



Maggie Delbon / Staff artist

# Bel Air's legend

## Mysterious Mont aids in absentia

By Ryan Konig  
Staff writer

**W**ho is Grayson Mont?  
Where does he live?  
And what does he look like?

No one in the Bel Air Neighborhood knows.

In fact no one knows anything about Grayson Mont, except that he's the reason why many neighbors now know each other.

No one ever heard of him until May, when he set off a chain of events that is making his name a neighborhood legend, and his neighborhood a better place to live.

In May, letters signed by Grayson Mont were sent out to residents. It asked neighbors to meet at a church so they could start a neighborhood association to improve the area bounded by Indian School Road, the Grand Canal,

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## Here's the letter that started it all

*Grayson Mont has become a legend in his west Phoenix neighborhood. The name appears to be fictitious and neighbors have yet to learn the identity of the man who is credited with helping to start the neighborhood's homeowners association. Here is the letter, signed by Grayson Mont, that was sent to neighbors:*

Dear neighbor,

There has been deterioration in our neighborhood in recent years. Although the signs of decline are apparent, we have an opportunity to stop the decline and turn it around.

The enclosed article about the Glenrosa Village Neighborhood Association in east Phoenix sounds a lot like us. Another article enclosed discusses and lists some blight causes. We have our share of these, increasingly so during the past five years. But there is much worthwhile

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## LETTER

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here, including friendly and caring people, and the good is worth protecting and enhancing.

The city of Phoenix has programs to help neighborhoods such as ours. And we need a neighborhood association to go along with our (too few) Block Watch groups. Most of us realize our neighborhood would benefit greatly by taking action, but we have no organized body to begin the process. The intent of this letter is to prompt a step in that direction.

-To get us started, there will be a

meeting on May 20th. The Evangelical Lutheran Church, 830 West Glenrosa Ave., is not involved in this project, but will let us use its parking lot as a preliminary gathering point at 9 a.m. At that time we can decide where to go for our meeting.

The hope is that enough leadership will come out of the initial meeting to get us organized. There will be a number of us who will want to help in other ways. At the very least, we will realize that many are concerned about our

neighborhood and about each other.

Our neighborhood is made up of three subdivisions: Bel Air, Eugene Place, and Kearnie Estates. This mailing was based on random selection of residential addresses within each subdivision, and it was sent to more than half of the addresses in each subdivision to reach an adequate cross section. Also, there will be some sharing of information with others.

## HOMEOWNERS

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15th and 19th avenues.

The area showed signs of aging — sagging roofs and overgrown lawns. Invisible walls stood between graying homeowners and young renters. A neighborhood association could build bridges and tear down barriers.

Dozens of neighbors showed up for the meeting. They took seats and waited for Grayson Mont to rise, walk to the podium and deliver a speech befitting a leader who could save a neighborhood.

Instead there was silence.

No one rose.

No one spoke.

The waiting became awkward. So people began chatting. Many neighbors met for the first time.

Soon they were talking about families, jobs and neighborhood troubles.

Bryan Vincent was there too. He thought about the coincidence of the letter, for he and his wife also were thinking about starting a neighborhood association.

Vincent rose and asked if anyone knew where Grayson Mont was. Maybe someone would know why Mont was late or when he

would arrive.

No one did.

Vincent asked if anyone even knew Grayson Mont.

No one did.

Vincent started the meeting. Residents offered ideas for improving the neighborhood by painting over graffiti and setting up Block Watches.

By meeting's end, residents had voted to create the Bel Air Neighborhood Association. Vincent is association president.

Within months, Bel Air volunteers had cleared tons of trash from alleys and lots.

Robert James helped organized a citizens patrol. Police have trained Bel Air volunteers to patrol the neighborhood, spot suspicious activity and call police.

Treasurer Fred Godwin helped raise money for neighborhood parties and cleanups.

Bel Air also publishes a newsletter and maintains a telephone hotline to notify people of scheduled events.

The residents also have searched for the mysterious Grayson Mont. But there's no

trace of him in phone listings or in records for real estate, tax licenses or voter registration.

Bryan Vincent and neighbors are puzzled as to why someone sent a letter with an apparently fake name. Maybe the person wanted to help the neighborhood, but was too shy to take the lead.

Real or not, Grayson Mont is credited with helping to unite a neighborhood where many folks had never met their neighbor — or anyone named Grayson Mont.

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