



news

Your free newsletter
Issue No 3 — December 2008



Letter from the editor

When I started Melville News in August, I decided to look on the bright side when it came to content. I had no idea how popular a choice that would be among readers. That is not to undermine all those working behind the scenes to make Melville a happy, clean, crime-free place for residents and visitors alike.

In an email to me, one such worker bemoaned the fact that there are so many of us doing our own thing instead of working together. I choose to see this differently. Melville is a vibrant suburb full of busy people with career and family obligations with the upshot that many of us use our individual strengths and talents to make a difference, and that is indeed what unites us.

There are residents working on community forums; individuals taking issue with noise, dumping, litter and graffiti; a dedicated website (www.melvilleinfo.co.za); activists committed to the ongoing saga of the park and other long-standing issues and, not least, Liza de Wit and her team of volunteers on the MRA committee who frequently perform the thankless tasks with which most people don't want to become involved. I urge everyone who lives here to assist them even if the only contribution you can make is by paying your subs (idube@myconnection.co.za).

From my positive perspective, there are stand-out moments. I was touched by a recent communication from a resident whose puppy had gone missing and was found by a local security guard who had taken the pup into his hut for safekeeping. There's the wonderful addition of the farmers' market at Bamboo Centre. The Melville Development Project has been approved by council. And Greenpeace Africa has opened its first local office in Fourth Avenue, with the intention of building a strong presence in Africa. Amadou Kanoute, Executive Director of Greenpeace Africa, explained it thus: "While the environmental threats facing Africans are urgent and critical, Africa is in a position to leapfrog dirty development and become a leader in helping to avert catastrophic climate change and protect the natural environment. We are here to help make that happen." This is a challenge to us all and one I've no doubt many in Melville will embrace.

Louise Viljoen, last issue's winner of The Weekender subscription for her feature urging the Melville Development Plan to go green, sent me details of the Champion Tree Project which was started when the Sophiatown oak, in Bertha Street, became the first tree in South Africa to be given protection under the National Forestry Act. Another is a poplar tree on the corner of Lothbury Road and Fawley Avenue in Auckland Park. If you have trees you believe ought to be preserved for posterity, contact Councillor Steve Kotze at steve.kotze@absamail.co.za

For the newsletter, I owe much to Rozanne Myburgh (www.jouwereld.co.za) for her immeasurable contribution with layout and design. Dehan Liebenberg plunged in with me at the start to sponsor the printing and distribution of the hard copy version. This bumper edition has been half-sponsored by advertisers. As for those who have responded to my requests for content, many thanks – but please keep it up as I really cannot do it without you. I can't say putting together Melville News is a breeze, but when it's done it feels like we've happily survived a whirlwind.

Have a great festive season and an upbeat 2009.

Suzanne Brenner

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A SECRET REVEALED

TV personality and producer, columnist, maverick and Afrikaans establishment upstart, **Deon Maas** is passionate about Melville. Here is one of his reasons.

I am a hunter gatherer and proud of it. Armed with my credit card I am stalking my prey, making sure that my family is warm, safe and well informed. I go home with my prey in shopping bags where the family sings my praise around the fire in the lounge - congratulating me on my rare finds, my dedication to keeping them smart and entertained.

My favourite hunting ground is Melville. My target is next to a fish shop that smells fishy on Monday mornings in the summer, but is fine for the rest of the week and year. Except on Monday mornings, I can smell my target before I even enter the shop. The musty smell of books has always turned me on, promising wisdom, knowledge and a good laugh.

Filled with thousands of hard-to-find comics, graphic novels, games and sci-fi and fantasy novels, a *stoep* full of *Magic the Gathering* card players on Saturday afternoons and a geek quotient higher than the rest of Melville combined, **Outer Limits** is a well kept secret enjoyed by those who are in on it.

So while the rest of my cave dwellers are hunting dogs at Ratz, hoping to avoid bunny boilers and STDs, I am holed up with my lover, feeling warm, wanted and above all, smart. At least she'll still respect me in the morning.

