



The Sycamore Islander

August 1999

Volume 78, No. 8

Here Ye, Hear Ye: Regatta Notice

The annual Sycamore Grand Regatta will be held this year on Labor Day, September 6th, at 1:00 p.m. There will be water events such as the Round the Island Race, the Bag Pickup, the Drowned Rat Relay, the Sink or Swim Relay, the Jousting Tournament and more. For landlubbers, there will be the usual Raw Egg Toss and Three Legged Race for starters. So, put the date on your calendar and COME ONE, COME ALL. This means all Sycamore **regular members and wait-listers too**. Prizes, fun, and splashes galore!!! George and Marcia Loeb are providing the specialized game equipment. They need assistants— call the Loeb's to volunteer at (301) 652-4229. Bring a favorite dish for the the pot-luck picnic afterwards if you wish.

August Meeting

Officially (not counting spouses) only 8 members attended July's meeting – two shy of the quorum requirement. No business was transacted.

The August meeting will be held on the Island on August 11. Island usage will still be the main discussion topic and large parties in particular. One unintended benefit of the lack of a July meeting is that the results of the Large Party surveys are published in this *Islander* (see elsewhere in this issue), in time for August meeting participants to use the data for discussion and debate. As always, all members are encouraged to attend and bring their ideas and energy to the issues.

Large Party Rules

A few members have requested that **Large Party rules be published in the Islander since they are not sure of the details**. Rule infractions that occur during large parties are not always just large party rules but also general conduct rules. The following is a summary of rules most relevant to large party events.

General Conduct Rules

- The host members are responsible for the conduct of their guests and any rule infractions their guests may commit.

(continued)

The Sycamore Islander is a monthly newsletter of the Montgomery Sycamore Island Club. Articles, photographic essays, drawings, announcements, letters to the editors— any materials of interest to the membership and waiting list— are welcome and should be sent to the Editors, Jane and David Winer, 5927 Onondaga Road, Bethesda, MD 20816. Text and graphics may be sent as email attachments to davidwiner@erols.com in all common formats. The deadline for inclusion in a particular issue is receipt at the Editors' address ten days prior to the second-Wednesday monthly meeting of the club. **Earlier submissions can be expected to**

Large Party Rules (continued)

- The host members are responsible for the conduct of their guests and any damage to club property their guests may cause.
- No alcohol.
- No dogs.
- No guns.
- No archery.
- No amplified audio equipment.
- No cutting of trees, shrubs, flowers, etc.
- No staying past dark unless it is an approved camping event.
- No taking out canoes from the canoe shed except your own.
- No setting of fires except in stoves, fireplaces or grills.
- Pack your trash out.
- Leave the Island and clubhouse as you found it. Put everything away in its proper place.
- Don't make any noise in the clubhouse after 10pm or before 7am the following morning.
- Children under 12 not permitted to use the pool table unless directly supervised.

Rules Specific to Conduct of Large Parties

- The host member must attend the entire party.
- Large parties cannot be longer than 6 hours.
- Large parties cannot have more than 35 guests unless approved at a monthly meeting.
- Overnight camping groups must leave by 11am the following morning.
- Host member is responsible for all guests signing in on ferry or otherwise signing a liability waiver. A liability form must be signed by an adult of every guest child.

Rules Specific to Large Party Scheduling

- No group of 10 or more guests is permitted on the Island unless it has been scheduled as a large party in advance.
- Notice of weekend large parties must be announced in the *Islander* in advance.
- Weekday large parties must be scheduled one week in advance but need no *Islander* notice.
- Only one large party may be scheduled per weekend (on the odd-numbered day).
- A large party is not considered scheduled until after

the fee is paid and all forms submitted.

- Only one large party may be scheduled at a time.
- The Party Supervisor may require hosts to appoint assistants for large parties with children.

