

FOUNDERS' GROVE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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The Art and Amusement of D. Bill

Adapted from a 2016 article by Tara Henry

"Picasso meets Easter Island." Those are the words that came to mind upon first seeing one of the outdoor pole carvings of local artist D. Bill. There are an estimated 50 different D. Bill creations in Founders' Grove: in back yards, side yards, peeking over fences. Some of these 9 foot tall wooden poles feature the vertical expressions of wild faces with stacked eyes and wide mouths; some bear the heads of animals; and some include words. Occasionally painted, sometimes adorned with repurposed materials, these artworks represent the musings of a machinist from the little town of Danvers, Ill.



"Trust me, you'll know you're in the right spot," said Shaun Bill as he explained how to find his grandfather D. Bill's farm where Shaun and I would meet. He was right... the lane to D. Bill's farmhouse was lined with weathered carved totems, among them a Roman soldier, a dog with eyes crafted from repurposed red reflectors, a chef, a Smokey Bear, an African villager with silver coil circling his neck, and a Mohawk Indian with a piece of worn carpet resembling

an animal skin slung around his torso.

As Shaun walked me around part of the 58-acre farm, he explained how his now passed-on grandfather D. Bill was never "intentionally artistic." He was a man who in his daily tool and die work at Caterpillar made functional things, useful things, with his hands. Shaun described a playhouse that his Grandpa had made for him as a boy, with windows slanted at 30 degree angles. "Why make them straight?" was D. Bill's thought process, "when you can make them interesting!"

D. Bill (Darwin Bill) started making his "pole art" by chance, late in life. When the electric company removed a line of telephone poles near his lane in the 80s, Bill asked if they'd leave the poles for him. He was recently retired from Caterpillar and had the time to release his creativity – and a pile of material to use as well. He would transport a single poll to his workshop, make a line drawing of his design idea on paper, and use chalk to outline the necessary cut lines on the wooden pole. His hatchet was his *only* tool.

He never intended on selling his work... he placed his finished pieces on his property, gave some to friends, and finally began exhibiting locally at the urging of others. As the demand for his pieces skyrocketed and his poles sold out at each show, D. Bill experienced one emotion: amusement. Amusement at the popularity of his hand-hatched hobby pieces.



It seemed he was a man who wanted to make functional pieces more interesting, to add whimsy where you may not expect it, while at the same time repurposing materials at hand. For example, the paint that Bill used on his pole creations consisted of whatever unused gallons he could find at Habitat for Humanity ReStore, and the various metal pieces and other pole adornments are materials you and I would pass by in our garage. Bill visualized ways to creatively combine ordinary materials into a final piece that would amuse its observers.

The next time you walk by your neighbor's fence and see the eyes of a D. Bill piece staring at you, picture Darwin Bill and his hatchet, chipping away the chalk lines on the pole to reveal the face underneath, smiling in amusement.

PREZ on the EDGE - By Amanda Hill on Mercer, Board President

Fall is always one of my favorite seasons in Founders' Grove. In my opinion we have the most beautiful tree-lined streets, and the fall colors were truly spectacular this year! I hope you've had time to sit and enjoy the peace of your front porches or walk through our neighborhood to take in all the beauty that exists all around us.

The 10th Annual FGNA Palooza was another smashing success. It is so fun to see the talented folks who live in our 'hood perform in our very own backyard. A special thanks to all the performers, to Chris McGough for sharing his equipment and running sound all day long, and to Matt Lollar for putting so much effort into this fun event year after year.

Halloween in our 'hood was amazing this year as usual! Several neighbors on Grove Street reported 600-700 trick-or-treaters at their doors. I'm amazed at all the generous neighbors who go all out



for these kiddos on such a fun night.

With the winter season right around the corner, the board met to plan our next round of events. We look forward to the December



Social at Casper Brewing Company. We hope to share some holiday cheer with neighbors old and new alike. We will also have the annual bake sale at AB Hatchery the following day. Please let us know if you are able to make any donations or contributions as this is one of our best fundraisers of the year. See the calendar on the back of the newsletter for all the details.

Hope to see you around the 'hood soon!

Cheers!

Amanda

About Founders' Grove Neighborhood Association

FGNA is a 501c3 organization formed to enhance the community in which we live. Every residence on and between Oakland, Mercer, Washington and State streets is a member invited to join any and all events. No dues are required, and activities are funded by donations.

Donate by:

- Cash in FGNA jars at events
- PayPal to fgnabloomington@gmail.com
- Check to: FGNA (c/o Neil Gridley), 1219 E. Washington St., Bloomington, IL 61701

2022-2023 FGNA Board

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GOALS

- Celebrate and preserve our neighborhood's unique character and history.
- Promote communication and a sense of community between neighbors, with many social gatherings.
- Keep neighbors informed about city projects that may affect them and give our neighborhood a voice in city decision-making.
- Keep the neighborhood safe and traffic under control.
- Help our neighborhood schools & businesses thrive.
- Share expert info on topics of interest such as gardening and home restoration.

HELLO, NEIGHBOR! Featuring Ruth Hargis of Garden Grove Apartments

By Todd Trainor, FGNA Social Chair

Ruth spent 20 years in Heyworth, Ill., where she raised her three daughters prior to relocating north to Bloomington in 1984. She originally planned to stay just a year in an apartment at 1208 E. Grove Street, then in 2010 during a remodeling phase at the property, moved east to the building of 1210 E. Grove Street (same complex) where she still happily resides!

