President's Message

Nancy Cook

YOUR BOARD has truly been busy during the summer months with projects that greatly impact upon our Society's future goals and objectives.

The Kirwan House on Rte. 552 in Chester, which eventually will be open to the public, has had a new furnace installed and a new roof has replaced the three-layered old one. A new security system is also being added. The Kent Island Garden Club has been working diligently on the grounds. [See “Kirwan Garden Restoration” in next column.]

The Old Stevensville Post Office at 408 Love Point Road has acquired antique brass mailboxes and an old desk that looked much like ones that were used in early town post offices. These acquisitions are just a start at refurbishing the little building with authentic historic postal items.

The Society was awarded a $100,000 Bond Bill by the 2001 General Assembly in order to restore the Cray House. The paperwork is being completed and the architect, Greg Torchio, is proceeding with plans to complete the five-phase project. The first phase of inserting foundation piers to stabilize the 1809 structure will begin shortly.

We are most eager to complete the physical plants for these three projects so that we ultimately can establish interactive tours to provide our visitors with information that will enhance their understanding of the history of Kent Island.

Kirwan Garden Restoration

Diana Bonner
The Kent Island Garden Club

The first phase of The Kent Island Garden Club's restoration of the Kirwan House garden to its former glory is nearing completion. A dead tree and several dying boxwoods were removed. A crepe myrtle, two dogwood trees, black-eyed Susans, inkberry and spirea have been planted.

Stephanie McNinch of McNinch Construction and Landscaping Co., Inc., is donating her time and valued expertise to assist us with this project. She designed the garden and provides continuing technical input and oversight to the process.

The Garden Club also received a tremendous assist from Steve Rafter, who chose the Kirwan House garden restoration as his Eagle Scout project. Steve solicited donations from area businesses and gathered a crew of volunteers to replace the cracked cement garden walkway with very attractive brick. He has also constructed a garden bench and a magnificent arbor spacious enough for built-in seating. This is just the start of making the Kirwan garden a showplace for our community.

Money for Garden Club projects is generated through fundraisers, such as selling plants at Kent Island Days and an annual Fall Fling event, which features a delectable variety of hors d'oeuvres, desserts, wine, beer, sodas and a

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Mark Your Calendar

Heritage Society General Meeting
Tuesday, September 18
Kent Island Library
7:00 Refreshments
7:30 Guest Speaker
Pete Lesher
Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum
“Paid Off By the Boom” - A history of the Chesapeake Bay Oyster Fishery, with special emphasis on the Oyster Wars
Kirwan Garden Restoration
Continued from page 1

50/50 drawing. This popular annual event is being held at the Holiday Inn Express, Kent Narrows, on September 28 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Tickets are $10.
You may call any Kent Island Garden Club member for tickets. Ways and Means Chair is Ernestine Kepley, 410-643-3174. Flyers and tickets will be available at the Heritage Society’s meeting on September 18.

Steve Rafter with new arbor and brick walkway he and others constructed at Kirwan House.

Know Your Board

Audrey Bruscup Hawkins has been our treasurer since 1995, having previously served as treasurer from 1987 through 1989. She was president from 1990 through 1992 and served as director from 1993 through 1994. She is a charter member of our society, having joined in 1975.

Over the years Audrey has served as docent for the Cray House, Train Depot and Post Office headquarters; on refreshment committees for Kent Island Days and the annual Christmas dinner; and on various other committees. She was docent at the Earreckson House during Kent Island’s 350th anniversary in 1981. She has represented the society in the Queen Anne’s County Historic Sites Consortium since it was organized in 1996. She was chosen to represent Queen Anne’s County in the “Maryland You Are Beautiful” volunteer program in 1995.

Audrey works part time as a travel counselor for the County Department of Business and Tourism at Piney Narrows. She is retired from the State of Maryland, where she worked as an income tax revenue examiner in the Office of the Comptroller. She has lived on Kent Island since 1957. She has one daughter and one grandson. She is a member of the Kent Island United Methodist Church, having served on various committees when the church was built in 1963. She has been singing in the church choir for 25 years.

