

THE SYCAMORE ISLANDER

JULY 1998

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JULY MEETING

The July meeting will be held on the Island on Wednesday, July 8th at 8:00pm. A number of questionnaires relating to the "Dogs on the Island" debate have been received with the majority (20-8) holding the line against changing the current rule which prohibits dogs on the Island altogether. Expect a debate and then a vote on the issue. (Remember, according to the By-Laws, only votes counted at the meeting will decide this issue. Questionnaires might gauge sentiment but they don't count formally and proxies are not allowed.)

The **Scenic Easement** issue was also on the agenda and scheduled for a vote but Mac Thornton of the Potomac Conservancy called to postpone discussion until later. Since members at the May meeting were interested in opening up the terms of the easement for further discussion, and the Potomac Conservancy would like to propose their own changes, an ad-hoc committee will need to be formed to work out the details. Members interested in working on this committee should call Tryon Wells at 301-320-6762.

SUNDAY RELIEF CARETAKERS

	<u>9:00AM - 3PM</u>	<u>3PM - DUSK</u>
July 12	Harry Schwartz	Fred and Emma Wright and Catherine Seibert
July 19	Tom and Mary Edsall	Tom and Mary Edsall
July 26	Tom and Mary Edsall	Tom and Mary Edsall
August 2	Richard and Carol Schleicher	John and Anne-Marie Cunningham

SCHEDULED LARGE PARTIES

July 11, 3pm-8pm	Alan Gelb, birthday party, 25 persons
July 19, 2pm-dark	Renee Dunham, dancers/writers, 25 persons
July 25, Noon-6pm	Karl Kosok and Emily Glazer, birthday party, 35 6-yr-olds
August 15, 11:30am-3pm	Jack and Alison Talmadge, 25 persons

ANNUAL SYCAMORE ISLAND REGATTA -- 1:00pm on Saturday, August 1st, 1998



ANNUAL SYCAMORE ISLAND REGATTA



Hear ye, Hear ye!

Your chance to participate in The Third Grand Sycamore Regatta on the Island at 1:00pm on Saturday, August 1st, 1998 has arrived.

All members, their friends and waiting list applicants are welcome.

Be prepared for a good time. The more the merrier!

There will be canoe races, biodegradable balloon pickups, jousting from canoes, novelty relays afloat and ashore, and more.

(there will also be events for landlubbers)

Everyone is invited to a pot luck supper after the contests, followed by awarding of prizes. So bring a dish to pass: proteinaceous, carbohydrateous, or vegefabulous. Drinks will be provided. Would you like to be a race monitor?? A setter-upper?? A skill demonstrator??

Help is needed!!

Please call George and Marcia Loeb at 301-652-4229 right away.



AN ADVENTURE IN CHEVY CHASE

Last fall, as we were bringing the regatta results to the Thomson house for posting in the Islander, we had a most exciting experience. It was after 11pm, right up against the print deadline, and we were just going to put our news into the Thomson's mail slot. Unfortunately, when we arrived on Grafton Street, most of the good residents had gone to bed and had put out their porch lights. Where was number 23? While Marcia walked up the street, George tried to shine the car lights on the numbers. When a small disturbance caused Marcia to turn back, she got a surprise. There was George in the car, surrounded by police cars and glaring foot police. When Marcia arrived at the car, they began asking for IDs and reasons for being on the street. Someone had called us in! It started to rain, and when Marcia wanted to get into the car, the patrolman said, emphatically, "NO-STAY RIGHT THERE!"

We were all getting soggy, including the Regatta news, while the woman who complained, wearing her bathrobe, was questioned, and backyards and front yards were searched for alleged co-conspirators. None were found, and we waited for higher authority to show up and assess the situation. Finally the sergeant appeared and confirmed why the imposing show of force was called for: a number of burglaries had been reported previously in the neighborhood and the residents were nervous. Convinced, finally, that we were merely unconventional newshounds and not overly dangerous, they let us go. We then continued the search for #23 in the dark, but unmolested. The news was not quite hot now, but very wet. However it was dried out by morning, and John printed it.