Ruth worked for Van Gundy

Insurance as a customer service representative from 1991 until retirement in 2005.

Ruth said she has appreciated all of the events that Founders' Grove neighborhood provides. Some she could attend and others not as much. She has acquired many friends over the years within her complex as well as in the neighborhood. Ruth said she loves to see activity from her 2nd floor view or balcony... of people

walking by – and the many breeds of dogs being walked.

Ruth noted how gracious people are in our neighborhood. When I asked about her favorite season in Founders' Grove, she replied she loves all seasons; but especially currently the array of beautiful fall colors. You may happen to meet Ruth some day on Grove Street as she loves to get out to take photos in the 'hood.

Know of an interesting neighbor to feature? Email sonyajeremy@yahoo.com

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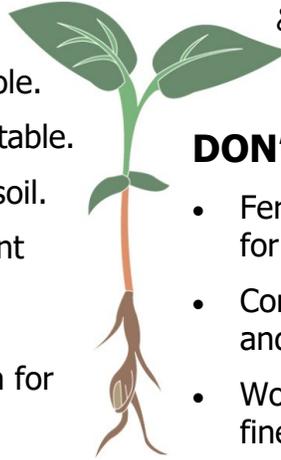
Fall/Winter Garden Tips from Sue Anderson

Master Gardener
& FGNA resident



DO:

- Plant if the ground is soft enough to dig a hole.
- Add mulch to help keep root temperatures stable.
- Add compost to supply organic nutrients to soil.
- Cover container plants with moisture-resistant material and move containers close to the foundation of the house or under eaves.
- Order those garden center catalogs to watch for the newest plants coming out.



DON'T:

- Fertilize lawn and plants. This is a time for garden plants to go dormant and rest.
- Continue watering; it can damage roots and new growth.
- Worry about bulb foliage. Leaves will be fine with temperature changes.



FGNA is seeking garden volunteers!

Looking for a group of individuals who like to get their hands dirty!

Our neighborhood garden at the corner of Towanda and Washington Streets needs some peeps to periodically step in to pull weeds, prune and possibly provide some gardening guidance to maintain the beauty of our Founders' Grove flower garden. There is no time commitment or skill set required... Just trying to keep it looking good all year long!

If interested please email fgnabloomington@gmail.com with your name and contact information. *Happy Growing!*

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Socials

The Social Scene



Vinyl Hullabaloo



Crockpot Cookoff



FGNA Palooza



GOOD TIMES

NOVEMBER

Thursday, Nov. 17 at 7 p.m. – Mystery Book Club

- **Book:** "Dial A for Aunties" by Jesse Q. Sutanto
- **Where:** Jen Johnson's, 1413 E Grove St. Details: jsjohnson1413@comcast.net

Tuesday, Nov. 22 at 7 p.m. – Washington Street Book Club

- **Book:** "Unceasing Militant" by Alison Parker
- **Where:** Rochelle Gridley's, 1219 E Washington St. (back porch) Details: rochellegridley@gmail.com

DECEMBER

Thursday, Dec. 1 at 7 p.m. – FGNA Member Meeting, open to all residents

- **Speaker:** IWU Professor Given Harper on creating bird habitats for owls
- **Where:** Centennial Christian Church, 1219 E. Grove St.

Friday, Dec. 9 from 5:30 p.m. to ??? – FGNA Social "Out of the 'hood"

- **Where:** Casper Brewing Company, 3807 Ballybunion Rd., Bloomington (61704; off Ireland Grove Rd)
- **Details:** Must purchase beverages from venue. FGNA will provide light hors d'oeuvres.
- **What to bring:** A dish to share, money for 50/50 drawing with additional prizes. Wear your ugliest HOLIDAY attire! There might be a prize for something awful!



Saturday, Dec. 10 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. – FGNA Annual Bake Sale

- **Donations needed:** We are seeking donations of baked goods. Please drop off the morning of before 9 a.m. at AB Hatchery; or you can bring to the social the night before or even contact any board member to make arrangements. The FGNA Board appreciates the donations, as this is one of our main fundraisers for neighborhood activities!
- **Where:** AB Hatchery & Garden Center, 916 E. Grove St.



2023

FGNA Friday Socials are taking a hiatus! None in January or February; resuming again March 10!

Stay tuned for the lineup of 2023 activities!

RECURRING MONTHLY EVENTS

A **Euchre Club** and **Music Guild** also meet most months. At Music Guild, select & share songs from bands/artists that align to a monthly theme. **Mystery Book Club** usually meets 3rd Thursday of each month & **Washington Street Book Club** usually the 4th Tuesday. For more info, email fgnabloomington@gmail.com

Events, dates & times listed are to the best of the Board's knowledge at time of printing

To stay up to date on the latest, watch for FGNA events on Facebook (www.facebook.com/FoundersGrove), visit fgna.org or sign up for email updates by contacting Bob Dawson at bob@dawson1.com.

Neighbor to Neighbor Classifieds

Nov. 25, 8 a.m. to noon: Art Friday Open House

featuring drawings by Lisa Walcott and mixed media work by Mandy Cano Villalobos. Join Lori Baum & Aaron Henkelman at 1918 E. Jackson St. to view or purchase work by the two Michigan artists, enjoy breakfast treats, and mingle with friends and neighbors. Questions? Email: aaronandlori1@frontier.com

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