



The Sycamore Islander

October, 2000

Volume 79, No. 10

Be thinking about...

The Fall Work Fest date has not been announced, but the event will take place in November after the leaves drop. Fun-filled strenuous activity will build appetites for the pot-luck afterwards, so let the anticipation begin! Wait-listers especially enjoy these occasions.

October Meeting

The September Meeting debated the motion by Blair Bower to tie a member's eligibility to host large parties to greater participation in club tasks. At the end of a long meeting it was decided to require some participation in order to be able to host a large party.

The October Monthly Meeting will be held on October 11 on Sycamore Island at 8:00 p.m. The meeting will discuss Orientation Policies for new members and club applicants on the waiting list. As always, all members are encouraged to come and add their perspectives and ideas to the discussion.

Minutes of September 13 Meeting

Attendance: Betty Burchell, Gerald Barton, Trip Reid, Frank Daspit and Nell Hennessey, John Noble, Jane and David Winer, Richard Bertaut, Phil Thorson, Chuck Pill, Tove Elfstrom, Ned Goddard, Pat Roth, Marcia and George Loeb, Ellen Richards,

Blair and Nancy Bower, John Matthews, Renee Dunham, Tryon Wells, Alan Gelb, Johnna Robinson, Jeff Komarow, John Stapko.

The meeting was called to order at 8:15 p.m.

Treasurer's Report: Alan Gelb reported: "All smooth."

Ground's Report: Trip Reid quoted Alan Gelb: "All smooth."

Captain's Report: John Matthews reported that the new caretaker's structure is still being considered with architect John Wiebenson.

Regatta Report: The Loeb's reported that all went well. It was a great day for the children.

New Business:

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.**

Minutes of September 13 Meeting (continued)

Member Phil Thorson gave a report about the ravages of the Kudzu vines in Montgomery County. The County is requesting concerned citizens to support efforts to save trees endangered by the vines. Some Sycamore Island members were interested in volunteering as a group next spring to work on the strip along MacArthur Boulevard between the Island and Brookmont Dam. The current most effective technique is to cut a vine near the ground and as high as possible, then spray the exposed stem near the ground. Springtime, around April, is the best time to spray as the sap is up then and the leaves are not yet out. More information will be published at a later date.

Renee Dunham presented a motion initiated by Luther Carter who could not attend the meeting. This motion pertains to the ruling that new waiting list applicants wait three years before using the Island. Luther Carter's motion would amend this ruling to waive the waiting period for senior applicants, i.e., those 65 and over. The Club will vote on this at the October meeting.

Old business: The motion to change Standing Rule 3 regarding large parties was discussed prior to voting. This motion read as follows:

A regular member of the club may host a large party during a calendar year ONLY IF the regular member in the preceding calendar year has (1) done a shift as a relief caretaker, AND (2) participated in at least one of the two workfests, AND (3) attended at least one of the monthly meetings of the club.

A senior member of the club may host a large party during a calendar year ONLY IF the senior member in the preceding calendar year has performed at least ONE of the four tasks listed above.

Upon petition to the club at a monthly meeting, a member may be granted an exception from this rule if the member can show compelling reason why he/she was unable to participate in the preceding calendar year in the manner described by this rule.

Current Officers and Supervisors of the club, and Officers and Supervisors of the club in the preceding calendar year, are not subject to this rule.

The vote was 10 in favor and 10 opposed, and so, lacking a majority vote, the motion was defeated.

A more flexible scheme for participation was then suggested and the first paragraph above was changed to read:

