

Friday

60% Chance of Thunderstorms

63/39

Saturday

Partly Cloudy

53/36

Sunday

30% Chance of Rain

47/22

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THE CARRBORO CITIZEN

Schools

New store provides teachers school supplies

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JANUARY 10, 2008 ♦ CARRBORO'S COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER ♦ VOLUME I NO. XXXXIII

FREE

PHOTO BY PETER WHITE
Sycamore bark peels off to change the coarser grey-brown-green bark of the lower trunk to a smooth stark white trunk above.

In praise of the mighty sycamore

FLORA

By Ken Moore

Botanical Garden director Peter White loves trees. Chatting with him over a coffee at Open Eye, I mentioned featuring the Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) in *The Citizen's* "Flora" column. He enthusiastically responded with numerous stories.

Its beauty is somewhat obscured by the foliage during the growing season, but in the winter no tree in the Carolinas is like the sycamore with its distinctive bark and habit. The base is somewhat like a typical tree bark. Now, I'll leave it to your imagination to visualize a "typical" bark. As your eye travels up the trunk of the tree, you will notice bark peeling off in large irregular scales colored from gray and tan to green. Further upwards, the trunk becomes very smooth and snow white in color, reaching skyward to the very branch tips. During the winter months, even viewed from speeding vehicles, the stark white stems along riverbanks are unmistakable. It occurs throughout our state — one of our most magnificent native trees.

Single trunk specimens are most commonly seen in urban landscapes. Many of the specimens found in the wild are multi-trunked. Next time you are walking along a stream or river, take time to notice how many of the trees are multi-trunked with two of more stems. Flooding and logging in floodplains cause injuries to trees and loss of main stems. The trees rebound vigorously with "stump sprouts" that mature into dramatic multi-trunk specimens.

Asked for an explanation for the unusual smooth white upper bark, White can describe a number of interesting theories. One is that the white bark evolved to make a surface against which caterpillars were easily picked off as tasty morsels by birds, a clever sycamore adaptation to protect its leaves.

SEE **FLORA**, PAGE 10

Calvander at the crossroads

After months of discussions, the committee studying plans for the town's northern area sends a plan to the board of aldermen

By Kirk Ross
Staff Writer

A new school is several frenzied months of construction away from opening day, as are new homes in developments recently approved nearby, but the intersection of Homestead Road and Old N.C. 86 at Calvander is already a busy place. Steady development has made it much more of a crossroads than ever before and now

the Talberts on the west side of the intersection isn't just hopping at lunchtime.

Last spring, concern about growth in the area led the Carrboro Board of Aldermen to impose a six-month development moratorium and charge a 17-member committee made up of residents, elected officials and town advisory board members with coming up with ideas for how to proceed. The committee's name was a mouthful: the Northern Study Area Plan Implementation Review Committee.

At the heart of concern for shaping growth was a recognition that it can't be all residential — that the area will need some commercial services and amenities.

How to do that became the subject of a long-running

SEE **CROSSROADS**, PAGE 10

PHOTO BY KIRK ROSS
How to shape development along the east and west sides of Old N.C. 86 became a subject of debate among a town committee studying plans for the area.

PHOTOS BY KIRK ROSS

TRIEM TAGGED
The empty Triem building on South Greensboro Street has seen a growing popularity among graffiti painters. On this week's Opinion page, one local resident says it's time to paint over the marks to discourage the practice.

See Guest Column, page 6

Citizens take note! Historic debate at Century Center

By Kirk Ross
Staff Writer

They're promising an old-fashioned political debate in the spirit of the famed Lincoln-Douglas matches. But for Al McSurley, John Heuer and other members of the local Coalition for the Constitution, which is sponsoring the event scheduled for next Tuesday at the Century Center, the stakes are somewhat higher than who will be the next senator from Illinois.

The title of this one is "On the Question of Impeachment," and in addition to the all-American bunting Heuer and McSurely plan to hang a banner reminding those gathered that they're sitting in the cradle of impeachment.

The "convenor" for this debate is County Commissioner Moses Carey and moderating will be professor Hodding Carter III. While an elected dignitary and a professor may seem about right in their roles, the actual debaters might surprise you a bit. Arguing for impeachment is Republican Bruce Fein, a former justice department lawyer who was research director for the congressional inquiry into

the Iran-Contra scandal and recently served on the American Bar Association's task force on presidential signing statements.