John Smigo Jr. is acting vice president. He has served on the board of directors since 1997. He is a native Eastern Shoreman, whose family history on the shore goes back several generations.

Continued on page
Jennifer Reamy Awarded KIHS $1,000 Scholarship

This essay was written as prerequisite for the $1,000 scholarship award. Jennifer will be attending Washington Bible College in the fall.

I was born in Baltimore on October 8, 1983 to Bonnie and Garry Reamy. My mom was from the western shore, but my dad was born and raised on Kent Island. He’s never lived anywhere else, so naturally, he wanted to raise me here near all of his family and friends. I was an only child for 9 years, and then my mom gave birth to my sister, Becca (now 8). She is beautiful, funny, intelligent and has a great heart. My parents are just as wonderful, family is the most important thing to me. Although through the years, I’ve experienced much success in my academics, music and student leadership positions, the relationship we share will always be considered my greatest accomplishment.

This is the most significant reason why I feel we need to strive to preserve the heritage of Kent Island. The Island is our home where our friends and neighbors are our family. I believe that there is no other place in the world where I could find the kind of connection with my surroundings as I do here.

Honestly, I didn’t always think this way. I used to complain that there was nothing to do. I hated having to cross the bridge to get to Annapolis or Baltimore where I could find something new and exciting, and I especially hated that everyone had either one of two professions: You were a farmer or a waterman, and the one you didn’t claim on your income taxes was your hobby.

I couldn’t wait to go to college and get off the shore. Then it hit me. I had thought that I would be a more successful person if it meant that I came from a big city in a state like Florida or Tennessee. I was wrong.

Last week, it was a bit warm outside so I rolled the windows down in my car on my way to work. While I was driving down Route 18 past Park’s Amoco, Oyster Cove, Captain Meredith’s and Fisherman’s Inn, I took in a big, deep breath of fresh air and gazed around at the water and marsh area. At that moment, I realized that the smell and the simple beauty of the Shore is unique—something that I’ll never find anywhere else. I watched people walk to their trucks from their afternoon fishing excursions, laughing and carrying on with their friends probably sharing stories about the fish that was “this big.” The people of the shore are just as fabulous and unequalled.

That one afternoon changed my mind and my heart about everything that I had convinced myself true of Kent Island. Sure, it is a small town, there aren’t many things to do as compared to Annapolis or

President Nancy Cook presents scholarship award to Jennifer Reamy at June 19 meeting.

Baltimore, and it is a pain to cross the Bay Bridge—only because I have to pay $2.50 to come home.

I have realized that I love coming home and feeling safe. I know that I can walk out my front door, sit on the step and just watch the cars go by and be okay. I can go to the grocery store to pick up a gallon of milk and see a few friends or maybe even a relative. Going to weekend Little League games or a walk down to the beach at Terrapin Park are staples of our lives. There aren’t many places in this world where we can still do that.

We need to make an effort to preserve Kent Island. I am proud to say that I come from the Eastern Shore because of the warm, generous, down-to-earth people and the genuine appreciation I have for the natural state much of the area still sits in.

Kent Island is not only the first English settlement in Maryland, but it is the most precious hidden treasure of Maryland. I hope that everyone will have the opportunity that I did to stop and “smell the marsh grass” so to speak, because we sometimes take for granted that it is so exceptional and a privilege to call “home.” Let’s be sure that the thrill of development hasn’t and won’t get in the way of our aesthetic sense of Kent Island heritage.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Calendar of Events</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, Sept. 18</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kent Island Heritage Society</td>
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<td>KI Library, 7 p.m.</td>
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<td><strong>Friday, Sept. 28</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Kent Island Garden Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:30 to 8:30 p.m., $10</td>
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<td>Call Diana Bonner, 410-643-6779</td>
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<td><strong>Sat./Sun., Oct. 6-7</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Opening of sites belonging to Queen Anne’s County Historic Sites Consortium, co-sponsored by county Dept. of Business and Tourism</td>
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<td><strong>Saturday, Dec. 8</strong></td>
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<td>10 a.m. to 4 p.m., $10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kent Island Heritage Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kent Island Yacht Club, 6 p.m.</td>
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Stream Mill Bridge

Carole Price Frederick

The Stream Mill Bridge (currently called the Stevensville Bridge) is the way one crosses Cox’s Creek and has been since the first wooden bridge was built. There was a stream mill at the foot of the bridge, hence its name.

