



HOW THE CITY WORKS

BY MARK KAPLAN

How is the City of Lawrence governed? Who runs the town, and how is it managed? What are the problems, and how could some of these problems be solved?

These are all important questions for a town of 50,000 people, a town whose future may lie in the path of unheralded growth and development. The form that this growth takes, and the degree of control which the citizens can exercise over it are important matters to all who consider Lawrence their home.

These questions become even more important in the light of a petition drive currently underway which would bring to a vote of the people the question of the form of government Lawrence should operate under.

Following is a summary of the structural design of Lawrence's present form of local government, and an interview with an active proponent for change.

To start with, the Lawrence City Hall is located at 9th and Mass., in the First National Bank Tower, on the 3rd and 4th floors. It's obviously quite invisible. It's the place where you go to pay your water bills. The two floors rent for \$5,000 a month.

Towards a

BY CHIP JONES

Chanette Mastin, 15 year resident of Lawrence, described the current change-of-government petition drive as a grass roots effort of "people who are concerned with the lack of voice they have in their government."

The petition, she said, is an attempt to put on the March ballot the question of withdrawing the present form of government (City Commission-City Manager) for a City Council-Mayor form.

Ms. Mastin thinks democratic representation is the crux of the problem. "The main thing that bothers me is that the government is non-representative of the citizen's wishes in this town. That's illustrated by the Haskell Loop opposition, by the city garage opposition, by continual small agenda items that come up on the City Commission agendas without advanced public debate and without enough time for the public to come up with alternatives. The commissioners are at-large and it's hard to deal with a random sample of opinion and not a special constituency. But if a representative comes from a certain neighborhood, he or she is already going to have a special feeling for what the neighborhood needs and what it doesn't need, what priorities it has, what attention it isn't getting. Just by living in that neighborhood, that commissioner would already have a general consensus."

The current City Commissioners do the best they can, she says, but under the current set-up it's not good enough. "A city of 55,000 can't be run by part-time commissioners. It needs a qualified, professional staff of full-time paid commissioners."

The City of Lawrence operates under the Manager-Commission form of government, granted to the City by the State of Kansas. Five Commissioners make up the policy-making board of the City. Every two years, in the Spring, elections are held to fill three new seats. Any number of people may file for office. First, there is a primary election which narrows the number of candidates, who run from the City "at-large," to six. A general election is held four weeks later, with the three candidates getting the highest vote-totals winning seats. First and second-place winners get four-year terms and the candidate who comes in third gets a two-year term. Commissioners are paid a salary of \$100 a year, increasing to \$900 a year in 1977.

There is no real "Mayor." The Mayor's position is simply the chair of the Commission meetings. He has a few ceremonial jobs. The Mayor is rotated in and out of office every year and has absolutely no political power whatsoever beyond that of the other Commissioners.

The Commission meets each Tuesday night at 7:00p.m. at City Hall in public session. Attend a meeting and find out what's going on.

The Second division of local government is the City Manager and City Staff. The manager is res-

ponsible for a dministration of the City. The manager is hired by the Commission as a business manager and serves for an indefinite time-period at the pleasure of the Commissioners. The City-Manager's office, including an assistant and two secretaries, is salaried at more than \$65,000 a year.

All departments of City government fall under the jurisdiction of the City Manager's office. This includes technical and service functions, such as sewer, water, streets, police, fires, as well as planning and zoning, community development, and finance. Each of these departments is run by department heads and supervisors, all responsible only to the City Manager. They comprise the City Staff. The administrative positions are full-time, well-salaried.