MORAL: Neither darkness nor rain nor police nor nervous neighbors can stop dedicated reporters from their deadline rounds.

THE "DOGS ON THE ISLAND" DEBATE OF 1998

Question: Dogs on the Island? Yes or No, or on what conditions?

YES

Proposal should be approved, subject to the revisiting of the rule after a year of living with it

(8)

NO

Proposal should be rejected, without a trial

(20)

The authors of all 28 questionnaires received (by the time this *Islander* went to press) took a stand, choosing one or the other opposing point of view. A third option on the questionnaire, a conditional Yes, with comments to describe the conditions, was never used -- except that comments came with about half of the questionnaires anyway. Since many of these comments will provide a starting point for the July 8 Monthly Meeting, they are reproduced here in full (unless otherwise noted), without attribution, and will be brought to the meeting:

"I am a big-time dog-lover and dog owner but I know that some places should be dog free. For one, I don't want Doc to have to be the dog police officer determining which dog is under control/too loud/etc. For another, dog poop is an issue. Finally, we have so many wonderful places to walk dogs around here -- Sycamore Island doesn't have to be one of them." -- Recommends NO

"I suspect it will work well and hope that next year dogs will be welcome on weekends too. It's one of the reasons we use the Island so little." -- Recommends YES

"Dogs are wonderful pets and fine animals, generally, but there is no place for dogs on the Island. They bark, intruding on other people's solitude. Often the barking in my neighborhood is so bothersome that I seek refuge at Sycamore Island!" -- Recommends NO

"We have a golden retriever who likes to canoe with us and go elsewhere to do this. Would be nice to canoe off Sycamore. People bringing dogs should have proof they have the necessary equipment (i.e. scooper, bag, etc.) to cleanup after their pooch when going to the Island." -- Recommends YES

"What happens if a dog owner brings a dog on the Island and a) lets it off the leash; b) doesn't clean up after it; c) it bites someone? (We have a wonderful dog who bit a child suddenly, and contrary to warnings, put her face too close to the dog's face.) Who will be responsible for enforcement?" -- Recommends NO

"I have a dog and would love to bring him to the Island. However I know that is not feasible to keep a dog leashed at all times while running around (especially if one has children). I do not want to have to begin dealing with the possibility of stepping in dog feces, especially when on the Island at night." -- Recommends NO

"I would vote for a clause which designated only Luther Carter's current dog Izzy as acceptable on the Island ... dog owners are unaware and uncaring of the many people who are afraid of dogs." – Recommends NO

"This is not a good idea for the following reasons: Not every member of the club is as enamored or as subjective about dogs as their owners. Some people are allergic to them. A large dog crowding the ferry and shaking water off himself could be unpleasant. An unfriendly, not to mention, attack-dog could be embarrassing and dangerous. Leash laws are commonly ignored. Some dogs try to grope(paw) people they have not even met before. Just as a leash laws are not obeyed, cleanup rules likely would not be either. Even when cleanup is attempted, some is always left behind to stick to a foot. Left behind refuse would be visited by flies and hence to the picnic table. Worst of all, how many owners would carry the dog refuse home with them? My guess is it would be dumped in the river to add to the insensitive treatment already accorded the river. This is probably illegal, and the DNA, supine as it is, might take legal exception to additional dumping in the river. For those who want to have dogs on the Island, it would sweeten the swimming-hole and help the fishing. I request all comments received to be kept on file until this matter is resolved. And said written comments be available to all members." – Recommends NO

"Control includes a dog's barking." – Recommends YES

"If we decide to do this, I would choose both a one-year trial with revisiting and the following change: People must clean up after their dogs any and everywhere on the Island. Our children play all over the Island as do others – not just on 'areas subject to regular use such as foot paths and canoe shed areas.'" – Recommends NO