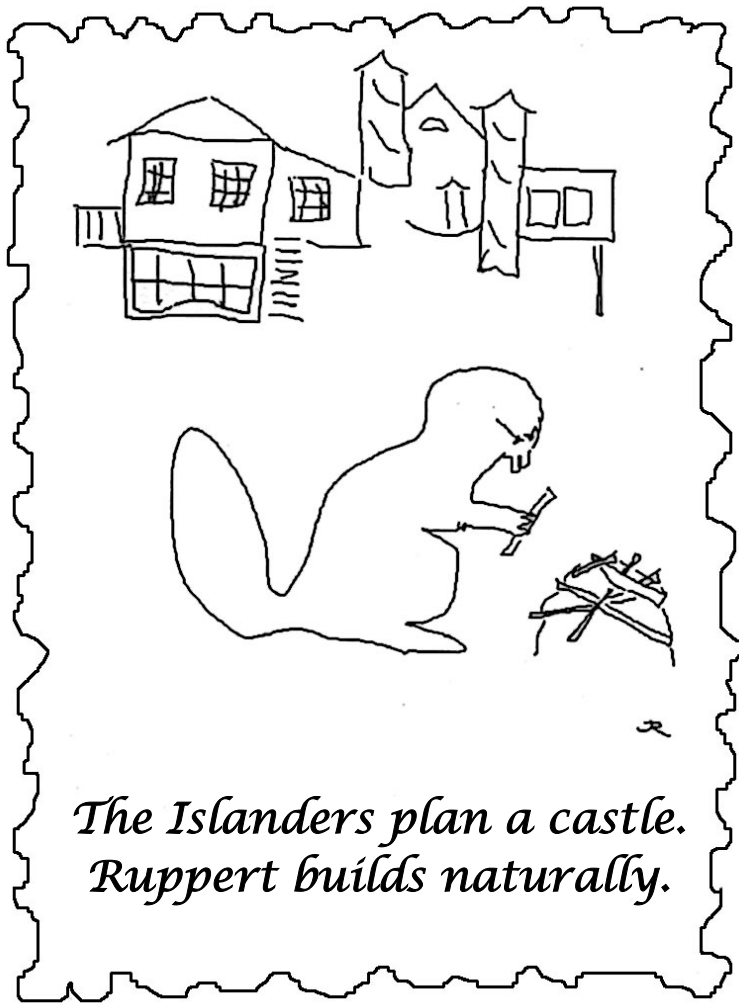
A regular member of the club may host a large party during a calendar year ONLY IF the regular member, in the period of time dating back to January 1 of the preceding calendar year, has performed at least three activities, selected in any combination, from the following list: (1) done a shift as a relief caretaker; (2) participated in at least one of the two workfests; (3) participated in a club-approved work assignment; (4) attended at least one of the monthly meetings of the club.

This motion, including the remaining paragraphs of the previously defeated motion, was passed by a vote of 14 to 6.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 p.m.

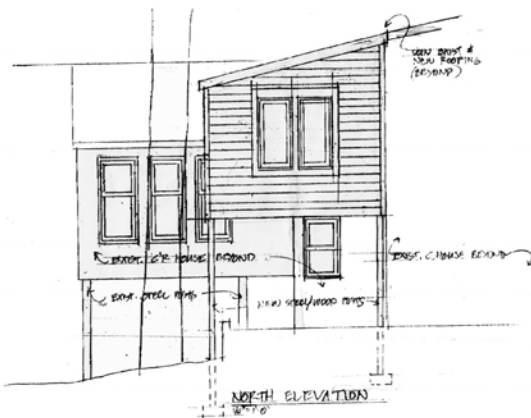
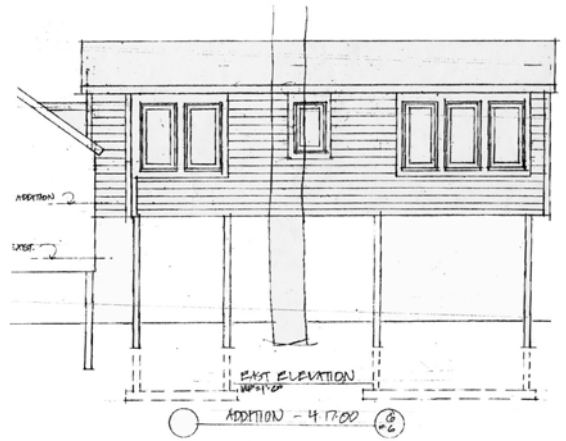
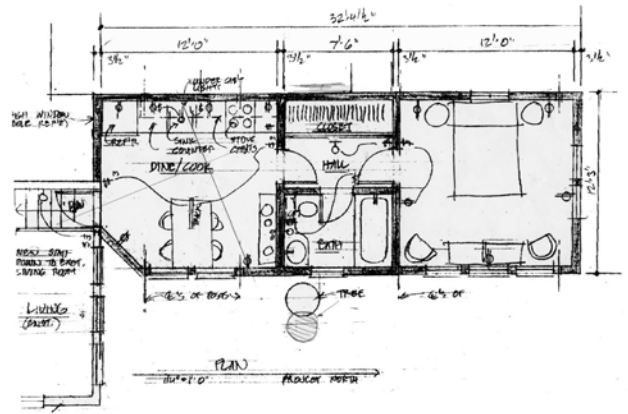
—Renee Dunham, Secretary

