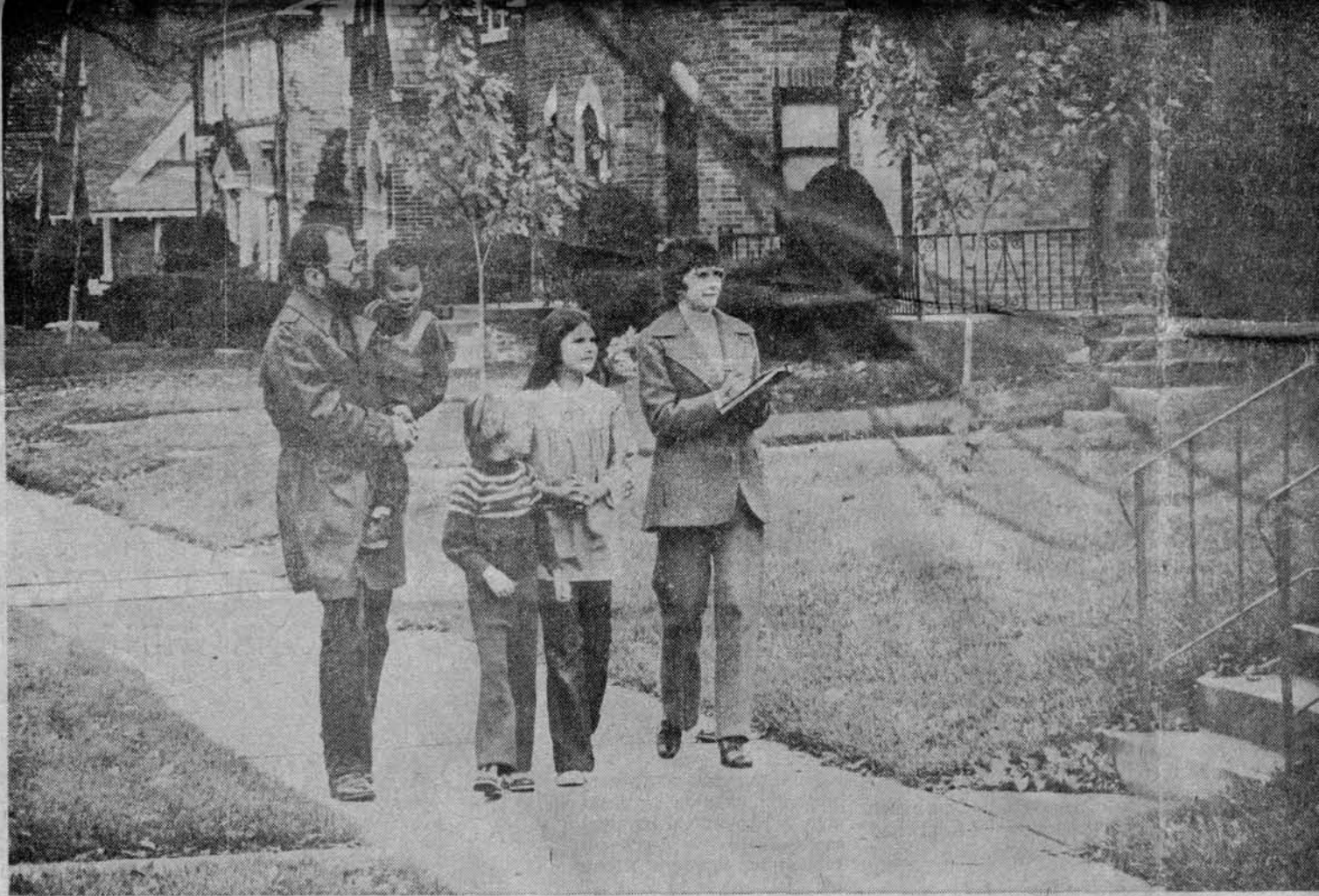


With clipboard in hand, Judy McBride and her family searched Milwaukee for the perfect neighborhood. Walking along N. 51st Blvd. were (from left) her husband, Byron, adopted son Jonathan, 3, and daughters, Amy, 6, and Rebecca, 10.

# The Right Place to Live



# The Right Place to Live

By Margo Huston  
of The Journal Staff

The perfect neighborhood. Where is it?

For the Byron McBride family, it was not up north in Merrill, Wis., even though they found peace there.

Theirs was a huge white house on a hill. The children could go off on their bikes in the morning and not come home until evening without causing mom or dad to worry. People were friendly. Schools were fine. But something was missing.

"Living in Merrill has been like vacationing for a year and a half," said Judy McBride. "We know there's something happening in society that we would like to be a part of."

## Seeks Ethnic Mix

Also missing in Merrill was the type of ethnic mix that Mrs. McBride considers healthy for raising a family.

"If a kid has a teacher or a neighbor or a friend who is Jewish or Chinese or black or

Spanish or Indian, and then if someone says those people are rotten, he knows it's not true," she said. "I think the worst thing I can do for our kids is raise them to be narrow and prejudiced."

The McBrides' own family contains a better than average ethnic mix. They have two biological daughters, Rebecca, 10, and Amy, 6; one adopted son, Jonathan, 3, of mixed black-white parentage, and they're soon expecting another adopted son Mikal, 2, who is black and Korean.

## Only One

"I don't want Jonathan to grow up being the only black kid in a town where anybody who's the least bit different stands out," she said.

"Sure, at 3½ he's real cute, and all the ladies run across the supermarket to touse his hair. But he's not going to be a baby all his life."

However, Mrs. McBride added emphatically, "Jonathan is not our main reason for moving from Merrill. We

see a multi-ethnic community as a plus for our entire family.