Recent History of Large Parties

I haven't formed a large party committee yet since I feel that its purpose would be to dig up all the relevant details regarding large parties in the past few years and present that information at a monthly meeting for debate and vote. Instead, quite by chance, I have recently had the benefit of having at my house about 4 copies of each past *Islander* dating back to January 1984, and the personal time to research large party frequency and size over that time period. In a sense, this research would be the work of the committee and it is now done. Here are some findings (the following party totals are only those scheduled in past *Islanders* -- how many really happened is anybody's guess):

In 1984, the club required that advance notice of all weekend large parties be printed in the *Sycamore Islander*. However, the *Islanders* between 1984 and 1987 had so many gaps in summer months where no large parties were listed at all, those years cannot be considered statistically reliable. It is also likely that the data between 1988 and 1993 suffers from some underreporting, though not as serious. It is significant that the club archives do contain a handwritten report on yellow legal paper, that totals the number of large parties for 1988 at 22, not the 16 I found scheduled in the 1988 *Islanders*.

The number of Large Parties scheduled since 1988 (as

1998 - 16	1992 - 18	1996 - 19
1989 - 15	1993 - 20	1997 - 37
1990 - 10	1994 - 20	1998 - 21
1991 - 21	1995 - 17	1999 - 15 (so far)

reported in past *Islanders*):

Therefore, since 1990...

... the AVERAGE NUMBER of scheduled large parties during the decade has probably stayed "steady" at between 20 and 30 large parties per year. Weekday parties are not included in any of the years, and some underreporting in the

Islander of weekend parties is suspected in the early 1990s. The exceptional year is 1997 with 37 large parties. Though I tend to feel that there has been a slight increase in the average number of large parties in recent years, perhaps by as much as 3 or 4 per year, our data is too poor to prove or disprove it. This year will probably fall in the 20-30 range also.

... the AVERAGE SIZE of the large parties is smaller. A cap of 35 on the number of guests was made a rule in 1995 (to host a party larger than 35 requires approval at a monthly meeting). **The number of scheduled parties of 40 or more guests:**

1990 through 1994: 16

(half of these parties scheduled over 60 guests)

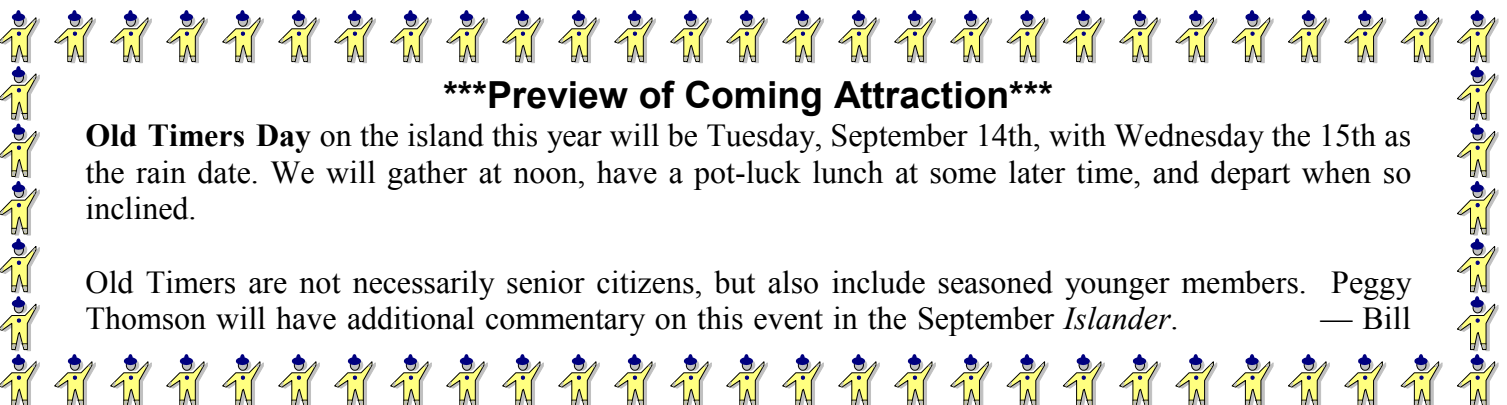
1995 through 1999: 6

(none of these parties scheduled over 60 guests)

We've been here before... and not so long ago...