It has been told that a barge filled with revivalists would dock at the bridge and hold services. Some old timers believed that these revivals were the beginning of the “demise” of Kent Island.

This photo of the original wooden Stream Mill Bridge (circa 1919) shows George E. Brown of Kent Island and Baltimore, Blanch E. Winters of Baltimore and Cora Rebecca Carroll Bryan of Kent Island. Cora Bryan (Mrs. Norman Bryan) is the mother of Norma Hopkins, Clara Davidson, Olive Lowe and Mary Ford. The house shown in the background on the left is now owned by the Slater family. In the distance on the right a white fence lined the lane of the farm that is now Harbor View. Of course, Route 50 had not even been thought of.

This photo shows the second Stream Mill Bridge. It was taken by Dan Hopkins, whose grandmother, Cora Bryan, is pictured on the original wooden bridge. This bridge was replaced by the current bridge in 1999.

Know Your Board

Continued from page 2

John and his wife and their three children live in a turn-of-the-century farmhouse he recently renovated in Carmichael. He is the manager at Baker’s Liquors in Chester.

Forrest P. Chisman is a member of the board of directors. He is a consultant on social policy and organizational development. He previously was a foundation officer, a senior official of the U.S. Department of Commerce and president of two research and advocacy organizations in the social policy field.

Forrest and his wife, Renee Woodworth, moved to Kent Island from Pennsylvania in 1996 when they purchased a historic house in Mattapax. In addition to history, his interests include art, music, botany, literature and politics.

He has a B.A. from Harvard and a doctorate from Oxford. He is the author of several books and is currently working on one about Kent Island.
The late-model, American-made, four-door sedan cruised Rte. 8 north, under the legal speed limit. Unlike the commuters who sped to and fro on the road twice daily and the harried locals who saw the day as a series of trips—to school, to the store, to here, to there—the white-haired, mustached man was in no hurry to get anywhere. Will’s destination hadn’t existed since the 1930s.

Will was born in 1921, eight years before the Great Depression began. His youngest memories were somewhat of a blur. His Baltimore working-class family lived within its means, and, while there were no luxuries, neither he nor his little sister lacked the necessities: a roof, a meal, clean clothes. His father worked steadily at the Dundalk yards for a decade. Optimism was a cheerful energy around his home.

Then, in 1929, a shaky economy began crumbling into a monstrous, worldwide monetary and social disaster. Though Will remembered hearing of the crashing stock market and sensed the taint of fear in adults’ voices, it had no immediate impact on his young perceptions.

His father lost his job in 1930. The reality of life during the Depression seemed to cut Will’s childhood short. It was a time for seriousness. Father took odd jobs around the neighborhood. Mother took work as a seamstress when it was available. There was no time for juvenile behavior. Will accepted additional responsibility with a sense of duty. Everyone in the country, and especially everyone in his home, was expected to carry his or her weight. It was a difficult five years until his father landed one of President Roosevelt’s New Deal jobs building roads and bridges.

Will’s family had made do in the meantime. By scrimping and saving they had managed to keep their home. They hadn’t been ripped apart by displacement; they had survived the worst of the Depression. But Will had toughened some. His smile was less quick to find a place to rest.

Will pushed the impressions of the hard years back into the deeper parts of his psyche as he made the right turn onto Pier Avenue. The high bank along the right-hand side of the tar-and-chip road and the flat swath of grass on the other side would look like an odd natural formation to the uninformed. Will knew this parcel of land wasn’t God’s bowling alley. He remembered the excitement of the trains rumbling into here, into Love Point.

He pulled the Buick into a short gravelled cul-de-sac and parked. Walking along the road, his mind drifted back to 1935. He was a teenager, a young man of 14, when his family took its first trip to Love Point.

For years Dad had thrilled his adolescent children with stories of the Love Point Resort on Kent Island. In the 1920s, a wild time of prosperity and advancement in all facets of life, including leisure, steamboats brought thousands of visitors to the famous resort every summer weekend. Dad spoke with affection of the beaches, the sports, the Eastern Shore cooking. The food was the most vividly described part of his father’s stories.

