

# VENETIAN HISTORY

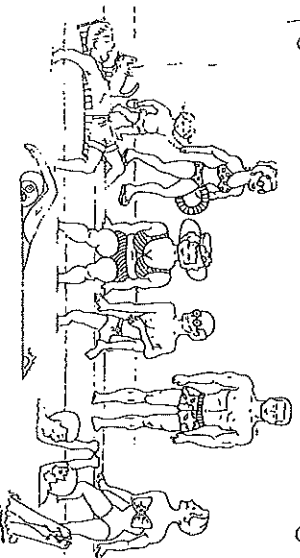
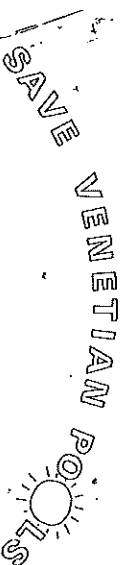
The history of Venetian Pools dates back to 1928, when Walter Baker, a World War I Cavalry Captain, wounded in combat, acquired well over 20 acres of land, which included the present Scott Boulevard Venetian Pools property. With the help of two men, one whose job it was to keep the axes sharpened, Capt. Baker cleared the land at the pool site. He took the timber to a nearby sawmill and had it cut into boards, from which he built his home and the poolside buildings. With a mule-drawn flat pan, he dug the pools, which included an Olympic-sized lap pool, a family pool, a diving pool, and a baby pool. He designed the filter system, utilizing gravel, sand, and charcoal. The Venetian filter system was a model copied by other pool builders for many years.

Members of the Baker family ran the pools through the summer of 1985. After the bathhouse burned down at the end of the summer, the Baker family decided to sell the property and did not open the pools in 1986.

The northeast Atlanta and Decatur neighborhoods surrounding the pools have been made more desirable as residential areas because of the proximity of this well-designed outdoor recreational facility. The pools were badly missed by those who had come to depend upon them as a center for summer social activity, as well as an excellent place for athletic training.

# VENETIAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Neil Shulman decided that the way to save the pools was to form a non-profit corporation and to make the purchase and restoration of the pools a community project. Acting quickly, because developers had already made offers for the property, he organized the Venetian Community Association. An interim board of directors composed of Dr. Shulman; Tom Shim, a financial consultant; Carol Richard, an architect; and David Soloway and Jay McClure, both attorneys, devised a plan to reopen the pools under community ownership for the 1987 summer season. They decided to sell life memberships to finance the initial large capital outlay, which included purchase price, construction costs, and pool repair. Life members will have reserved places on the annual membership lists and voting rights in the association. Life memberships can be resold through the association to prospective members. Funds for maintenance will come from annual fees, discounted to life members. Memberships will be available on a first come, first served basis, giving priority consideration to life members. The association is relying heavily on volunteer help to keep the cost of the project as low as possible and to foster community spirit. When the pools are reopened, the interim board will be replaced by a board elected by the life members.



## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

### LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Family .....	\$1000
Single Parent Family .....	750
Individual .....	500

### ANNUAL DUES

	Life Member	Non-Life Member
Family	\$300	\$500
Single Parent Family	225	375
Individual	150	250

Membership will be limited to 350 families and 150 individuals. Life members will be given priority. Life members can transfer their life memberships through the association to the first prospective new member on the waiting list.

CALL 373-0302 TO VOLUNTEER OR TO GET MORE INFORMATION.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address & Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Ph: \_\_\_\_\_ Bus. Ph: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list children and ages:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

I/We would like to sign up for the following:

\_\_\_\_ Family Life Member and 1987 Annual Fee

\_\_\_\_ Single Parent Life Mem. & 1987 Annual Fee

\_\_\_\_ Individual Life Member & 1987 Annual Fee

\_\_\_\_ Family Non-Life Member 1987 Annual Fee

\_\_\_\_ Single Parent Non-Life Mem. 1987 Annual Fee

\_\_\_\_ Individual Non-Life Member 1987 Annual Fee

\_\_\_\_ I/We would be willing to do volunteer work

\_\_\_\_ What kind? \_\_\_\_\_

Payment for life memberships is due now. 1987 annual fees will be due May 1. (After 1987, annual fees will be due January 1.) A 10% refundable deposit is suggested immediately for non-life members who want to hold a space for the 1987 season.

