

## What's inside

by Nelly Childress

In this issue you will find what is going on in Hopkinson House in the **Messages from Council and Management**—a must if you are a new resident or a not so new! **Larry Meehan's** article reports on speaker Councilman **Mark Squilla's** address to the Washington Square Citizens' League concerning the overhaul of the Philadelphia property tax system. On another matter **David Roberts** reports on the address by a representative of our trash hauler on how our trash and recyclable discards are handled. A profile of long-term

resident **Ann Artz** is aptly captured by Susan Tomita. Over 25 people attended a dinner that **Nancy Snyder** organized to inaugurate the addition of the first elevator in the *Ristorante La Buca's* building. Resident **David Kurkowski's** many hats—teacher, market researcher, politician, musician and composer—but which one fits best? by wife **Myra Kurkowski**. **Lou DelSoldo** reports on Washington Square Citizens' League Discussion Group's meeting on the 2013 One Book, One Philadelphia. The greening of Philadelphia by **Lynn Miller** is not, as Lynn said, a flash-in-the-pan agenda of a single

# on the HOUSE

The Newsletter of  
Hopkinson House • Spring 2013



## The Occasional Photograph



Spring, a secret. Photo by David Roberts.

mayoral administration. **David Roberts'** article on vogue words would make any English teacher smile and approve. Very important is **Barbara Levy's** article on *PhillyPatientRide* a collaboration between the American Cancer Society and PhyllyCarShare.

The insert "RECYCLABLES Only" by Republic Services is provided for your convenience/help in order to comply with the disposition of your "trash."

Pleasant Reading! ■

## Participating in One Book, One Philadelphia

by Lou DelSoldo

*One Book, One Philadelphia*, a joint project of the Mayor's Office and the Free Library of Philadelphia, has the goal of promoting literacy and encouraging the Philadelphia community to come together once a year through reading and discussing a single book. Now in its 11th year, the program began in 2003 with the first selection, *The Price of a Child* by Lorene Carey. Other selections have included *The Things They Carried* by Tim

O'Brien, and *The Soloist* by former Philadelphia Inquirer writer, Steve Lopez. For the past 5 years, Washington Square Citizen's League's Monday afternoon discussion group has read and met to discuss the annual selection. This year was no exception, and Julie Otsuka's *The Buddha in the Attic* precipitated a lively discussion with many divergent points of view.

*The Buddha in the Attic* is the story of Japanese women who a century ago were brought to San Francisco as "picture brides." Married to husbands they had never seen, they had proposals of marriage made through the exchange of letters and photos. Otsuka recounts the first nights with their husbands, the work in the gardens and houses of "whites," the experience raising children who would reject Japanese culture to become fully "American," and finally to the incarceration in concentration camps after Pearl Harbor.

One of the most remarkable things about Otsuka's book is that the story is told from a collective, rather than a personal point of view. "On the boat we were mostly virgins," it begins, "Some of us had eaten nothing but rice gruel as young girls and had slightly bowed legs, and some

# on the HOUSE

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of us were only fourteen years old and were still young girls ourselves. Some of us came from the city and wore stylish city clothes, but many more of us came from the country and on the boat we wore the same old kimonos we'd been wearing for years [...]” And she continues in this vein, documenting the many diverse experiences through the eyes of many participants, rather than taking an in-depth look at a single person’s story.

One of the most hotly debated issues at the Monday discussion group was whether or not *The Buddha in the Attic* is actually a novel. Some argued that the lack of development of a single character or of plot made it more a sociological treatise than a work of fiction. Others held that the range of the novel is broader than character development and

plot, and that *Buddha in the Attic*, like the epistolary novels of the eighteenth century that recorded an exchange of letters, is indeed a novel. While consensus could not be reached on that point, there was wide agreement that Otsuka’s book reads like sheer poetry. Several passages were read aloud:

*They (the Whites) admired us for our strong backs and nimble hands. Our stamina. Our discipline. Our docile dispositions. We had all the virtues of the Chinese - we were hardworking, we were patient, We were unfailingly polite – but none of their vices - we didn’t gamble or smoke opium, we didn’t brawl, we never spat. We were faster than the Filipinos and less arrogant than the Hindus.*

*We were more disciplined than the Koreans. We were soberer than the Mexicans. We were cheaper to feed than the Okies and Arkies, both the light and the dark.* A Japanese can live on a teaspoon of rice a day. *We were the best workers they had ever hired in their lives.*

Note was taken of Otsuka’s use of italics to record sentences that anyone might have said. Everyone at the discussion group agreed that powerful emotions permeated these splendidly written lines.

Many at the discussion expressed outrage at the social injustice perpetrated in the name of national security after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Many of the Japanese incarcerated in camps in Wyoming and Utah during

the war were United States citizens, as were all of their children. Otsuka describes powerfully their fear before the evacuation orders.

*There was talk of a list. Some people being taken away in the middle of the night. A banker who went to work and never came home. A barber who disappeared during his lunch break.*

And she also documents their frustration at the haste at which they had to move once the evacuation orders were given.

*Junkmen slowly drove their trucks down the narrow streets of our neighborhoods, offering us money for our things. Ten dollars for a new stove we had bought for two hundred the year before. Five dollars for a refrigerator. Neighbors with whom we had never exchanged a word approached us in the fields and asked us if there was anything we wanted to get rid of.*

What had the Japanese immigrants done to provoke the distrust of the American government? Why weren’t descendants of German and Italian immigrants likewise sent to camps? (Actually some Italian fishermen on the northwest coast were also incarcerated.)