In 1994, an ad-hoc Large Party Committee was assigned to look into these issues and make recommendations. The committee instead became deadlocked and both sides presented their arguments in the *Islander*. Finally in a vote at the April 1995 meeting, "guidelines" were approved that contained most of the current rules. Last year, in the general updating of the Bylaws and Standing Rules, these guidelines were formally incorporated and are the rules we have today.

In light of the interest displayed at tackling these issues at the July meeting (no quorum), and before traveling down the Large Party Committee path again, I feel the club currently has all the data it needs in this *Islander* and last month's issue, coupled with the results of the Large Party survey, to make recommendations for any rule or enforcement changes. I will therefore wait for any specific proposals to be made before pursuing this as an agenda topic at future meetings.



*****Preview of Coming Attraction*****

Old Timers Day on the island this year will be Tuesday, September 14th, with Wednesday the 15th as the rain date. We will gather at noon, have a pot-luck lunch at some later time, and depart when so inclined.

Old Timers are not necessarily senior citizens, but also include seasoned younger members. Peggy Thomson will have additional commentary on this event in the September *Islander*. — Bill

Call for Drawings

We know you are out there... we just don't know who you are. You are the folks who can put pen and ink (or charcoal, or paint, or pencil, or crayon, or whatever) to paper, creating artwork for the *Sycamore Islander*. We really do have a place for works on paper— from hasty sketches to more serious efforts. The newsletter is meant for sharing with the club, by the club. So far we have received good response in the form of news, articles and photos, all materials that the members and waiting list have contributed on their own initiative, or when "commissioned." Artwork, on the other hand has lagged. We want more!

We see different uses for such pictures: first, we all like to look at artworks that kindle our interests. This newsletter being an organ of the club, there are scads of island-related subject matters that would delight the readers as objects worthy of inclusion along with the usual verbal material. We would like to include many such works as features.

A second need, if we may be candid, is to fill spaces to round out the page layouts. Obviously, the materials on hand don't always exactly fit the columns and pages of a particular issue. We would like to have a backlog of small sketches and drawings that we could size as needed to create more attractive page layouts. Well, yes, we could use "clipart," as canned computer pictures are termed. But originality is called for here.

You needn't be concerned about size since we scan any page-size drawing and enlarge or reduce as needed. Ordinarily, the feature-type works will be attributed, but if you wish we can use only initials, or make them entirely anonymous. Take your sketchpad with you on your next visit to the island.

— The Editors

Large Party Survey Results

The following is a tally of the responses from regular members (33), senior members (11), honorary members (2), applicants on the waiting list (6) and anonymous (9). The total number of surveys received was 61 out of an *Islander* mailing list of about 400. Some respondents did not answer all of the questions which explains why some numbers do not total precisely.

1. The club currently allows one Large Party per weekend. **Large Parties** should be allowed ...

As they are now (one per weekend)	33
Only one weekend a month	7
Only two weekends a month	16
Twice per weekend	2
No restriction	1

2. The club currently limits a **Large Party** to 35 people or less. **Large Parties** should be limited to ...

As they are now (35 people)	31
30 people	3
25 people	9
20 people	6
15 people	1
over 35 people	8

3. The club currently limits the time allowed for a **Large Party** to 6 hours or less. **Large Parties** should be limited to ...

As it is now (6 hours)	36
5 hours	5
4 hours	16
3 hours	1
2 hours	0
over 6 hours	2

4. The club currently may suspend a member's **Large Party** privileges for two years for an infraction of the **Large Party** rules. How should the club enforce **Large Party** rules? (Place the number corresponding to the level of enforcement you think desirable in each of the square brackets [] below.