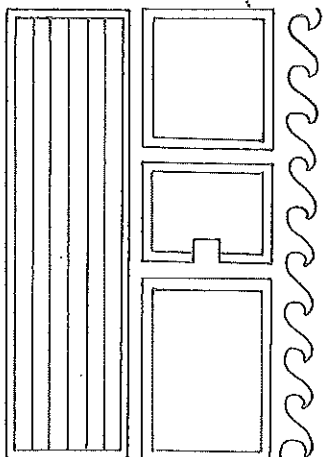
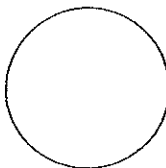
Checks should be made out to:

VENETIAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

and mailed with this form to:

DAVID SOLOWAY, ATTORNEY AT LAW  
Suite 203 A, 1961 N. Druid Hills Rd., NE  
Atlanta, GA 30329

VENETIAN POOLS



VENETIAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

SCOTT BOULEVARD  
at Nelson Ferry

373-0302

## Venetian Pools Re-Opening Planned For Memorial Day

By HELEN ORDNER

Lazy summer days by the Venetian Pools — a local tradition which goes back before World War II, are expected to resume this summer.

The Venetian Community Association has been successful in purchasing the Scott Boulevard property from the heirs of Walter Baker who cleared forested land and developed one of the first public swimming pools in this area.

The center, with four pools — an olympic-sized one, family pool, diving pool and baby pool) was a neighborhood gathering spot for years before it was closed after the summer of 1985.

Community residents, fearing that the property would be sold to a developer for condominiums and the center never restored, organized a "save the pools" drive.

**MORE THAN 130** life memberships in the recreation group have already been purchased, according

to Mary Dabbs, membership chairperson. Others have been pledged and annual memberships will be available also, depending on space remaining, she said.

Life memberships are available at \$1,000 for a family, \$750 for single parent family, and \$500 for an individual.

Plans call for re-opening Venetian Pools on Memorial Day and "there's no reason to think we won't make it," according to Mrs. Dabbs.

Volunteers are expected to gather over the March 21-22 weekend to begin clean-up and landscaping of the grounds which have been closed for several years.

It is estimated that the old bathhouse, which had burned, can be rebuilt at a cost of \$70,000. Approximately \$41,000 will be needed to repair the pool, pipes and filters, Mrs. Dabbs said.

For more information, telephone 373-0802.

2-9-87

# Pool

From Page I-B

offer to the owners and are expecting a response sometime Tuesday, said Thomas Shum, president of the association.

"Let's just say we feel everything is going to work out our way," Shum said. "The community support has just been tremendous."

The owners say they have been approached by several developers but would not identify them. The country club land is in an area zoned for single- and two-family houses. To place townhouses or apartments on the site would require rezoning, said Hugh Saxon, de-

velopment director for Decatur.

"Our father always intended it to be a community gathering place," said Walter Baker Jr., who lives in Hawkinsville, Ga. He and his two sisters own the property.

"We're negotiating with several people right now. We've operated the place for so long, and we're all in our 60s now. We just feel it's time to let someone else take it over. But we're very sympathetic to the plight of the residents."

If the association is successful, it plans to open the Venetian pools under its ownership on May 30.

"In the summer, this place becomes stroller heaven," Mrs. Smith said with a smile. "A lot of us grew up here. We don't want our memories plowed under and replaced with condos."

# Venetian Community Association

By MARY DARRS

For The Druid Hills Civic Association

A non-profit corporation is being established under the name of the Venetian Community Association with the aim of maintaining the old Venetian Pools property on Scott Boulevard for community recreational purposes.

The pools, built by Walter Baker and run by members of his family through the summer of 1985, have played an important part in filling the recreational needs of Druid Hills families. The pools did not open in 1986 and were badly missed by those who have included Venetian in their summer plans for many years.

IN 1928, WALTER BAKER, a World War I cavalry captain, wounded in combat, purchased well over 20 acres of land, which included the pools site. With the help of two men, one whose job it was to keep the axes sharpened, he cleared the land for the pools. He took the timber to a nearby sawmill and had it cut into boards, from which he built his home and the poolside buildings. He dug the pools with a mule-drawn flat pan. He built the Olympic-sized lap pool first. Later he added the other pools, which include a family pool, a diving pool and a baby pool. He designed the filter system, utilizing gravel, sand and charcoal. The Venetian filter system was a model copied by other pool builders for many years.