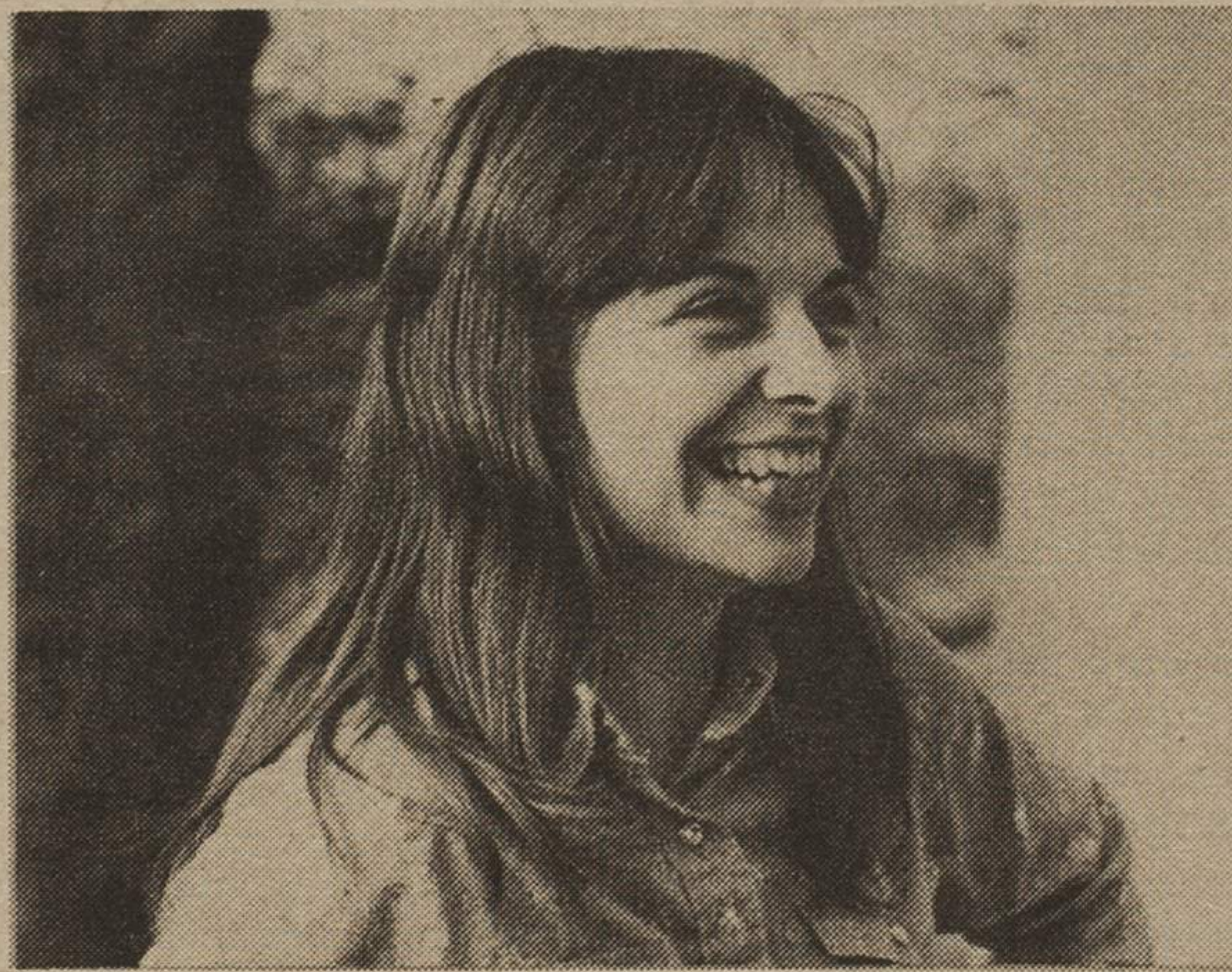
In addition, there are various boards and commissions, such as human relations, planning, traffic and safety. These positions are filled with unpaid appointees each year by the "Mayor." They make recommendations to the City Commission but have no real power of decision-making.

At the present time, the five City Commissioners are Carl Mibeck, Donald Binns, Marnie Argersinger, Barkley Clark and Fred Pence.

The City Manager is Buford Watson.

DEMOCRATIC

Decrying the current form of government as one dominated by the city manager (who's not an elected official) and the many consulting firms he employs, Ms. Mastin offered her vision of a government with checks and balances. "Non-representation would turn to representation by wards. Possibly six, possibly eight. There would be two representatives



per district elected for two year terms. A mayor elected at-large, also for two years. The mayor would act as an overseer of the city government. He'd have no vote in council decisions except in case of a tie. He can also veto a vote by the council. Then there could be a 2/3 majority override of his veto. It's a check and balance system which we don't have now."

ALTERNATIVE

She then asserted that the council, operating on a full-time, salaried basis, could do much of the work that is currently done by consulting firms.

Another advantage of the Mayor-Council government is the council would have to live with their decisions, since they would be elected from their own neighborhoods. With the at-large system, she said, the commissioners are more likely to act in bad faith. "Often in times past, a commissioner has given the public their feeling on an issue, but when that commissioner has voted they've changed their mind. So when they have asked the public to support them, the public has given them support, but the commissioners have turned their backs on them."

The city garage is a case-in-point of this kind of back-turning, Ms. Mastin stated. "At the time, I was living in Far East Lawrence and I went to a FELIA meeting where the issue was brought up after having been rejected in the Pinckney area. We were led to believe that a 17 acre park would be built as kind of a consolation for losing the Delaware park. We were told if you vote for the city garage, the city will try to get you a 17 acre park. Result? Within two months there was no mention of the park. It dwindled down to 3 acres, then to nothing. And the park had never been discussed or mentioned until that meeting. It was a dream they threw out and the people fell for it."

