

ALONSOVILLE VOICE

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Issue No. 21

Summer 2026

Brought to you
by:

David Bolton
writer, editor, bon
vivant

Eric Gordon
design & layout

In this Issue:

Featured Neighbors:

Rudy Satorius,

Tom Livingston,

The Stony Run Band,

Denise Bolton,

Arlo Szbist,

Nick Sheridan,

Don Berger,

Carol Kurtz-Stack,

John Dean,

Peter Berger,

Eric Gordon,

Henri Gordon



.....Rudy's Castle, Rudy Satorius, age 8, markers on paper

News and Notes:

Meet the new **Keswick Improvement Association (KIA) Board:**

Matt Stegman = President, Sara Gordon= VP,
James Stevenson = Secretary, Louisa Peartree= Treasurer,
At large = Sondra Gutman, Nick Sheridan, and Elizabeth Zack

Any neighborhood concern, event, or project you are interested in working on this year, email stegmata@gmail.com to have it put on the agenda when meetings begin again in the Fall.

Upcoming events at the **Roland Park Water Tower-**

August, Sunday the 30th- Trinidad & Tobago Baltimore Steel Orchestra, 4pm - 7pm

September, Saturday the 19th- Flea Market, 9pm - 1pm

Sunday the. 27th- The Ridgeley's (band), 4pm - 8pm

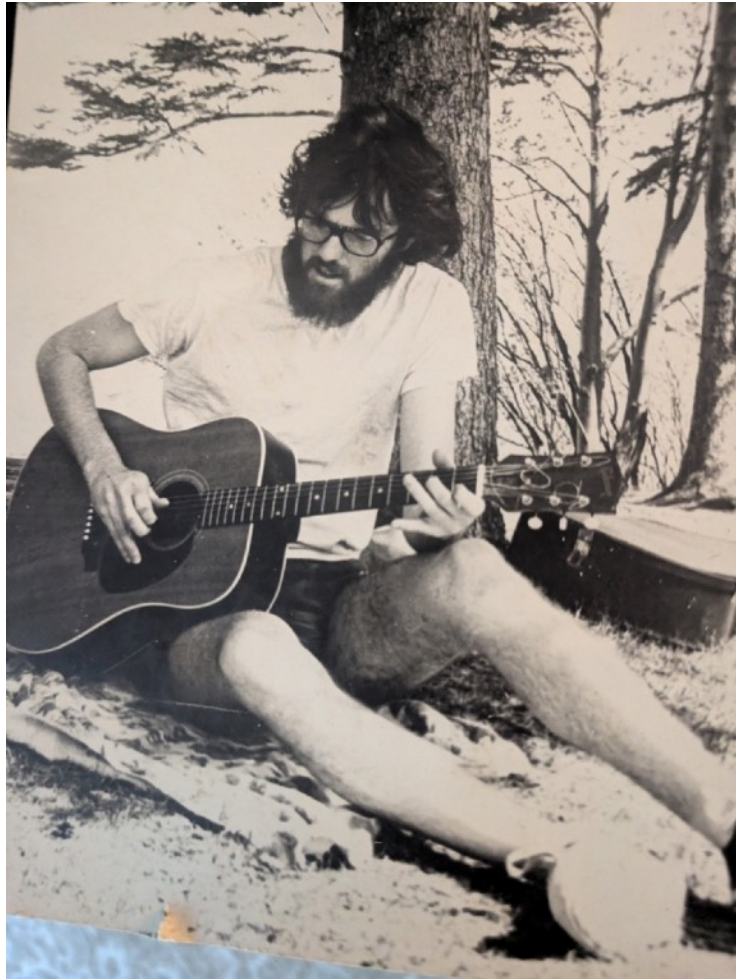
October, Sunday the 25th- The Noch-Noch Band + Halloween Parade, 3pm - 5pm

For more information visit Friends of the Roland Park Water Tower on Facebook or friendsrolandwatertower@gmail.com

Tom Livingston: Mister Jukebox

By David Bolton

Music has always been a big part of Tom's life, including as a kid. It might be Mom playing a gospel song on the family piano, or Dad playing Dave Brubeck on his Heath Kit Hi-Fi from his collection, housed in the home-made plywood cabinet. Burl Ives was a favorite of Tom's, with his jokey story songs.