Finally people at the discussion wanted to know why this book was chosen for the *One Book, One Philadelphia* program. Many noted that the Japanese evacuation during the war was

a chapter in American history best not forgotten. But why Philadelphia, when there are so few Japanese living here? No one seemed to have the explanation for why these books are chosen, only that each one, in its own way, has relevance to important issues in American society. Whatever the impetus for selecting this book, it is without a doubt an excellent choice and a worthwhile read.

*Editor’s Note: The Japanese American Day of Remembrance is February 19. On this date in 1942 E.O. 9066 was signed by President Franklin Roosevelt and led to the incarceration in internment camps of some 120,000 Japanese Americans. Over 40 years later, President Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act, resulting in a letter of apology from the US government with a check for redress to each Japanese American incarcerated in these camps during WWII. This year is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Civil Liberties Act. ■*

**Message from Management**  
by Judi Forte

Welcome, spring! The winter was a mixed bag weather-wise. We can only hope that Mr. Groundhog

was right. There are some construction plans in the works for the spring and summer.

The design for the elevator cabs is complete and approved. The materials are on order and should arrive in late April or early May. Once the materials have arrived, the renovation of the first elevator cab can begin. The design is classic and upscale.

The renovations of the main lobby and the lower lobby are scheduled for 2013. The Council will be meeting with several architectural/design firms to select the one with the best plans for the lobbies.

The Arrimour Group has been chosen to provide the landscaping services in 2013. This is their fifth year of service at Hopkinson House and we are looking forward to seeing the spring and summer plantings. We will work with Arrimour to get the spring plantings in time for the Garden Tour on May 19.

A reminder: The Hopkinson House Annual Meeting and announcement of Council members’ election will take place in the Solarium on Thursday, April 18 at 7:00 p.m. Three seats were open on Council this year. The first mailing seeking HHOA Council candidates was sent on March 4, the completed résumé should have been returned to Management office by March 18.

The pool will open on May 25. Membership information, pool hours and pool Rules and Regulations will be available the first week in May. You must be a full time resident of Hopkinson House in order to be eligible for single or household membership.

Extended family members, summer visitors, friends, etc.

are not eligible to become a part of the membership. The pool facilities can be used by guests upon the purchase of a guest pass by the unit owner or resident who must accompany them to the pool. A day pass will also allow you to purchase guest passes.

With the onset of warm weather more and more residents will be using their balconies to dine and relax. Please exercise caution when watering your outdoor plants. Do not let the water overflow the drip pan under the planter. Do not sweep dirt or water off the balcony. Your neighbor below does not want to be doused with water or have dirt fall on them or their meal.

Smokers: A reminder that smokers who are grandfathered under the Hopkinson House Smoking Ban may not smoke on their balconies or on Hopkinson House property. You must confine your smoking to the inside of your units. Neither owners nor residents who bought or rented their units after the ban went in to effect nor their guests may smoke anywhere on Hopkinson House property, including the inside of their units. This ban went into effect on September 1, 2012.

We receive many complaints about smoke infiltrating units from adjoining units and from across the hall. We ask that those smokers in the building who are grandfathered under the ban and continue to smoke in their units be considerate of their neighbors. If we receive a complaint about smoke odors coming from your unit, you will be required to purchase an air filtration system to prevent the smoke and odors from penetrating other units.

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Photography: David Roberts.







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*Hopkinson House is a smoke-free building in all of the common areas.*

**The use of barbecue grills is prohibited in high-rise buildings by order of the Philadelphia Fire Department.**

A reminder: Shade umbrellas may be used on the balconies with certain restrictions. In 2008 the HHOA Council amended the conditions under which umbrellas may be used. Umbrellas may be used on the balconies between May 1 and October 31. From November 1 through April 30, umbrellas may not be used on the balconies. They must be taken down and securely stored away during this time. During any periods of high winds, all loose or removable objects, including patio umbrellas must be removed from the balconies. Plants, pots, receptacles and other movable objects are prohibited from being placed on or maintained on the ledges of the balconies. The height of planters, pots, receptacles and all loose or movable objects must be below the height of the balcony wall. Owners and residents are prohibited from mounting, installing or otherwise attaching any item to the balcony. Owners and residents may not drill holes or otherwise alter the face of the balcony.

We have received complaints about noises which sound like something being dropped and heard in units below. One of our owners has traced the noise to what he believes are cabinet doors being closed. Many cabinet doors have no cushioning and if closed too hard, the sound can travel to other units. There is a product called Soft

Close Damper for Cabinet Doors. They can be purchased individually or in packs of 19 at Home Depot and Lowes. They are simple to install and they do stop the banging. It's something to think about.

While on the subject of Home Depot and Lowes, CFL light bulbs which have burned out can be brought to these places for disposal. There is no recycling program available at this time and it is best not to throw these bulbs in with the regular trash because of the mercury which they contain.

**Deliveries are not permitted on Sunday or legal and religious holidays. When ordering furniture, appliances, etc., please be sure that the company you are buying from does not schedule the delivery on any of these days.**

We are heading into the busiest moving time of the year. **Please book your moving date as soon as possible and confirm it with a check for \$150. Only one move per day is permitted Monday through Saturday between the hours of 10:00 am and 4:00 pm. We are sorry that we cannot make exceptions to this rule.** If you delay, you may not get the moving date that you need. Remember that most moves occur on the last day of the month when leases expire.

When you have boxes to discard, please do not leave them in the trash room. Break the boxes down and call the resident services desk at (215) 923-1776 ext. 110 to have housekeeping pick up the boxes.

