

## Hill's Angels in Hilleast

A continuing battle with crime gains a new set of opponents

BY PETER J. WALDRON

When Erik Holzherr, owner of the Wisdom Bar ([www.dcwisdom.com](http://www.dcwisdom.com)) at 1432 Penn. Ave. SE, went to bed early on New Years Eve because of a lingering cold, he had reason to expect a quiet if subdued celebration. The Wisdom Bar, his dream since his days of growing up in Queens, was in its second full year and doing well.

At three in the morning his serenity was broken, as the reality of crime in his newly adopted Hill East neighborhood literally woke him with a “bang,” the sound he heard as the rear entrance of his bar was smashed open. Holzherr looked out his window and saw that three hooded burglars with an accompanying lookout in a car had broken an outside gate in the alley behind Wisdom and were now downstairs in his bar. He awakened his uncle, who was visiting, and was immediately on the phone to the police. Moments later he realized that his 70-year-old uncle had gone down to the bar to confront the burglars and after a brief altercation, the burglars dashed from the building but were arrested by the quickly arriving police. In the end Holzherr’s good fortune was that neither he nor his uncle were hurt, no cash was taken in a business dominated by credit card payments and that the burglars were in custody.

Ironically, Holzherr, a 2001 graduate of the Air Force Academy, has been a driving force in the newly resurgent Neighborhood Watch along with ANC Commissioner Carol Green (6B07) who refers to the group as the Hill’s Angels. According to Green, the group got started last May. Initially the

Hill’s Angels were on the streets five or six nights a week but have settled into a walk every two weeks. The Angels have adopted the strategy of never taking the same path or repeating the same day. They often brunch together and then walk through the neighborhood and have begun organizing “porch patrols.” And as a by product of going down alleys and streets, they are able to pinpoint uncollected trash and have graffiti removed and report to the police other problems. In addition, Green points out, “We have become acquainted with members of our community that we would otherwise not know.”

Throughout the late ‘80s and early ‘90s community stalwarts such as ANC Commissioner Wil Hill (6B06) and long time residents Theodore and Eleanor Hill, leaders of the Barney Circle Orange Hats for more than a quarter of a century, walked the Hill East neighborhood weekly on frigid winter nights and brutally hot summer evenings. They endured the intimidating glares and threats from hostile drug dealers as they ritually paused at a multitude of crack houses at a time when random street shootings were the norm. According to Theodore Hill, a resident since 1956: “No one was coming to the meetings anymore and so we have just stopped meeting and walking.” Wil Hill (no relation), an ANC commissioner since the early 80s, fought an often solitary battle to overcome crime in his district. ANC commissioner Francis Campbell, (6B12, who was born and raised in Hill East adds: “Most of those who walked in the old day have died or moved away.”



The Barney Circle Orange Hats for more than a quarter of a century, walked the Hill East neighborhood weekly on frigid winter nights and brutally hot summer evenings. Photo: Andrew Lightman



The newly resurgent Neighborhood Watch. Eric Holzherr is on the top right. Photo: Andrew Lightman



ANC Commissioner Wil Hill (6B06), a founder of the original Orange Hats, in front of the Potomac Avenue Metro stop. Photo: Andrew Lightman

### A Shift in Crime

Crime in Hill East is a continuing problem, but over time it has changed, shifting from gang related drug violence to crimes of person and property such as robberies, car jackings and burglaries. Witness an armed robbery with a gun, two car jackings and reports of six gunshots in the Hill East neighborhood area and one stabbing at a Metro bus station over the MLK holiday weekend. Statistically crime is down in District One ([www.mapcrime.dc.gov](http://www.mapcrime.dc.gov)) by 9 % over the past decade although robberies (17%) and burglaries (20%) are up from last year. Violent crime in PSA 107 remains the same as one year ago (119 versus 120 crimes ) with robberies with a gun up 17% , burglaries up 5% and stolen autos up 1%. Total violent crime is unchanged from one year ago with property crimes down 2 %. Last year in PSA 107 there was only one homicide reported.

Outgoing PSA 107 liaison Lieutenant Daniel Ewell, who draws praise from the

40 to 50 additional people at a PSA meeting but that as the crisis passes that number “dwindles down. When they have ownership it helps. We are not asking people to handcuff people to the mailbox.” Ewell thinks the police have made some good arrests as far as a rash of burglaries that have recently occurred.

Holzherr remains hopeful. “ I had all these people coming to Wisdom and telling me their sob stories. I asked did you call the police? No, they didn’t do anything.” Now with the resurgent Neighborhood Watch, Holzherr tells residents, “This is your neighborhood. That’s what I am trying to push.” As far as results? “I think it is working. This neighborhood is worth fighting for.”

*The Neighborhood Watch’s new web site is (<http://www.hillwatchdc.org/>). PSA 107 meets every third Thursday of each month at Liberty Baptist Church, 527 Kentucky Ave SE at 7:00PM ★*

community for his efforts, believes that the community must get and stay engaged. “You can’t email or text your way out of this problem. People need to get engaged. If you see something, call the police.” Ewell, a 20-year MPD veteran, says there is a continuing need for a community presence on the streets and offers his own wisdom, suggesting that a rise in crime will produce

NEW CLASSES & DEMONSTRATIONS  
COOKIE CUTTERS  
STOVE TOP  
BAKEWARE  
TARGETS  
PAPER  
MAKERS  
TELLERS

**HILLS  
KITCHEN**

713 D STREET SE | WASHINGTON DC 20003  
202.543.1997 | [WWW.HILLSKITCHEN.COM](http://WWW.HILLSKITCHEN.COM)  
TUESDAY-SATURDAY 10AM TO 7PM, SUNDAY 10 TO 5PM  
CLOSED MONDAY

**perēgrine  
espresso**

7th St and Pennsylvania Ave, SE  
[www.peregrineespresso.com](http://www.peregrineespresso.com)

## Frame of Mine

**Our 22nd  
Annual Chinese New Year  
Sale starts February 1  
and Ends March 14th!**



*By far, our most popular sale!*

So bring your projects in... do-it-yourself or custom... one item or many... and make your selections. Then draw a Fortune Cookie to discover your discount. The minimum is 10% off, but there are lots at 15%, 20%, & 25%. There’s even one 50%, one 75% and one FREE! You can draw a cookie a day (after selections are made) until they are gone or until March 16th, whichever comes first!

522 8th St SE Washington, DC 20003  
202-543-3030

[www.frame-of-mine.com](http://www.frame-of-mine.com) • [fom@frame-of-mine.com](mailto:fom@frame-of-mine.com)

Monday, Friday, Saturday 10-6 pm  
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 10-9 pm  
Sunday 12-6 pm

Discounts apply only if drawn after your purchase. This sale can not be used in combination with other sales and applies to new orders only.