"We all sang in choirs," said Tom of his family in a recent interview. Beginning in the junior choir at church, they each sang all the way through junior high and high school.

Tom and his older brother Frank shared a room. Frank was a kind of bookish young intellectual and brought both poetry and non-pop music into their space. "He absolutely blew my mind with Dylan's 'Blonde on Blonde' when I was about 13. I remember Frank also had a T.S. Eliot record. Both the sound of Eliot's voice and the way the words went together burrowed deep into my brain - 'In the room the women come and go, talking of Michaelangelo' what? I thought."

Tom (age 19) learning his first song, "Tomorrow Is a Long Time" (Bob Dylan) in Leif Erikson Park in Duluth.

Being the second half of the sixties, it was perhaps inevitable that he'd pick up a guitar at 15.

Five of the six siblings eventually played guitar, both brothers and two of his three sisters. "I started out on my sister's really terrible Stella guitar - if I hadn't moved on from that, I probably would have ditched the whole project. At family gatherings we'd literally gather around the piano or sit around with guitars and share songs - things like 'Will the Circle be Unbroken.'"

During Tom's 16th summer, he worked for his aunt and uncle in their Der Weinerschitzel franchise in Springfield, Missouri. "With my measly pay - a dollar an hour, plus room and board - I made it up by eating Polish Dogs. I bought a portable stereo, made of plastic. The speakers folded over the turntable to make a very bulky carrying package. Even though the thing was cheesy, the stereo sound changed everything again for me. I also bought my first LP's - there were six and included quirky folk singer John Hartford and one by the Young Rascals."

"We could sit and play songs for two days without repeating ourselves"

Starting in 11th grade, he fell in with the school's hippish, music nerd crowd. When a new record arrived, say, Steve Miller Band's 'Number Five', they would gather at Stan or Brad's house (the ones with the great stereos) to listen intently. "Another experience that changed everything for me was listening to Electric Ladyland on Stan's headphones."

Basketball didn't take for the gangly 6'6"er "People still ask where I played. My answer is that I couldn't run and dribble at the same time." But the guitar did. His friends, Doug and Brian, with their Martin Guitars, were the relative experts and inspirations, and the songs covered the range from folk music to rock and roll. "We were the kids sitting around the campfire playing songs instead of talking to the girls, though talking to the girls is what we really wanted to do. I would try to make out which chords to play and sing harmony." That experience was the beginning of a lifelong friendship. "They're still my role models with music."

With brother Andy, Tom started a band after high school, "The Heel String Nation." The name referred to the people of the boot heel in his parents' home state of Missouri, Boot heel was the designation during the depression - so poor that their heel strings stood out.

"Besides the two of us with our guitars and vocals, there was Ted on mandolin and a revolving cast of characters, including a bass player and a lead singer (Debby lit up the room) and eventually a terrific fiddler. Showing my growing eclectic interest, we played a range of things, from traditional to Willie Nelson and Dan Hicks and his Hot Licks. We'd close our shows with Merle Haggard's 'Sing Me Back Home'. Last week, Doug texted me that he'd heard the song on the radio and it made him think of me - that would have been more than forty years ago."

"My music partnership with my brother Andy has been the richest of many great collaborations. The two of us can get together and we can (and still do) sit and play songs for two days without repeating ourselves."

At the University of Minnesota Duluth, Tom talked his way into the college radio station and shakily DJ'd his first few radio shows. He knew by the second week he'd found his lifetime groove. "They had a huge record collection, basically all the records." Everything changed for Tom. He was the folk and rock guy while the kids really cared about jazz. Folk and rock remained his personal center. "Jazz got added to my personal mix, especially while sharing an apartment with the radio heads who wouldn't allow anything but jazz into the place. It was the seventies, and I traveled all over the country to see lots of the greats – Mingus, Rollins, Pharoah Sanders, Tyner, Sun Ra, and more." The station also sponsored many live shows, including MC and performance roles for Tom.