- 1) Infraction too petty. Club should relax and "get a life."
- 2) Club should call member and complain.
- 3) Club should suspend member's privileges to host Large Parties for some period of time.
- 4) Club should suspend member's privileges to bring any guests for some period of time.
- 5) Club should suspend member's privileges to visit the club for some period of time.
- 6) Club should expel member.

	Enforcement level for 1 st time infraction						%
	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	
If the party goes too long (1 hour or more)	12	23	18	1	0	1	35
If the party goes too long (less than an hour)	30	18	5	0	0	0	9
If the party has more guests than scheduled (7 or more than expected)	5	26	19	0	1	1	40
If the party has more guests than scheduled (less than 7 more than expected)	21	22	12	0	0	0	22
If the party leaves party rubbish on the Island	1	17	24	12	1	1	68
If the member-host does not attend the party	1	6	23	9	7	11	88
If the member-host comes late or leaves during the party	3	17	16	10	6	5	65
If the member or guests take out unauthorized canoes from the canoe shed	1	15	21	10	7	3	72
If the member or guests do not sign in	4	33	13	3	2	0	33
If the member or guests consume alcohol at the party	4	12	20	8	8	5	72
If the member or guests play amplified audio equipment	3	16	21	7	6	3	66
If the member or guests bring a dog or dogs on the Island	3	13	17	8	12	2	71

% of respondents that thought 1st time infraction should result in suspension of a member's privileges



	Enforcement level for 2 nd time infraction						%
	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	
If the party goes too long (1 hour or more)	2	8	23	6	5	3	79
If the party goes too long (less than an hour)	14	17	10	0	3	1	31
If the party has more guests than scheduled (7 or more than expected)	1	9	19	9	6	2	78
If the party has more guests than scheduled (less than 7 more than expected)	6	13	18	4	4	1	59
If the party leaves party rubbish on the Island	0	1	16	11	14	4	98
If the member-host does not attend the party	0	2	9	7	13	13	95
If the member-host comes late or leaves during the party	2	3	13	7	12	9	89
If the member or guests take out unauthorized canoes from the canoe shed	0	3	10	11	10	11	93
If the member or guests do not sign in	0	16	15	7	8	2	70
If the member or guests consume alcohol at the party	1	7	7	11	6	13	82
If the member or guests play amplified audio equipment	1	6	9	9	15	6	85
If the member or guests bring a dog or dogs on the Island	0	6	6	7	19	7	87

% of respondents that thought 2nd time infraction should result in suspension of a member's privileges 

4. Should the club have a club Officer or Supervisor present during at least part of every Large Party?

Yes-12 No-33

5. What is the allowable nature of a Large Party on Sycamore Island? Mark all you would allow or disallow.

	Allow	Disallow
Family and friends	59	1
Office parties	34	23
Classes	44	15
Company retreats	22	37
Member sponsors party for a friend and friend's guestlist	10	48
Member sponsors party for a friend's wedding (or other ceremony)	14	43
Member advertises publicly and charges guests	0	60
Member awards attendance at Sycamore Island party as prize in fundraising effort	9	52
Member weddings	58	2
Member memorial services	59	1

Notes on the Survey Results

A few members were confused about the construction of Question #4, the enforcement question. Quite a few others simply elected not to give answers to the second column on what the club should do regarding a second-time infraction. The results therefore show significantly fewer responses than the total number of surveys received. This is also true for Question #5 (whether an officer should be present for at least part of a large party) and may owe its meager response (45 out of 61) to its unfortunate position at the bottom of an otherwise busy survey page.

