereafter, he was often seen carrying knobby bags imprinted with the Friendly Liquors logo. When he shot himself with his father’s service revolver, they said that the wicker basket was filled with empties; not a story to tell a young grandchild.

But houses outlive owners, of course. A more cheerful episode in the long life of Herbert’s house spanned the years when it was Mr. Lippman who lived there and gave violin lessons to a procession of yarmulke-capped youths plodding their way after school to practice in his basement and eat the honeycakes made by his wife, Reba. Reba’s ambition was to sing in the chorus of the Lyric. On summer days we could hear her plaintive “Pace, pace, mio Dio” wafted out of open windows.

Why does unrelieved sun beat down on this hot pavement although the rest of the block lies in cool shadows? It’s all Geraldine’s fault. Her family was city-connected with someone in every department, including forestry. When we heard the whine of the chain saw that day and looked out of our windows, we recognized the sound and sight of city clout. Geraldine was causing to be removed from her parkway a great healthy silver maple. The roots, she reported, were responsible for water in her basement after a heavy rain. We all know about that, hiring plumbers and complaining, but this is the price we pay for precious shade and the illusion of urban peace and quiet. Trees are the pride of our neighborhood. [Editor’s note: “Geraldine” is likely Rose McGurty (1905–79), who lived at 2912 W. Wilson, and whose family included three city workers.]

Geraldine, however, stood out there boldly overseeing the execution. The rest of us wrung our hands and cursed her politics. Only Mrs. Gustafson stood at her doorway screaming: “You are murderers! This tree belongs to the birds, the people, the children yet unborn.” Her outrage reflected our own. By 3 o’clock, only the stump



Author Katharine Byrne, in 1937, at her graduation from the University of Chicago.

remained, its annual rings recording the age of a tree destroyed. Many years later one of Geraldine’s attendants wheels her out to sit unshaded in the sun. And Mrs. Gustafson, too old now to hold an ancient grudge, may cross the street to talk about old times with Geraldine. [Mary Gustafson, age 84 at time of this essay, lived at 2859 W. Wilson, according to census records, ed.]

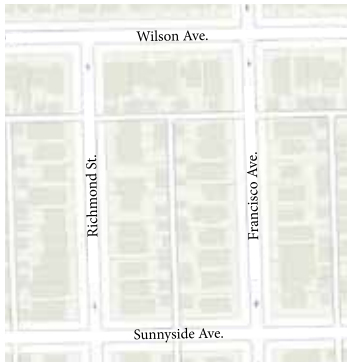
In times old or new, border wars and boundary skirmishes are one of the constants among us; they

may break out between these narrow neighboring kingdoms at any time. Somewhere else, back yards may blend amiably into one another with no lines of demarcation beyond those on the surveyor’s plat. Here, our narrow lots are divided from one another by a variety of fences. The oldest of these are likely to be low, unimpressive and see-through. More recent constructions are high, impenetrable and locked, reflecting the owners’ fear of intrusion—someone may steal the wife’s diamond earrings or the VCR. The owner may also wish to shut out the view of a neighbor’s yard or the noises that come from that direction. Is there an overhanging mulberry tree, a fence that encroaches even a few inches on his rose bushes? An inclination to feed pigeons? To play hard rock at high volume? Proximity may cause problems. Umbrage is taken; what is easier to take than umbrage?

Did you see that *New Yorker* cover last summer? The one that showed one man’s wild yard, full of exuberant growth native to the area, with himself happily settled in his lawn chair, reading a book? One man’s paradise, a neighbor’s jungle. On the other side of his fence, an old lady armed with a pruning shears is bent to the task of fighting back his relentless proliferation of trees-of-heaven, generic phlox and wild mint poking through her fence and cutting off the sun from her tidy, well-mannered garden.

Out of such stuff may grow grumbling, shouting, threats, lawyerly exchanges and even a decision to move. But people move for many reasons. This is after all the city, by ambitious transients regarded as a temporary way station on the road to something better, bigger, safer, farther from the central city and from one’s nearest neighbors.

Proximity can encourage friendships as well, a sense of well-being and support among friends. I have memories of children banging in and out of adjoining homes, sharing lunches and trips to the library or to the Dunes to refill the sandbox as its contents accumulated in our carpets, beds and bath tub. And of neighbors handing clumps of dianthus or johnny jumpups over adjoining fences. Well-wishers, generous in emergencies, bringers of casseroles in times of sorrow.