He described the stately three-story, 30-year-old hotel and the Dreamland Amusement Park behind it. Though it lasted only a short time and no longer existed, the park had offered a boardwalk, merry-go-round, shooting gallery and bowling alley.

Famous and important people passed through regularly. Once, with grandpa, Dad had seen Arnie Oakley herself give an exhibition. Throwing bulbs into the air, she thrilled the crowds by picking them off with a Martin rifle. Will couldn’t believe he was going to a place where someone he had read about had been.

As their trolley neared Baltimore’s Light Street Pier, Will searched the harbor for a glimpse of the ferry boat Philadelphia, affectionately known as “Smokey Josephine.”

Steam packets by then were a thing of the past. Thanks to Henry Ford and his automobiles, ferries were needed for transportation across the Chesapeake Bay.

Smokey Joe was famous around the state as a sturdy and dependable workhorse. Her exploits in the Bay were reported in the papers. Many tales circulated of daring rescues performed by the red-faced lady and her captain, Washington Woodall.

Though years later Will found that he
had not ridden the famous Smoky Joe that day, it didn’t matter. The real Smoky Joe was on a four-year transfer to New York, shuffling back and forth across Hudson Bay. In fact, the boat his family rode that day was Smoky Joe II, the Pittsburgh.

Similar to the original, the boat was a squat, dumpy 200 feet, with 1,800 horsepower and two big black stacks. That first trip across the Bay was to Will like every other that followed it later. He stood as near the bow as possible holding his head high, hoping to sight land. He tasted the moist summer air around him. He hoped he’d get splashed. He was proud to be on board of Smoky Joe.

Walking along a grassy knoll years later, Will realized he was next to the site where the old hotel had sat. He could visualize that great white landmark when he closed his eyes. He could feel how his heart had soared that first day when he rode the ferry up to the pier in the Chester River. This was the place he had heard so much about. This was the Love Point Hotel.

The hotel sat up the beach beyond an expansive lawn. It was awe-inspiring to a young man who had rarely ventured from the neighborhood stoops and corners. A porch wrapped around a high-ceilinged lobby. People sat in wicker chairs fanning themselves with palm fans. Women in long white dresses and men in snappy suits and straw hats bustled across the lawn and in and out of the hotel. Bathers lounged in modest suits on the beach where one of only two phones sat unused. Will felt out of place, as though he didn’t belong.

Inside the hotel, the feelings of unease increased. A large central lobby featured 14 great doors and 19 windows. He counted them. Horsehair sofas and Tiffany glass gave the decor an impressive effect. There was a dining room the size of which he’d never seen before, seating more than 200 people at a table. Will looked forward to his turn at the white linen and silverware.

Will tried to fit in everything during that 1935 weekend at Love Point. There were volleyball games and croquet. The picnic grounds and Lake Mattapex were perfect for exploring. On Saturday night he stood outside the ballroom— which had been the dining room a few short hours earlier—and listened to the Clubmen Orchestra. He watched couples steal into the Lake’s nighttime shadows with a newfound curiosity and fascination.

The food was the best. All you could eat dinner buffets offered up the delicacies the Eastern Shore was famous for the world over. There were fresh Bay fish and crabs cooked ways he’d never dreamed of. Fried chicken so succulent and crispy, it was difficult not to make a meal from it alone. Hot beet biscuits and mashed potatoes smothered in gravy begged for his attention. Local fruits and vegetables, berries and melons; sweet buttery corn on the cob and deep-red tomatoes were too good to be good for you. When his family went back to Baltimore, Will, being a ravenous 14-year-old boy, missed the food the most.

In the summer of 1936, the family came to Love Point for Fourth of July week. Will felt more comfortable this trip, being a regular customer and all. An added attraction this time to all the regular activities at the resort, the Kent Island Business Men’s Association was having a 10-day carnival. Love Point was a beehive with trains and autos and ferries coming and going. Hundreds of people walked the grounds. Locals and tourists alike carried a true air of good humor and geniality.

