



## Property Tax Protest Update

by Bill Murray

A Property Tax Task Force has assembled information to assist Old Braeswood property owners who choose to protest their Harris County Property Taxes. This information is posted on our web site at <http://www.oldbraeswood.com/index.htm> and includes a road map describing the protest procedure, resources to assist with mounting a protest, and a database of HCAD property appraisals for the

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## House Deadlock Kills Neighborhood Condemnation Reform Bill

by Hugh Rice Kelly

Scheduled for an expected favorable vote in the Texas House of Representatives on May 22, our Texas Medical Center eminent domain reform bill was instead stopped dead by a House filibuster. Legislative business ceased for five days, long enough to run out the clock on all remaining major bills received from the Senate. The product of a bitter dispute over voter identification legislation, the filibuster had nothing to do with our bill.

Because the TMC Inc. reform bill was one of the scores of major bills scuttled in the deadlock, we are favorably positioned to reactivate the effort in the 2011 legislative session.

Before the filibuster shut down the House, our reform bill had cleared every hurdle and was poised for passage.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

## Your House Has a History

by Susan Teich, OBPOA Historian

One director of the Braeswood Corporation, which developed our neighborhood, was also a founding partner of Humble Oil Company – Walter W. Fondren. It is not surprising, then, that executives of Humble Oil were among Old Braeswood’s first residents. Ernest F. Voss, the chief refining engineer for Humble, built 2318 Bluebonnet in 1931 and moved in with his wife, Mildred. They stayed for 21 years.

During that time, City Directory listings began to indicate the names of household staff occupying garage apartments.

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## SAVE THE DATE

**6 October, 6:30-8:30 pm**  
**Texas National Night Out**  
**Ice Cream in the Park**

**17 November**  
**Old Braeswood Annual Meeting**  
**Place & Time: TBD**



2351 Kelvin



Hi Neighbors,

It is time to present a "Yard for the Summer Season". In spite of the HOT, HOT weather, many of our Old Braeswood yards are holding up and looking good. This time we would like to recognize two yards that exemplify our neighborhood.

One is a yard planted to accommodate lots of shade. It is at 2351 Kelvin. The abundance of colors achieved by using caladium's is very cooling and pleasing to look at.

The other yard is planted to utilize the sun. It is always blooming with all kinds of flowers and colors. Wonderful to behold. Take a look at the yard at 2522 Bluebonnet.

Happy Silver Flamingo's to both households.



2522 Bluebonnet



## Bluebonnet Triangle Improved

by Christine Robins

As some residents may have noticed, improvements to the Bluebonnet triangle have already begun. Five lovely, large live oaks have been planted at the triangle and the deformed crape myrtle has been removed.

Thanks to Blanton Filak and Diane Tanking at 2307 Bluebonnet for supplementing the watering schedule provided by Trees for Houston and keeping the trees well watered while they get established this summer.

In addition, Bob Birenbaum and Bill Murray have been supplementing the Trees for Houston watering schedule of the two new crape myrtles that have been planted in the Park.

Your help is greatly appreciated!



## House Deadlock Kills Neighborhood Condemnation Reform Bill

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The stand-alone version, House Bill 3907 had received the necessary approval of the House Land and Resource Management Committee. More significantly, the provisions of HB 3907 had also been added to Senate Bill 18, a state-wide eminent domain bill reform bill that was universally expected to pass.

The momentum our bill generated was significant. It had been endorsed by the Houston Chronicle, and by every legislator who represented any part of the Texas Medical Center: Representative Garnet Coleman, the bill's author; Senator Rodney Ellis; Representative Ellen Cohen; and Representative Al Edwards. A number of city leaders led by Council Member Anne Clutterbuck also endorsed the reform legislation.

Additionally, no significant opposition appeared from any quarter,

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The Voss household included a chauffeur and a housekeeper. The chauffeur undoubtedly drove Ernest daily to his office in the Humble Building, at Main Street and Polk Avenue. There he must have been busy as Humble Oil expanded to meet the needs of World War II. Humble refineries during the War produced high-octane aviation gasoline, toluene for explosives, Butyl rubber, and butadiene for synthetic rubber.

In 1953, Ernest and Mildred moved to Tanglewood. The house was rented in 1953, and then sold in 1954 to William Rice, treasurer of Transportation Gas Pipe Line. The Rices moved to Memorial the following year and sold the house to Gwendolyn and Philip M. Pappas.