The author estimated she walked around this block in the Manor 12,000 times.

As we turn a corner, we come to the home where Edmund and Eloise used to live; the last of the early settlers, they moved in soon after the truck farmers moved out, and dwelt for half a century among their flowering trees and perennial. [This is likely Emil and Louise Krueger, who lived at 4510 N. Francisco from the 1910s until 1957–58, ed.] After Edmund's death, Eloise dedicated herself to keeping her doll collection well-dressed, working

on her filing system of everything ever purchased for the house, having shelves built to store old opera programs, travel folders, canceled checks.

When Eloise left everything to The Vineyard of Holistic Fellowship, some religion her relatives never even heard of, they produced hopeful evidence that she had not been of sound mind or disposing memory at the signing of her will. For years a legal game was played out, and during that time, an electronic system turned lights on and off at appropriate times, upstairs and downstairs, beginning at dusk and ending late at night with one lamp burning in Eloise's bedroom. She was up there, one of my children insisted, arranging her dolls for the annual Christmas display to which we were always invited. For years Gomez and Sons, Landscapers, came with their truck to plant and water flower beds, and in winter they shoveled snow from paths no one ever walked on. Last spring brought good news and new life to the old house. I was happy to see a couple of little boys with the traditional small pink rubber ball, playing pinnars against the front steps.

Our own moving-in? One Sunday in 1947, searching for a way out of the three-room apartment we lived in, we had parked our old Chevrolet in front of a friendly-looking possibility on a tree-lined street, a two-story house hedged in by privet and mock orange, Austrian shades in puffy scalloped festoons on clean windows. In the center of the lawn a homemade sign announcing FOR SALE BY OWNER. In hope and in fear, each carrying a small child, we walked up the front steps and rang the bell of the house that would be our home. We were seeking what millions have sought: peace, or at least the absence of alien noises and smells, a refuge, a measure of independence. A war was over; we wanted to house our growing family, to grow a garden. This impulse persists in all who seek the order and stability of owning a home, no matter how imperfectly it may be realized.

Does it look different than when we moved here? Not as different as you might expect in an urban setting where age and deterioration often go together. Surviving elms and maples extend their branches gracefully, arching and meeting in the middle of the street. Most lawns are done by professionals and not by an enterprising 10-year-old child of ours with a hand mower. Earnest young homeowners

appreciate what they pay for here: a place relatively quiet and safe, oak and mahogany surfaces to restore, stained glass to cherish.

There used to be one empty lot, a place for dugouts, forts, club-houses. In this remnant of the great prairie that once covered our part of the world, wild flowers grew: violets, daisies, black-eyed susans, "lilies of the alley" for children to carry home. A house now stands on that spot [4502 N. Francisco], its grass hedged in by a tall iron fence and serviced by the chemical-lawn persons whose hose sprays it with artificial green health once a month.

Children could play ball in the street right here, the game seldom interrupted by passing cars. More traffic now, more beer cans tossed from passing cars, fewer children. Here is the corner where I used to stand with our last child, waiting for the Big Kids to come home for lunch, laughing and running in the company of a small crowd of classmates, all in parochial-school plaids, tan shirts, regulation blue ties. It's noon now, but the street is empty. Two cheerful demographic notes, however: At the end of the block, someone has hung from a 2nd-floor window a pink banner inscribed "It's a Girl!" For her big brothers, there is a newly built treehouse in a giant horse chestnut.

We pass a house sprouting skylights and new dormers out of what used to be Mrs. Sidley's attic. Walking Toto, an earlier dog, I used to be stopped right here by Mrs. Sidley with her current pack of grandchildren's pictures. Winners all. Baton twirlers, Little League pitchers, finalists in oratorical contests, spelling bees, French-horn competitions. Last spring her daughters-in-law invited me in, complaining that even the steps leading to the attic were close-packed with piles of home-made valentines, piano recital programs, baseball and bowling trophies. They said of her that her epitaph should read, "She never threw anything out."

I tried to defend my old neighbor against these competent young women.