The two most common noise complaints that we receive are because of uncarpeted units and TV volume. **The Hopkinson House**

**Community Rules require all units to have 80% carpeting in the living room, dining room, bedrooms and halls.**

The bathroom and kitchen are not required to be carpeted. Landlords are responsible for their tenants complying with this rule. **Exercise equipment should not be used after 10:00 p.m. or before 8:00 a.m.**

TV volume is to be kept at a level at which it does not interfere with the peace and quiet of neighboring units. If you have difficulty hearing a lowered TV, think about investing in a head set for your TV. If you are prone to falling asleep with your TV on, please remember to set the sleep timer.

From Council, Management and staff at Hopkinson House, have a safe and wonderful summer. ■



## Message from Council

**by Paul Coyne  
HHOA Council President**

Little green fingers are popping up in our balcony garden. Wonderful things are promised as spring arrives.

We welcome Lisa Schwab to the Council and we are looking forward to equally wonderful things through 2013.

Judi Forte, our General Manager, is presenting a catalogue of the construction events scheduled for this year so watch for a succession of improvements in our historic building.

## Real estate tax assessments

Most of us have received the real estate full-value assessment of our property. In a majority of cases the evaluations are reasonably close to market value. Those that are above what could reasonably be expected can be contested. Information on this topic from the law firm representing our building has been posted on the bulletin board. In fact we have little knowledge and no information on the tax rate. Until a decision is reached by City Council we can only speculate. We will keep you posted on what can be done, what to expect and what the changes will look like.

## Elevator cabs

Hopefully you have looked at the display in the lobby. The selected materials and design were submitted by DAS Architects and our ad hoc design committee: Gail Winkler, James Scott and Sunny Feldman.

The design reflects the period of the Sixties, the Bauhaus movement and elements of the building—the sculptures representing the four seasons around the elevators in the lobby, the pattern of the wallpaper in the hallways and a functional and dignified cabin.

Forthcoming are the selection of contractors, the signature of contracts and the procurement of materials.



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#### Mummers to close the 50th anniversary celebration

We will be closing Hopkinson House's 50th anniversary celebration with a performance featuring the Quaker City String Band on April 28 from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Music, some dancing, beverages and munchies will end our building's Golden anniversary. With the consent of the weather gods all of the celebration will take place in our courtyard.

#### House and garden tour May 19

Once again we will be opening our courtyard for the annual Society Hill House and Garden tour on May 19, 2013 from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Volunteers will be needed to tell the Hopkinson House garden story. We have the only "secret Garden" and need to share its story as well as the magnificent "Adam and Eve" sculpture. We were able to make major improvements in the green spaces following last year's major building projects.

#### Talking trash and money

The Republic Services of Pa. provided a speaker for the Monday, March 4 Discussion group meeting in the solarium. Mr. Brendan Marzano, Major Account Executive described the waste removal process and explained how important recycling was. Fundamentally waste disposal consists of two elements: waste as trash and the recycling as a commodity, which is sold.

As you might expect there were lots of questions. We left with a better understanding of the process

and the significant role recycling plays in keeping our cost down.

#### Bank and elevator company and change

The bank closing and our elevator tenant moving have shaken what seems to have been part of our routines. We are looking to Real Estate leasing professionals to find tenants for the spaces. In the best of all worlds a bank would be an excellent find but in this market we will see where that idea goes. We have some time before these businesses leave to make an aggressive search for replacements.

#### Ramps, architects, engineers all in the design salad

We should be looking into: (1) the feasibility of installing a ramp at the main entrance curb (2) updating and functional improvement to the lower lobby, the two upper lobbies and the mailroom.

Each project will call on the talents of engineering, architectural and design

professionals. So as the elevator cabs' renovations progress the studies for the curb, the lobbies and the mailroom will not be far behind.

*Anecdote:* I asked a rider in the elevator, "What do you think of the proposed changes in elevator design?" He answered, "I would be pleased to move into one of them." ■

#### Dinner with Nancy

by Nelly Childress

One Monday in February, Nancy Snyder, among the first occupants of Hopkinson House and now in her 90s, assembled 24 residents in her preferred neighborhood restaurant, *Ristorante La Buca*. The purpose was to celebrate the building's first elevator. Because of incapacitating medical problems she has been in the past few years unable to negotiate the steps leading down to the restaurant and quite unhappy about it. Well, thought she, there

are others in the buildings who are similarly affected, and presto, she grabbed her phone and called friends and acquaintances! As a result, over 25 people, including healthy and athletic, young and old joined for an evening at the restaurant with great food, conviviality, renewing of friendships and making of new ones. Let's do it again soon! everyone said. ■

#### Inspired collaboration

by Barbara Levy

Cancer patients face many challenges. Daily or weekly treatments over a period of months can be difficult and overwhelming. This burden for some patients may actually cause them to miss or forgo their treatments entirely.

Some patients do not have a vehicle or may be too ill to drive or take public transportation; others may be without family or friends that are available to provide rides.

"PhillyPatientRide" is the collaboration between the American Cancer Society and PhillyCarShare. Rides are provided at no cost to the patients who have no other way to get to their treatments. Patients are identified for the program by a health care professional at a participating treatment center.

Patients must be ambulatory, live within the city limits, and be receiving treatment at one of five partner hospitals: Jefferson, Pennsylvania, Temple & Hahnemann Hospitals as well as HUP (Radiation Oncology only).



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The drivers are trained volunteers that must be at least 21 years old and able to pass a DMV and Criminal background check. Volunteers must complete a PhillyCarShare membership application, but incur no cost and they are insured through the PhillyCarShare Insurance policy.