"I question the impact of any dogs – even leashed – on Island wildlife. What about the effect of a barking dog on nesting geese? This isn't to say nesting geese should always have top priority, but dogs may scare geese and other birds off the Island."
– Recommends NO

"Trouble for caretaker, cats, goslings." – Recommends NO

"We have a dog who is a well-loved member of our family, and we take him many places. However, we are very willing to continue the ban on dogs on Sycamore Island. Why? The Island wildlife and visitors don't need the additional impact of dogs on the Island. We're sure that Luther is a responsible dog owner. Unfortunately, many other dog owners who perceive themselves as responsible and their dogs as well-behaved, are not in touch with the reality of their behavior." – Recommends NO

"We have long supported such an amendment" – Recommends YES

"The dog-owner is likely to have a great temptation to unleash his companion. How many will resist? ... Based on my observations...the larger the dog, the less likely it is to be on a leash. ... The cleanup requirement should cover 100% of the Island. ...Club members are not perfect. Club canoes go out without occupants having life vests, requirements for using the pool table and equipment are ignored. ... Who is going to enforce...the regulation?" – Excerpted from 2-page letter, Recommends NO

NOTES FROM THE ISLAND

The hot wet weather has certainly brought out the skeeters... and in fact bugs and spiders of all sorts in much greater profusion. Last year it seemed to be always pleasant outside around dusk, but this year is different. Bring repellent if you plan to stay late in the afternoon.

The river seems to be almost completely recovered from the 1996 floods. There are lots of water plants and lots of fish. Paul Stanton has reported seeing at least 20 great blue herons feeding at separate places along the river above Sycamore, and this would support the rumors of a rookery up at wide water. There has been a lot of fishing this year, and the reports suggest that there are many small mouth bass, which are not large, and many bluegill, which are big. Catfish have even been caught with surface lure.

One incident I have been meaning to report has solved the mystery of why the geese sometimes fly up to the roof of the canoe shed and create a ruckus. Sometimes it gets positively loud down here, as when I went out one day to investigate a commotion of intermingled goose and crow sounds. There were goslings on the open lawn, and about four black birds (they seemed too large to be simple crows) were perched on lower limbs around the lawn. The black birds would swoop down and make passes at the smallest goslings, actually much the same behavior one would expect with a falcon or hawk. They seemed to work together, coming in quickly at frequent intervals from different directions. Of course, this had about 20 adult geese all squawking madly. I did not see any goslings carried away, but almost, and the process seemed well rehearsed by the black birds and could certainly explain why the number of goslings diminished slightly in the last two weeks of May. It could also explain why families with goslings stopped wandering around the open lawn areas of the Island. Finally, a couple of geese flew to the top of the canoe shed and strutted and honked challengingly. This put them above the "swoop zone" where they could threaten to drop down on any black bird making a pass, and so the black birds left.

The daylilies were out in June and the color was riotous. The Island was decked out from one end to the other. This is especially gratifying to the Caretaker because last year they hardly bloomed at all. At first I presumed that the floods of the year before had dropped so much sediment that the soil level had changed on many plants, causing them to spend a year readjusting themselves. Now I am of the theory that the floods are good for certain clumped perennials because of the more fluid characteristics of the top several inches of soil when beneath flood waters. It seems that those daylilies on the lower reaches of the Island are not as congested in their clumps... the beds are as though divided... as though when under water the top inches of soil is more the consistency of a thick soup in which things can rearrange themselves, and that the daylily roots flex and push away from each other. The bed near the canoe shed, which has only been under water twice during the 1996 floods, is in more need of dividing and is unlike the beds. Of course, this year the daylilies have benefited from some serious weeding. However, this has mostly been inadvertent, the result of last year's mid-season war against the stinging nettle, which has continued this year. The only weeding dedicated for the sake of the daylilies themselves has been to pluck out the jewel weed from the front of certain beds. Everyone should have seen the massive daylily bed now accessible by the new "beaver trail." Fisher persons... beware!!!! Last June 9 a Ranger was noted checking the catch of a fisherman sitting on our towpath steps. The fisherman was an older person, who professed to anyone that