At 22, he became the full-time manager of KUMD. The job continued during and after his long college career. He liked to say he graduated on "the nine-year plan." He played the central role in the transformation of the station from a 250-watt station that barely reached beyond the campus to a 100,000-watt powerhouse.

One June night at a staff meeting for the community's activist newspaper, *The Port Guardian*, Tom met Katherine. She had heard that voice before on the early morning show. In a previous interview (*AlonsovilleVoice* 13), Katherine described him as "this beguiling voice speaking with gravity and authority." She decided to interview the young man and wrangled the assignment from the paper's managing editor. Two years later, they were married in the backyard of Tom's parents' house (with the reception at Katherine's family's farm).

As the demands of work and family grew, time for the band shrank. One day he said to the group that he needed fewer practices; they said they wanted to practice more. "That was the end of my time in the Heel String Nation."

The kids were two and four when they moved to Shreveport, Louisiana. Tom was hired to build from scratch a public radio station for the region. "I had done all I could with KUMD, and besides, my salary doubled with the new job – from \$13k to \$26k."

The Jukebox

In 2015, while serving as Interim General Manager of the public radio station for Colorado Springs, Tom discovered that Jane Turnis (his supervisor/client and head of communications for Colorado College) loved playing music. For the remaining months of the assignment, he regularly joined Jane and her friends for beer and music. "Jane called me the Jukebox."

Northern Louisiana was a big cultural change from Northern Minnesota. It was essentially a five-year hiatus from playing music. He had no "music buddies." Both Tom and Katherine completed a two-year Master of Liberal Arts degrees at LSU.

In 1988, the family moved to Fairfax, Virginia, as Tom became the manager of the DC public radio station, WETA. In Fairfax he found and built a new music community, centered on the Fairfax Unitarian Church and choir, led by its amazing director Judy. Spin-offs included playing guitar and singing with his friends, Bob and Martha, as well as Tom singing the role of Jesus in *Godspell* to two sold-out crowds at the church. "During the clean up after one of the shows, someone brought me a program that had been left behind. Written on it was 'That Jesus, he's a hottie.'" Tom had to laugh.



Tom as Jesus in *Godspell*

With other members of the congregation, he started a 'geezer band.' "We called ourselves the Free Radicals. We thought that was a hilarious name." The band was large, as many as ten players, including two keyboard players, friends Bob and Martha, and really good bass and drums. "Our lead player taught music in the Fairfax public school system, and our bass player was the Washington Bureau Chief for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. I played rhythm guitar and sang. The bass player was always on me for playing the electric guitar like a folk musician. We had male and female



Tom the Dude

lead singers, which limited my singing time. I even wrote a song about it. 'Hey gang, let me sing my song - it's the only one I get to sing all night long.'" After playing it for them, they voted to never play originals from that point on. "The band lasted for nearly ten years, including for a while after we moved to Baltimore. I became comfortable on the electric guitar and singing into a microphone with monitors. I heard my voice differently, helping me improve my intonation and sing higher in my range."

"My oddball thing with music is the number of songs I have learned and played. I am probably learning a song a month. How does it work? It starts with listening to a ton of music - those years in the KUMD record library when I was supposed to be studying, concerts and radio stations, and now Spotify, including all the songs on my phone. I'll listen to a song over and over, then get the chords and words from Ultimate Guitar, and just burn it in. At some point it is in my long-term memory, and it pretty much stays there."

Today Tom plays guitar and sings in the Stony Run Band. It's been such an honor to play with Tom these past eight years. His catalogue of songs has lengthened far beyond 100, maybe twice that. His baritone is still rich.

He cherishes Timothy App's 12-string guitar. "When Timothy loaned me his Martin 12-string, he said he no longer had the hand strength needed to play the chords with the twelve strings. I was intimidated by the generosity of the gift and the instrument itself - all those strings! I let it sit for months, not even sure how to tune the darn thing. Now and then Timothy would ask if I was playing it yet. He would get that look on his face when I said 'no, but soon'. At some point he asked if I wanted him to tune it for me."

