

# *The Sycamore Islander*

*December 1999*

*Volume 78, No. 12*

## **ISLAND CLOSED ON CHRISTMAS**

Last month a scheduling error caused the caretaker to work on his day off. Since he has family from out of town visiting for Christmas, he has requested that he have Christmas day off and that the club be closed. I see no reason to object since the Island is so little used at this time of year. The weekend relief coordinator (Ann Marie Cunningham) concurs, but is willing to operate the ferry in the event she is notified by the next monthly meeting date (December 8<sup>th</sup>) if anyone has any plans to go down on Christmas day. -- Tryon Wells

## **DECEMBER MEETING**

The November meeting took up the Island usage motions made at the last meeting with vigor. The motion that was finally passed, after an hour and a half of careful debate, stated that, except for applicants that were issued Guest Cards for last year, all other applicants on the waiting list must be on the waiting list for 3 years to be eligible for a Guest Card. In addition, the motion to "freeze" the waiting list was defeated but a significant new motion was made that would limit the time period that people could apply to join the club to only the first quarter of the year.

The December Annual Meeting will be held on the home of Peggy Thomson at 8:00 p.m. on December 8. This is the meeting when the new budget is voted on and new officers elected. All members are encouraged

to attend the last meeting of the Old Millennium! Directions: The address is 23 Grafton Street. From the corner of Wisconsin Ave. and Western Ave. (Friendship Heights) go northeast on Western towards Chevy Chase Circle. Turn left onto Cedar Parkway at the light. After a few short blocks turn right onto Grafton Street.

## **MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER MEETING**

**Attendance:** Alan Gelb, Trip Reid, Dick and Penny Doolittle, John Membrino, Peter Winkler, David Winer, Tryon Wells, Betty Burchell, Ann Marie Cunningham, Tove Elfstrom, John Matthews, Gerald Barton, Brad Coolidge, Doc Taliaferro, Renee Dunham, Jeff Komarow

President Tryon Wells called the meeting to order at

*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 receive priority.**

8:04 p.m. The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

**Budget Report:** Tryon Wells reported for Johnna Robinson that the budget was in order and the 2000 budget will be prepared for presentation at the next meeting.

**Islander Report:** David reported that he had problems with desk-top publishing software but was able to work around them to get last month's *Islander* out.

**Canoe Report:** David Winer reported that two more canoes have been purchased from the Pocomoke River Canoe Company in Snow Hill, Maryland. This livery service sells their entire fleet of canoes each year. The added boats will replace some of our battered aluminum Grumman's. We now have a total of five of these Old Town *Discoverer 174* canoes, a type that has been particularly well received by the members. Being longer, wider, and more flat-bottomed than our older canoes, members have noted their increased stability in the water. Also purchased from the livery were ten life preservers and ten fiberglass/aluminum paddles. Total cost of canoes, life preservers, and paddles was about \$1,000.

**Captain's Report:** John Matthews reported that the electric line break which disabled the towpath lights was near the house, and is now fixed. A winter warm-room for substitute caretakers will be provided in the Clubhouse just outside the women's toilet and locker rooms; the large window in that room will be replaced with an insulated window.

**Caretaker's Report:** Doc laid out printed materials provided by the Park Police about the fish ladder construction at the Little Falls Dam. He announced that members John and Martha Foley are willing to give canoe instruction in the late spring. A malfunctioning, overflowing washing machine is causing floor rot below it. Doc suggested that we put in a new floor and washing machine at the same time. Phyllis suggested that we check newspaper ads when it comes time to replace the ping-pong table. An additional callbell for the ferry has been strung in the tree next to the Clubhouse.

Report on the status of the Island water system: The water delivery system failed and the Island was without water for three days. The problem was fixed by replacing the pressure valve which had been disabled by floods and debris buildup. The water, however, smells

foul. The caretaker and his family have been using bottled water. Others are advised to bring their own drinking water to the Island. Experts have been called to test the water. The bacterial test is negative. Test results for other possible contaminants are due in several weeks. The captain advises that the suggestions of the experts be followed.

**Old Business:**

Motions initiated last month and published in the *Islander* were presented for voting. Here are the results:

Unanimously passed:

- Add to 3M. Supervisor of Camping and Parties:
  - c. Prepare a report for the January meeting of all Large Parties held during the past year with Date, Member Name, and the Number of guests for each party, with the total number of parties held to be included in that month's meeting minutes.

Unanimously passed:

- Add to 3E. Membership Secretary:
  - k. Prepare a report for the May meeting of the number of Guest Cards issued and the current totals for all categories of membership, with all totals to be included in that month's meeting minutes.

