

AVIS Update

The Andover Village Improvement Society (AVIS) is a non-profit land trust. Founded in 1894, AVIS is one of the oldest land trusts in the United States. AVIS' mission is to acquire and preserve Andover land in its natural state. More than 1,000 acres of land are managed by AVIS and are open to all for passive recreation.

Vol. 112, Issue 1 **Andover Village Improvement Society** • PO Box 5097 • Andover, MA Spring 2005
Jane Gossard and Marta Hornidge, Editors



Annual Meeting: Celebrating Nat Smith and Peggy Keck

By Marta Hornidge & Jane Gossard

Despite a driving snowstorm, 124 people (a record attendance) were present at the 111th AVIS Annual Meeting. **After a combined tenure of 55 years service to AVIS, both president Nat Smith (35 yrs.) and vice president Peggy Keck (20 yrs.) are retiring (upper left).** The Annual Meeting was devoted to honoring these two people, vital to the growth of this society. Through their tenure, 53 parcels of land totaling 2000 acres have been added to AVIS holdings.

Highlights of the business meeting included a fund-raising report by chairman Susan Stott. A record

\$123,000 was raised from appreciative AVIS members and others donors for the newly created *Nat Smith/Peggy Keck Land Acquisition Fund* (a list of donors will be published in the Fall Update). Peggy Kruse, chairman of the Nominating Committee, presented a **new slate of officers: Fred Snell, president, Andrew Girdwood, vice president, (lower right), and new trustees Gay Bird and Mark Cutler (page 2).** New president Fred Snell has been a trustee of AVIS for 6 yrs., working as co-chairman of the Land Management Committee. Fred shows initiative and competence in all that he has accomplished, and has been involved in many aspects of AVIS. New vice president Andrew Girdwood has been an AVIS trustee for 4 years as a member of the Land Management Committee and AVIS's liaison to the Merrimack River Watershed. He will be helping the wardens of reservations east of Rt. 28. Peggy Keck, chairman of the Land Acquisition Committee reported on AVIS's 4 new land acquisitions (see Fall 2004 Update). The new reservation off Haggetts Pond Road is the *Christopher and Lillian Sherman Reservation*.

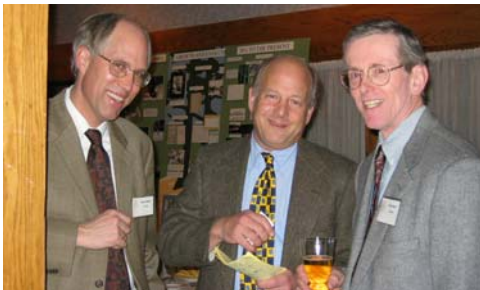
Business concluded, the fun and reminiscing began. Nat entertained us with a wonderful slide show of his favorite memories through the years. Matt Dallett spoke of Nat's "thank you" notes, so eloquent and appreciative that some

people have saved them. Dave Dargie spoke fondly of his long association with Nat, praising his ability to negotiate with land owners and lawyers and his creation of the AVIS town map. A little known fact that Dave revealed is that if you look closely you can see a tiny "x" marking Nat's home! Rachel Garcia remembered Peggy's generous use of her home, her dining room table - scene of countless meetings fueled by home made cookies to plan AVIS's participation in Andover's 350th celebration, including AVIS's place in the Centennial Parade (page 4). Jane Gossard read two poems written for Nat and Peggy

(Continued on page 2)



(page 3), calligraphied and illustrated by local artist Francis McCormick and framed as a gift from AVIS. Alix Driscoll presented two beautiful books of pictures and prose which captured the high points of Nat and Peggy's accomplishments, and Nat then delivered the finest speech of the evening extolling Peggy's virtues: dedication, intelligence, cleverness, tenacity, patience, and perseverance. Just when it seemed as if the evening couldn't possibly hold any more, Nat and Peggy were each presented with two large reservation signs with their names on them! The former Bailey Reservation is now the Nat Smith Reservation, and the former Rocky Hill Reservation is now the Peggy Keck Reservation. Beautiful flowers were presented by Nat's wife Cilla and then, out of nowhere Alice Buck came striding up to the speaker's stand (right), dressed for the 1890's sporting a saucy hat. She spoke of the unbelievable growth of the embryonic organization she knew as AVIS in 1896, and was out of breath by the time she finished reciting all of the properties that have come to AVIS by Peggy's efforts. As the wildest spring snowstorm in recent memory raged outside, Nat closed the meeting, urging people to drive safely. Inside the room glowed with the deep feeling of family. Hats off to Dave Doub who led the planning for this wonderful evening.