Being old enough to go his own way, Will soon met boys his own age. A local kid, Philip, whose parents worked at the hotel, and a couple of other guys visiting the family, spent a lot of hours together that week. Philip quickly became a good friend. Between the fair and Philip, Will was loosening up, having a good time.

Philip was a joker and a great story teller. That week he told Will different legends about how Love Point got it’s name. In the oldest, two local Indians from different tribes were forbidden by their warring families to marry. Broken hearted, like Romeo and Juliet the lovers committed suicide. By rowing out into the river and slipping over the side of their canoe into the cold, dark water of the Chester, they immortalized their love.

In other tales, the sailing term “luff”—sailing closer into the wind—evolved to “love” by lazy tongues. The same thing happened to the name of an early settler named Luff.

Will’s favorite of Philip’s tales was about a man who made love to a woman at Love Point, killed her at Bloody Point and buried her at Hell Point. Will’s mother loved the tragic Indian story, but found the murder story distasteful and forbid him to repeat it. That alone, of course, made it his favorite.

Every day the celebration had something new to offer. Will, his friends and a Chesapeake puppy named Busch, would run down to the fairgrounds every morning. Laughing, joking and tussling, the boys would marvel at that day’s excitement.

One day they saw an aerial stunt show with parachute jumping from 1,000 feet. A husband and wife fell to earth clapping one another’s wrists, then parted, pulling their chutes open at the last second, eliciting gasps from astonished spectators.

There was a donkey basketball game and swim races. Philip took Will behind the curtain to watch the beauty contest. The winner won a trip to Atlantic City, and, when she was announced, Philip boldly stated that not only had he rooted for her to win, but that he had once had a crush on him.

Will met Elizabeth on Independence Day. As soon as he could get away from his family that morning, he and the boys had gone down to the water’s edge to watch the speedboat and workboat races. In the early afternoon they watched some innings of a baseball game. The Queenstown Terps beat the Washington, D.C., Red Sox 8-3. Then, after supper, there was boxing. Brothers Bob and Kid Costen took on all comers, giving the 250 fight fans behind the hotel lots to cheer for. And after dark, the fireworks began. In more ways than one.

All week long while running with his pals, Will had kept an eye on Elizabeth, a strawberry redhead with green eyes and faint summer freckles across her face. Will tried all week to muster up the nerve to speak to her. Finally, when he could stand it no more, under the moon and the fiery multicolored explosions, he walked up and stood silently next to her. He couldn’t speak, but, somehow, just standing there was enough. Once their hands touched, and though she pulled away with a shyness equal to his own, he felt something more than skin. And he knew she had felt it too.

The last two days of that summer he
spent much less time with the guys. Will and Elizabeth rented rowboats and paddled around Lake Mattapex. They walked on the beach and sat on the lawn talking in whispers. At night they sat on the big screened porch and drank iced tea while the music from the dancing pavilion wafted over the sweet honeysuckle calm.

For two more summers Will’s family came to Love Point over the Fourth. So did Elizabeth and her family. While Philip could be counted on for fishing and boating and cards, Elizabeth became more of a confidant. She and Will wrote long letters 51 weeks of the year, either remembering the last time they had seen each other or looking forward to the next.

As the young couple strengthened their relationship, Love Point began its slide into history. The trains stopped running in 1938. The ferries soon followed suit. With cars going faster and people finding more and more things to do with their time, Love Point became less of an attraction. With the start of World War II, the country looked at frivolous pastimes with less enthusiasm.

After serving his country, Will chose a college near Elizabeth’s home town in southern Pennsylvania. They got married and bought a house. For over 20 years they raised kids in the same house, and Will went to work every day as a marine engineer. They seldom made it to Kent Island anymore. Usually they just passed through on their way to the family’s vacations at Ocean City.

Philip kept in touch, though. They talked on the phone, and he’d tell Will about the hotel. There were a couple of half-hearted attempts to revive the splendor, but eventually the property became a haven only for weeds and vandals. The lobby windows were busted out and the great doors stolen. Thousands of names were scrawled across the walls in graffiti less offensive than today’s stuff. Even the rumors of hauntings failed to keep out the trespassers.