Jamie McCann, American Cancer Society Health Initiative Representative, explains that volunteers have access to the complete fleet of vehicles from PhillyCarShare and have provided 5,000 rides to over 320 patients, since its inception in January 2011. Pretty impressive!

Parking arrangements are in place at each of the five partner hospitals, so that volunteers have no out-of-pocket expenses.

There is no money available for advertising these services, so word of mouth is vital to sharing this information and allowing patients to concentrate their limited energy on fighting their cancer.

The local American Cancer Society once again shows its leadership role in our community. PhillyCarShare has been recognized for its excellent environmental, economic, and social impact in Philadelphia; and its collaboration with the American Cancer Society is truly inspirational.

What a wonderful reminder that business success does not preclude a commitment to the community it serves.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer or want more information please contact Jamie McCann: *Jamie*.



Ann Artz at Ormistan [left], and showing off an album of her portraits.

McCann@cancer.org or (215) 985-5359 or visit <http://www.phillypatientride.org>. ■

## How to be a “model” resident: Meet Ann Artz

by Susan Tomita

It was her fashion modeling career that ultimately brought Ann Artz and her late husband Ken to Hopkinson House in 1966. Originally from Reading PA, Ann suggested moving from Broomall to the city, where Ken worked as a CPA and where Ann often modeled. She heard about Hopkinson House through her work for Nan Duskin – the boutique for Philadelphia’s best dressed for almost 70 years. Society Hill Towers was nice, but had no balconies. The Dorchester had balconies, but its rooms were small. Hopkinson House was then a rental building and provided the spacious rooms and southern view that the Artz’s sought. A realtor saved their dream apartment until their ranch house was sold. “Can you imagine anyone saving anything for you today?”



Schiaparelli, Oscar de la Renta, Pauline Trigère, Missoni, and Norman Norell are some of the couture designers whose clothing Ann modeled at showrooms and runways. Photos of her appeared in *Women’s Wear Daily*, often with the designers. Bill Blass was a favorite. Audiences in those days were buyers for stores—with none of the “gaudy bit” and would-be actresses who flock to showrooms today. Then, it was strictly business.

“The whole ball game has changed from what it was years ago... just like the way the clothes have changed” and the way that models walk. Unlike today’s under-age “wannabes,” Ann became a fashion model at age 32, persuaded by the owner of a one-of-a-kind fashion store in Upper Darby, Helen Caro. “Why aren’t you a model?” “Because nobody ever asked me.” Through Helen Caro, Ann learned how to model. There was no ostentatious sashaying in her day. “You just moved your legs, you took off your coat very quietly, put it here, took off the jacket, and put it there.” Ann “did everything wrong, but Helen persevered.”

Belonging to the models guild was a *must* for

modeling jobs, which meant auditioning on the runway for photographers and fashion coordinators. Ann was accepted into the guild. But to be considered for actual shows, she had to visit each store, introduce herself, and win their favor.

At that time, people who hired models “wanted you to quietly show your own personality.” But not too much. “Norman Norell until later years did not have blondes in his show because he felt that that everyone would be looking at the blondes instead of the clothes.” Ken Artz “thought it was neat that I was a model, but I don’t think he told many people at his job.” Not until he heard the whispers, “There she is!” when Ann strode a runway did he realize how much others shared his excitement.

“It was hard work, but I liked it.” In those days, Philadelphia models took care of their own make-up, hair, and accessories. There were costume fittings, often many layers of clothing to don between presentations, and sometimes eight to ten changings per show. Ann also did some photo modeling (more lucrative but less interesting because “I liked



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to move”) and morning TV shows (which she enjoyed). Her appearance with designer Adele Simpson, both wearing the same dress in contrasting sizes, was particularly amusing. When modeling was no longer fun—all the rushing, suburban driving, and long days in New York—Ann retired in 1978.

Ann reminisced about Hopkinson House in her modeling days, with activities such as the “Children’s Hour,” the Social Committee events, and the holiday celebrations in which everyone seemed to participate. In addition to radio and TV people who lived in the building, there was 7’1” basketball Hall of Famer Wilt Chamberlain, who lived across the hall one floor above the Artz’s. And fashion in Philadelphia was such that “I would come home with a smile on my face just from looking.” Today... not so much. Bonwit Teller and Nan Duskin are long gone, as are the department stores, except for the newly arrived Macy’s.

Of her unexpected career, Ann says without false modesty that it was almost as if it were supposed to happen. “Everything just seemed to click.” Her advice for young women today? “If you learn to be a lady, everything falls in place.” Perseverance, professionalism, and personality also help, of course. With her regal posture and easy smile, Ann Artz truly is a “model” member of the Hopkinson House community. ■

## Trash and recycling

by David Roberts

Are you confused about how to use the trash room? On Monday, March 4, we were enlightened by our new trash hauler on how our trash and recyclable discards are handled and on what we should do to help make the system work well.

Mr. Brendan Marzano of Republic Services of PA advised us (The Washington Square Citizens’ League) that a truck collects the compacted general trash seven days a week. Another truck takes the recyclables six days a week.

The bagged trash that goes down the chute gets compacted and cannot be separated for recycling. Items to be recycled must be placed in either the red or the yellow bin. We used to keep paper and cardboard separate but this is no longer necessary. Glass must not be put down the chute, even if bagged, because trash hits the dumpster at high speed—up to 100 mph—and glass objects shatter, the fragments flying out of the dumpster with lethal velocity, a serious hazard to any staff working in the area. All glass must be placed in the red or yellow bin.