CAPT. BAKER completed work on the pools in time to volunteer to serve in World War II. He was a morale officer for Special Services and put on shows to entertain the troops.

Throughout their history, the pools have been a center for social activity, as well as a popular place for athletes to train. Well-known political figures enjoyed Venetian along with members of the Atlanta Crackers baseball team and other athletes, including Larry Morris, Chicago Bears World Championship player, as well as residents of the surrounding neighborhoods and students from nearby universities. The clubhouse, which has not been used in recent years, was once a favorite party spot for Tech and Emory fraternities. In the old days, the wet set favored the gazebo by the creek, which was delicately perched on a long finger of Fulton County, safe from the prohibitions of dry Decatur and DeKalb that governed elsewhere on the premises.

THE VENETIAN COMMUNITY Association is presently engaged in a membership drive to raise capital to purchase the property, replace the bathhouse which burned down in 1985, repair the pools, and landscape the grounds. Members will be accepted on a first come-first serve basis, giving preference to those who purchase family or individual life memberships. Revenue from the life memberships, which can be resold through the corporation, will cover the large initial capital expenditure. Annual fees will cover the cost of maintaining the property. People interested in membership should call 373-0302 and leave their names and telephone numbers. Volunteers will return calls.

## Druid Hills Letter

THE MEMBERSHIP drive got off to a successful start with a Save-the-Pools Party on Jan. 29. A substantial number of those in attendance bought life memberships and volunteered to serve on committees, which include membership, facilities planning, programs, development and finance. Committee members have been working very hard to get all the necessary planning done, so that renovation can begin as soon as the association has title to the property.

THE ORGANIZERS of the Venetian Community Association, and members of its interim board, are Neil Schulman, a physician who had the idea that community ownership was the way to save the pools; Tom Shim, a financial consultant; Carol Richard, an architect; and Jay McClure and David Soloway, who are both lawyers. The interim board is focusing on work that needs to be done in order to meet the scheduled Memorial Day opening. The interim board will be replaced by a board elected by the life members on July 15, 1987.

PONCE DE LEON TRAFFIC LIGHTS: The traffic lights on Ponce from Clifton Road all the way to Glen Iris were not working Tuesday morning, Feb. 10, early in the morning just at the time people are going to work and school. The lights remained green for Ponce traffic and red for all the cross streets. During the past month or so, the lights have See DRUID HILLS, Page 5A

BACKY SMITH SAID  
THAT YOU MAY WANT  
THIS FOR YOUR FILE,  
WE APPRECIATE YOUR  
INTEREST - Mary Darrs

way" List in the Northeast study area section of the city's 1986 and 1987 Comprehensive Development Plan Updates.)

Until that new equipment is installed, we have to hope for the best. If the lights do malfunction, call the Atlanta Police first: 658-6821 (Special Operations, Traffic Division; ask for Capt. Forrester or Lt. Wright). Ask that officers be sent immediately to handle traffic at the intersections.

Then call 653-7020 to report the malfunctioning lights to the Bureau of Traffic and Transportation (the number in the blue pages of the phone book is no longer valid; that bureau has moved to a new location near the Garnett Street Station and has a new phone system).

DHCA has been assured that we will receive all necessary attention until the new equipment is installed.

2/19/87

**Decatur-DeKalb News/Era**

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### Druid Hills

Continued From Page 4A

failed to work too often. Evidently the equipment is very old, affected by "extreme cold," and works just like old-fashioned Christmas lights: when one goes, they all go.

Help is in sight. New equipment has been ordered and should arrive by March 1. (Signalization improvements for Ponce de Leon has been on the "Projects Under-

# Pooling their resources in Decatur

## City residents fighting to keep their old recreational spot



Above, the pools at the Venetian Country Club have been closed since a fire at the bathhouse two years ago. At right, community leader Thomas Shinn (leaning on rail) talks to local residents about the prospects of buying the pools from current owners.



STEVE DEAL/Staff

By Keith L. Thomas

Staff Writer

Forget the whales. The rallying cry in one Decatur community is "Save the Pools!"