THE SPIRIT OF MELVILLE

Melville Residents Association chair **Liza de Wit**, whose day job is senior manager at Deloitte Consulting, decided she was going to make a difference during her tenure.

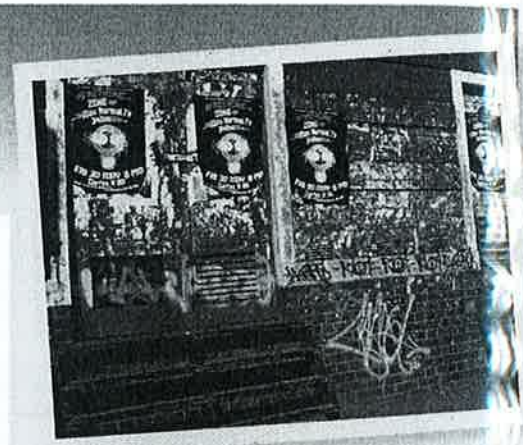
It all started in April this year. A group of more than a 100 residents gathered at the Melville Kruisgemeente Church in Fourth Avenue with a single mission - to clean the streets of Melville. A few enthusiastic teams chose graffiti removal and set off with scrapers, smelly products and brushes. Graffiti Removal Services supported the teams with professional advice and held our hands when we discovered that all is not as simple as it seems.

The MRA determined to continue this activity on a monthly basis, with preliminary focus on the entry and exits points of Melville. And without denying the hard work involved, it is a fun exercise that garners huge support from business and passers-by.

Our efforts have included removal of posters and graffiti tags all along Fourth Avenue; the Auckland Park Post Office and Telkom buildings in Lothbury Road; Main Road municipal boxes; tags on residential walls and Mays Chemist's boundary wall and in Ninth Street opposite Bamboo corner.

In October, the last graffiti clean-up day for the year was held. It's immensely satisfying to discover that most of the spots tackled this year are still clean and what's more, most of us look forward to the light-hearted moments we now share as friends united against graffiti to make our suburb a prettier place. Melville residents have made a difference! The MRA thanks all of you who continue to make the suburb a better place.

Contact: createmelville@gmail.co.za if you want to make a difference



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COME RIDE WITH US

It was an invitation **Adrian Steed** couldn't refuse. Without skipping a beat, he kitted up to take the saddle vacated by one of the manne on a cycling trip abroad.

"Come and pedal Portugal with us and when we get home we can peddle Portugal!" The well-known ex-broadcaster and long-time Melville resident, who these days coaches people in business on how to work with the news media, received this invitation from his dear friend James Clarke, the *Stoep Talk* columnist.

The invite came because Rex Gibson, one of the six cyclists who journey to *darkest Europe* every year along with five other regular members of what James calls the Tour de Farce Team, was unable to ride his bike due to the fact that he'd just had a hip replacement. Which just may be an indication of the heaven knows how many kilometres that the team, comprising well known newspaper editors - past and present - have pedalled, pushed and panted for the past seven years. In this time they have visited France, Germany, Austria, England, Ireland and Spain.

Adrian says he was both surprised and delighted to make up the team's numbers and hoped that he would be able to keep up with the other members, whose average age was about 70.

He needn't have worried. The gentle Melville hills were in his legs and the ups and downs of Portugal were within his range - as was a different experience of Portuguese food and drink. "There really is a great deal more to Portuguese food than prawns and chunks of skewered steak," he says. "The cuisine was deliciously different enough to encourage me to buy a wonderful cook book called *Piri Piri Starfish* by a South African called Tessa Kiroos."

Needless to say, Adrian, a bicycle rider of many years standing, is still to be seen tackling the back streets of Melville.

Oh yes, in addition to being an *aficionado* of bicycles, Adrian is one of the meanest cooks in Melville.



BOOK GIVE-AWAY

Melville News has a great give-away for one reader. The *2009 Flux Trend Review* edited by **Dion Chang** is a must-have for anyone interested in the information overload that characterises living in the 21st Century. To enter, provide the name of one of the contributors to the Flux Trend Review. You will find the names on www.fluxtrends.co.za Email your entry and your contact details to prowrite@mweb.co.za with Flux Trend in the subject line.