came by that he spoke not a word of English, and seemed to convince some that he was Russian. What little Russian I heard convinced me that he was more likely a poor or homeless person just wanting to be left alone. He sat on the steps for many hours, and I saw him pull in at least one catfish. It seemed from a distance that the Ranger might have written him a ticket (no license?), and certainly he inspected the plastic bag in which the caught fish were kept. So make sure your own paperwork is in order if you come to fish... they are checking.

On the evening of 17 June we were visited by Bill Jackson, who had been a teenage caretaker in the early fifties. Caught reminiscing on the towpath, Bill was invited over and described a much different Sycamore Island Club from his youth. The man who lived here at the time "was not a caretaker but a gentleman," who was a Harvard trained lawyer that had retired from practicing patent law. Bill would come down and do essential caretaking, ferrying, and anything else that needed doing for 75 cents an hour. One of the first things he asked about was the pool table, on which he had been taught by the gentleman, and was especially fond of "bottle pool," where a leather covered bottle was placed on the table with two balls. The gentleman lived in a shack behind the clubhouse, where he frequently played classical music, and from which Bill credits his own love of the genre. He was under the impression that there were only about 50 members, only canoeists (and maybe fishermen?), and that there were no swimmers or picnickers on the Island. No one wore shorts, only slacks and wide brimmed hats. Bill now manufactures specialty computers at a factory in Ohio to which he commutes from a large farm nearby. So all you kids come on down and help... the first steps on the path to greatness can begin here.

Swimmers rejoice... Tryon Wells has come down and installed a new ladder on the swimming float... not the swimming "dock" which is near the shore... but the new wooden float anchored out mid-river. The ladder is identical to the one on the swimming dock. Even more important, the geese are around but in large flocks, are not territorial, and thus there are no pairs nesting on the floats and docks and leaving goose poo about. The water temperature is up to 81 degrees, but boaters and swimmers should take note that the river has been over 4 feet for the last three weeks with no sign of abatement and there is a lot of current.

Monday, 22 June, was the third day in a row that the park Police have come by policing the towpath. On the previous Saturday Officer Bill Thomas of the Mounted Patrol came by for the third time during that week, but on Sunday another officer came by on a three wheeler motorcycle, and Monday an actual patrol car came by on the towpath. All of this activity is probably the result of two reported incidents of indecent exposure during the last two weeks, and about ten days before Officer Thomas surprised and apprehended one of the perpetrators. I have of course called the Park Police to give positive reinforcement to the increased patrolling, and the Club might do a letter of support. Regarding the Sunday, 14 June incident in which a man was exposing himself indecently on our own iron bridge: The man was black (coffee), with black hair, 30 to 40 years old, 190 lbs. but round and puffy as though out of shape, wearing green shorts and white socks with white running shoes. He exposed himself at 1 PM on Chain Bridge and at 2 PM on our iron bridge. Please call Officer Bill Thomas if you have any info at (202) 472-3760.

It has come up that one reason we have not had more Park Police coverage along our part of the Park is that the barn/mounted police station at Glen Echo was taken from the mounted police

while they were doing temporary duty in Atlanta during the Olympics. Research has suggested that this was done in a politically deceitful and unethical manner. A promise was made to provide another facility at Carderock, but this seems to be forgotten. As there has been an alarming increase in several categories of incidents in our area, some Members have decided to get out the "squeaky wheel" until this issue is resolved, and interested parties can contact the Island for more information.

