

Looking back at revival

Ed Rendell reminisces on the inception of the Avenue of the Arts.

By Stephan Salisbury
INQUIRER CULTURE WRITER

Ed Rendell didn't ask the hundreds gathered Tuesday evening at the Masonic Temple for the Avenue of the Arts Inc.'s 20th anniversary celebration to close their eyes and dream of a vibrant city in the future. That future is now.

AVENUE OF THE Arts 20 YEARS

A WEEK ON THE AVENUE

► **Thursday:** Craig LaBan surveys the restaurant scene.

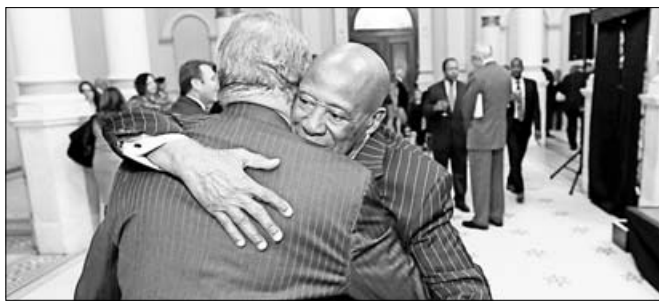
► **Friday:** Inga Saffron analyzes the big picture.

Residents were leaving, companies were not moving in.

So Rendell grabbed hold of an idea that was percolating at the time and made it a key piece of his economic development plans: transform South Broad Street into an Avenue of the Arts.

"We did it," he said. "We achieved our goal big time. Is it perfect? No ... but it certainly accomplished almost a miracle.

Rendell and his co-visionary, Bernard Watson, then-president of the William Penn Foundation, who had embarked on a parallel avenue "vision" before Rendell took office in 1991, were honored at the leather-ap-



Bernard Watson (right), who with then-Mayor Ed Rendell got the Avenue of the Arts in motion, hugs Thomas McGill. MICHAEL BRYANT / Staff Photographer

pointed, fluted-columned Masonic Temple for their efforts in getting the avenue out of the dreaming stage and into reality.

But they didn't do it alone, and several lesser-known but still-critical people were cited by speakers noting the collective effort that went into transforming a declining commercial corridor into a different kind of street — one of music, dance, and theater, galleries, hotels, restaurants, and, most important, nightlife — people on the streets.

U.S. District Judge Marjorie O. Rendell, the then-mayor's wife and for 13 years chairwoman of Avenue of the Arts Inc., was away at a judicial conference but won praise for her efforts, planning, and organizing.

"If you want to say I had a vision, I turned it over to Midge and she made it happen. She made the decisions," Rendell said.

Also praised was Carol Haas Gravano, who proposed combining a new orchestra hall and a recital hall in one facility, according to Joseph Kluger, former president of the Philadelphia

Orchestra Association, who called her "one of the unsung heroes."

While Rendell was painting the big picture for potential funders — including then-Gov. Robert P. Casey, who kicked in \$74 million in 1992 — Watson was focused on saving and reusing the grand, decaying Ridgway Library at Broad and Christian Streets. He approached Rendell's predecessor, W. Wilson Goode, who agreed to support the project to turn the building into the High School for Creative and Performing Arts.

In the meantime, Watson focused William Penn on renovating the Arts Bank at Broad and South Street, creating the first new theater seats on Broad in years, and funding new homes for the Clef Club and the Brandywine Graphic Workshop. The Avenue was underway.

Looking forward, Paul S. Beideman, president and chief executive of Avenue of the Arts Inc., said a \$14 million lighting and streetscape project for North Broad from Glenwood Avenue south to Spring Garden Street would begin in January.

OBITUARIES

Sarah Evan, 89, a psychotherapist

By Bonnie L. Cook
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Sarah Evan, 89, a retired psychotherapist and longtime Swarthmore resident, died Thursday, Oct. 17, of kidney failure at Martins Run, a continuing-care community in Media. While growing up on New York's Lower East Side, she knew she would spend her life in a profession aimed at helping people.

After graduating at age 15 from Seward Park High School, she earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Brooklyn College at age 19.

She completed a master's degree in social work at the University of Pittsburgh by age 21 and did postgraduate work at the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis in Manhattan.

Mrs. Evan began as a social worker with jobs in New York City; Chicago; and Ithaca, N.Y. While in Boston, she became certified as a psychotherapist. She continued that work at Jewish Family Service of Philadelphia from 1966 to 1971, and from 1972 until 1982 for the Mental Health Clinics of Delaware County in Media.

She also saw patients at home. Even after moving in 2009 to Martins Run, she continued counseling in person and over the phone.

"There were some who didn't want to give her up, and she was moved by that," said her daughter, Raima.

The former Sareleh Kaufman was born in Sattmar, Hungary, in 1924, to Ephraim and Feige Kaufman. Her native languages were Yiddish and Hun-

garian. When she was 4, her father left for America and was gone for a year. In 1930, when the family reunited in America, she didn't recognize him.