Summary of the Large Party Survey's Results

- The current rules limiting the number, size and duration of large parties is generally endorsed (63%). A minority (37%) would like further restrictions.
- Some rules clearly stand out for stricter enforcement than others. A majority (65%-72%) has little tolerance for alcohol, dogs, boom-boxes, leaving rubbish or taking out unauthorized canoes – even if it is a first offense. *And woe to those who do not attend all or part their own large party (88%)!* On the other hand, a majority is actually tolerant if a party goes a little long (65%) or has a few more guests than expected (60%).
- A majority (75%) do not feel it is necessary for a club officer to be present for even part of a large party. A couple of respondents noted in the margins that it was too much of an imposition to be asked of the club's officers.
- Large parties can be for family and friends (98%), office parties (60%), classes (75%), member weddings (97%) and member memorial services (98%). Parties considered inappropriate, by wide margins, are sponsoring a friend's party (83%), sponsoring a friend's wedding or other ceremony (75%), making money on a party (100%), or fundraising (85%). (There are no current rules that prohibit any large party on the basis of its type or purpose.)
- The margins of many surveys contained notes. One note pointed up the divide in the club on rule interpretation: "limit [on party size should be] smaller because you will always have more [guests]." Too some, just being in the compliance ballpark is good enough, while others see each infraction of a rule as something broken, not bent.

Notes From The Island

The big news this month has been the security problems we have had resulting from teenagers coming over to the Island from the rope swing area along the towpath. Paddles and inner tubes have been stolen and we have had one canoe theft and one attempted canoe theft. The stolen canoe was recovered after it was abandoned at the rope swing area. A special mention in the dispatches to Susan Benson, who, during a party she held on the Island a few days later observed a strange teenager taking a canoe out and reported it to the Caretaker, who then confronted the youth while the canoe was being carried down to the river. The police were called for the second time in a week. His story was that while hanging out at the rope swing near the towpath he saw a canoe and asked where it came from and was told he could “get one from the Island” where there was a “rec center.” He claimed that many groups from all the schools used the rope swing, that the “word was out,” and certainly it seems that way, as there is a constant stream of youths on the towpath all day long, and at least three nights a week the rope swing area is a party site until well after midnight.

One result of the theft of inner tubes is that Swimming supervisor Ann Kip purchased five new ones, and John Krasny contributed three new “noodles.” Near the swimming float are buoys attached by Peter Jones to mark a barely submerged tree trunk.

I was fortunate to encounter in the parking lot a trapper from Adcock Trapping Service, the same folks that removed the beaver from the tidal basin earlier this year. He suggested that our mysterious animal sightings were of a river otter and not a nutria. He knows otters are in the river but seldom seen, while nutria are

no closer than the Eastern shore. Peter Jones recalls that early in his tour of duty he and Holly found a largish,

beaver sized animal dead along the river and even took a photo to satisfy himself it was an otter. Later that same day, seeing surveyors on the towpath, I went across to chat and learned that the large sewer pipe that runs along the side of the canal is going to be replaced. The work has already started in Georgetown and will progress all the way up the canal, past the Island. They could not say when the work would get this far or if the canal was being drained and torn up to get at the pipe.

Despite the drought, color is returning to the Island as many of the late summer perennials are coming in to bloom. We are coming into a “yellow” season dominated by the meadow sunflowers and others. Walnuts and hickory nuts are starting to fall. The Paw Paw trees that cover much of the up river end of the Island had so many flowers and so much promise in the Spring, but there is not a fruit to be found anywhere, except, if one looks closely, on the very

large tree one can look down at from the top of the stairs on the iron bridge. Those of you that do not venture onto the up-Island paths should give it a try. The paths extend all the way to the tip of the Island, through Butterfly Lane and past where several stands of cardinal flowers are blooming. The established perennials must have root systems to the water table because along the paths they tower over normal sized folks. Butterflies are everywhere and a soft, sweet scent lays over the tip of the Island.