Once as I went to answer the bell this month, I was surprised to see a dog tied up on the ferry. A Member and his family were having a picnic on the Island, but the Member himself had come late. I had not seen the dog waiting on the towpath with the Member, and a son had offered to go and get his father. The Member also answered the bell and hurried to the ferry, volunteering to handle the ferry while the dog was tied up on it, and explained that while usually he left his dog tied up on the towpath while he came to the Island to get his canoe before going to Ruppert's Island, on this occasion he was late and wanted to grab a bite to eat first... and after all, he pointed out... while tied up on the ferry the dog was not really on the Island. I had to admit this was true, but I also considered it to be high drama and great fun to see which arriving Members might ring the bell while the dog was on the ferry. Several arrived and shared the ferry with the dog, but it was a very nice dog and fortunately none seemed to mind, and before long dog and Member happily canoed off to Ruppert's as per their usual program. When I asked the Member later if he had responded with his dog questionnaire, he said that he had not, that he was actually ambivalent about the issue as he never actually brought his dog on the Island.

MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES

June 10, 1998

Attendance: Tryon Wells, David Winer, Susan Garbini, Betty Burchell, Judy Lentz, Bill Bays, Norman Metzger, Barbara Kraft, Renee Dunham, Marcia Loeb, George Loeb, Doc Taliaferro, Phyllis Taliaferro, Holly Syrrakos

President Tryon Wells called the meeting to order at 8:13 p.m.

The membership approved the Minutes of the previous meeting.

Communications: Susana Membrino phoned in information about a hearing on July 9 at 12:30 p.m. regarding the cell phone antenna tower in Virginia. The National Capital Planning Commission staff will make a report. She will follow-up and report to the Club.

The EPA has the Club listed as part of its watershed protection network. Judy Lentz will be the contact person and will fill out the forms.

Financial Secretary's Report: On behalf of Jinny Jones, Tryon reported \$1,840 in deposits from May 14 through June 10. About half of the money came from dues. There is a \$7,687.70 in the checking account.

Membership Secretary's Report: On behalf of Peter Winkler, Barbara Kraft reported 156 regular members (Art and Arline Gutnick being reinstated). There are 141 on the waiting list. There were 6 guest cards issued, making 50 for the year. New addresses are:

Miklos Kertesz & Eva Tarnok
7800 Whittier Blvd.
Bethesda, MD 20817-6646

Richard Jung & Janice Anderson
2908 Cortland Pl. NW
Washington, DC 20008

Tom & Molly Healy
5905 Harwick Rd.
Bethesda, MD 20816

Christopher & Michelle Hutter
5205 Wyoming Rd.
Bethesda, MD 20816

Gordon & Linda Phillips
6000 Cromwell Dr.
Bethesda, MD 20816

James Hess & Betsy Cody
803 Kenmore St.
Arlington, VA 22201

Caretaker's Report: Phyllis and Doc's VW Golf, parked on Walhonding, was vandalized (again!). There were some suggestions about solutions—many of which they had already tried. On another subject, Doc thought it was time to buy more BBQ grills.

House Committee's Report: Susan Garbini received estimates on painting the women's locker room and replacing window panes in the clubhouse. She suggested painting as a volunteer activity at a workfest. Tryon volunteered to replace the window panes. Susan will get tables for the deck and will look into buying grills.

Canoe Chair's Report: David Winer reminded folks that the Club canoes need to be cleaned out once in awhile, especially when there's been a lot of mud. Take a bucket and a sponge and wash them out if you've used them and notice they're dirty.

Old Business:

Guest Card Rule Change: The following change was passed unanimously.:

6. Guest Cards

Upon the request of an applicant for membership who has deposited his or her application fee, the Membership Secretary may issue to such applicant a guest card valid for the year in which issued. Holders of such cards and members of their immediate families shall be entitled to the use of all facilities of the Island, subject to the By-Laws and Standing Rules, between November and April, inclusive, and from Monday to Friday inclusive during the remainder of the year, except for national holidays, and may pay an additional fee for the use of a canoe rack, if available. The Financial Secretary shall collect from each guest card applicant, prior to issuance of the card, a fee equal to one-half the regular annual dues. For new applicants, the fee is prorated to the nearest whole month of admission to the waiting list. [To take effect Jan., 1999.]