New Trustees Gay Bird & Mark Cutler

Gay and her family love the outdoors and know the AVIS reservations. A member of the Lazarus House board, she oversees the Hike for Hope and believes in sharing the outdoors with children. Mark, an Andover native, teaches Spanish at Phillips Academy and is director of Search and Rescue. As a trustee, Mark is excited to unite his passions: conservation, service and the outdoors.



Photos clockwise from top left: Alice Buck talks with Peggy, Jim Keck; Jane & Nat with framed poem; Diane Grieco, Chris Young; Terry Reid, Kathy Hess, Susan Lenoe; Dave Doub, Matt Dallett, Fred Snell; Peggy Kruse, Jack Driscoll, Alix Driscoll



Trees Mother

for Peggy

The woodlands stand
silent at their heart,
wrapped in coats
of bark – pine, oak
and birch – crowned
with trembling leaves.

Through all the seasons
of loss and renewal,
they grow and rest
and wait, holding
the ground with their
long knotty fingers.

Shelters for deer nested
in needles and leaves,
rooty dens for fox,
hollowed homes
for squirrels and birds,
fishers and bees,

they listen - to creak
and roar, throaty songs
rising from still pools, water
rushing over smooth stones,
and in the distance
destruction's metallic whine.

Shrouded in their own
stillness they wait.
They know she will come.
They have sensed her
footfall on the path.
She is the one

with feet planted
firmly in two worlds
who searches for
her children and saves
them. Her devotion
is complete.

Jane Gossard 1/05

The Meadow

for Nat

He did not believe
it was possible
at first, to save
the meadow.

But the glint
of the sun off the
small pond had
its way with him.

As he walked
through the tall grass,
the sun's warmth
fell on his neck

and the open sky,
framed at the edges
by soft green trees,
gave him room to breathe.

He let go of his fears
and fell in love, tossed
his heart in the center
of the ring and wrestled

with his own demons,
the ones who always said,
"No, it can't be done."
His heart won,

and when he turned
to face outward
a host of others
joined him.

Some had walked
there on a wet day
and felt a clear curtain
of rain falling straight down.

Others had witnessed
the veil of mist rising up
from the warm earth
at dawn – a doe

and her fawn
startled to stillness.
All together he led them
into the old story

that begins with
believing the impossible
and ends with
achieving it.

Jane Gossard 12/04



Peggy Keck and Nat Smith Thanks for the Memories



The AVIS Blues

by Marta Hornidge



As promised in the *Autumn 04 Update*, this spring's report continues the saga of what should be done about the critical blueberry situation. An unusually wet summer created a flooding situation and an overwhelming infestation of loosestrife that limited the blueberry production. Muddy paths created difficult, at times impossible access. The meeting to discuss this problem was held at the home of Gail Zwerling, neighbor and warden of this section of the Taft Reservation. There was talk about applying an organic herbicide to kill the loosestrife and of organizing a group to do some weed cutting when the area is dry. Gail and a neighbor, Susan, offered to organize such a group. David Dargie offered to go in with the brush cutter when the time was appropriate. The blueberry area does lie in a certified wet land, limiting the possibilities to change the area. Wait for next fall's *Update* to hear about efforts to improve the berry production without changing the natural habitat. We pickers do look forward to our jellies and jams!



Great news on the other "blue" front! Dave Schmidt, our bluebird man, has just sighted his first pair of bluebirds flying around their Shawsheen River residence, checking out the houses Dave has so carefully prepared. Who knows? This season may truly be a blue one!