—Photo by Peter Jones

—Doc

The BremanTown Musicians visit Low Water

Betty Burchell has been studying ferries across the Potomac below Great Falls, as some may have heard. This has required numerous forays to visit landings, rock walls, cable ends, libraries and archeologists. A couple weeks ago she and Virginia Payne and John Matthews and I went out to check out the Lock 10 rock walls at low water. Virginia is a long-time Cabin John resident who has a memory of how things were before the parkway, when Cabin John was a sleepy forgotten village. She lives near Jack Lorenzo's house, who was a famous prize-fighter in the Twenties, close to where you now drive under the Parkway to get to the Canal. At Lock 10 we inspected the edge of the slough which has dressed stones. This may have been the side of a road along the river. At the north end of Swainson's Island there is also dressed stone along the edge of a suspicious cut. There used to be a high bridge to Swainson's Island and Mr. Swainson, of dubious reputation, used to grow corn there. But the River! Only a few of the deep channels have water in them. The bottom of the river here is riven with sharp ridges of metagreywack, not really promising ferry territory. It is probable that the river in Colonial times had a more gentle bottom and a fording road of logs could have crossed at this place. The deforestation of the watershed has had pronounced effects on the river approaches. On the Virginia side an old roadbed leads down to the river from Georgetown Pike.

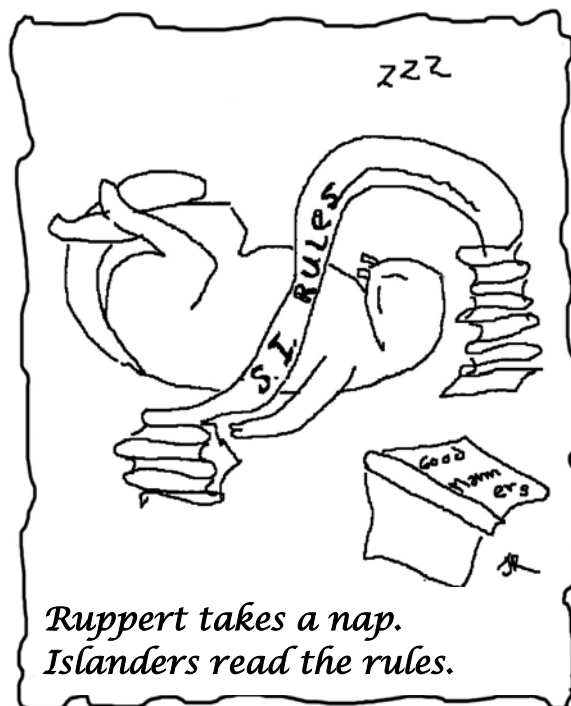
We then drove down to Lock 8 and checked out the real estate along the river. John remembers when he kept a canoe with the lockkeeper at Lock 8 and where the good channels are at different water levels. At normal water the river bed is full and only a few rocks outcrop now. The river here is really not visible! Only a half-mile of jagged rocks show, so that the

Virginia side looks quite close.

All along the way we chatted with everyone we met, hoping to find an old hand who would have some new old memories. Betty is good at ferreting out people and she found a fellow who promised to show her some more cable lashing points along Mather Gorge. We also met a woman who had seis pescados. It was a very successful outing and we all promised to get out to the Indian Weirs before the water comes back into the channels. I believe the level was 2.59' that day... lower than any time in the past 30 years.

—Johnna Robinson, Official Foray Photographer

Ruppert



Cartoon by Johnna Robinson

July Caretakers: Truth be told

Last month, we printed an incorrect list of Relief Caretakers. To set the record straight as to who did indeed serve the club as Relief Caretakers in July, we list them herewith:

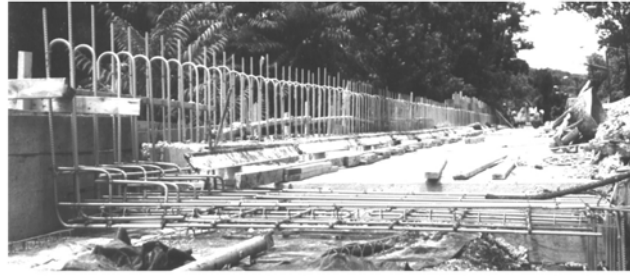
4 July: Martha Burgess and Al Brown; Bill Bays.