Many of us are often puzzled as to what may be recycled and what may not. Mr. Marzano advised as follows:

### May be recycled—red or yellow bin

*Clean paper and cardboard.*

*Glass.* All glass articles except light bulbs may be recycled. Bottles should be emptied and rinsed.

*Plastic.* Containers should be emptied and rinsed. Plastic

bags are not acceptable for recycling but may be used to hold articles that are.

*Metal cans.* Cans that contained drinks, soups, etc., may be recycled. They should be emptied and rinsed. Pressurized containers of insecticides and other liquid sprays should be emptied by spraying until exhausted. Otherwise they may explode.

### May not be recycled

*Styrofoam,* used a lot in packaging, is not acceptable. Dispose of Styrofoam in bagged trash.

*Batteries.* Batteries are not accepted for recycling but many vendors will take them and have them recycled.

*Wire coat hangers.* These are not recyclable but dry cleaners will take them back.

*Light bulbs.* Light bulbs are not accepted. They should be bagged and placed in the gray bin, *not* down the chute.

The leaflet enclosed in this newsletter provides longer lists of articles that are or are not accepted for recycling. Please remove the leaflet and keep it for future reference. It is very important to ensure that there is no food waste or food-tainted items in the bins. They attract cockroaches and mice.

Large cardboard boxes and other bulky items should not be placed in the trash room or the lobby next to it. Ask the front desk staff for instructions. Within minutes they will usually send somebody to your apartment to remove the item(s). Placing objects in the freight-elevator lobby violates fire rules.

### When in doubt

You may always call the front desk for advice but most items may be discarded in

the bagged trash. If a non-recyclable item contains or consists of glass it must be bagged and placed in the gray bin—*not* down the chute. ■

## Real estate tax reform a hot topic

by Larry Meehan

Hopkinson House residents and neighbors packed the solarium on February 25 for an event hosted by the Washington Square Citizens’ League. They came to hear City Councilman Mark Squilla address concerns about the overhaul of the Philadelphia property tax system. The overhaul is known as the Actual Value Initiative (AVI), an attempt to match property assessments with actual market values that will go into effect in 2014.

While the Office of Property Assessment (OPA) has completed almost all of the assessments, the Mayor and City Council have yet to decide the tax rate, a decision that must be made by June 30. Squilla indicated that the rates under discussion range from 1.25 to 1.4 percent. (A rate of 1.25 would yield a tax of \$1,250 for each \$100,000 of assessed value.) But the battle over rates and the AVI has just begun, and the issues are far from settled.

### The politics of AVI

Mark Squilla has been at the forefront of that battle since he became our representative on City Council last year. His First District is a rapidly developing area that stretches along



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and in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

the Delaware River from South Philadelphia through Center City, Chinatown, Northern Liberties, Fishtown, Kensington, and Port Richmond. Those areas include many neighborhoods that have gentrified over the last several decades and face considerably higher taxes.

Mayor Nutter wanted to launch AVI in 2013, but Squilla led a successful effort to delay implementation of AVI for a full year. The councilman and several of his colleagues argued that it was unfair to deploy AVI before the OPA had finished assessing all 579,000 city properties. After all, how could the city budget incorporate an appropriate tax rate if it were not based on complete information about the property to be taxed?

Squilla argued that AVI should not take full effect even in 2014 because of the suspected inaccuracy of many assessments. He said that an initial tax rate as low as one percent could be the starting point of a process that would phase in AVI over a four-year period while the OPA fine tuned assessments, and city departments instituted zero-based budgeting to cut operating expenses.

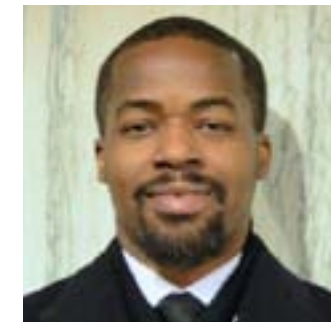
Another reason to delay full implementation, said Squilla, is that under AVI approximately \$200,000,000 of the property tax burden shifts from commercial to residential property owners. He advocated reallocating that amount in stages over the four-year period.

Another unsettled matter is the amount of the Homestead Exemption. Currently residential property owners may apply to exempt

## Welcome two new staff



Neville Thoms joined the Housekeeping Department.



Korey L. Harper, Sr. joined the Desk and Door Department.

\$30,000 of assessed value of a primary residence from the tax. Squilla reported that City Council is reviewing a number of options, but he noted that the amount would not be more than \$50,000.

One option under consideration is to tax non-exempt property owned by not-for-profit organizations more aggressively. Another is to dramatically increase resources for tax collection. Estimates of current uncollected property taxes range from \$230,000,000 to more than \$500,000,000. Only Detroit has a worse record of tax collection, and beating a city so cruelly battered by economic forces and corruption is little comfort.

## A road to tax reform?

Although the political wrangling over AVI has revealed many flaws in the current design, we must not forget that AVI could be the cornerstone of something that Philadelphia has never had – a rational system of taxation for its residents and businesses. It may come as a surprise to discover that real estate taxes in Philadelphia are quite low. They constitute only 15 percent of municipal revenue,

while in other cities property taxes contribute more than 50 percent. What makes Philadelphians the second most taxed urban residents in the country (after those unfortunate enough to live in Bridgeport, Connecticut) is the burdensome combination of sales, wage, business, and other taxes. Property tax reform could be the basis for improvements in the overall tax structure.