On Friday, November 12, 1965, Will was working on a project at Sparrows Point. Standing on the end of a pier wearing a hard hat and holding the inevitable clipboard, Will was struck with a sudden sense of dread. Looking southeast across the Bay toward Kent Island, he saw billows of black smoke rolling up into the sky. Somehow, Will knew it was the old hotel.

The next day he and Elizabeth drove down to the Island. Philip met them at the site and told them of the fire. The work of an arsonist, the blaze started a little after 1 p.m. in the northern end of the structure, climbed to the roof and roared across the entire building in a matter of minutes. By the time the fire company could respond, the hotel was an inferno. The best the firemen could do was keep it from spreading. The heat was intense enough to melt the plastic dome lights on the trucks. In 20 short minutes the building collapsed as it’s supports gave in to the fire, sending sparks and flames still farther heavenward. The firemen stayed late into the night to make sure it was under control.

Even while they stood there talking, wisps of smoke rose and coals and embers still smoldered. Elizabeth cried a little when they walked back to the car.

They had considered moving to Kent Island a couple of times over the years. But Elizabeth wanted to stay near the grandkids, and Will couldn’t get excited about the commute. It was decided that when he retired they would begin to look for property on the Shore. Preferably at Love Point.

They never got the chance. Elizabeth died in 1980. Her heart disease had come as a complete shock, having been healthy and strong all her life. Thankfully, the disease took her away with as much mercy and as little pain as it did. To her last day, Elizabeth was a proud woman, full of love and laughter. Will misses her terribly.

He found himself standing at the edge of Lake Mattapex under the cottonwood trees in the slumbering shade. He twirled a stick in the water, watching the phosphorus and mud spin under the movements. The lake made him think of the way his memories worked. On the surface his memory seemed murky, hard to see through. Seldom hinting of the depths and intertwined relationships beneath.

Life is not an aquarium, not something you can stand back and observe from a distance. Most of it will always be hidden from view. All you can hope is that the tides of life bring in more than they take away. Philip had reminded Will how to have a good time, Elizabeth learned about love with him. The old Love Point Resort was one of the most important places in his life. Even if it existed only in his memories.

Will was smiling as he walked back to his car under the midday summer sun. He hadn’t felt like this inside for quite some time. He thought about stopping in to see Phil and about the upcoming Fourth of July. He looked forward to taking the grandkids to the fireworks at the Inner Harbor. The fireworks were still Will’s favorite. All the kids would be with him except the oldest boy, Billy. At 15 Billy wasn’t really interested in hanging out with grandpa and a bunch of kids. He was changing.

Taking one last look before getting in his car, Will thought about how much Love Point had changed too. But he wasn’t melancholy. He felt good, strong, invigorated. Things change. That’s just the nature of things. Change makes life a challenge worth living. Will put the car in gear and drove on into the rest of his life.

Brent Lewis is a member of the Kent Island Heritage Society and an outstanding writer who has contributed numerous items to this newsletter. This short story was previously published by Kent Islander Magazine, June 1992.

Wes Stone, an historic interpreter on lighthouses, was the featured speaker at the June 19 meeting.
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I wish to become a member of the Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc.
Enclosed is my check to cover dues of membership indicated
below: Life Membership ... $250.00  Single Membership ... $10.00

Name ____________________________

Name ____________________________

Street __________________________

Town/State ______________________  Zip __________

Telephone ________________________

Dues and contributions are deductible on income tax returns.
Membership period January 1-December 31

Welcome New Members

Jeffrey Beard
Washington, D.C.

Barbara Olin Crouch
Chester, Maryland

Evelyn Colonna Garcia
Chester, Maryland

Pastor Timothy George
Queenstown, Maryland

William Fisher
Hagerstown, Maryland

Howard P. Johnson Jr.
Upper Marboro, Maryland

Kay Jones
Stevensville, Maryland

Chris and Krista Pettit
Matapexke Restaurant
Stevensville, Maryland

Caryn Trinkle
Stevensville, Maryland

Special thanks to Mark Odell, Stevensville freelance photographer,
for computer-enhancing some very marginal photos for this issue.