After Timothy passed, Theresa made a gift of the guitar, and Tom took it to Appalachian Bluegrass in Catonsville, where they did a setup and showed him how to tune it. Now he's exploring the new world of how songs he knows sound with this magnificent instrument. "'My Back Pages', 'As Tears Go By'" - I'm not sure those are the kinds of things Timothy played on the guitar. I wish I'd gotten it going so he could hear me playing it, but I'm sure he'd be happy that it is getting used. I'm so grateful to both Timothy and Theresa. Another big step on my musical journey.



The Stony Run Band: Tom, Liz, Dave, and Chris



Denise Bolton, Don's House, gouache, 11x7

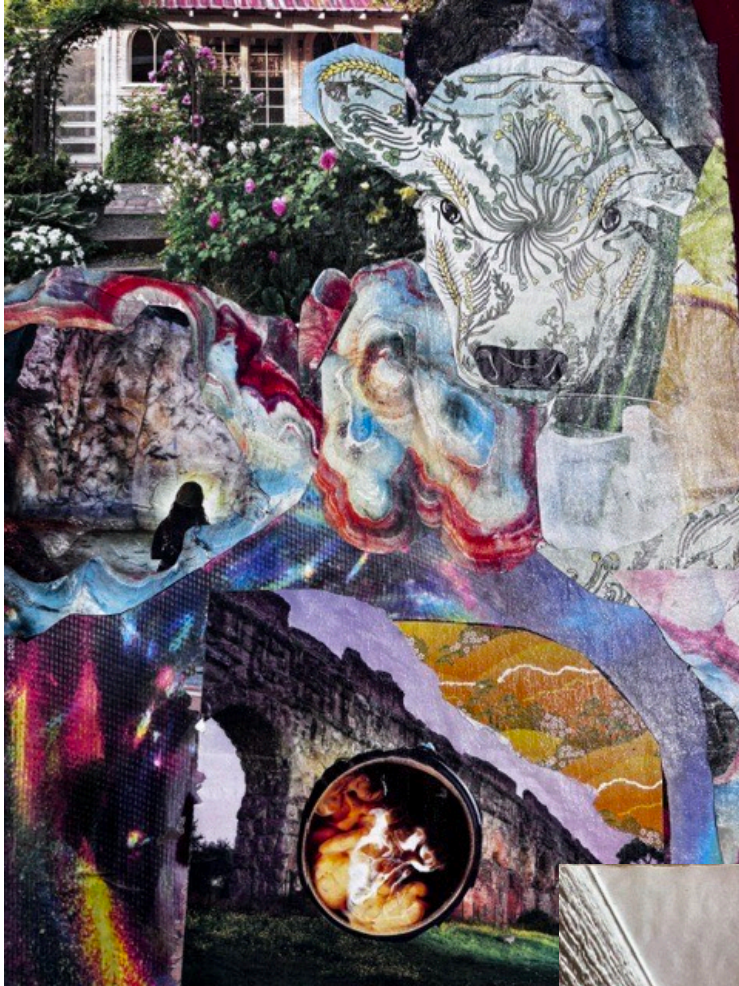


Arlo Szbist, 2 years and 6 months

Quote of the Day

A free will and a will subject to moral laws are one and the same

~ Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals III*



Collages by Nick Sheridan



Once Upon a Time

Interspersed with dense vegetation, the spacious eclectic turn-of-the-century homes that comprised Roland Park were annexed to the city in 1918. In 1974, the community was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

~ Keswick History Notebook



Denise Bolton, Summer Fields, Gouache 6x9, Delight Farm, Tanyard Rd.

Padua

All the sudden the air was really muscling the trees
Like they were helpless people getting the wind knocked out of them,
Screaming but only in rustling,
A massive hush, an amplified, corrugated whisper.
A door slams, things fall onto the floor upstairs, there's a bird too unafraid to fly.