AVIS Tidbits

Master List—Peggy Keck has nearly finalized a compilation of AVIS lands that she has been working on for some time. It includes all AVIS parcels, grouped by reservation. Each parcel is listed by date acquired with acreage, cost to AVIS, book and page in the Registry, Plan number (when such exists), and from whom received. AVIS now owns about 875 acres of land and maintains 11,000 acres. President Nat Smith said, "This is a marvelous undertaking and only Peggy could have done it!"

Warden Retires—Peter Sirois, outstanding warden of the large Harold Rafton Reservation, has resigned from his job due to family obligations. Peter has been constantly alert to the problem caused by the mysterious illegal cutting of nearly 100 trees on the property. Although the culprits never were identified, the cutting has ceased, perhaps due to Peter's constant vigilance. We will miss you Peter. Thank you for all of your hard work.

Church Help—AVIS says "thank you" to South Church for their help on AVIS reservations during their "Day of Service" last October.



Skiers' Report

by Marta Hornidge

The intrepid AVIS/AMC team of Burt Batcheller and David Dargie once again led hardy skiing groups down snowy paths at the two annual winter events: The Harold Rafton Breakfast Ski and the Goldsmith Woodlands Moonlight Ski.

In January, forty skiers, adults and children, enjoying perfect skiing conditions, delicious doughnuts, hot chocolate and coffee, skied the usual route on Harold Rafton. Many old faithfuls, including members of Phil Dargie's family (organizers of the first breakfast 40 years ago) were present. Some traditions never seem to fade away.

In February, about twenty moonlight skiers, well-equipped with headlights, warm jackets (maybe even long johns) and heavy mittens were prepared for a 6:00 pm. winter trip on the Goldsmith Woodlands Reservation. Following a traditional path to Land's End, they skied across an arm of Foster's Pond to Scout's Hollow where a welcoming fire, complete with hot chocolate and munchkins, awaited them. A bright crescent moon in a starry sky lighting the path made a truly magical night. Headlights were hardly needed. Another tradition lives on!



AVIS Welcomes New Members

Angela & Brian Zinsmeister
 Iric Rex & Family
 Ellen & Steve Pritchard
 Winnie O'Keefe
 Maria Marasco
 Arlene Mason
 John Ramsdell
 Paul Martellucci
 Steve Pekack
 Lederfine Pascal Family
 Julie Litzenberger
 John & Joan McArdle
 Eileen Shannon & Matthew Robert
 Anne Schwind
 Judy & Richard Howe
 Jackie Bullock
 Karen & Patrick Farrell
 Willow Cheely & David Driscoll
 Pat & Jim Gonet



AVIS Calendar

April 23 (Saturday) Clean-up on the Burns Reservation
 9:00-1:00 pm. Park on Chester St. just off of Clark Rd.
 (rain date 4/30) Peggy Kruse 978-475-0176.

May 1 (Sunday) AMC hike on Indian Ridge & Baker's
 Meadow 1:30 pm. Park at the lot by the football stands
 on Red Spring Rd. Dennis Crispo 978-474-0790.

May 7 (Saturday) Maintenance work on 3 turtle nesting
 sites in the Goldsmith Woodlands 6:00-9:00 am. Park
 at entrance on Main St. Dave Dargie 978-475-1149

May 14 – (Saturday) Work party to reroute trail on the
 new Lillian and Christopher Sherman Reservation.
 Please call Wardens Chip & Patricia Gregory to volun-
 teer, 978-689-3257. Park at their home, 232 Haggetts
 Pond Road.

June 25 (Saturday) AMC walk along the river, Deer
 Jump Reservation narrated by Ray Potvin, co-author of
 "The Scalp Hunters," and expert on local Native Ameri-
 cans. 1:30 pm at the trailhead off Launching Road.

September 24 (Saturday) Warden's Party
 Please visit our website @ www.avisandover.org

AVIS New Member Signup (Current members will receive dues notice)

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Individual membership \$15

Family membership \$30

Sustaining membership \$100

Life membership \$500

Additional donation \$ _____

AVIS * P.O. Box 5097 * Andover, MA 01810

AVIS
P.O. Box 5097
Andover, MA 01810

Non-profit org.

U.S. Postage PAID

Permit No. 344

Andover, MA 01810