

Early Memories of Montrose Remain Vivid

By Dee Goodin: *Johnson City Press*, August 21, 1983

I can't remember when I was first told that Montrose Court was once "the" place to live in Johnson City.

I was always fascinated by the structure, even before I heard **Al Capone** was known for sneaking in and out of the building through a secret underground entrance. It's still hard to believe such excitement could occur in my wholesome neighborhood.

As a miserable first grader at Southside School, I stared out the window at Montrose. Because of its ornateness, it was the most fascinating thing I had to look at. Trees soon lose their charm when you're six years old, tearful and want to go home.

I'd try to imagine my father as a youngster, when he lived in Montrose. In my mind I saw a little boy in short pants, with a heck of a cowlick, running up and down the halls terrorizing the other tenants. (Note: Dee's father was Johnson City Attorney & Municipal Court Judge **John Goodin**)

I entered Montrose for the first time a few years later when I went with a friend to visit her grandmother. It seemed everyone I came in contact with, knew or had known someone who lived there.

She somehow had managed to preserve the original charm of her apartment. When I stepped from the hallway into the apartment, it was like being flung back through time, 30 years before I was born.

Although I can't remember much about the old lady's apartment, it was clean with very few signs of disrepair.

But I definitely remember the apartment had personality, a quality sadly lacking in many of today's boxy condominiums, apartments and houses.

In my teens, I'd stop, lean my bike on the surrounding stone wall and rest so I could make the Virginia Street hill. I could sit on that wall and in less than an hour see most of the people in the neighborhood I knew.

But those memories aren't what make Montrose important to me. **I also remember when my mother forbade me to go inside.** It didn't bother

me because I certainly didn't go inside on a regular basis. But for a sad time in Montrose's history, even wise adults wouldn't go in.

In spite of Mom's warning, once, in 1973, a friend and myself were feeling brave and decided to try and sell *Krispy Kreme* doughnuts inside. The first person we encountered in the hall was a thin young man with glassy eyes.

Sure, he wanted some doughnuts but he had to get some money. As he staggered down the hall, my friend and I debated in whispers over whether he was a marijuana-smoking fiend or a heroin addict.

He never came back and it didn't take us long to decide we were in the wrong place.

So, only twice in 24 years was I actually inside the massive building. Until last week it had been 10 years and the only thing I recognized from my previous two visits was what is left of the original red and black floor tile.

But I've passed the building daily for 24 years. And next to my home, it has made more of an impression on me than any other single structure.

When the neighborhood was in an uproar over the owners' neglect of the building, I was 18. I read the paper, hoped they wouldn't tear the building down but never became actively involved.

Perhaps I knew that Johnson City would never let Montrose die.

Montrose is being renovated now.

A sign on the side of the building states **"The Management Wishes to Thank the Neighborhood for its Cooperation in this Project."**

My response is: "This minor, unimportant, part of the neighborhood would like to thank the management for resurrecting an important part of my life!"