The recreational reservoirs in need of rescuing are located at the Venetian Country Club, 150 Scott Blvd., a place for family gatherings, weekend picnics and community swim parties for more than five decades. Two years ago, a blaze in the club bathhouse forced the complex to shut down, and it's been closed since. Owners of the three-acre site have begun to entertain offers from developers who want to buy the property to mobilize.

More than 100 residents — many of whom first learned the breast stroke, back-

stroke and belly flop in the Venetian pools — have organized and raised approximately \$150,000 toward purchasing the property before developers do. They say they don't want the pools replaced with condominiums or houses.

"I learned how to swim here," said Becky Smith, 27, as she pushed her 5-month-old daughter Elizabeth in a stroller around the four waterless pools — one for kiddies, one for divers, one for families and an Olympic-size beauty built for the likes of Johnny Weissmuller.

"I remember dancing and drinking beer here as a college student," said Mary Dabbs, 51, membership chairman of the Venetian Community Association. The non-profit organization was formed by residents on Jan. 29 at a "Save the Pool" party.

"This place is a neighborhood institu-

tion," Mrs. Smith said. "I'm hoping Elizabeth will get a chance to learn to swim here just like I did."

Although Elizabeth could only yawn at the notion, a lot of people share her mother's love and concern for the club. Calling the place a country club is somewhat misleading. Aside from the pools, the complex consists of two wood-frame buildings, picnic facilities, recreational areas and at least two basketball hoops. Members of the community association plan to rebuild the bathhouse, landscape the area, solicit family memberships and — of course — refill the pools. It is estimated that renovations could cost as much as \$150,000.

In 1928, Walter Baker Sr. cleared the property with an ax and mules to build the family oriented complex. At the time, it

boasted the largest pool in the city — 150 feet long. Venetian was one of the few places where families could swim before the advent of public pools.

Atlantians flocked to the club to enjoy volleyball, baseball and dancing, as well as swimming and sunning. In the late 1930s, Georgia Tech's diving team used one of the pools for training. There was the occasional wedding, social gathering or teen party in the clubhouse. Rich's and Davison's even held evening fashion shows there, with models crossing bridges built over the brightly lit pools.

The association has been raising money by selling pool memberships to other families in the upper middle-class neighborhood. Thursday night, the group made an

See POOL, Page 8-B

9-9-87

## Pool

From Page 1-B

offer to the owners and are expecting a response sometime Tuesday, said Thomas Shimi, president of the association.

"Let's just say we feel everything is going to work out our way," Shimi said. "The community support has just been tremendous."

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Atlanta Constitution

Feb. 9, 1987



STEVE DEAL/Staff

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# Venetian Country Club to rebuild bathhouse gutted by fire

...SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 1985 @the Atlanta Journal AND CONSTITUTION 3-B

By Diana Minardi  
Staff Writer

For 20 years, E.W. Felder has been bringing his family to Decatur's Venetian Country Club, where nearly three generations of Atlantans have beat the summer heat and socialized at the club's four pools, dance hall and picnic areas.

So when a friend called Saturday morning to tell him that the club's 55-year-old, wood-frame bathhouse had burned down shortly after midnight, Felder decided he had to survey the damage himself.

"Why, my daughter just about grew up in that pool" near the bathhouse, an upset Felder said Saturday afternoon. "I used to throw ball and dancing as well as swimming. My daughter's going to be so upset when I call and tell her."

While the Decatur Fire Department continued its investigation of the fire, Felder was one of a dozen or so residents who dropped by Saturday to view the scene and inquire if the private swimming club would ever reopen.

"It will be open again," Walter Baker Jr., son of the late club founder, declared while sitting in school kids doing the boogie woogie while playing the jukebox," Baker recalled.

"We never had a bit of a slump."

People always have come to go swimming. Even during the lean years, it survived despite the devil."

