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An Adams Morgan Essay Four O'clock in the A.M.

Fri., June 10, 2005: Part 2 of Five

By Rafael E. Valero

It turns out it was Haji, the Iranian owner of Chloe, who led the three of us to our first table. Amanda Consovoy and Rachael Sowray, ahead of me, were oooing and ahhhing and taking in the 18th Street restaurant's ambiance as we crossed the dance floor. With a wave of his hand, the owner gestured to our seats tucked between the main bar and brick wall stairs, and then he disappeared. Just like that, *voilà!*

Magic. Sort of.

I watched Haji, a thin man dressed all in white, meander back through his restaurant unfazed by the fuss all around him. Climaxed in the disco hot lights, I saw he had a humble face with a touch of intellect. At the time, I wasn't sure who he was. He reminded me of a captain at ease with his ship or like a maintenance man in his boiler room. The two are not really so different, except that one sees from the bottom of the authority chain and the other from the top.

It's 10:23 pm.

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Church Street Block "Reborn" With a New Urban Look and Feel

By Rosemary E. Reed Miller*

Church Street is alive with new residential and commercial spirit. The community people who worked so hard to convince Whole Foods, then known as fresh Fields, to locate in the 1400 block of P Street must be pleased.



photo—Paul K. Williams—The Intowner.

View showing a portion of the north side of the 1500 block of Church Street, looking toward I-4th. The first building on the left, a former garage, now houses the Dragonfly store; immediately next to it is the Nimbus salon; beyond the new, tall residential building is the former Rainbow Auto Body shop recently converted to condo lofts (note that the original sign has been preserved); and beyond that is yet another new residential building.

The south side of this block is likewise lined with new residential buildings, although there is no retail yet. Only a few parcels at the western end of the block are awaiting redevelopment or

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shop.

Homeowners looking for occasional chests, wardrobes, and entrance tables will find 19th century pieces in walnut and elm. Prices range from \$250 to \$2,500. "I've found a good supply of Quing Dynasty camphor wood, hand-carved camphor wood shutters which can either go on the wall, or be used as dividers."

She has a nice collection of the miniature bamboo plants in glass or ceramic vases. Hessler also has older straw baskets from Burma and boxes from Thailand. Her staff assistant, Jordan McLeish said she ... "came in two years ago and I was so intrigued that I spent over two hours in the shop. I couldn't leave and convinced Kimberly to let me join

her in the shop. My next venture is to get to China. The more you look, the more you see, and the more you learn."

Over the years, Kimberly has dealt with all kinds of interesting customers. "Everyone is special to me, but I must admit that I was most pleased to meet and sell to David Wang, who I met through my work with the Asia Society. He wrote the musical *M Butterfly*. He bought some of my shutters."

The personable Yusuf Baptiste, a DC native, who graduated from the elite, college-prep Banneker High School, opened Nimbus last year. "Banneker gears you for critical thinking. I went first to Malacaster University in Minnesota for political science studies. Trying to finance my college courses made me stop my university career, and I returned to DC to work with a construction firm and to learn graphic design. Both skills have helped me in building and

designing Nimbus. I did most of the construction work in the shop." He continued, "I gave my architect my concept drawings, and he tweaked them. I executed the plans. I worked two jobs night and day to pay for the costs. It took me about six months to finish."

After returning to DC, Yusuf trained at the Graham Webb International School of Hairdressing in Arlington. He's worked for the hair salons Molecule on 19th Street and Daniels on M Street. "Everything I did, and everyone I worked for, and everywhere I studied has influenced my work," Yusuf said.

Nimbus is a clean, modern-looking white-bright and glass building. He joins the other three shops in keeping the overhead, pull-up door car repair shop façade. He combines clean, sculpted wood chairs from the Côte d'Ivoire with sleek industrial chairs. Yusuf

said, "The elements blend and inspire me and my customers. I was looking for calm. I was looking for a hair salon with a 'lounge' feeling where people are comfortable and at ease. However, my bar-lounge's drink is just healthy water. People in the neighborhood have responded well. I like to put a smile on their faces. It's a great place to be. I can do all sorts of hair for all sorts of ages, body types, and styles."

Karin Miller, a Nimbus customer who was on her way to a New York meeting, thinks that... "the shop reflects Yusuf's esthetic, his personality, and the talent he's learned from his former salon experiences."

Future Green almost explains itself. The original owners, Lisa and Swee Sim, who opened the first store in Wisconsin, wanted to put under one roof "fair trade" items. The concept of "fair trade" means that most of

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the money from the customer goes to the producer. Future Green also buys from co-ops based in Africa, Bangladesh, Cambodia,

know much about yarn, so various customers said they would help by suggesting the types and fibers which they would work with. I didn't know it, but there are various farms around here which sell naturally dyed wools."

Future Green also sponsors Thursday evening Flun Gong sessions at 7 p.m. "Falun Gong is an ancient meditation concept which was revived in 1992." There are about 62 million people around the world who practice Falun Gong. The Chinese government has tried to suppress it for years, but Keith appreciates its spirituality and its ideas of physical and mental unity. "It's a way of looking at life. It fits Future Green's concept of a healthy mind and healthy environment."



Photo—courtesy, Kimberly Hessler

Interior of the Dragonfly shop reveals the effective use of the huge former garage space. Note the original concrete floor and the air ducts left exposed.

Nepal, and Serbia.

They bought recycled or organic materials for clothing, accessories or jewelry, or for household use, and they sold world music from small producers. Keith Ware and his wife were friends of the Sims and felt Washington, DC was ready for a Future Green concept store. "We're from DC. We have children here, we believe in the future and we knew of Church Street emerging as a possible home or apartment owners' area," Ware said. His wife Donna and Court Pearman staff the brightly-colored shop. "We sell and we tried out all our products as we were building the space out. The floors are of

Keith remembered, "One guy came in and said he had to have one right away. He had read about the kind of bed we had and he needed a good night's sleep. He meant right