"When she looked at this dusty philodendron," I told them, "she saw the friend who gave it to her 30 years ago. When she picked up a Mother's Day card, promising prayers, good works, and to 'clean under my bed,' she saw a long-gone child of hers."

Behind her house, leaf-bags were torn open by curious passersby, the contents blown down the alley in March winds. I went home that day resolved to amend my life, and tried for several hours to throw stuff out.

We round the last corner. At the end of our journey, we have not reached Bogota, Copenhagen or Istanbul, just our own front door. I unfasten Daisy's leash, and she bounds ahead and up the steps. I follow, somewhat more slowly than on the day when we first rang this bell in hope and apprehension. All hopes realized? All apprehensions unfounded? Of course not. Yet in laughter and in tears, and with love that mitigates failure and loss, this has been a good place to live.

I look out my rear windows at my own small plot, the perennials fighting against too many ferns, more alley flowers than *(continued on page 6)*

Around the Block (cont.)

a good gardener would allow. No matter. It's mine. And in memory I see children happily shouting or quarreling in an enormous sandbox their father made. Three squeaking swings are in motion. I relive a rare summery moment of calm that does not last. A small war breaks out. Someone is crying. I see myself hurrying down the stairs with distractions: frozen orange juice and peanut butter on apple slices, paper towels for sandy fingers. An elderly retired lawyer looks in at us from the alley, and not in approval.

"You the people who live in the Boothby's house now?" [the Boothly family had lived at 2917 W. Wilson, according to census records, ed.]

Earnest young homeowners appreciate what they pay for here: a place relatively quiet and safe, oak and mahogany surfaces to restore, stained glass to cherish.

"Yes," I have to admit, for it has been about five years since we moved in, "but not all of these children are mine. They come from all over the block." "What you are providing here, madam," he intones, "may be attractive to these children, but to the rest of us, it is a nuisance."

We were lucky in the loving and tolerant neighbors living for many years to the east and west of us. One side offered children of appropriate ages to play with, to invite for sleepovers, to inherit one another's winter jackets. And on the other side [2919 W. Wilson] lived Esther and Olga [Burke]. Esther taught 2nd grade; Olga was a milliner. ("Kate, what's a milliner?") One made us birthday cakes, the other played "Away in a Manger" ("Kate, what's a manger?") for our children to sing.

Enough of that. No more backward glances. A beautiful grandchild, old enough to have graduated from college, is living and working in this city where her mother was born, and she likes it here. She is coming for dinner. If she spends the night, she can sleep in the bed we bought for her mother when she was three years old and one of the Big Kids. If this child joins Daisy and me in the last round-the-block of the day, together we will look hopefully at the world we know. She may tell me about her life and loves; her hopes and dreams. I vow to speak only of the good things still growing here, alive and well around the block.

This essay first appeared in the Oct. 4, 1992 issue of the Chicago Tribune. Its author, Katherine Byrne, resided at 2917 W. Wilson from 1947 until her death in 2009. Her essays appeared in a variety of publications, including the Chicago Sun-Times, the Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine, the Cleveland Plain Dealer, and Commonweal. During the 1950s and '60s, Ms. Byrne also wrote an advice column in the Catholic weekly, The Young Catholic Messenger, under the pseudonym, "Janice Langley." She and her husband, John, a Chicago Public Schools teacher, principal, and district superintendent, raised five children in the Manor. Thanks to the generous permission of her family, we are reprinting some of Ms. Byrne's Manor-based essays in this newsletter on a periodic basis.

About RMIA

Manor News is published quarterly by the Ravenswood Manor Improvement Association.

Established in 1914, the RMIA is a neighborhood association run entirely by volunteers. We hold monthly board of directors meetings, stage various social events and special projects, and maintain communication channels through our web site, e-mail alerts, and newsletter. Your annual RMIA membership helps to support all of this work.

The RMIA Mission Statement is: "To promote the welfare of the community in respect to the maintenance and improvement of the physical appearance of the private and public property; the compliance with the laws as applicable to private and public property; the maintenance of facilities with respect to the safety, health, and welfare of its residents."