Philip Pappas grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, working in his father's restaurant supply business and inventing new kinds of restaurant equipment. When he married Gwendolyn Bennett and tried to start a family, doctors advised Gwendolyn that she could not bear children. The couple moved to Houston, attracted by the reputation of St. Joseph's hospital as a premier obstetrics center. Houston was good to them. They became the parents of six children. Also, Philip obtained funding to form Super Chef Manufacturing Company. As CEO of Super Chef, Philip continued his work as an inventor, winning over 75 patents for such things as the gas-fired Fat Mizer, the first commercially designed Electric-Gas deep fat fryer, and a lift-out/plug-in thermostat. (Today, the company is run by Pappas' children, out of Missouri City.)

Gwendolyn, besides raising all those children, was named Poet Laureate for the State of Texas

in 1963. That was only one year after being elected Houston's Mother of the Year (1962), and only two years after being elected Houston's Outstanding Homemaker (1961). Her list of awards and publications are too numerous for this article.

Maureen and Pat Swanson, the current owners, purchased the house from Pappas in 1995. The Swansons again filled the house with children, four in all. They also filled it with music. Maureen, a classically trained vocalist, sings with the jazz group Riff Raff and has drawn musicians from all over Houston to their home. (You may not know it, but you see Maureen's father,



The Swanson home at 2318 Bluebonnet was built in 1931.

Larry Miggins, when you drive I-45 to Huntsville. He served as the model for the Sam Houston Statue that stands 67 feet tall, not counting the 10 foot granite base.) Pat, an Air Force Academy graduate, is

a Certified Financial Analyst for King Investment Advisors and a Boy Scout Pack Master.

The Swanson's have preserved many features original to the house, things they fell in love with as newlyweds when they purchased it. The house still has its original planked, hand-pegged oak floors and a Poet's beamed library at the landing midway between the first and second floor. Currently, it is back on the market, awaiting its chance to host another chapter in Houston's history.

[This is the ninth article in a continuing series on houses and people in Old Braeswood. Suggestions for future columns are welcome.]

**Old Braeswood  
Real Estate  
Report** by Dawn Gervais



July, 2009

Real Estate Statistics for Old Braeswood

**HOMES SOLD SINCE MAY 1, 2009**

- \* Total sold: 1
- \* Sales price per square foot: \$188.82
- \* Sales price: \$500,000
- \* Days on market: 89

**HOMES CURRENTLY UNDER CONTRACT**

- \* Total # of homes under contract, pending sales: 4
- \* Minimum sales price: \$700,000
- \* Maximum sales price: \$1,475,000

**HOMES CURRENTLY FOR SALE**

- \* Total # of homes available: 13
- \* Minimum asking price: \$439,000
- \* Maximum asking price: \$3,995,000
- \* Average asking price: \$1,253,703

Information obtained from  
the Houston Association of Realtors.

***Need extra chairs for an event?***

Our OBPOA has 20 chairs that are used for neighborhood meetings. The folding chairs are lightweight black plastic and aluminum. Any neighbor is welcome to borrow them for temporary use—donations to OBPOA are welcome, but not required. If needed, contact G.G. Hsieh 713-660-9520 or [gghsieh@gmail.com](mailto:gghsieh@gmail.com).

***Protect your trees on trash days***



Do not place your garbage can under a tree branch. When the garbage truck's mechanical arm lifts the garbage can into the air for emptying, the can may become entangled in the branch and damage it.

**Old Braeswood**

The very successful May 3 Park Party was organized by Christine Robins. Thanks so much, Christine!



James Coney Island hot dogs, chips, soft drinks, and ice cream were enjoyed by everyone.



# Annual Park Party

May 3, 2009



Even a little rain didn't dampen anyone's spirit.



Thanks to Diane Tanking, we have more than eighty photos to remember this year's event.

## Summer Computer Help!

College and graduate students, Paul and Matthew Hausknecht of Maroneal Blvd., are home for the summer and can help you with your computer needs (assembly, data back-up & recovery, virus removal, trouble-shooting, account set-up, mini-tutorials, etc.).



Both students are Eagle Scouts, National Merit Scholar finalists, honor students, and have worked at college doing computer repair.

This service is *FREE* for neighbors—however, tipping is most appreciated. Call 713-805-8949 or email [BrosCompRepair@gmail.com](mailto:BrosCompRepair@gmail.com).

## Property Tax Protest Update

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Braeswood Addition (neighborhood #7417). At this point, efforts to address the lack of transparency and apparent unequal appraisal values are left to each individual property owner.

The Task Force is working to determine if there is an administrative approach to HCAD or the Harris County Board to present a case for improvement in the transparency of the process and equality of results. More on that down the road as we pursue the options. Anyone interested in assisting with this effort should contact Bill Murray at [wjcm@wjcmurray-assoc.com](mailto:wjcm@wjcmurray-assoc.com) or 713-522-9656.

We plan to update our information each year and we need your help in doing that. Here is our request. After the protest season is over, we plan to collect information on results and best approaches to inform people so we can have an improved process next year and provide more information to our residents in Old Braeswood.