Ruppert



*The Islanders plan a castle.
Ruppert builds naturally.*

Cartoon by Johnna Robinson



Report from a displaced Islander...

A Canoe Club in Germany

—Kathleen Peters

We recently left Germany after 4 years of living a 10-minute walk away from the Rhine river in Bonn. There are numerous canoe clubs in the area—some have clubhouses, while others are just loose associations of canoeists who meet up to paddle together. Despite its awesome beauty, the Rhine itself is not particularly popular among canoeists. My German friend says that this is because canoeing the Rhine—the most traveled waterway in Europe—is something like driving the autobahn. Thus canoeists tend to prefer the many quieter tributaries that feed into the Rhine or other waters in the region.

The club in Mehlem, my former village, is considered fairly small, with a membership of about 100. It was founded in 1928 and has a clubhouse directly on the Rhine abutting a nature preserve. Originally the club had only a garage to shelter its boats, but seven years ago the members got together and built a clubhouse by themselves. It consists of a large room for the boats, a club-room, and two changing rooms with toilets. Each member has a key. A work schedule—to clean the inside of the clubhouse and maintain the garden—is posted inside.

In this club (Kanuclub Mehlem) members have individual logbooks in which they keep track of the number of kilometers paddled. A separate book is maintained by the club; kilometers logged by members must be recorded in this book as well (for insurance purposes). The book stays in the clubhouse.

All members have maps called “flussfuhrer” (water guides) of the local region.



These guides mark out the kilometers and rate the relative difficulty/danger of the routes they depict. Similar guides may be purchased in the form of books for the whole of Europe.

I found it astonishing how far members are willing to travel to canoe. Many have paddled all over Europe. In winter, club members might go to Austria and Slovenia; in summer, to Italy or Corsica. Small groups of diehards (4-6 paddlers) have journeyed as far as Alaska and South America to canoe. Over the course of the past twenty years, one husband-and-wife team has actually managed to paddle over 40,000 kilometers—enough to circle the entire globe.



The kanu club paddling in the Alps.

Not all members are this active, of course. Also, as with Sycamore Island, some members use the club facilities much more than others. For some, the clubhouse is a kind of home away from home. They might spend 2-3 nights a week in the clubhouse. Every Friday the club has a “stammtisch,” meaning whoever wants to show up for drinks or

a card game from a certain time on does. In winter, members might meet to ice skate or bowl.

The club publishes its own newsletter that tells members about upcoming trips and club matters. The relative difficulty of each trip is assessed in the newsletter (rated from 0-5). When the club travels to foreign countries or far away in Germany, the more rustic members tend to camp out, while the less hardy rent hotel rooms.



On a quiet trip near Berlin.

Once a year the club offers a range of one week “how-to” courses, including lessons for absolute beginners. Special courses and activities are available for younger children, while other courses, activities, and trips are scheduled for teenagers-only. Although the trips for teenagers are supervised by adults, the teenagers themselves are required to plan all aspects of it, including what food is needed, who does what work, what equipment is required, etc.

I found Germans open to giving lots of independence to teenagers. For example, the 16-year old daughter of my friends would be al-

lowed to host an unsupervised party in the clubhouse. Because the club officers know her and think she is responsible, it would be approved as a matter of trust (not all teens could do this). If it didn’t turn out well, she would simply not be given permission to host a party again.