Please contact the RMIA board if you have any questions or suggestions:

Athene Carras – President

Jim Peters – Vice President

Kathy Monk – Secretary

Rick Glick - Treasurer

Our contacts are:

Web site: ravenswoodmanor.com

Facebook.com/[ravenswoodmanor](https://www.facebook.com/ravenswoodmanor)

E-mail: board@ravenswoodmanor.com

Mail: P.O. Box 25486, Chicago IL 60625



Ask not what the Manor can do for you Ask What You Can Do for the Manor

Featured in this issue is an "Event Calendar," which outlines a series of neighborhood activities for the coming year, ranging from popular kid activities (Easter Egg Hunt and Independence Bike Parade) and family events (Garage Sale and Garden Walk) to gatherings aimed at adults (Spring Fling, Semi-Annual Meetings, and SeptemberFest).

The Ravenswood Manor Improvement Association (RMIA) is one of the city's oldest neighborhood groups, but it is also an all-volunteer organization. Consequently, we need other volunteers to help make these annual events a reality. Otherwise, some activities may have to be cancelled.

If you are interested in helping out on an event—or another RMIA board activity—please contact the board president, Athene Carras, at president@ravenswoodmanor.com.

Centennial Plaques



As we turn the calendar from 2015 into 2016, the next round of plaques commemorating century-old buildings in Ravenswood Manor will become available for purchase by homeowners.

In January, the owners of the 56 neighborhood houses constructed in 1916 will receive a packet from the Ravenswood Manor Improvement Association (RMIA). The packet will include a certificate and information

on how to order a bronze plaque. (Building dates are based on research for the neighborhood's 2008 listing on the National Register of Historic Places.)

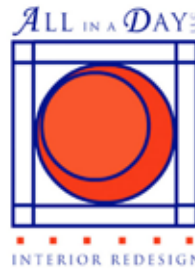
The "Centennial Plaque" program began in 2014 as part of the RMIA's celebration of its 100th anniversary as a community organization. That year, packets were delivered to the 120 owners whose buildings were built between 1909 and 1914. In early 2015, packets were sent to the 50 owners whose buildings turned 100 this year.

Approximately 75 owners have ordered a Centennial Plaque in the past two years, which can be seen on houses, apartments, and commercial buildings throughout the neighborhood—serving as a mini-history tour of local architecture.

If you have questions about the program, please contact Thomas Applegate at thomasapplegate@yahoo.com or visit the Centennial Homes page on the RMIA website: ravenswoodmanor.com/centennialhomes

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RMIA Membership Renewal Time

Ravenswood Manor is a strong community due to the collective and cumulative efforts of residents and their association, RMIA, over the past century plus. This includes the dozens of residents who help distribute this quarterly newsletter.

RMIA relies on your membership support each year in order to produce the following services:

- Fun for all at annual events: Easter Egg Hunt, Spring Fling, Garage Sale, Garden Walk, 4th of July Bike Parade, and SeptoberFest
- Representation of community interests and safety concerns with 33rd Ward Alderman Deb Mell, City of Chicago departments, Police, Fire, Park District, neighboring associations, local schools, local businesses, and media
- Investment in Waters Elementary and support of the Waters Today organization

- Maintenance and programming in our parks and parkways, including principal responsibility for upkeep of LaPointe Park, installation of the holiday "snowflakes," and sponsorship of HPAC's summer concert series in Ravenswood Manor Park
- Special initiatives, such as the Centennial Plaque program
- Partnering with homeowners and Manor Garden Club for tree planting
- Communication with residents through the printed *Manor News*, email newsletter, special notice emails, mailings, flyers, Facebook, and our website at www.ravenswoodmanor.com

The membership year starts on November 1st, and we ask you to either complete the membership form below or go to our membership page on the website: ravenswoodmanor.com/membership. Thank you for your support.

Ravenswood Manor Improvement Association: Membership Form

Pick Your Membership Level: \$100 \$50 \$25 \$10

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P.O. Box 25486
Chicago IL 60625

Additional donation of support for RMIA's work in the neighborhood: \$ _____

Membership is from November 1, 2015 to October 31, 2016. Please make your membership payment payable to RMIA. Your personal information will be used only by RMIA for communications with you. RMIA will not sell or share your information.

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Online: to become a member or renew, go to the Membership page on the RMIA site ravenswoodmanor.com/membership/



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Chapter Two

By Neil Simon

BEGINS JAN 27, 2016

BY Nell Benjamin
 DIRECTED BY David H. Bell

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EXPLORERS
 CLUB