PROPERTY IS STILL A GOOD INVESTMENT

Dehan Liebenberg of *Jawitz Properties* looks on the bright side of the depressed global property market.

Property has moved rather slowly this year and sellers throughout the country have had to be realistic in their expectations regarding price if they genuinely want to sell. Prices have certainly been relatively low all year but we are now seeing astute buyers capitalising on what's perceived to be the bottom end of the cycle and good value for money.

Undoubtedly, it's a great opportunity for buyers, and - if there is any spare cash at all - the best time for us in Melville to look at investing in a second property in this delightful suburb. Melville has long proved to be an excellent investment area with great returns over the medium to long term. The demand for rental properties has always been and continues to be good. So despite the worldwide recession, the sentiment is strongly optimistic that interest rates should start coming down (albeit it slowly) during the course of next year and in turn, property prices will start recovering.

And with the exciting plans and initiatives planned ahead for Melville, we can look forward to ever increasing value for local homeowners.

THIS MONTH'S WINNER OF THE WEEKENDER SUBSCRIPTION

Since the inception of Melville News, **Jane Griffiths** has written her popular garden features. For her contributions and community spirit, she is a deserving winner of this terrific prize.

DELISH SALAD GARDENS

If the idea of starting a fully-fledged vegetable garden is too daunting, then start with a simple salad garden. Considering how expensive one bag of loose-leaf lettuce is, a salad garden is a worthwhile investment and is easy to grow and maintain.

Lettuces & greens

A good salad starts with an interesting mix of lettuces and greens. The most practical way of growing these in a home vegetable garden, is the 'cut and come again' method, which provides multiple harvesting from one planting. Sow the seeds quite thickly in a block rather than rows. Leave space for successive sowing. Once they are large enough, young individual leaves are plucked from a selection of plants. Not only are these tastier, each picking encourages the plant to produce more leaves.

Use mixed lettuce seed packs or blend your own using frilly and loose-leaf lettuce seeds. Greens suitable for this method are: kale, mustard, bok choy, rocket, tatsoi, mizuna, amaranth, spinach, Swiss chard, sorrel and land cress.

Tomatoes

Cherry tomatoes make the most sense for the home vegetable garden. They produce earlier, more abundantly and for longer than larger varieties. Because most cherry tomatoes have a vining growth habit, they benefit from strong staking and support.

Set transplants deeper in the earth than they were in their seed modules, with the level of the ground just below the bottom leaves. This encourages the growth of more roots along the stem, resulting in larger and healthier plants.

Once the tomatoes have started growing their fifth and sixth branches, break off any below, using your thumbnail. (If you are a smoker, make sure you wash your hands well first, as tobacco can transfer the mosaic virus to your tomatoes.) Breaking off these bottom stems keeps the soil from splashing onto the plant, reducing disease and increasing airflow.

Tomato leaves have a particularly pungent smell and are in fact poisonous to humans. This makes them less attractive to many leaf-eating bugs, with the exception of aphids and tomato hornworms. During hot, dry weather, red spider mites can be a problem. Although tomatoes tend to be relatively bug-free, they are susceptible to various wilts and diseases. To help prevent these, water tomatoes at their roots rather than overhead watering. The exception is if the weather is very dry, which limits flowering. Watering with an overhead sprinkler will create the desired humidity.

If you have any queries, you can contact Jane on info@janedeliciousgarden.com or via her website at www.janedeliciousgarden.com © Jane's Delicious Garden



Each issue a winning Melville News contributor will receive a six month subscription to The Weekender. Please send yours to prowrite@mweb.co.za

A HELPING HAND AT THE SPARROW SCHOOL

Twenty-one year old **Edward Pearce** hails from South London in the UK. On a gap year in SA, he told Melville News intern **David Molelekoa** what brought him to Johannesburg.

Edward Pearce completed his degree in literature at Cambridge University last June. In September, he was at the Sparrow Foundation School located on First Avenue in Melville.