Several motions to curb guest cards as printed in last month's minutes were defeated before Brad Coolidge's motion was passed in amended form as follows:

Effective January 1, 2000, issuance of guest cards shall be limited to those who have been on the waiting list for three years. Those who have been on the waiting list for less than three years but who have held a guest card in 1999 may renew.

The following modification to 6. Guest Cards now reads as follows (new wording in italics):

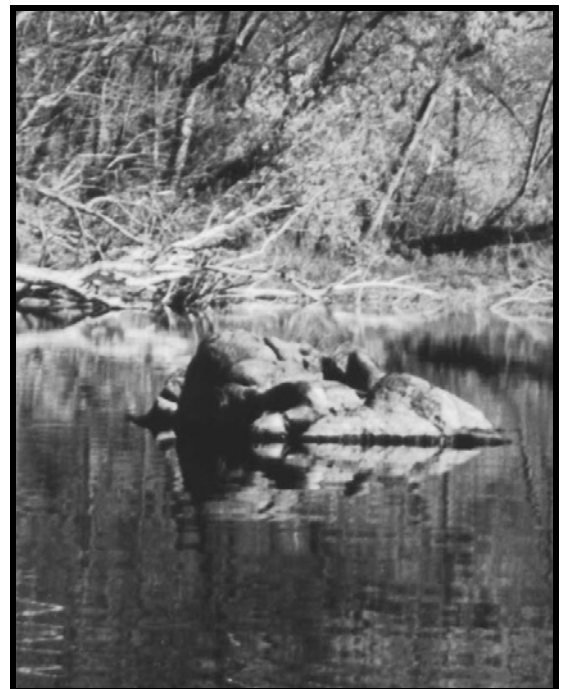
"Upon the request of an applicant for membership who is in good standing, *and if the applicant has been on the waiting list for a minimum of 3 years*, the Membership Secretary may issue to such applicant a guest card valid for the year in which issued."

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10PM.

**Reflections...**  
**Reflections...**



**Hester Ohbi had her camera along while paddling around the Island. She shares these images of objects mirrored in the quiet water on a day in the waning fall.**



## Morris Cobern, Publishing Ally

— By Jane Winer

When David and I came aboard as editors of the *Sycamore Islander* early last fall, we planned to make one change to the newsletter: we wanted to include good quality black & white photographs in the text. So early one morning, armed with a list of 4 commercial printer-candidates (including the company we inherited from John Thomson), we made the rounds. As it turned out, Morris Cobern of Allied Printing in Bethesda was the only printer we interviewed who thought that he could help us accomplish our goal.

Morris looked at the series of glossy, high-resolution photographs that David had printed out with an ink-jet printer--pictures of the Island reflected in still water--and told us to take them home, reduce the resolution, and print them out again, with a laser printer. The results, which appeared in our first issue of the *Islander*, disappointed all three of us. When the next issue was in order and the photos ready, Morris gave us another assignment: "Go back," he instructed David, "and correct the contrast, which is too high; reduce the darkest darks and the lightest lights." Then he sent us home with the special paper required for printing the photos, and assured David that the retouching software he needed for the job ". . . isn't hard to use, once you know how!"

Since then each successive issue of the *Sycamore Islander* has benefited from Morris's suggestions. It was he who suggested we go to 2 columns instead of one--the newsletter is easier to read. He and his assistants have also helped David choose new software, so we no longer lay out the newsletter on a word processor, but use Microsoft Publisher. When David has had problems with computer or software, he has been able to work directly with an expert in the Allied shop, Adri DeGroot, to solve those problems.

Morris does more than just print the *Islander* for us; he actually reads it. He reads it for content and, in fact, goes over everything like an editor.

His comments caused David to rewrite a piece, for example. In the nitty-gritty department, it was Morris who recently picked up on the fact that we had inadvertently left out the permit number in the postage imprint on the newsletter, so he inserted it by hand for us--on all 400 copies--before it got to the Post Office. Now, since he handles the mailing, he has even brought a couple of incorrect local zip codes to our attention.

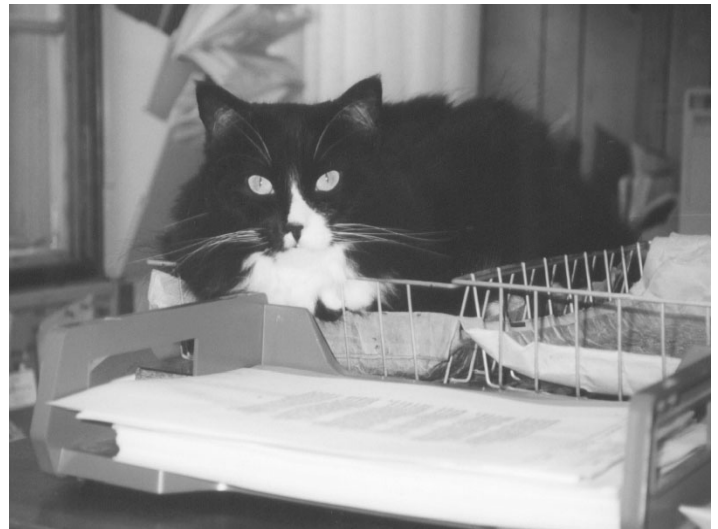


The proprietor relaxes with "Onyx" before tackling the next issue of the *Sycamore Islander*.