"The experience of loss, displacement, and language change stayed with her throughout her life," said her daughter. "She talked often about her profound sadness. She thought of him as the father who showed up in America. There was a sense of rupture in her life."

Mrs. Evan met her husband, William, in high school. They lost track of each other, but met again by chance on the New York subway after attending a lecture by the psychologist Erich Fromm in the mid-1940s. They married in 1948.

Mrs. Evan found joy in her family and work, but she also loved unearthing treasures from antique shops in Philadelphia and elsewhere.

"She created memorable homes, and was often asked by friends and relatives to rearrange their furniture — or she did so unasked," her daughter said.

She read novels, memoirs, history, and politics, and cultivated a wide circle of friends.

Surviving, besides her daughter, are a son, Robert, and three grandchildren. Her husband died in 2009.

Services were private. Mrs. Evan donated her body to the University of Pennsylvania Medical School through the Humanity Gifts Registry.

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Sarah Evan

Political statement — or racism?

Calvin Coleman spent part of his 75th birthday Sunday protesting the skeleton in George Vucelich's yard in Delaware County. The cake and scallops dinner would have to wait.

The skeleton hangs from a maple tree. A noose appears to be around its scrawny plastic neck. It also wears an Obama-Biden T-shirt.

"When I first heard of this, I was irate. I believed something like this wouldn't happen in Swarthmore," said Coleman, who is African American and whose family has resided in Delaware County for six generations. "If the skeleton was in a chair, I wouldn't be here."

But the skeleton is not in a chair. It hangs from a tree.

Vucelich, who is white, said he did not put up the skeleton to upset people. "I didn't see the racial connection," he told me. "I thought it would mildly annoy the Democrats."

The skeleton has done far more than that. Vucelich told me the rope is not around the skeleton's neck, though it certainly appears to be. He told the Delaware County Daily Times that he thought the skeleton was "a joke."

The suggestion of lynching, among the most heinous acts in our nation's troubled racial history, has



Betty Ann Wilson decries the skeleton George Vucelich displays in his yard. The figure wears an Obama-Biden T-shirt and hangs from a tree. ED HILLE / Staff Photographer

a way of aggravating ancient wounds.

The cops have been by three times. For almost two weeks, a collection of neighbors — African American and white — have held quiet vigils on the leafy but well-traveled 700 block of Hillborn Avenue, which straddles the line between Springfield and Swarthmore. They hold signs that read "Did you learn nothing from the last 200 years?" and "Mr. Vucelich: Take that lynching down!"

But he has not. At midday Sunday, I counted the motorists rushing by with thumbs up for the protesters and stopped at two dozen. A few honked, but there was also the occasional scowl. A residential street, even a busy one, is not usually the scene of daily protest.

Law professor Clare Keefe Coleman, who is white and no relation to Calvin, helped organize the demonstrations and contributed Facebook posts. She called the skeleton "a racist act" and put

up "I Object!!" fliers on neighborhood trees, only to find them repeatedly shredded. "He has a right to free speech," she told me. "But we have a right to speak back."

On Sunday, 20 people gathered, standing in the street before Vucelich's house but not obstructing traffic, just as the cops instructed. Betty Ann Wilson, Calvin Coleman's sister, refused to look at the skeleton hanging behind her.

"I am filled with rage," she said. "He said this is freedom of speech. Most people don't use freedom of speech in defending a Halloween decoration. I would like him to take a walk in my shoes." Beside her stood Paula Lawrence Wehmiller, an African American Episcopal priest and the granddaughter of a priest from Vicksburg, Miss., who called the skeleton "a wound on all of us."

Vucelich, 59, a Wharton graduate who is currently an unemployed accountant, has lived most his life in the brick twin his

parents owned before him. A registered Democrat, Vucelich told me he campaigned for Ed Rendell and Hillary Clinton but supported Mitt Romney last year. Democrats, he told the Daily Times, are "fascists." He told me his neighbors are mostly Democrats and dislike his politics. Two doors down there is an aging Romney sign planted in a yard.

I spent a half-hour talking to Vucelich. We politely debated the placement of the rope, the power of appearances and symbols that harken back to an uglier time.

"I just don't see it," he said repeatedly. "I swear to you I'm not a racist. I'm just somebody who is being pushed too far." He said he felt the protesters tried to get him arrested. He wished neighbors had spoken to him before calling the police. Twice, he thought about taking the skeleton down, but he said people had yelled profanities and sent hate mail. The longer the protests have gone on, the more he has dug in his heels.

"I feel I've been painted into a corner," he said. "You back a rat into a corner, he's going to fight."

Hanging the skeleton in the tree was a challenge, said Vucelich, who suffers from vertigo. He plans to take the skeleton down first thing Friday morning. He has no plans to open his door on Halloween.