Sparrow Schools Educational Trust is a registered non-profit organisation that provides affordable, specialised education to disadvantaged and disabled children between the ages of seven and 18. Edward had been exposed to the Sparrow schools in 2 000 when, as a member of an Under 15 cricket team from Dulwich College Preparatory School, he visited the schools on a three-week tour. This experience helped him to decide to return as a volunteer.

Edward was taken by Sparrow's aim to provide remedial and special needs education to disadvantaged youths. "I'm excited to be a volunteer here," he says, "and seeing the kids improve under my influence is amazing."

Smiling, he says he will definitely keep in contact with the Sparrow School when his time comes to move on.

For more information about Sparrow Schools' local volunteer programmes, email sparrow@mweb.co.za



Learners Hafsa and Raydene with volunteer Edward Pearce.

FIVE LEADING QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Local resident **Jeremy Wafer** is Head of Fine Art at the University of Witwatersrand. New York-based author and lecturer **RoseLee Goldberg** is a Wits art graduate and the director of Performa, a multi disciplinary arts organisation (www.performa-arts.org). She interviewed him via email.

RLG: You are a highly regarded practising artist, with an extensive exhibition history in South Africa and abroad. What was it like to shift gears to become the Head of Fine Art at Wits?

JW: I enjoy teaching and interacting with students and colleagues. Fortunately, the university year allows for a fair amount of time in my own studio so I do manage to balance things out. Wits is one of the best art schools with excellent staff and students so it is a pleasure and challenge to be asked to 'set the pace'.

RLG: I've always been impressed by how deeply South African artists express political and humanist concerns through their art. There is an underlying ethics and sense of responsibility for the 'transformative' power of art that comes across in their work. How do you teach such values to young artists?

JW: We all believe in these things ourselves so it inevitably comes through in how we teach. We are living in exciting and complex times and in a vibrant but difficult city - we try to encourage students to be responsive to the place they are in.

RLG: How do you teach your students to cope with the realities of being an artist, of learning the ropes of the galleries and the international art world and actually making a living?

JW: The art world is a challenging place to make one's mark in. We try to develop the self-confidence, creativity, skill, awareness and professionalism needed for young artists to make a place for themselves in the art world. We get out of the studio and classroom as often as we can into the galleries, museums and artists' studios in Joburg and encourage students to put on their own shows and events in formal and informal spaces all around town.

RLG: Do you imagine the Wits Fine Art Department having a larger role to play in the cultural future of South Africa?

JW: We feel that Wits, at the heart of both the South African art and economic worlds, is really committed to arts having a major role to play in the formation of a rich post-apartheid South African cultural identity and as a huge area for job creation and entrepreneurship.

RLG: On a recent trip to Johannesburg, I met several artists in the Melville neighbourhood and was very impressed by their sense of community. Is Melville a special magnet for people in the arts? A kind of Greenwich Village or Bloomsbury?

JW: Melville is a great place to live - we can walk out to good bookshops, to coffee and art house DVDs, to the greengrocer and can catch the bus to work. We chat to our neighbours in the street and while there is lots of upgrading going on, things are not too posh!



LEEKS ARE IN SEASON

Once ubiquitous in Melville, **Davina Kirby** is now chilling in Arniston where she runs a B&B, *The Inn* (www.overberginfo.co.za). A cook of distinction, Davina sent this recipe to whet our appetites...

Slice leeks julienne style or straight across with your sharpest knife. The steamer or trivet should be placed on top of a pan of boiling water, and in they go... but not after considering that they, unlike us, hide their grit. So rinse many times before steaming for 4 to 5 minutes. No mention of salt here.

Pre-prepare: a platter splashed with Virgin Olive Oil, finely chopped Italian parsley, a hint of garlic, white pepper, and grated fresh ginger (easily done if peeled and frozen previously). Remove leeks from the steam and plate up, toss and serve immediately if hot. Never serve a floppy warming-drawer-warmed leek.

If preferred chilled, then add pumpkin seeds, lemon zest and Verjuice. Nasturtium flowers clash beautifully as decor.

If anyone insists on a cheese sauce, don't buy fresh leeks.