Ms. Mastin had a marked-up Journal World (Nov. 9, 1976) editorial page lying before her on the dining room table. She glanced at it and said:



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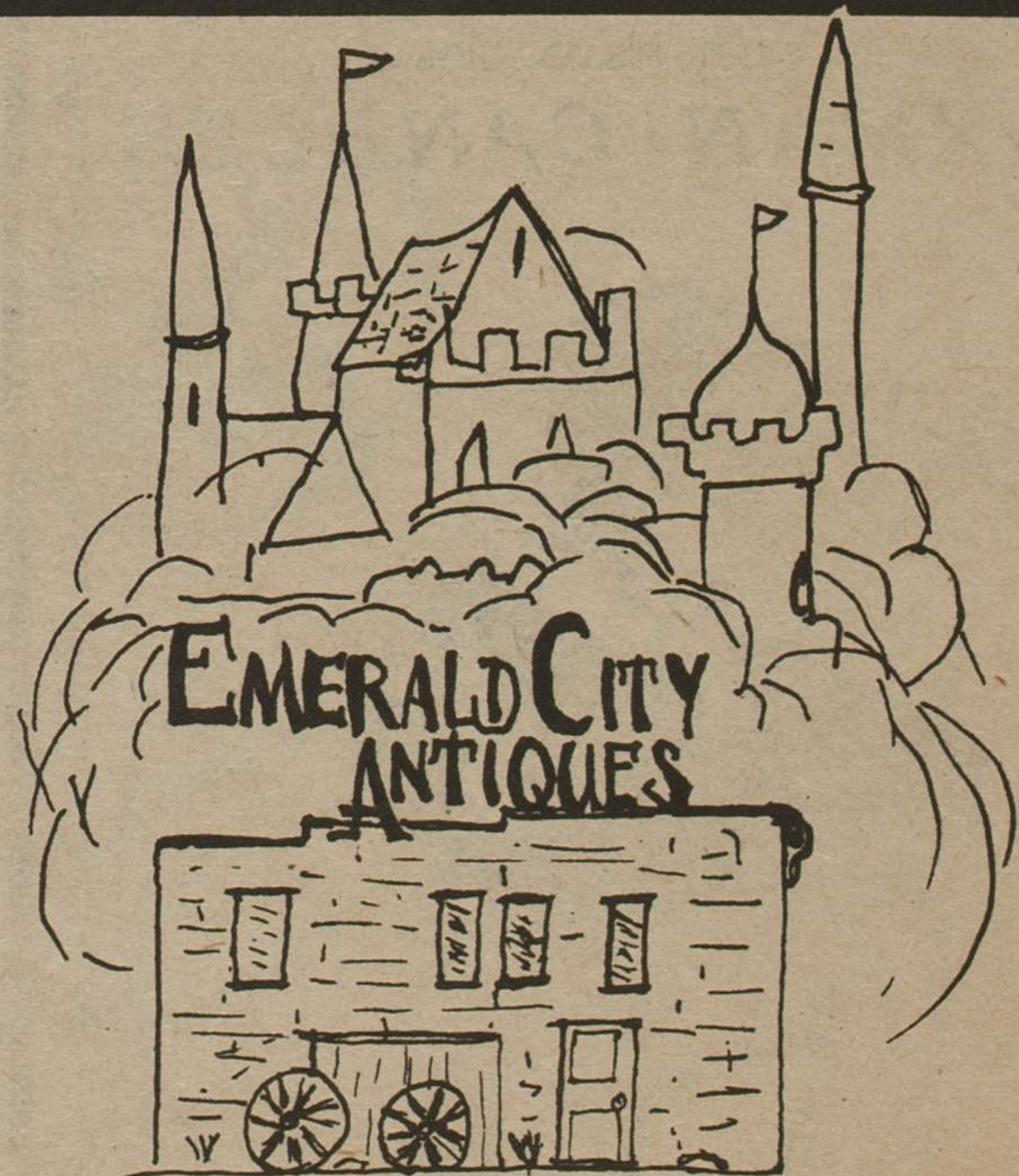
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LIFE WAS A MISERY TO HER

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Carrollton, Ky.—"I suffered almost two years with female weakness. I could not walk any distance, ride or take any exercise at all without resting. If I swept the floor or did any kind of work it would bring my sickness on. I was weak, languid, had no energy and life was a misery to me. I was under the care of a good physician for several months and tried other remedies. I had read of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and decided to try it. After taking twelve bottles I found myself much improved and I took six more. I have never had any more trouble in that respect since. I have done all kinds of work and at present am an attendant at a State Hospital and am feeling fine. I have recommended your Vegetable Compound to dozens of my friends and shall always recommend it."

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