The protesters, though, plan to be there Thursday night, handing out candy to any child who asks.

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Cheryl G. Mack, 61, a systems analyst

By Walter F. Naedele
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Cheryl Grover Mack, 61, of Delran, a computer systems analyst for the former Moorestown packaging and distribution center of Tyco Toys Inc., died of kidney failure Friday, Oct. 25, at her home.

Mrs. Mack received a liver transplant "about 13 years ago," her husband, Barry, said. "She lived longer than most transplants, but it started giving out."

Born in Riverside, Mrs. Mack graduated from Riverside High School

in 1969 and from the IBM Educational Center in Center City in 1975, he said.

Mrs. Mack suffered leg injuries in a car accident in California. While she returned to work for Tyco, "it took years for her to recover," her husband said.

She left Tyco in 1985. It moved its Moorestown operations to Oregon in 1992.

Before moving to Naples, Fla., in the early 2000s, Mrs. Mack was a member of the board of trustees in her condomini-

um community, Cooper Valley Village in Edgewater Park, for seven years, her husband said.

For four of those years, he said, she was the board president. "It was a hectic job," he said.

The Macks returned to South Jersey from Naples in 2011.

Besides her husband of 34 years, Mrs. Mack is survived by a brother, a sister, and stepsons Ryan and Darin Mack.

A life celebration was set at the Snover/Givnish of Cinnaminson funeral home, 1200 Route 130 N., from 9:30 to 11 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 30, before an 11 a.m. prayer service there. Interment is to be in Lakeview Memorial Park in Cinnaminson.

Donations may be made to Samaritan Hospice, Suite 300, 5 Eves Dr., Marlton, N.J. 08053.

Condolences may be offered to the family at www.snovergivnish.com.

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Cheryl G. Mack

U.S. breaks up Oxycodone/Xanax ring

By Jeremy Roebuck
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

PHILADELPHIA With the help of a physician's receptionist and a couple of prescription pads, a Cherry Hill man turned a small doctor's office into one of North Philadelphia's most active drug corners, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration said Tuesday.

Federal prosecutors allege that Leon Little, 33, bought and resold more than 380,000 Oxycodone and Xanax pills from a small army of accomplices recruited to pose as patients in severe pain.

All told, officials said, his operation raked in more than \$3 million in less than two years. Almost as troubling as the

volume moved by Little's prescription drug empire, said local DEA head David Dongilli, was the number of people he recruited.

In addition to Little, DEA agents arrested 26 others Tuesday. Thirty-two more were charged — many of them residents of the Raymond Rosen Projects, a Philadelphia Housing Authority development near 25th and Diamond Streets.

According to court filings, Little's accomplices picked up residents of the project, shuttled them to the doctor's office, and then took them to three North Philadelphia pharmacies to fill their prescriptions — sometimes as many as

four times a day.

Little allegedly resold the drugs and then laundered the proceeds by giving them to another man, identified in court documents as "D.W." He would later deposit the money in the account of a consulting company Little created to receive it.

But the alleged scheme hinged primarily on the aid of a secretary for one local doctor, whom investigators declined to identify Tuesday.

Heather Herzstein, 28, of Folcroft, frequently forged prescriptions in her boss' name, prosecutors said. And when pharmacists called to verify that the prescriptions were legitimate, Herzstein took the calls.

"With this corrupt employee in the doctor's office, the Little organization held the keys to the Oxycodone kingdom," said Louis Lappen, first assistant U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

As of late Tuesday, it remained unclear whether Little, Herzstein, or any of the other 57 defendants had retained lawyers. All those arrested remained in federal custody.

If convicted on counts of drug conspiracy, distribution of a controlled substance, and fraud, Little and Herzstein could face up to life in prison.

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IN THE NATION AND THE WORLD

Ike Skelton Ex-congressman, 81

Ike Skelton, 81, a Democrat who built a reputation as a military expert and social conservative during 34 years representing western and central Missouri in the House, died Monday in Virginia.

Mr. Skelton died at Virginia Hospital Center in Arlington, surrounded by his wife, his sons and their families, and longtime colleague Russell Orban, who confirmed the death. The cause was not immediately released, but Orban said Mr. Skelton entered the hospital a week earlier with a bad cough.

A former prosecutor in his native Lexington, Mo., he joined the national Kansas City-based law firm of Husch Blackwell after his 2010 defeat in Missouri's Fourth District by Republican Vicky Hartzler, a state lawmaker who had strong tea party backing.

He won the first of 17 congressional terms in 1976 and was chairman of the Armed Services Committee at the time of his defeat.

An astute military historian, Mr. Skelton helped build up Missouri's two military installations.

Mr. Skelton was honored at West Point in 2012 with the Sylvanus Thayer Award, presented to "an outstanding citizen whose service and accomplishments in the national interests exemplify the Military Academy motto, 'Duty, Honor, Country.'" — AP