Scenic Easement: To be discussed at the July meeting.

Dogs on the Island: John Thomson will collate the questionnaires (from the June Islander). Peggy Thomson called with the vote running 8-4 against at the time of the meeting.

New Business:

Sunday Caretaker: Doc cited the recent case of a Sunday caretaker who hosted a large party at the same time as s/he volunteered to be caretaker. The general opinion is that this doesn't work. One simply cannot both host a party and run the ferry, the primary job of the Sunday caretaker.

Sycamore Island Regatta: George and Marcia Loeb are planning the Regatta on Sat., Aug. 1 in the afternoon. All members, including those on the waiting list, are invited for water and land games and snacks.

Sunday Caretaker Coordinator: The Club will need a volunteer to coordinate the Sunday caretaking. Norman Metzger leaves this job at the end of Sept.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Next Meeting: The July meeting will be on the 8th at the Island, water level permitting.

Holly Syrrakos, Recording Secretary

YOU ARE THE CARETAKER WHEN THE CARETAKER'S NOT ON THE ISLAND

The caretaker must occasionally go the bank, or dentist, or hardware store. Do you know what to do when you arrive and find the ferry locked up? Do you know the combination to the lock? *Remember that you become the de facto caretaker when you are alone on the island, and can not go swimming or canoeing or do other things out of earshot of the bell unless you return the ferry to the towpath first and lock it up again.* A red book is kept upstairs with emergency numbers, membership lists, caretaker instructions, Club rules and by-laws, extra ferry sign in sheets, and even a fascinating article about the history of the Club that is guaranteed to entertain anyone waiting out a rainstorm.

HELP WANTED!!

Weekend Relief Caretaker Coordinator -- Norm Metzger is hanging up his spurs at the end of this summer having done a superlative job of scheduling members for Sunday relief caretaking this past year. A new member-volunteer is needed to coordinate the weekend relief caretakers for the coming year. It's a wonderful way to meet and talk to other members of the club. Most members enjoy caretaking for a shift on Sundays just about any time of the year and it is rarely difficult to find coverage for a weekend even at the last minute. But someone needs to do the coordinating. Please call the Captain, John Matthews (301-229-0234) to volunteer.

FOR THE RECORD

Hours for Relief Caretaker Shifts by Month

<i>January</i>	11am-2pm	2pm-dark	<i>July</i>	9am-3pm	3pm-dark
<i>February</i>	11am-2pm	2pm-dark	<i>August</i>	9am-3pm	3pm-dark
<i>March</i>	10am-2pm	2pm-dark	<i>September</i>	10am-3pm	3pm-dark
<i>April</i>	10am-3pm	3pm-dark	<i>October</i>	10am-2pm	2pm-dark
<i>May</i>	10am-3pm	3pm-dark	<i>November</i>	10am-2pm	2pm-dark
<i>June</i>	9am-3pm	3pm-dark	<i>December</i>	11am-2pm	2pm-dark

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERIMENTAL MAILING FORMAT

Actually, the editorial process and the preparation of content for this *Islander* has undergone no change whatsoever. What is different is the way that it is folded and mailed. This method of folding and mailing has the virtue of costing the club considerably less per month since we pay only for photo-copying at the printer. Folding the newsletter and then applying the labels and stamps is also less work than the current method of (1) folding, (2) stuffing, then (3) sealing specially bought envelopes -- after which, the (4) labels still need to be applied. In addition, the club pays the printer to maintain a database of member's addresses (the club's third database after the Membership and Financial Secretary's lists), which seems needlessly redundant. The cost of the stamps is the same in either case as the club doesn't qualify for special postal non-profit status. But the potential savings should still be considered since they may approach halving the annual current cost of the newsletter (currently around \$7,000.00/yr).