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LAUGHTER IS A TONIC

Bill Gee, an India-based laughterologist, has brought laughter therapy to South Africa.

Scientific research confirms that laughter is nature's stress-buster. Laughing long, loud and often quickly reduces and heals related health problems – and a technique called aerobic laughter helps people to laugh without the need for jokes or comedy.

It is well documented that stress is a major cause of depression, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, cancer and also learning difficulties. With foresight, many educational institutions, hospices and local companies are using our laughter workshops to benefit their charges and employees and to improve performance.

South Africa's first laughter clinic has come to Lothbury Road with offerings that include daily laughter sessions. There are also regular medical and psychological screenings to monitor improvements. In addition to treating the conditions mentioned above, laughter can help people suffering from trauma, grief, insomnia and fertility problems. Laughter is an excellent therapy for people fighting cancer and living with HIV/AIDS. For more information visit www.inlaughter.org



IF IT'S LAUGHTER YOU'RE AFTER

The Dungeon continues to host the only world famous comedy club in South Africa.

The Comedy Underground will be eight-years-old in April '09, making it by far the longest running comedy evening in the country.

Cool Runnings' 140-seater venue, the Dungeon, is still bursting at the seams every Sunday night with howling fans of alternative comedy. Emphasis is on original material and quirky first-timers provide startling and sometimes outrageous explosions of enthusiasm.

The Underground is also famous for featuring surprise acts without prior warning. Catch outrageous host John Vlismas' signature improv-abuse, which is not for the faint-hearted.

At R30 a ticket, it's still the cheapest comedy event on the calendar, even though comedians are queuing to perform there. The Sunday closest to mid-December is generally the last show of the year, reopening about mid-January.

MEMORIES ARE MADE OF MELVILLE

Mariada Goosen, now based in Cape Town, helped put Melville on the map with the annual Melville Mardi Gras.

May, 1985. It was a logistical nightmare.

For four months prior to the first Melville Mardi Gras, everyone thought we were daft. No-one was sure what to expect as they listened to our outlandish demands and ideas, advised us and kept their doubts to themselves. Permission to host the *mardi gras* was granted by Manie Venter. Patch Oosthuisen and a host of wonderful people shared their expertise. Bev Gurwicz cajoled everyone with her smile and gentleness. I nagged, harassed, irritated and bored people until they relented and promised to participate.

We pulled out all the stops to convince whoever we could to participate, physically and financially. We spent the last two weeks talking to journalists in the print media and on radio programmes – and of course, we used the Melville bush telegraph. *Melvillians* opened their arms and their hearts and shared their energy with all the citizens of Johannesburg and came up trumps.

The Melville Mardi Gras was born. People came from everywhere to share the day with us. There was so much to look at, to listen to, to eat, to drink and to enjoy. Friendships were forged and bridges were built. It was a red-letter day.

Twenty-three-years later Melville continues to enchant and fascinate people. I miss you.

FEEDBACK

- The newsletter is great fun and reminds me of the great days 20 years ago when I was in various houses there with the wonderful grocers and restaurants and indeed Opera Boutique, the shop we had in Seventh Street. Very good to know it's as fun as ever. - **Charles Anderson, Bangkok**
- I think it is just amazing the way you have put this publication together. The articles and news items (are) interesting and well edited and the layout is very pleasing. - **Elbe Hofmeyr, Somerset West**
- Well done on putting together such a professional and uplifting newsletter. - **Richard Tait, former MRA chairman, Mauritius**
- What a great newsletter! I read it right to the end with great interest. It's easy on the eyes, has a variety of interesting content and you've managed to make it friendly and grown-up at the same time. - **Maggie Tyler, London**
- I think it is very good, and very well written. I like the tone and the layout. - **Michael Savage, Cape Town**
- You really have done an exceptional job in putting together a wonderful newsletter that makes me feel fortunate and proud to be part of Melville. Lots of lovely articles and useful info! - **Cynthia Rose, MRA committee member**
- I liked Bruce Fordyce's article on the Koppies and am glad you could use the photo which captured some of the early morning quietness. The Koppie rocks in the logo are a lovely aspect of Melville which many people still need to experience. - **Wendy Carstens**
- I have to salute you and your team for involving all *Melvillites* (and surrounding areas like Auckland Park) in getting more actively involved in the upkeep and preservation of our precious Melville. Bravo, encore and well done! - **Georg Knoke** (Note from ed: I wish we had a team!)
- I am relatively new to Melville, but living here is great. The Melville News is awesome and nobody should miss the monthly Farmers' Market! - **Chrissie Carey**
- The newsletter looks and reads great! I think this should go a long way towards building a closer-knit Melville community. - **Olga Cukrowska**

