

# THE MULTNOMAH VILLAGER

## The Playground Rundown

By Mark Myers

Ironically, just in time for back-to-school I find myself thinking of all the time we've spent at our various neighborhood playgrounds over the summer. Portland, as you certainly know, is full of parks, many of which contain playground facilities. Here's the rundown on a few of our favorites in or near the Village.

### Custer Park

Custer Park has been our favorite haunt this summer. Since Jr. V is getting older now (almost seven!) we've outgrown the facilities at Gabriel Park and have been taking evening walks across the Village to visit the excellent play facilities at Custer.

The renovations last year unnerved me a bit, since I was afraid they were going to remove the old-school merry-go-round and see-saws, and they

might mess with the excellent swings. These fears proved to be unfounded, and all the equipment is still in place and improved.

The swings are excellent here, with smooth movement, long chains, and an expansive view of the park from their setting atop the large hill. There's two large play structures, one for smaller kids and one for the bigger ones with slides, poles and a tire swing.

The merry-go-round has a nice padded rubber circle under it, which is helpful since the inevitable fall off of this thing WILL happen. It's pretty much a kid rite of passage. Nice shady area to play. Oh, the long downhill paved path that circles around the baseball field and out to the sidewalk is great for scootering.

### Gabriel Park

We haven't spent much time at Gabriel Park this summer. Largely because Jr. V has outgrown the play facilities there. I'm annoyed to report that the small slide has never been replaced after being damaged by vandalism last year, which is a major blow to smaller kids who might not be ready for the big slide.

There's a small swing set, but the tire swing is pretty much the extent

of the fun for kids over the age of about 4. I really wish that Gabriel Park had more extensive play equipment, something more fitting with the size of the park, but that's the way it is.

We'll probably visit more in future summers, especially when the skate park is completed, which seems to me dovetailing perfectly with Jr V's inevitable interest in skateboarding.

### Multnomah Center

The little playground behind the Multnomah Center is a regular stop. We've been there more than anywhere else this year. There's a slide, a swing set with swings for little kids and older ones, and the ubiquitous tire swing.

Jr. V enjoys climbing up on the plastic tunnel-thing and taking wild swinging jumps off of the monkey bars. Especially on Monday evenings when "knight practice" is in full swing. This is a quick walk from our house, it's our closest playground, and so we take evening strolls up there quite often. It'd be nice to see some actual sand in the large sandbox area.

### The Kangabunny

This is how we refer to the playground at Pendleton Park, over on

55<sup>th</sup> and Iowa St. This one has always been a favorite destination because of the excellent, large play structure and also due to the statue.

Jr. V was fascinated by this statue of a large rabbit when he was younger. He would stare at it for the longest time. Due to the length of its legs, and its posture – it's referred to in our house as the "Kangabunny" which of course is a half-kangaroo half-bunny.

The official name of the statue is "Vincent, Waiting for Alice" and it's by Keith Jellum. The thing is 8 feet tall. This park is a great picnic destination and the play facilities really are superb. It's handicapped accessible too.

### Maplewood Playground

All the fundraising, work and waiting for the new play facilities at Maplewood Elementary have definitely paid off. The new playground is great with an expansive play structure with several slides, climbing surfaces and monkey bars of varying descriptions.

The equipment is new, so now's the time to enjoy it. It will be hard-used during the school year and I hope it holds up well. Some of the attachment points seem to be somewhat less solid

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