As with Sycamore, problems that come up are hashed out by the club, or, more frequently, by its officers. One problem was what to do about the cartons of bottled drinks that were left in the clubhouse for members to take and pay for on an honors system, a few too many of which ended up unaccounted for. The end result was that the honors system and club till remained intact, but now just enough stock is left out as needed. Another issue is that some members (contrary to national stereotype) are less-than-diligent about cleaning the clubhouse (a duty rotated among members). For this reason, the members are toying with the idea of chipping in to hire a maid. The concerns about potential liability, etc., that are so worrisome to Sycamore Island do not seem to be much of a concern here.

Dues run approximately \$150 per year per family. My friend was astonished to hear about the long waiting list to enter the Sycamore Island Club. The Kanuclub Mehlem has no such list and and gladly welcomes new members.

Kathleen Peters was very active in Sycamore Island affairs, last serving as Membership Chair. She and her husband, Johann Aeschliemann, and two sons, are now living in Brussels. We look forward to seeing them active again at the club one day.

Regatta 2000

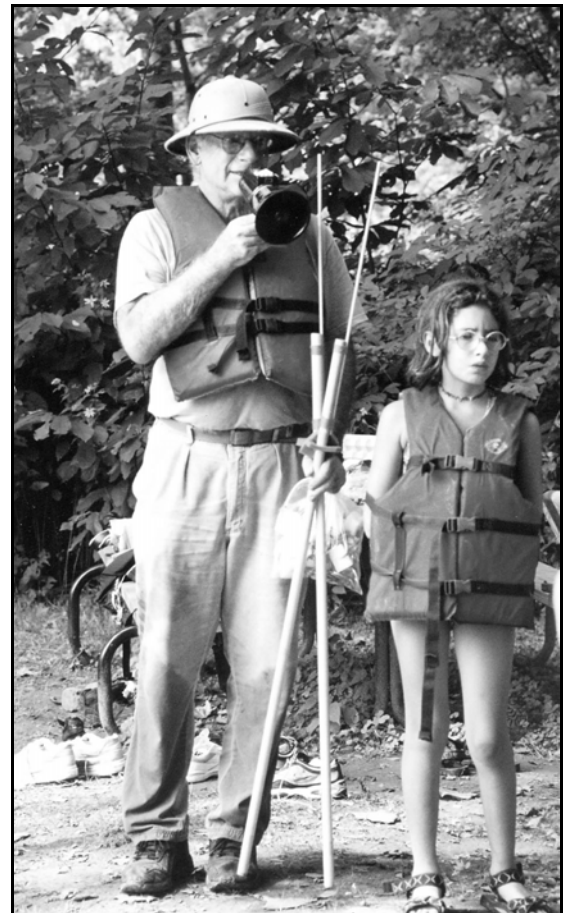
Fun and games before the storm...

—George and Marcia Loeb

The morning of the Sycamore Regatta was gray and cool, with a threat of rain in the forecast, a tradition over its four year history. But that didn't deter about 35 members, waiting list members-in-waiting, and their eager kids from coming down to participate. The first event was the Sycamore Circuit (previously known as the Round-the-Island Race), with winners Paul and Jackie London and runners up Alex Pill, Jason, Derrick and Cassa Van Kundera (all in the same canoe!). The Pick-'em Up (and getting double points for bag numbers divisible by 3) with arithmetic diligence were winners Isaac and Jeffrey Jay with 46 points and Meredith Zoltick and Laura London with 36 points.