~ Don Berger



Beginning, Watercolor by Nick Sheriden



Carol Kurtz-Stack, untitled (above)
Irises (to right), watercolors



Variations Project

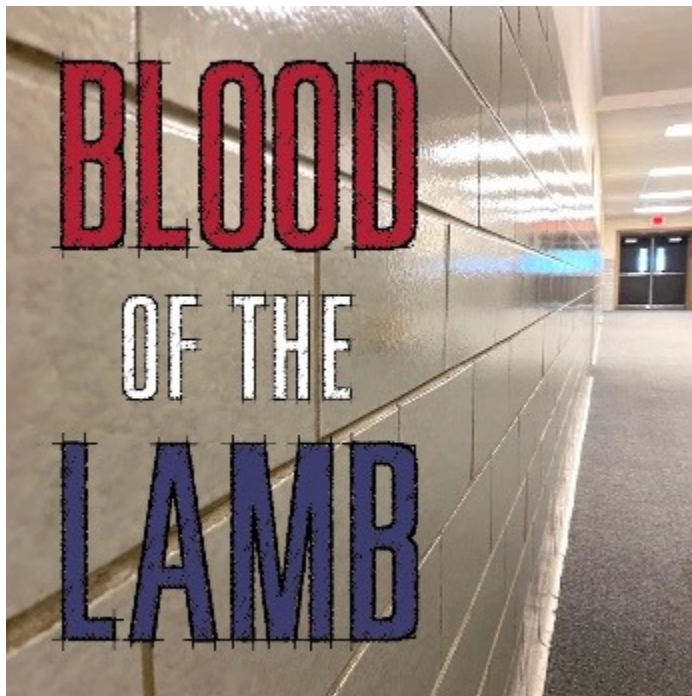
Alonsoville Theater Company is At It Again

Rapid Lemon Productions will close its 15th season late this summer, with the regional premiere of ***Blood of the Lamb*** by Arlene Hutton.

Nessa is pregnant. She finds herself detained in a Texas airport with Val: a court-appointed attorney assigned to represent her fetus. With new laws in place Nessa will not be allowed to leave the state until she after she gives birth, even though both women know that the baby is deceased and Nessa's life is in danger. Can Val be persuaded to go against her convictions, risking her career to help Nessa escape?

Hutton's gripping, subversive new play was nominated for the 2025 Drama Desk Award. It'll be performed live on stage at Strand Theater, 5426 Harford Road, Baltimore 21214. Tickets are general admission, \$25. A special discounted "Industry Night" performance (open to everyone) is just \$15, on Monday, August 31.

Visit rapidlemon.org for tickets and information.



Photos by young John Dean, Nottingham, England





Remembrance of Present

By David Bolton

I feel it coming, that void of fiction, words failing to fly,
living on the edge, acts fading into oblivion,
characters lost and found, five minutes go by, what did he say?

I stack Jenga with granddaughter, 4 years and counting
higher and higher sticks rise, balance is the key,
then my collapse, betrayed by space.

I play chess with grandson, 15 and counting
how I could play at that age! three games at once.
now, not so fast... lost on a fork.

I idle on the porch, sipping tea,
lightning flashes across the purple sky
comes the rumble of thunder, the gods are active
a river flows down the street,
a sniff of ozone so sweet.



Photo by Peter Berger



Balt People by Eric Gordon, ink, Watercolor, and pen on paper



One More Word

By David Bolton

This has been a wonderful time for me. On June 9, Rare Bird Books published my Towson novel, *Whispering Pines*. Got to be on TV twice with my good friend Bill Loving, author of *Fells Point*. We were the “Baltimore guys” with Baltimore books. The June 17 engagement at the Ivy Bookstore was a blast. The place was packed. We read our openings. Questions followed. Bill and I signed a lot of books.

Writing for me is not a hobby, but a calling. Been doing it since I was 19 when I decided to be a novelist instead of a lawyer. Tom Livingston made music his calling when he was a teenager. My wife Denise considers painting a calling. Such a commitment enriches one’s life and gives it order. Alonsoville, I believe, attracts creative people, including scientists, teachers, dancers, and actors. There’s something about the place that makes it magical.

Wouldn’t live anywhere else on the planet.



The Hydra by Henri Gordon, Age 7, ink on paper