You will receive an email in September with a survey attachment. Please take a few minutes to complete and return it. We will tally the results and post them on the web next year.

# WELCOME

## New Neighbors

Zoe & David Thompson

2400 Bluebonnet Blvd.

Katherine Jelinek &

Prince Ambooken

2322 Dorrington Blvd.

Beverly Guadagnolo &

Jean LeCler Rafael

2506 Gramercy Blvd.

Molly & Samy Khalil

2401 Bellefontaine Blvd.



## House Deadlock Kills Neighborhood Condemnation Reform Bill

(Continued from Page 2)

other than TMC Inc., whose only remaining hope was to try to carve out reforms out of SB 18 on the House floor or to convince a House-Senate conference committee to do so. The odds favored passage.

The author of our bill, Representative Garnet Coleman, skillfully guided it through the legislative labyrinth where most legislation perishes. Despite the outcome in this legislative session, Representative Coleman deserves great credit for his leadership and dedication.

Thanks are also due to the many volunteers who helped in the campaign. We wrote letters, and many carried our message personally to the Capitol in Austin. We generated television, radio and newspaper coverage, successfully persuaded the Chronicle both to print our opinions and, shortly before the expected House vote, to editorially endorse the bill.

We also generated a web site, <http://stoptmcinc.org/>, which includes links to the many documents and maps used to support the campaign. A highlight of this site is a strong and persuasive streaming video that effectively conveys our message.

We did all of these things on a shoestring; but the force of volunteer efforts made it a powerful effort.

The outcome, however, validates the caution urged in our May 21 report, distributed on the eve of the expected favorable House vote: "Our optimism must remain guarded . . . Nothing in the Texas Legislature should be counted on until all the votes are in and the Governor signs the bill."

## OBPOA Web Site

by Dee Murray

Have you looked at our Old Braeswood web site, [www.oldbraeswood.com](http://www.oldbraeswood.com)?

Fritz Weiss does a beautiful job of keeping our web site current, informative and always contains our newsletter. The newsletter is beautiful because all the pictures are in color. The newsletter layout is somewhat lost when printed in black and white, but you can view the original design on our web site. In addition, all the necessary information such as By-laws, deed restrictions, appraisal protest information, executive committee, etc., can be found there.

Please take time to enjoy our web site. And special thanks to Fritz!



## With sincere sympathy

Sanford "Sandy" Smith, DDS, passed away May 4 after a four-year battle with Pancreatic Cancer. He was a resident of Old Braeswood while attending Dental school and returned to live here in 1990 with his wife, Sandra.

He walked his precious dog, Lily, around the neighborhood daily until the last three weeks of his life.

Sandy was a gifted pianist and could be seen tickling the ivories at some of the local nursing homes and charitable events. His friends and family will miss those sing-a-longs at the Smith home.

## Thank You OBPC Donors by Christine Robins

The Old Braeswood Park Corporation extends a warm and hearty THANK YOU to the Park Patrons who have made a three or more year monetary pledge and who are 2009 one time donors. Your support is greatly appreciated! The funds received from the Park Patrons and donors will help support the maintenance of the Old Braeswood Park and Katy's Corner, and help fund future improvements to the Park, Katy's Corner, and the Bluebonnet triangle.

### 2009-2011 Park Patrons

Marilyn Archer & Jack Eby  
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Samia & Kamal Khalil  
Martha & Brian Long  
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Sally & Steven Burkett  
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It is not too late to make a tax deductible donation to the Old Braeswood Park Corporation (OBPC). Please contact OBPC Directors Christine Robins, Matthew Kelley, or Bob Birenbaum if you wish to contribute.

## Property Tax Protest Task Force by Dee Murray



Thank you to all of you who worked on the Property Tax Task Force. You have provided a valuable service to our neighborhood.

Many of us believe this is just the beginning. There is more legislative work to be done to change the taxing system so that it will become more equitable and transparent. I view this information that is being provided to everyone as a first step. I hope your passion and interest will carry us forward to the next phase of creating a change in the system.

I will begin by setting up meetings with Ellen Cohen and working with Evalyn to involve other

neighborhood associations. I am assuming all of you would help with this effort. Let me know if you know other people who may be interested in the next phase. Thanks especially to Bill Murray for being so diligent in leading this effort.

### *A very special thanks . . .*

to Cedar Baldrige of Baldrige Landscape for the lovely landscaping at Katy's Corner. Please see her company's advertisement on the back of the 2009 Old Braeswood Directory and visit her web site at [baldridgelandscape.com](http://baldridgelandscape.com) to learn more about the beautiful work her company does and what she can do to beautify your home and gardens.

## 2009

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