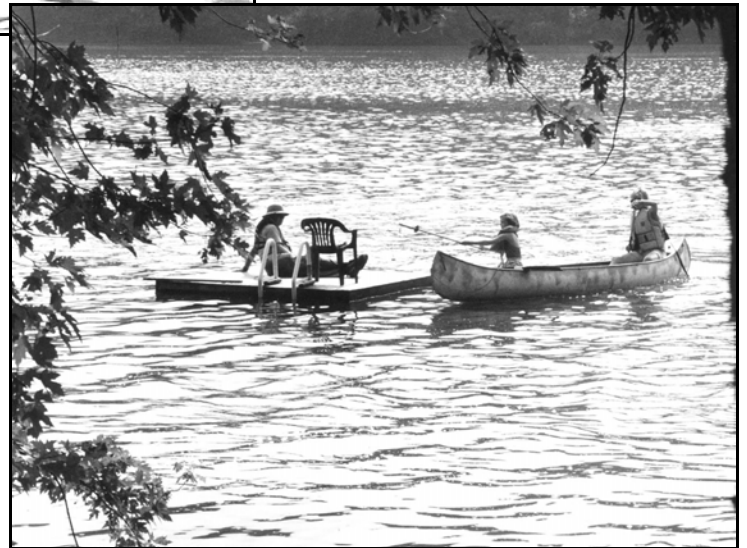
Moving to land events, the Turtles egg-spoon relay team was the fastest (!). A mixed group of adult and kid Turtles were Alex Pill, Marc, Claire and Helen Guinez, Lightning Jay, Jason, Derrick and Cassa Van Kundera, Joanna Asherman and John and Suzanna Membrino. Using the leftover eggs for the egg toss, the gentlest team - the ones who preserved their eggs unbroken - were Sam and John Membrino (first) and Meredith Zoltick and Laura London (2nd).





When the wind began to blow, and Doc's weather channel predicted a storm coming down the river, we retreated into the porch for lemonade and prizes. But when the rain didn't appear immediately, we all went outside again for a final bash on the lawn - the balloon stomp. We didn't record a single winner, but the guys who lasted longest with intact balloons on their ankles got their prizes before the rain came.

Moving back to the river for the Sir Lancelot, which we are informed is a slight modification of the official sport of Maryland (!!), each participating pair had to spear a brass ring suspended from the far swimming float with their Lance as the horse (the paddler) moved them into position. Pairs Laura Londen and Meredith Zoltick, Noah and Jeffrey Jay, Polly and Suzanne Membrino, Marc and Raoul Guinez, David and Paul London, and Joanna Sherman and Raoul Guinez all got their rings.



Again, there were more games on the plan than the weather would permit, but we all had fun. Join us next year when we plan to do it again. We guarantee clear weather, with your money back if it rains. We couldn't have managed without the help of Jean and Joanna Asherman, Jane Winer, and the ever-helpful and smiling Doc.



Notes from the Island

Mon 4 Sep Saturday's Fourteenth Annual Sycamore Regatta was a fun event... there were 41 people signed in ... all children for a day despite their ages. The day was sultry and steamy and the only people really happy were wearing gills, but the high relative humidity did not seem to dampen the fun. Loud thunderstorms passed to the southeast all afternoon. George and Marcia Loeb seemed to have the events timed perfectly so that the certificates and prizes were awarded just in time for people to escape ahead of the storm, but there was a revolt of the little people at the end... demanding to be allowed to compete in the cancelled balloon stomp event. So the afternoon ended in the rain, as kids (of all sizes) danced and stomped to be the last to have an inflated balloon tied to their ankle. The crowd favorite in this event was clearly Anthony Pill... by many years the youngest and smallest... but also, clearly largest in determination.

After the first flurry of rain and almost everyone's departure, 5 young-adult trespassers had to be ordered off the swimming float after being observed roughly pushing each other into the water while playing "King of the Float." The Caretaker "invited" them to swim to the Island so that they could be ferried to the towpath. This is the first instance of trespassers on the swimming float since it was moved out of the line of sight of the illegal rope swing.

Wed 6 Sep Officer Bill Thomas of the Mounted Park Police was by again today. We are happy to report that the Alison Thresher disappearance is still being investigated. Officer Thomas asked that we spread the word to folks we know who use the towpath regularly to be alert to and report any suspicious characters. He will be patrolling in the area for the next couple of weeks. He also reports that in October the Park Service "should" begin to build a new stable complex for mounted officers at Carderock, which is not far from here, and that this will mean more of a mounted presence in our area.