## Who benefits? Who suffers?

What is the overall effect of AVI? For the sake of illustration, assume that there is no Homestead Exemption and a tax rate of 1.25 percent:

1. 40 percent of city properties will have lower taxes. 30 percent will be taxed more heavily, with one third of this group seeing increases of more than \$1,000 a year and, in some cases, several thousand.
2. Commercial properties, except for some small businesses in gentrified neighborhoods, will be taxed less. Center City high-rise office building owners will see significantly lower tax bills.
3. In Hopkinson House,

it appears that a small number of residents will be taxed less, but most will see increases of 20 percent or more.

4. The 10-year tax abatement for new construction is not affected. (Councilman Squilla said there would probably be legislation to cushion the “unfairness” to long-term city residents.)

## What residents should do

Steps that homeowners can take include the following:

1. Look up your assessment and those of similar properties on the OPA website, [www.phila.gov/opa](http://www.phila.gov/opa).
2. Check to make sure that the property assessment notice that you received in the mail reflects that you successfully filed for the Homestead Exemption.
3. If you think your assessment is higher than the property value, you may request an informal “first level” review from OPA before March 31.
4. The traditional formal review process through the Bureau of Revision of Taxes is still available. The deadline for BRT review is October 7, 2013. ■

## Finally, a composer

By Myra Kurkowski

Many face retirement with trepidation, questioning, how will I fill my days? How will I make the most of the next phase of my life? But I think my husband, Dave, has spent most of his adult life waiting for retirement so





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that he could fully embrace his passion which is music.

After graduating from Oberlin, Dave began his career as a high school Social Studies teacher. While teaching he attended graduate school at Temple University. Ten years and three children later, he graduated with a PhD in Political Science. Interestingly, Lynn Miller, his academic advisor at Temple, also lives in Hopkinson House.

Dave was interested in the Foreign Service or an academic career at a university, but as sometimes happens in life, serendipity entered into the equation. Sitting next to him at graduation was a woman who asked what he planned to do with his degree. She said she worked for a market research firm which only hired Ph.D.'s.

That chance encounter led Dave out of academia into a business career. He joined that firm and five years later formed his own company. For the next 25 years, Dave travelled extensively for Fortune 500 companies throughout the US and Europe.

In addition to a very busy business career, Dave decided to try his hand at politics. He won a seat on the Cape May City Council but lost in his bid for Congress (NJ-2), running on the Obama ticket in 2008.

In December of 2012, after 13 years in teaching and 30 years in business, Dave retired. Finally, he was free to pursue his passion. He now plays oboe in a symphony orchestra, English horn in a concert band, and jazz piano in the big band style. He also composes music for soloists and choirs.

Dave's first CD of original songs, *It's Midnight*, was recently released. *Wake, Little Child*, a song he dedicated to the children



*After 13 years in teaching and 30 years in business, Dave Kurkowski is free to pursue his musical passions.*

of Newtown, can be found on YouTube.

So, for Dave, retirement is all he dreamed it would be. Of all the hats he has worn, this one fits him the best.

Not Dave Kurkowski, teacher. Not Dave Kurkowski, market researcher. Not Dave Kurkowski, politician. But rather, Dave Kurkowski, musician and composer..

For more information about *It's Midnight*, go to <http://www.cdbaby.com/artist/davidkurkowski>.

To hear *Wake, Little Child* on YouTube, search for "Wake Little Child Newtown." ■

## The greening of Philadelphia

by Lynn Miller

During the second half of the twentieth century, cities like Philadelphia were out of fashion. In that period, our city lost more than half a million residents, mostly to the suburbs. Its downward spiral seemed never-ending. Then, beginning about the time the new century

dawned, that trend began to reverse. The 2010 census showed that Philadelphia had actually gained residents for the first time since 1950. Whether that trend continues or not may have much to do with the effort to make Philadelphia, in Mayor Nutter's words, "the greenest city in America." Before taking a look at how growth and greening could be related, here's a little background.

Start with the idea of "sustainability." The term suggests that in the future human beings will have to live in far greater harmony with nature and its limits than we have in the recent past. We can't depend forever on non-renewable resources for our energy supply because, at the rate we're consuming them, those resources will all be exhausted some day. Once we acknowledge that fact, we begin to understand why Philadelphia and cities like it have a leg up on sustainability.

For one thing, the very density of our residential

neighborhoods means we depend far less on gas-guzzling cars than do those who live far apart from each other and from the daily necessities of life. We have the third largest residential population living downtown of any American city, and a larger percentage of those who walk to work than most. Second, and thanks in part to our density, we also have an effective mass transportation system, which moves us about far more cheaply and efficiently than do private cars. A third factor working in our favor is the amount of actual green space in the form of parks and playgrounds throughout the city. Not only do such spaces provide welcome relief for recreation, their trees and plants take in the carbon dioxide we discharge into the atmosphere and return oxygen to us—an essential trade-off in combating global warming.

Soon after Mayor Nutter was inaugurated in 2008, he created an Office of Sustainability, which produced a plan to make the city greener. That plan, Greenworks Philadelphia, set fifteen ambitious targets for improving the city's environment, reducing energy use, creating jobs, and enhancing the quality of life. Some of these relate to energy-saving building codes that include green roofs. Others would transform the local market for solar energy, making it cost-competitive. The city is also purchasing hybrid buses and replacing thousands of traffic signals with LED lights. Hundreds of miles of bicycle lanes are being created.



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When it comes to what is literally green, Philadelphia's Parks and Recreation Department (PPR) has set three broad goals to be achieved by 2015. The first is to add five hundred acres of "publicly accessible space" throughout the city, space that is not necessarily city owned, but accessible to the public. An example is Penn Park, which was created in 2011 on land owned by the University of Pennsylvania along the west bank of the Schuylkill between Walnut and South Streets. It remains university property, but is available for the recreational use of the public. Within four years of Nutter's inauguration, some 110 acres of green space had been added throughout the city, with about a hundred more in the planning stage.