"We wouldn't want our white girls to pick up the values of any community in which we didn't feel comfortable raising our black kids."

So, the McBride family decided that a new neighborhood was in order. How does a family find the right neighborhood for them?

"We're using the scientific method," said Mrs. McBride as she and her husband scouted the city one sunny day three weeks ago. A real estate broker chauffeured and a reporter rode along as the neighborhood hunters gathered data.

## It's Refreshing

The team criss-crossed through the near West, North and East Sides of town. "You have no idea how refreshing it is to see people who aren't all cut out of the same cookie cutter," said Mrs. McBride.

They looked at the schools.

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To discover the racial mix in various grade schools, Judy McBride talked with William Seiser, director of the department of facilities planning and administrative research for the Milwaukee Public Schools.

—Journal Photos



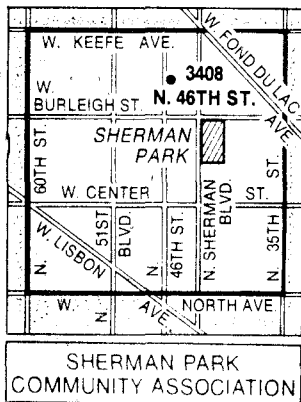
Judy McBride evaluated the neighborhood from the living room window of a West Side bungalow which the family looked at.

# From Merrill to Milwaukee With Love

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"What an ugly, ugly school," commented Mrs. McBride, riding past Walnut St. Grade School. "The thought of little 5 year olds going to that place to have new vistas opened for them is a dirty joke. It looks like a jail with all that mesh on the windows."

The McBrides had planned to concentrate their search in two areas of the city — Sherman Park, bounded by 35th and 60th Sts., North and Keefe Aves., and neighbor-



hoods bordering on the University of Wisconsin — Milwaukee.

## Suggested Areas

Those areas had been recommended by families who also had adopted transracially and to whom the McBrides had been introduced by long distance telephone.

Of Townsend Grade School, 3360 N. Sherman Blvd., Byron McBride commented, "That's not bad. At least there's some grass around it and buildings are

not crowded right up next to it."

They had made an appointment with William Seiser of the Milwaukee Public Schools to help them evaluate the quality and racial mix of various schools.

Seiser, cautious not to say any one school in the system was better than any other, brought out charts which told how many of the children at each school were white, black, brown, red or yellow. At a glance, Mrs. McBride could see the racial makeup and note how swiftly or slowly a particular school was being integrated.

Mrs. McBride, a 34 year old former junior high school teacher with a bachelor's degree in English, plans to someday return to the university.

## Why Merrill?

Besides being convenient, the UWM area would be comfortable. The McBrides met at the University of Colorado and lived in university towns for the eight years before they moved to Merrill.

At the University of Montana in Missoula, where Byron McBride was studying for the Ph.D. he needs in his present position as a clinical psychologist, Judy McBride worked as assistant director of the Black Studies Program.

"So you see, it's no accident that we adopted a black child," Mrs. McBride said.

Why, then, did they move to Merrill?

"Somehow, we thought that northern Wisconsin would be sort of like Montana, which was beginning to



—Journal Photo

"It's not exactly 'us' because it's not big and old and doesn't need all sorts of fixing up," said Judy McBride of the house they bought on N. 46th St. "But we're really excited about it because that means that as soon as we move in, we can get involved in the community." Their closing date is Nov. 19.

come to grips with the black issue," Mrs. McBride answered. "When you come from Montana, you think that's the most out of it place in the world. I guess we were ignorant."

As an employe of the Clinical Services in Madison, Byron McBride now works at Lincoln Boys' School, but is eligible to transfer to probation and parole in Milwaukee or the Wales Boys' School,

which is within commuting distance.

The week after they put in the bid on the East Side house, Mrs. McBride reported, "Our bid was rejected and perhaps it's a good thing. We would have felt comfortable there, but would we have been contributing all we could to a better world?"

After some soul searching about the real reason for moving to Milwaukee and

after talking to more Milwaukeeans, the McBrides began to feel they hadn't given Sherman Park enough of a chance.

"None of the feelings we have about the area are based on factual accounts by people who live there. It's all just innuendo and hearsay," she said. "And really, if Peckham Junior High is so terrible, rather than sitting back and waiting for someone else to solve the problem, ought we not be there, pitching in?"

The McBrides talked with Ken Payne and his wife, who have adopted transracially and after a year of searching for a house in Sherman Park bought one near UWM. Payne is the county housing co-ordinator. "They seemed to wish they were in Sherman Park," Mrs. McBride said.

For a closer look at the area, the entire McBride family descended upon Marilyn Johanssen one morning last week. The Johanssens of 3230 N. 51st Blvd. are active in the Sherman Park Community Association because "we live in an integrated neighborhood and we love it and we want to keep it integrated."

That day the McBrides changed their verdict. "As far as we see, there's nothing in the world unsafe about Sherman Park. The schools are on their way up again and there's a 50-50 chance that the freeway won't go through. It's an exciting, interesting, vital place to live," Mrs. McBride said.

They wanted a big, fancy old brick home, but ended up seriously looking at a rather new, large but not huge Lannon stone house.

## Snooped Around

"The immediate neighborhood worried us because the lawns were so well manicured and such gorgeous flowers were blooming around the houses," Mrs. McBride said. "Usually, those are signs of an adult neighborhood. So we went snooping around the alleys and streets for kids." They even rang doorbells and talked to people on the block.

"Then we found three little girls right about the same age as our girls," she said. "They live right next door and they're black."

So the McBrides bought that house at 3408 N. 46th St.