Any citizen support to write letters or call official worthies to make sure this happens will be appreciated. Presently we do not see mounted patrols very often because they are now headquartered down at the Tidal Basin and must trailer a long distance. Formerly they were located at Glen Echo Park, but during their TDY to the Atlanta Olympics, their facility at Glen Echo was taken away by sneaky politicians and they returned to DC to find they had been relocated in their absence. Hence their understandable distrust of the promises of Carderock. The Club should send a letter of support.

Thu 7 Sep After leaving the Island in the early afternoon, Rene Dunham returned shortly thereafter to report that two female cyclists she had just spoken to had themselves encountered a very suspicious man on the towpath near Lock 7. Rene had returned to the Island so that this encounter and description could be reported to Park Police. A few minutes later we heard a strange thundering sound coming up the towpath and looked up just in time to see Mounted Officer Thomas heading toward Lock 7 at a full gallop. Folks... it was inspiring! John Wayne never looked so good.

Fri 8 Sep Toby Smith has called to suggest that the Island's fishers might wish to contribute to an Island fishing log. Apparently some resorts and hotels that especially cater to fishing do this so that those going out can check to see what is biting and what is not. If enough interest in this idea can be garnered from the regular fishers, such a log might be kept in a red loose leaf notebook just inside the screen porch door so that anyone passing to put paddles and life preservers up might be motivated to make an entry. Stay tuned. By the way, last year the log began to mention "fisherpersons" when Judy Bader established herself near the top of the fishing pantheon, but I have recently been informed that the correct label is "fishers."

Notes from the Island

Sat 9 Sep Peggy Thomson has sent in an article from *The Torch*, the monthly publication of the Smithsonian staff, concerning an award-winning new film from the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in which Earl Nyeholm, an Ojibwa Indian, demonstrates the ancient craft of making a birch bark canoe. The article is fascinating and will be left upstairs for the Membership to access, but Peggy has suggested that the film might be a wonderful thing to feature at a monthly meeting.

Thu 14 Sep Staff has returned from three days of vacation to find everything shipshape as though we had never left. Kudos to Rene Dunham and friends who stayed so that we could play. Everything went so well in the absence of staff that the Caretaker is suffering from acute depression due to diminished self-importance.

Sat 16 Sep Johnna Robinson has called to report that a knowledgeable friend has suggested that the ubiquitous vine that has appeared everywhere is probably the burcucumber... which should reassure all of you who have commented just how like a cucumber it looks. To those of you worried that it seems this year to surpass even kudzu as a threat to trees and herbaceous perennials... Johnna points out that it probably has just been excited by all this year's rain, and certainly that sounds right, because we do not recall seeing it before this year. This plant allegedly favors stream banks and is non-noxious.

Tue 19 Sep There has been much interest in the trove of old pictures from the Island's past contributed by Peggy Thomson. These have been the pre-meeting entertainment of the last two monthly meetings, and as they were left upstairs, many have enjoyed poking through them since. David Winer came down yesterday to take another batch home to scan and digitize. His goal is not only to use some in the *Islander*, but also to put them on a CD for permanent ar-

chival purposes. Any of you out there who may have or know of old pictures from the distant past suitable for inclusion are encouraged to contact David Winer (301-229-8963) or the Caretaker.

Thu 21 Sep The Island has received the draft of the *Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement for Glen Echo Park*. This plan was two years in the making and presents "five alternatives that the National Park Service (NPS) considered for the management of resources and developed areas within Glen Echo Park: a No Action Alternative, an NPS Management Alternative, a Public Partnership Alternative, a Non-Profit Partnership Alternative, and a Modified Public Partnership Alternative." Club Members should be mindful of the goings on at Glen Echo Park, as it is not only our very near neighbor, but also owner of the rail-bed right of way and bridge that we walk beneath when parking in the top lot. That bridge is in increasingly bad shape, and we quickly approach the time when either repairing the bridge to make the thoroughfare beneath safe, or closing it off, may depend upon the health of the Glen Echo Park budget... something to worry about. Check it out when you are upstairs in the Clubhouse.