The source of Morris's interest in the *Islander*? We're not sure, but Morris is a devoted paddler with a canoe of his own, and he did think about joining the Club once upon a time. He is too busy with the business now, but he has visited the Island--Doc invited him over for a tour. We have already thanked Morris for the bookcase he lugged down to the Island, but you should also

know that he is a talented writer. Among other things, he had a brilliant "Op/Ed" piece published in the *New York Times* a while back. He shared the page with James Reston and Russell Baker.

We look forward to our monthly rendezvous with Morris and special assistants, Onyx and "Printcess," handsome black & white Maine Coon Cats that keep watch over the antique Chandler & Price letterpress on display in the front of the Allied shop. Sometime, stop by 4858 Cordell Avenue in Bethesda, say hello to Morris, and give those beautiful cats a pat.



"Printcess" on guard duty.

## Bird Paddle from Sycamore Island

—Revisited

Several readers asked for a list of the birds we saw on the Maryland Ornithological Society visit to the river on October 2. I mentioned the total, but not the individual species in the report in the November *Islander*. Here they are, in taxonomic order.

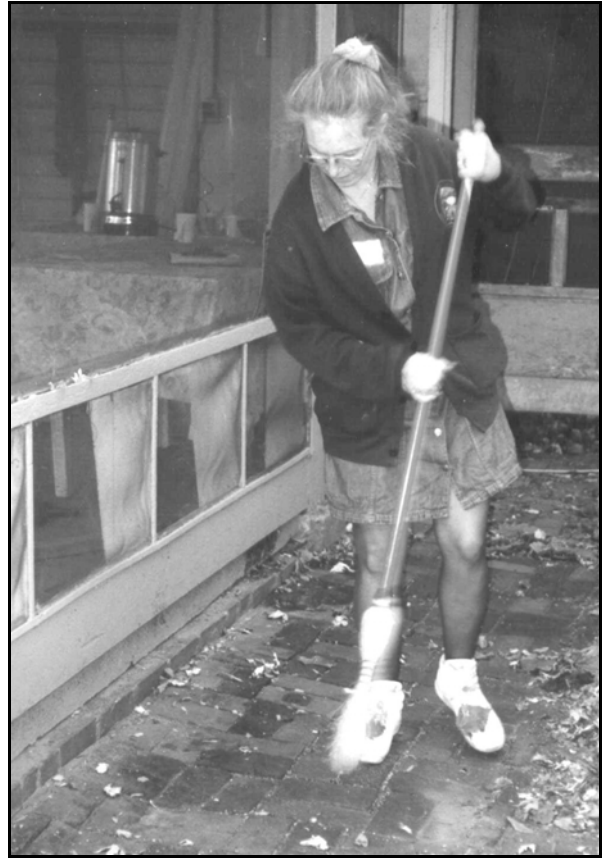
—David Winer

### 37 Species:

Horned Grebe	Pileated Woodpecker
Double-crested Cormorant	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Great Blue Heron	Blue Jay
Green Heron	American Crow
Canada Goose	Carolina Chickadee
Wood Duck	Tufted Titmouse
Mallard	White-breasted Nuthatch
Osprey	Carolina Wren
Broad-winged Hawk	House Wren
Gull species	Gray Catbird
Mourning Dove	Cedar Waxwing
Chimney Swift	European Starling
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Magnolia Warbler
Belted Kingfisher	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Black-and-white Warbler
Downy Woodpecker	Northern Cardinal
Hairy Woodpecker	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Northern Flicker	House Finch
	American Goldfinch



**Upstairs...Karen Possner.**



**Downstairs... Rochelle Banta.**

*Fall Workfest '99*

**A terrific turnout.**

**A terrific cleaning and fixing.**

**A terrific good time.**



**And in m'lady's parlor? Brad Collidge.**



**Sally Strain and Dick Walker get a cleaned screen back in place— just right.**







**Trip Reid and Tove Elfstrom replenish the calories. Preparers Marcia Loeb and Rochelle Banta look on.**



**Gerry Barton (picking up his tools) finishes the new picnic table just in the nick of time for its first use!**



**A pot-luck to remember.**



**The new table is stored for the winter season.**



**The canoes have a rest after scrubbing and polishing.**



**Raked, cleaned and tidied, all looks splendid at day's end.**

## Notes from the Island

I hope that those of you who participated in the Workfest are proud of yourselves... because certainly I am. There were 75 of you signed in, and Phyl and I both reflected afterwards that it seemed that there were just as many folks attending who have guest cards as there were Members. There were also two volunteer families present who have applications pending but who are not even on the waiting list yet. However, a notable thought is that I do not think there were any waiting list people here except those who have guest cards. And this is a shame, because again this year there seemed to be more fun than work, despite the fact that so much got done.