Arguing against impeachment is liberal journalist Michael Tomasky, who writes for *New York* magazine and is the author of *Left for Dead*, a study of the intellectual collapse of the American Left.

Both men say they're looking forward to the discussion.

In a recent interview with *The Citizen*, Fein said that he will argue that the president and vice president have so distorted the powers of their office that they must be challenged. The theory the Executive Branch is working on post-9-11, he said, contends "all the planet is a battlefield in and outside the U.S." Bush, Fein said, has created in terms of national policy "a state of nature with war of all against all."

In addition, he said, the administration's obsession with secrecy, Bush's signing statements that indicate he can interpret laws and choose to not obey them and politically motivated vendettas like the mass firing of federal prosecutors necessitate action.

SEE **DEBATE**, PAGE 3

EDITOR'S NOTE:
This story is the seventh in a series that examines issues related to environmental justice and to the fight of the Rogers and Eubanks roads community to be relieved of what they allege to be an undue burden. To read the stories in this series and for other resources, go to www.carrborocitizen.com/main/rogers-road

Who will tell the people?

By Taylor Sisk
Staff Writer

Lest you'd come to doubt, don't. Democracy does still work in America. It's alive and well, in fact, and toiling away right here in Orange County. But pack a lunch; a change of socks. Plan to stay late. You'll then see it well at work.

Of course we all knew this. We were aware that democracy still works when people are willing to work at it. But it's nice to be reminded — as we have been by our county commissioners, by the Rogers-Eubanks Coalition to End Environmental Racism (CEER), by CEER's supporters

and by the people they've come to represent who've refused to be quiet when confronted with what they perceive to be unjust treatment — by those who've stayed late to see that it works. When people are heard, and done deals are no longer quite so done, thank the folks who stayed late, and consider democracy being done.

Consider it — but not for long. Because nothing's yet settled.

After 35 years of carrying what it's felt to be a solid-waste overburden for the good of our community at large, the Rogers-Eubanks community has successfully lobbied the Orange County Board of Commission-

ers to reconsider their decision to site a waste transfer station on Eubanks Road at the location of the current landfill. A search is now underway to determine the best site for a transfer station. Eubanks Road is not off the table as a potential location.

Beyond that particular order of business, though, is the question of whether the county should have a transfer station at all: Should we be shipping our garbage out of county for someone else to deal with?

And: If we were to site another landfill (or landfills), where should they be placed? Are the towns of Chapel Hill and Carr-

boro, where the majority of our waste is generated, prepared for a landfill in their own backyards?

And: What are our long-term plans for reducing our waste and for alternatives to both landfill and transfer?

But at least we're talking, and that's democracy at work.

So what does a community at large — that portion not immediately affected by hazards and/or inconveniences — gain from dialog of this nature?

Plenty, says Gary Grant, a director of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network

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Police say suspect nabbed in break-in, may have been on a spree
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Women writers wooed by Chapel Hill

RECENTLY...

By Valarie Schwartz

Two women came to Chapel Hill to write books. . . .

Betty Smith, a petite brunette Brooklyn native, arrived in 1936 with two adolescent daughters. She had already risen from the brutal poverty of a childhood that included having to quit school after seventh grade to support her mother, brother and sister following the death of her alcoholic father, to marry a law student with political ambitions. While he studied law, she attended enough college courses to earn a degree — but couldn't because she had no high school diploma.

Determined since childhood to be a writer, she accepted an invitation to study with a renowned playwright at Yale after

winning an award for a play she wrote. It became the tipping point for her fragile marriage.

Valerie Yow, a petite blonde Greensboro native, arrived in 1991 after raising two daughters during a career of writing plays and books while teaching history at an Illinois university. After her marriage ended, she felt North Carolina calling her home and bought a cottage from a friend in the town where she'd long hoped to live.

In 1943, seven years after her arrival, Smith wrote a best-selling, very autobiographical novel, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, that was made into a movie, adapted into a Broadway musical and has been reprinted numerous times, most recently in 2006.

Yow blossomed into an artist and has now authored six books, the latest of which, released this month, is *Betty Smith, Life of the Author of A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (Wolf's Pond Press).

"I've now read both and am left impressed by the strength and courage of two women who, bolstered by talent, followed their hearts to produce meaningful literature."

Last September, my neighborhood book club voted to make *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* our February selection — chosen because it met two parameters for selection: it was written by a local author and is a classic. Yow contacted me about her book in December, and I've now read both and am left impressed by the strength and courage of two women who, bolstered by talent, followed their hearts to produce meaningful literature.

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