11 July: Eric Simpson; Chris and Lisa Klieforth

18 July: John Crook; John Krasny

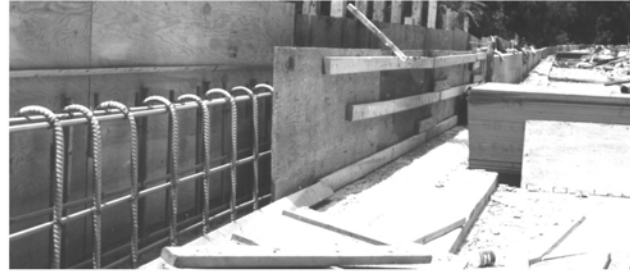
All roads lead to Sycamore Island...

Before any work.



Reinforcing bars for new wall, plus new sub-roadbed.

Digging the roadbed away.



Readying forms for new inner wall, prior to pouring.

Upper layer of old wall removed.



Inner wall finished, adding facing stones recycled from old wall.

Pouring new foundation on old wall's sub-level.



Placing cap-stones recycled from old wall.

Laying reinforcing bars under new roadbed, next to wall.



Finished product.
Beautiful!

Members from parts of the District and Virginia have had their normal access to Sycamore Island blocked along Canal Road since the winter of 1998. The crumbling wall between the road and the C&O Canal is being replaced by a much stronger and exceedingly handsome one. These photos, made in mid-July, show some of the major construction operations being carried out. The wall runs for three and a half miles from Chain Bridge to Foxhall Road.

It may seem to be taking forever, but when you see what work is involved, and notice the superb masonry workmanship in this project, you can appreciate the time needed. A superintendent confidently projects that the road will be open fully to two lane traffic before the end of August (yes, 1999).

Sunday Relief

Date	Time	Name(s)	Tel. No.
August 1	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	Lafe Solomon & Cam Crockett Robert Henry	301-229-3116 301-229-4936
August 8	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	Nancy & Winston Wiley Dick & Carol Schleicher	301-299-7586 301-229-2385
August 15	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	Bob & Irene Sinclair Mike Savage	202-966-5204 703-620-5746
August 22	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	Audrey & Jerome Cramer Sandy Robinson	202-966-1544 301-320-4971
August 29	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	Patricia Hartge PLEASE HELP!	301-907-6657

September 5	10:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	Tryon Wells Maxine Hattery	301-320-6762 202-362-1361
September 12	10:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	PLEASE HELP! PLEASE HELP!	
September 19	10:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	Linda Riegelman Karl Kosok	301-229-2871 301-589-0034
September 26	10:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	PLEASE HELP! PLEASE HELP!	

To fill empty slots in the schedule:
Call Ann Marie Cunningham (703) 876-9165
 — or —
Send a note to
annmarie.cunningham@lmco.com

Large

Who	When	What
Beverly Meeker	August 4, 1700-2000 hrs	50 adults for a baptism
Karl Kosok/Emily Glazer	August 21, 1300-1800 hrs	35 kids for birthday party
Betty Burchell	September 25, 1100-1700 hrs	30 for Church choir
Sue & Greg Super	October 3, 1200-1700 hrs	25 for kids birthday



The Sycamore Islander

6607 Marywood Road
Bethesda, MD, 20817

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This Issue:

- Annual Regatta is just around the corner.
- Wondering about large parties? Lots of answers.
- Old Timers Day afoot.
- Stonewalled is not so bad.
- Drought induces Sycamore



August is a lush time on the island, even during the current severe drought. Our summer flowers are blooming, and with them come other visitors.

— Photo (Eastern Tiger Swallowtail) by