—Doc Taliaferro

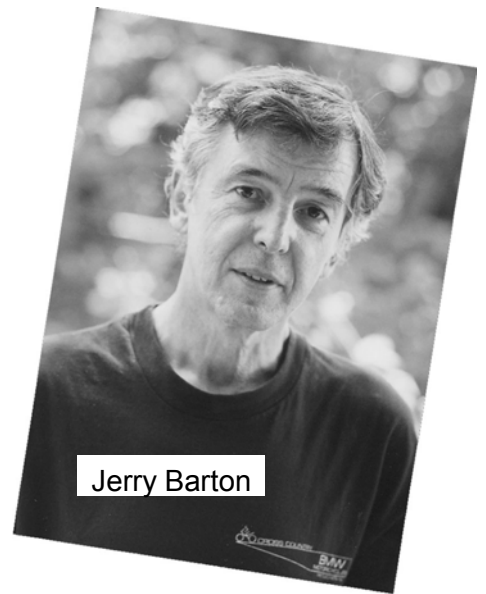
Excerpted from the Caretaker's Log at
<http://www.sycamoreisland.org>



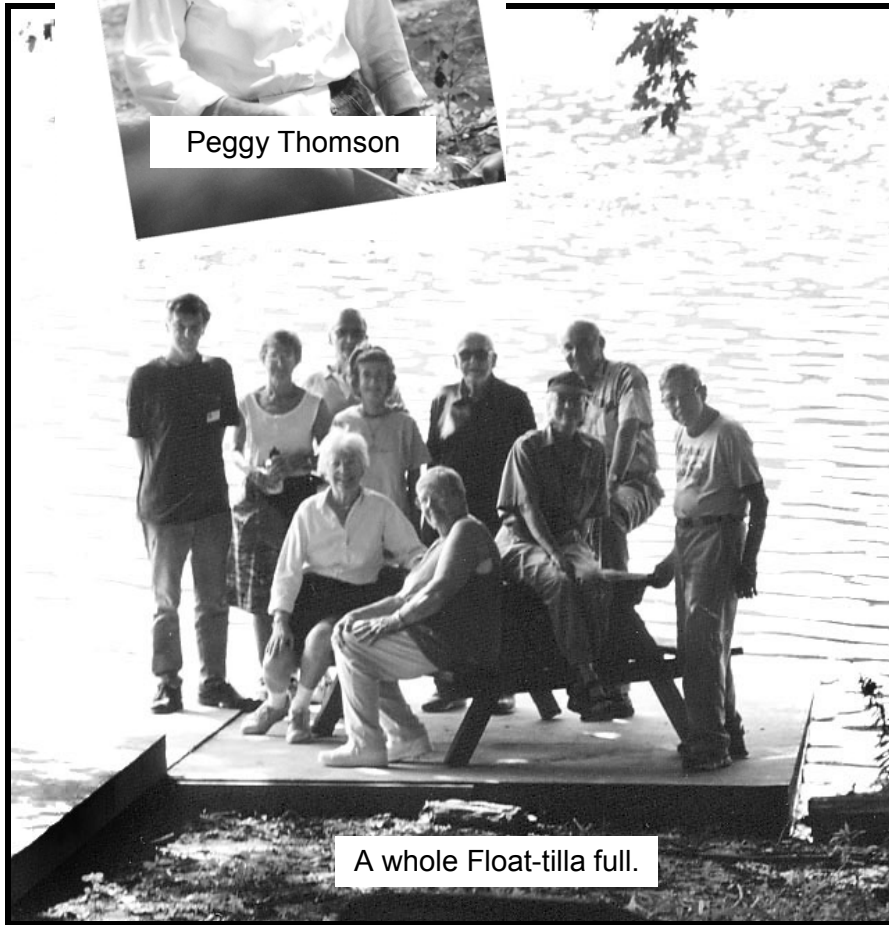
Snaps from
Old Timers Day
September 13, 2000