The goal is to provide park and recreation resources within a 10-minute walk for all Philadelphians. (If that sounds fanciful, a 2010 study showed that 80% of Philadelphians already enjoyed walkable access to open space.) The PPR also aims to have a total of 10,800 acres of city parkland by 2015. That of course includes the more than 5,000 acres of Fairmount Park, long regarded as one of the world's finest urban parks. We can also expect new parks to continue south along the Schuylkill, then join with new green space up the banks of the Delaware through center city and north.

There's an irony here: adding this much new green space is possible because of the loss of heavy industry, especially from our riverbanks, over the

past half century. Now that Philadelphia has largely been transformed into a post-industrial city, it attracts better educated young workers by providing such amenities as parks for recreation. These workers are members of the same generation who understand that urban density, walkability, a shrinking carbon footprint through the reduction of fossil fuels all make both good economic and environmental sense.

Working with the Water Department, the PPR's second goal is to convert many facilities, such as school playgrounds and parking lots, from asphalt to permeable, green surfaces. Making playgrounds and other hard surfaces permeable also helps the city in its larger goal of creating additional storm-water management capacity. A number of those projects are either underway or recently completed. As of last year, Philadelphia was the only city in the nation to win approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for its storm-water management.

The third goal is to plant 300,000 new trees by 2015, and to do so in a way that will increase tree coverage to thirty percent of the land area in all neighborhoods. The budget for tree-planting throughout the city more than quadrupled during Mayor Nutter's first four years in office. The program is meant to provide free trees for planting on private property in areas where they are scarce.

Put it all together and you begin to see that the greening of Philadelphia

is surely not the flash-in-the-pan agenda of a single mayoral administration. Mayors of the future may have other priorities, but they will not be able to ignore sustainability as an imperative. In time, the Rust Belt may give way to a new Green Belt, with Philadelphia among its leading cities (see <http://www.phila.gov/green>). ■

## Vogue words: pet peeve of an old grouch

By David Roberts

The English language provides plenty of good words for the clear statement of facts and ideas. The finest passages in English consist mostly of plain words of one or two syllables. Consider this sentence from the Book of Job:

"I know that my redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." Most of the words have one syllable and

only *redeemer* has three but what power, what majesty!

Too often we perplex or mislead people with words misapplied according to the current fashion, or words that are meant to impress by their length or technicality. A good example is *parameter*, which is guilty of all these sins.

### Parameter

*Parameter* is a technical term that was first used to describe the position of a plane in a crystal. In mathematics a parameter is a constant in an equation that changes from one equation to the next in a family of equations. In mathematical statistics a parameter is an absolute value that is unknown but is estimated from the measurement of random samples.

All of that should suffice to discourage people from using the word parameter. Instead there seems to be a vague sense that it means limit or boundary, possibly because of its similarity to *perimeter*. The word is often used in phrases such as *the parameters of politics*,

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Most voters in Philadelphia have read the article in the Philadelphia Inquirer dated February 15 regarding the contentious voter ID requirement. If Judge Simpson agrees to extend the preliminary injunction he issued on October 2012 it is an indication that for the Primary Municipal Elections of May 21<sup>st</sup> voters may still be asked to show an acceptable photo ID at the polls but will be allowed to vote whether they produce one or not.

Judge Simpson scheduled hearings in July on a permanent injunction against the law. It is possible that his decision will be reviewed by the state Supreme Court in time for the November elections.

**A voter registration help desk will be in the lobby on Saturday, April 13, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. and Monday, April 15, 4:00–7:00 p.m.**





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meaning what—limits? boundaries? dimensions? rules? I suspect this vagueness comforts people who wish to say something impressive but don't have a clear idea to express.

In general conversation or writing, *parameter* is a word you should avoid unless you intend to confuse people. If so, shame on you!

#### Substantive as an adjective

A few decades ago there were two very similar words with different meanings. *Substantive* was usually a noun. It meant a noun, or a phrase that served as a noun. *Substantial* was an adjective that meant solid, firm, or having substance. These days one rarely hears the word *substantial*. It is now the fashion to use *substantive* as the adjective instead, especially in TV talk. This is a pity because *substantial* is a useful word that is enjoyable to pronounce. In speech one can make something very *substantial* merely by increasing the stress on the second syllable. If you do that to the usually stressed first syllable of *substantive* it sounds silly.

Dictionaries provide a way of using *substantive* as an adjective that has some merit-- to mean real, and not abstract or imaginary, but why not use *substantial* or better still, *real*, a short plain word without pretensions?

#### Impact as a verb

By tradition, *impact* is a noun. It describes the effect of one object striking another; the one object makes or has an impact on the other. In recent decades

it has become the fashion to say that A impacts B or, worse, that A impacts *on* B. This misuse of a noun is unnecessary because there are plenty of real verbs to choose from to give the intended meaning— *strikes*, *harms*, *helps*, *affects*, *influences*, etc.

Once a word comes into vogue the alternatives are neglected. People eventually use the fashionable word exclusively, even when it's unsuitable, letting better words go to waste. If you are enslaved by vogue words and wish to escape, Roger's Thesaurus will provide you with a wealth of good choices. When you find and use the right word people will know exactly what you mean.

#### Limitations instead of limits, etc.

There are many people, especially in USA, who seem to feel uneasy using short words. So they lengthen them, often by adding *-ation*. They turn *visit* into *visitation*, although *visitation* has other meanings such as the coming of a ghost. *Transport* becomes *transportation* and *color* or *coloring* becomes *coloration*. Something that is limited surely has *limits* not *limitations*.