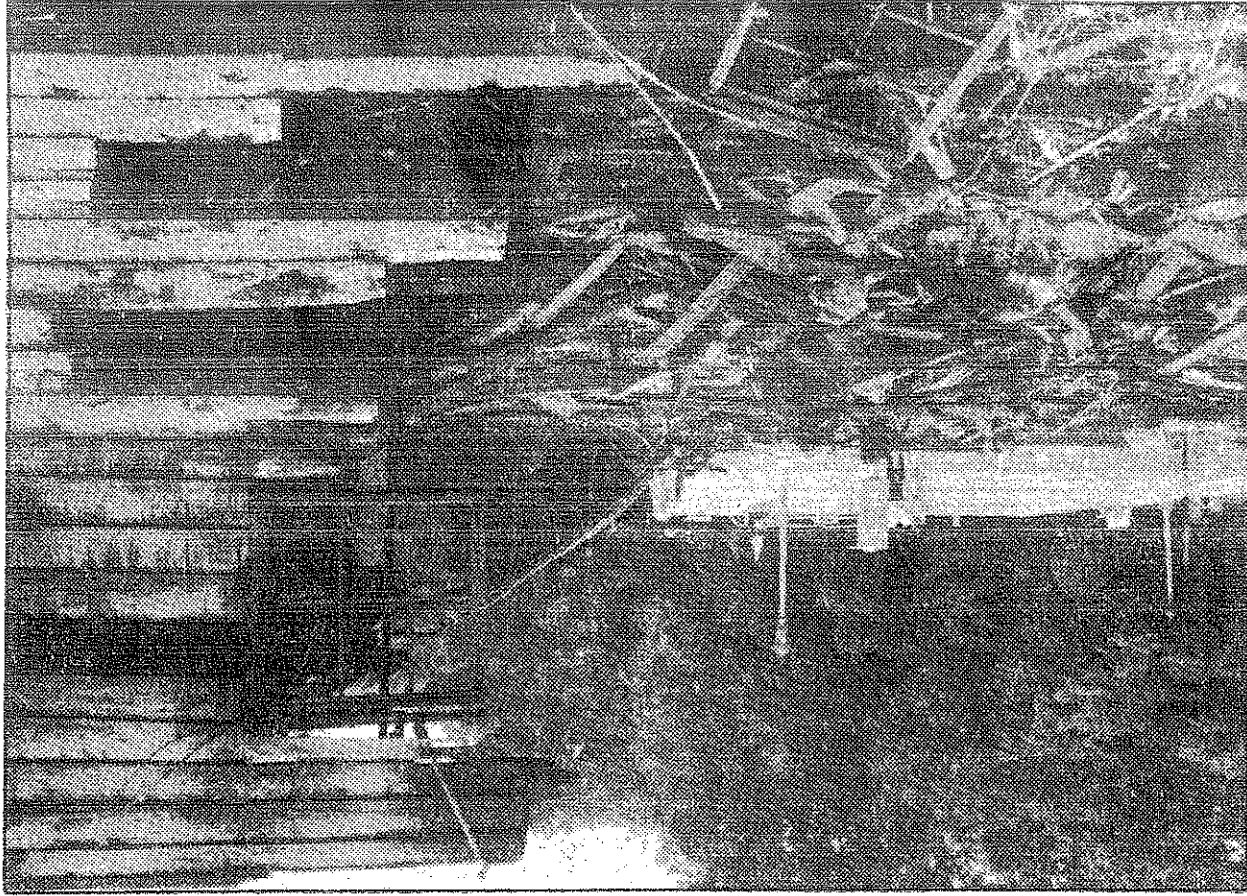
From the beginning, Venetian touted its pools' filtering systems, which Baker said were "unique."

"We were the first swimming pool to have a filter system anywhere in Georgia," he said. "I guess that is what distinguished it from the others." The filter system was so unusual that Baker has a Venetian Country Club postcard advertising "swimming in drinking water changed two times each day."

It is the viability of that filter system which could determine how soon the facility will reopen. Sharon Baker, daughter-in-law of Walter Baker Jr., said the pools could be open within two weeks if the filters are working properly.

As for the bathhouse, Baker said he wants to rebuild it and make other renovations at the club. "We really needed to improve it, but my mother wanted to leave it just like it was," he said of Beatrice Baker, who managed Venetian after her husband's death in 1970 until she died last year.

"My mother and father put so much into it. I just thought, 'Thank goodness they can't see this.'"



**BURNED BATHHOUSE:** Decatur fire officials are still investigating blaze at club on Scott Boulevard.

CALVIN CRUCE/Staff