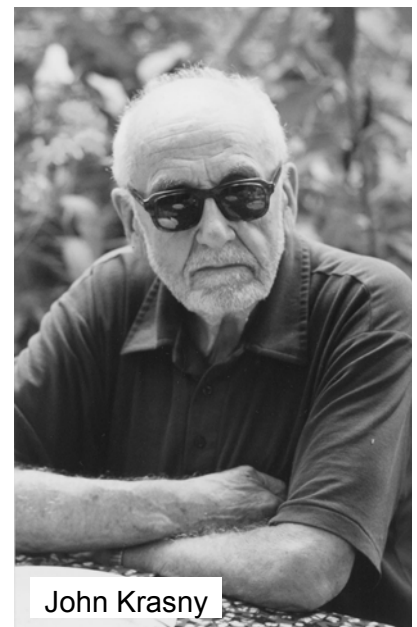
Peggy Thomson



Jerry Barton



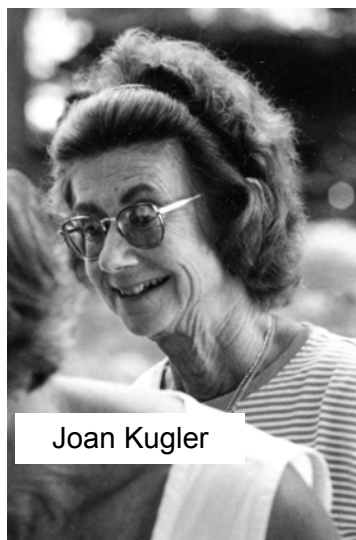
A whole Float-tilla full.



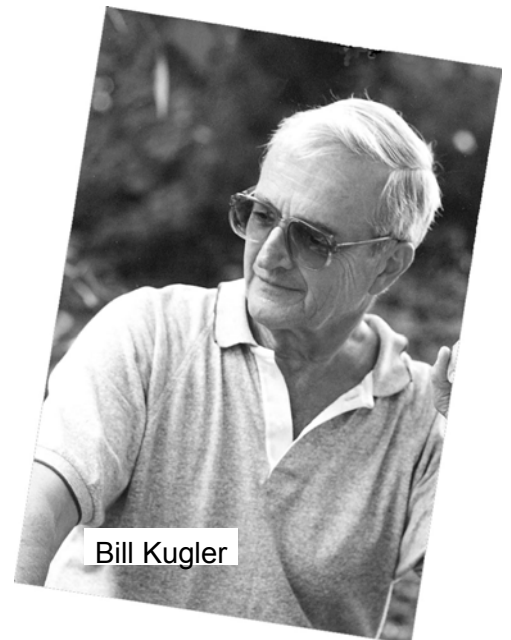
John Krasny



Charlotte Brewer



Joan Kugler



Bill Kugler

Sunday Relief Caretakers October 2000

Date	Time	Name(s)	Telephone
October 1	10:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Claire and Gavin Bloch Julia and Peter Smith	301 320-0060 703 385-2883
October 8	10:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Sue Schadler and Leslie Lipschitz Judy and Dick Edelson	301 656-6403 301-951-0195
October 15	10:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	George Malusky Maxine Hattery	301-587-0307 202-362-1361
October 22	10:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Carol and Dick Schleicher Judy and John Lentz	301-229-2385 301-229-4968
October 29	10:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Marcia and George Loeb Sarah Duggin and Kirk Renaud	301-652-4229 301-718-9632

***** Caretaker Volunteers *****

Call John Krasny (301-564-0342) or Jeff Komarow (301-897-5996) to volunteer for caretaking in November and December. You can also contact them by e-mail at jfkrasny@erols.com or jeffkomarow@aol.com. Late fall/early winter on the Island is a special time. Volunteers from the waiting list are encouraged. It's a great way to spend time on the Island! Special thanks to Maxine Hattery who is always willing to work that very difficult to fill last shift!

Large Parties October—November 2000

Date	Time	Who	What
No	Large Parties	have been reported to <i>The Islander</i>	in October

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

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October 2000

This Issue:

- New Large Party eligibility rules.
- Kanu canoe?
- Regatta-goers defy storm.
- P.I., then Kudzu, now Bur-cucumber



Strange cult ritual?