These are all nouns with *-ation* added for no purpose but to make them longer. A short, concise word becomes a long, clumsy one. Yes, they are all included in standard dictionaries but that doesn't make them good. There are, of course, good words that end in *-ation*. These are nouns derived from verbs that end in *-ate*. For example, *rotate* gives *rotation*, *dictate*

*dictation*, and *irritate* *irritation*.

#### Lingerie

In USA *lingerie* is a word that has come a long way from its French origin. In France *linge* means linen goods—table and bed linens (*linge de maison*) and underwear for both sexes (*linge de corps*)—even though they mostly ceased being made of linen after cotton arrived from Egypt. In France a *lingerie* is a place where *linge* is stored or sold, including a shop that sells women's underwear. The word is pronounced *la(n)zhree*.

The *n* is silent but it causes the preceding *i* to sound as a nasal *a*, like the *a* in *hang* or *fang*. The *g* is soft, *zh*, like the *s* in *pleasure*.

In Great Britain, where

many people speak at least some French, the use and pronunciation of *lingerie* have been little changed by the short trip across the English Channel. The much longer journey across the Atlantic Ocean has remade both. Here *lingerie* is used to describe women's underwear exclusively, and it is pronounced *lonjeray*, a sound that makes French speakers wince. Most modern American dictionaries, however, give *lonjeray* as the preferred pronunciation. If you open the women's section of Macy's web site you will find *lingerie* but not *underwear*. Clearly the war is lost. Perhaps the time has come to create a new American word by changing the spelling to match the sound—l o n j e r a y. ■

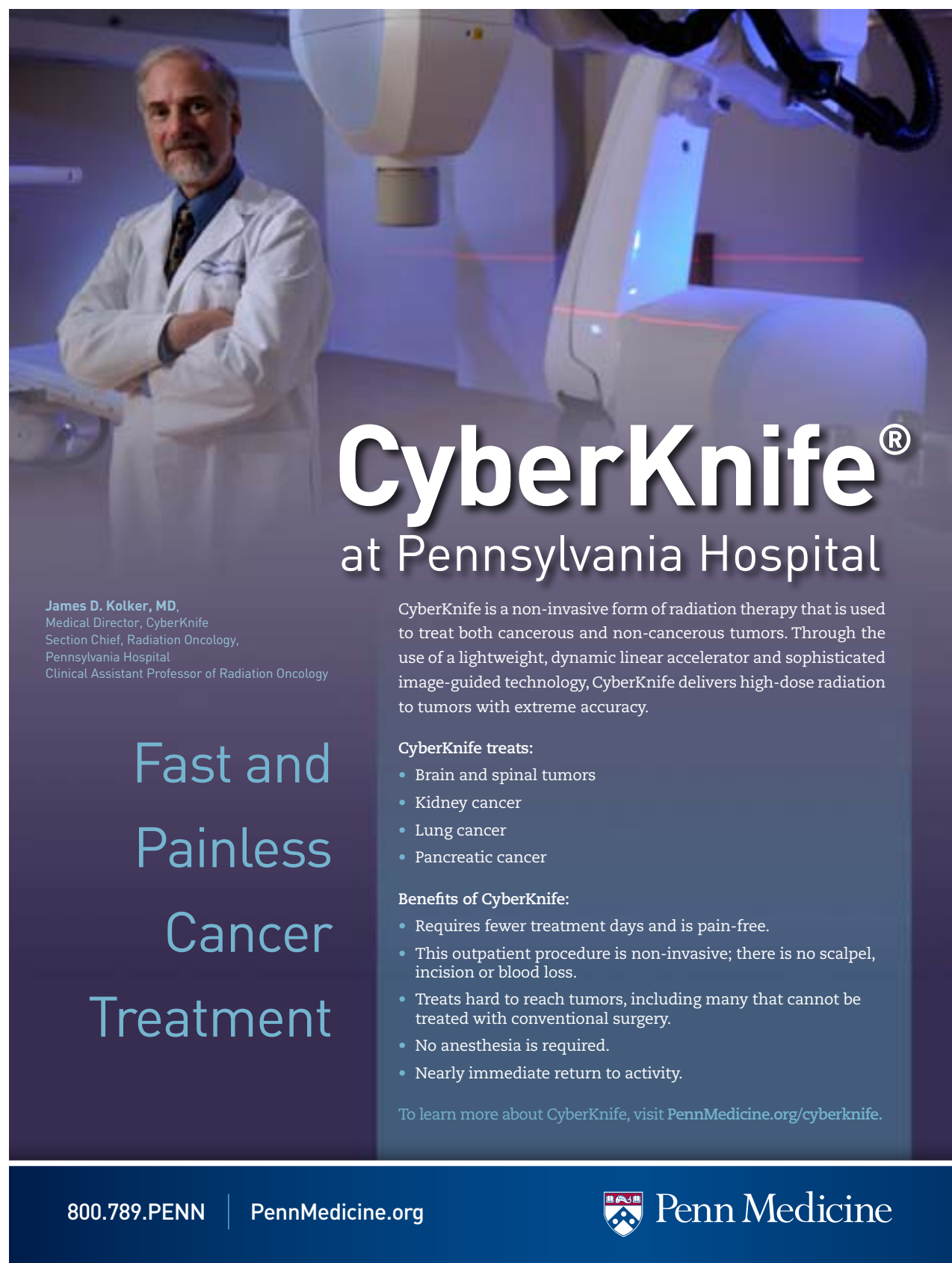
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