SMALLS

TRAILER for sale CI Sprite 1 200 x 1 000. Good condition. R2 500 o.n.c.o. Richard 082 441 8731.

SAGES Toastmasters Club, Marks Park, 19h00 on second and fourth Thursdays. Dave 082 442 6294.

WALKERS/joggers/runners join Gareth Strobie every Wednesday evening 18h00, corner of Seventh Street and Fifth Avenue.

DESPERATELY seeking Melville resident/student to give some handy home hints to confused computer operator. Jenny 083 267 4129

PAINTER/BUILDER based in Melville for large/small jobs or permanent employment. Contactable reference: Bill Gee 082 729 5170.

CAROLS on the Koppies, Sunday 7 December 18h30. Entrance next to Melville Junction Church in Fifth Street. Dean 084 223 3223

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Subscribe to The Weekender at a 30% discounted annual rate of R312.38 (R288.75 for pensioners). Email Karen Bonsall on bonsallk@bdfm.co.za with Melville News in the subject line, or call 011 280 3501

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KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOUR

Who are the residents of Melville? In what we hope will become a regular feature, **Suzanne Brenner** discovers **Nel Redelinghuys**.

Nel Redelinghuys is a local treasure.

She has lived in Melville for 40 years since arriving as a newlywed and she and her husband still live in the same happy house with a well-tended garden that borders the Koppies. With some nostalgia, she recalls the days when Melville really was a village – where there were fences not high walls, children played in the streets and everyone knew everyone.

Born to teach, Nel, an Afrikaans speaker, started out at the English medium Melville Primary School. When RAU opened its doors, she enrolled for a BA, majoring in English and History. Then it was an honours degree at UNISA and later a master's degree for which she wrote a thesis about modern Russia. Why Russia? "I just wanted to do something new," laughs Nel, "and I absolutely love Russia."

By now, Nel had graduated to being a university lecturer at Vista University's Soweto campus. Much to her surprise, her HOD asked her to take over tuition of third year students. She pointed out that the predominant subject, struggle history, was outside of her experience. With a shrug, the head gave her a reading list. She did a crash course and a mutually beneficial relationship developed with her students.

History, of course, is not as sexy as business and accounting and law – the subjects that have rand signs written all over them. With the merging of campuses and the rationalisation of subjects and lecturers, Nel found herself without a job in 2000. Undeterred, she made a list of how she could put her expertise to good use. She came up with the idea of conducting tours to Soweto, received her accreditation and began her new career with gusto.

Nel's tourists come to her by word of mouth – from Canada, the USA, the UK and the Soviet Union. She conducts tours of galleries, Constitution Hill and the Apartheid Museum but it is her day-long tours of Soweto that inspire her. And she also loves tours of Pretoria. And Melville. Soon after embarking on her new career, Nel began rifling through books for morsels about Melville – of which there are few, she tells.

Melville tours

On Nel's walking tours of Melville, you are likely to learn a great deal about one of the oldest suburbs in Johannesburg. Did you know that Melpark Primary was 100 years in 2005? That scholars were originally taught in tents? And that trams were the common mode of transport? "Melville is more than Seventh Street," says Nel.

For R65 per person, discover Melville with Nel on a relaxed two-and-a-half hour exploration of our suburb. Contact her on nelred@global.co.za At tour's end, you'll be invited to *kuier* with Nel over sherry and snacks. It sounds irresistible - old style Melville hospitality on our doorstep.



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