The Clubhouse got a good cleaning, which is good because it was not touched during the spring Workfest. Ann Waidmann and Sherry Pettie were the team leaders. David Winer and his team cleaned the Club canoes and painted the outside hulls of the plastic canoes with an acrylic coating. Gerry Barton and his helpers constructed two new picnic tables. Tryon Wells and his group buried the new electric cable on the towpath and installed wiring conduit where it comes out of the ground. Roger Herst brought his electric powered blower and took care of the leaves near the house. Many people brought rakes and during the day various teams seemed to coalesce here then there until the Island was done. Mark Brenneman and Joe Cecil were not only the first two to arrive (only ten people showed up before 10 AM), but together took responsibility for getting the swimming float untethered and in to shore where it could be pulled up with the help of Jim Drew, Chris White, Garret and Dan Rasmussen, et.al. Mark was also instrumental in repairing the hole that has appeared near the steps on the towpath landing.

Several days before John Matthews and son John had installed the new insulated window in the small room off the deck, which is being insulated to provide a warm library and hangout for

the winter substitute caretakers. Bill Banta and his team ripped the lockers out of that room and the unsightly cabinet off the wall. David Holdridge and Tove Elfstrom repaired the Caretaker's screen door, and Tove stayed late to replace and redo some of the planking that leads to the steps to the deck. Trip Reid and his team planted the five large new trees, and you are all challenged to find where they are. Trip also had several teams out wrapping certain Island trees with wire to protect them from beaver depredation. John Membrino was given a special secret assignment and suffered a nail puncture in his foot for the cause. And of course, George and Marcia Loeb performed their logistical miracle again, and aided by several pots of luck, sat everyone down for that sort of communal dinner one only sees in the movies these days.

Limited space in the dispatches means not everyone will get mentioned, as they should. And yet, it seemed like one of those rare events where participation is its own reward. Think about it... many people who did not necessarily know one another came together in various small teams during the day to undertake a series of various tasks that singly were not very glamorous but together were crucial to making the Island ship-shape for the winter. Most of these teams were collaborative efforts where no one was the actual boss but where the better idea imposed its own authority to get the job done. Yet I dare say that when most people left the Island that day they left with that warm glow that comes only from a feeling of accomplishment... and where can you get that and what price can you put on it? Actually, in Prague we had good friends that ran an international management consulting company that charged corporate executives a fortune to do much the same as we did at the Workfest just so that they could experience that feeling of accomplishment. And you got it for free !

— Doc Taliaferro





## Sunday Relief

Date	Time	Names	Tel. No.
December 5	11:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Peter & Debra Friedmann Wayne & Susan Limberg	301-365-4140 703-533-6839
December 12	11:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Peggy Clark & Thomas Keefer PLEASE HELP!	301-229-3501
December 19	11:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Susan Schadler & Leslie Lipschitz Blair & Nancy Bower	301-656-6403 703-528-4466
December 26	11:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	George & Marcia Loeb Elizabeth & Thomas Gibbon	301-652-4229 703-243-9620

**To volunteer for caretaking in January:  
Call Ann Marie Cunningham (703) 876-9165**

— or —

Send a note to  
[annmarie.cunningham@lmco.com](mailto:annmarie.cunningham@lmco.com)



## Large

There are no reports of large parties scheduled on the island during the months of December and January.

A large party application form may be printed from the club's Web page at  
<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/systems.htm>

— or —

To request a form through the mail, call the Supervisor of Parties, Bill Eichbaum  
301-229-1713



## *The Sycamore Islander*

6607 Marywood Road  
Bethesda, MD, 20817

<http://www.sycamoreisland.org>

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First Class Mail

December 1999

### **This Issue:**

- "...issuance of guest cards shall be limited"
- Mirror images.
- Pics from the Fall Workfest
- Inside story: how the *Islander* is printed.
- "The bacterial test is negative"... but...



Photo by Rene Dunham

### **Breezy Mainstream**

Extending the paddling season on warm days makes good sense— and so does staying near shore when water temperatures are in the numbing range.