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Clyde Lewis goes ghost hunting in the basement of Fat City Café

By Don Snedecor
The Southwest Portland Post

It's a Friday night in late October. It's a cold one so I throw on a warm jacket, grab my camera, gather up my backpack, and head out the door.

When I get to Fat City Café in Multnomah Village, it's hard to miss the fact that there is a hearse (that I first thought was a limousine) parked out in front of the restaurant's canopy.

Inside, there's a crowd of some 40 or 50 people jammed into the booths all listening to Clyde Lewis broadcasting his nightly talk show on the paranormal called "Ground Zero."

As I walk in the door, a caller named Rick mentions that he knew Bob Symes, who was dating the waitress Vivian Robinson who was shot and killed in a murder-suicide back in '73 on the stairs leading down to the basement of the restaurant.

I spent one morning digging through the files. It was Mother's Day, May 14, 1973 when the place was called the Nu Café and the owners were Art and Freda Felts.

In a 1996 interview with *The Post*, former Nu Café owner Art Felts was quoted as

saying, "All the waitresses were playgirls back then."

"None of them went out with the same guy twice, if you know what I mean. [Vivian] had a little girl, and she was going out with this guy Symes, her boyfriend."

Helen Johnson, present owner of Fat City Café, offers me a guided tour of the crime scene. We walk behind the counter through the kitchen and start down the stairway past one of the bullet holes (circled with the date) and down to the basement where Bob killed Vivian and then killed himself with a 22-caliber pistol.

The story goes that 30-year-old Vivian Robinson was separated but not divorced from her husband, I.L. Robinson, while at the same time she was dating 58-year-old Bob Symes, who lived just a few blocks away.

Freda Felts discovered the bodies after taking an hour break. According to a report in *The Oregonian* newspaper the next day, "Detectives said they knew of no reason for the incident." They said Mrs. Robinson and Symes "were acquainted."

I'm soon introduced to Dr. Jonathon Burgess, who has built a box about the size of the Ark of the Covenant in the movie "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

The box is covered in gold-colored



Dr. Jonathon Burgess (right) and an associate prepare the Golden Box with a metallic globe and flux capacitor in the basement of Fat City Café, October 26. Photos of Vivian Robinson and Mayo Methot sit on an altar in the background. (Post photo by Don Snedecor)

sheet metal. Burgess soon has it set up with some kind of metallic globe equipped with what he calls a "flux capacitor," which we all of us science

fiction junkies know was the gadget that controlled the DeLorean sports car/time machine in the movie "Back (Continued on Page 7)

City finalizes latest construction project for Multnomah Village

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

City of Portland representatives shared the final draft of what's being

called the Multnomah Village Stormwater Project with the Multnomah Village Business Association at its October 25 meeting.

After nearly four years of planning, feedback and redesigns, the City's

Bureau of Environmental Services will begin construction in early March 2013. It expected to last 90 days and will disrupt business access at times.

The project entails the planting of trees, demolition of sidewalks and expanding them to nine feet along Capitol Highway between 35th and 36th avenues in the heart of the Village.

Wider sidewalks on both sides of the street will allow the placement of benches, tables and café seating in some places. Several bioswales will be installed at either end of this section.

But aesthetics was not on the minds of business owners at their recent meeting. The main issues included disruption of business access during construction, lack of parking and less parking once construction is over.

"This process started back in 2008," explained Stephen Sykes, project manager for the Bureau of Environmental Services. "Many years of meetings and feedback were received during this time and it was crucial that no parking would be lost."

In fact, parking will be a lot safer according to landscape architect Ivy Dunlap. The angle in parking will be retained but placed on the opposite side of the street thus allowing drivers to back out in a safer fashion and bicyclists to avoid collisions.

Jill Crecraft, owner of Sip d'Vine, had concerns about vehicles smashing into storefront windows, since the curb will be the new barrier as cement wheel stops will not be installed.

MVBA President and Village Beads owner Michele Cassinelli half-jokingly said she would be taking her vacation during the construction but the City assured merchants that business would

be disrupted as little as possible.

"Obviously merchants are concerned," responded Sykes, "but all standard provisions will be provided the entire time."

This comes after years of sewer and water construction on Multnomah Boulevard, in which merchants, residents and shoppers alike became inpatient and saw business decline.

Members at the MVBA meeting urged the city to help promote business as usual during the spring construction time and requested all construction workers to park away from main business areas.

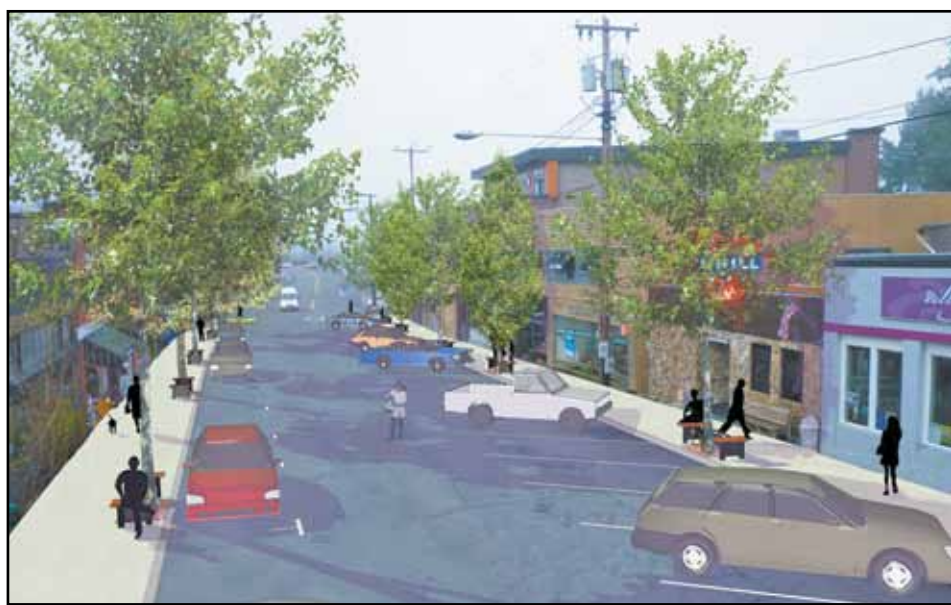
Work will take place from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday and possibly some Sunday work which will need a special variance application.

When asked about the possibility of moving utilities underground, the response was that this was a very expensive endeavor and would be the responsibility of the business or property owner to pay.

Medium-sized native trees will provide shade and were selected on beauty, fall foliage and whether or not they would make a mess with fruit or leaf droppings, said Dunlap. "Conifers would be too large for the area and crack the sidewalk," she said.

"We are excited about the changes and livability factor," commented one business owner who wished to remain anonymous, "but the city needs to keep to their timetable, enforce construction worker parking, and get done by 90 days."

For more information about the Multnomah Village Stormwater Project, please email ivy.dunlap@portlandoregon.gov or visit www.portlandonline.com/bes.



Southwest Capitol Highway at 35th Avenue, looking west. (Illustration courtesy of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services)

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Portland, OR 97206