



The Sycamore Islander

November, 2000

Volume 79, No. 11

See You at the Fall Workfest...

Saturday, November 18 is the date. Dock Workers begin at 9:00, followed all morning and afternoon in cleaning and sprucing. Pot-luck picnic after it's all under control. Wait-listers and those waiting to get on the waiting list find this an especially good way to meet members. And remember your work gloves. Past participants know to bring tools needed to perform their specialty upkeep and repair skills. For many, this means rakes—there's no such thing as too many of these. Of course, there are always carpentry tasks for those with such skills. And cleaning, and painting, and...

November Meeting

Only 8 members attended October's meeting – two shy of the quorum requirement. No official business was transacted.

The November meeting will be held at 8:00 p.m. on the Island on November 8. On the agenda is a motion to waive the new three-year rule for waiting list applicants to get a guest card if the applicant is over 65. Also to be discussed are construction of the caretaker's quarters and new procedures for annual club orientations to begin in the year 2001. As always, all members are encouraged to attend and bring their ideas and energy to the issues at hand.



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.**

The “Warm Room” is getting warmer.

As the club heads into another winter season, the little “warm room” for weekend caretakers (just outside the ladies locker room) is getting some insulation and new walls.



Considerable speculation was being made last season regarding whether the “warm room” would be successful or whether members would use the old wood stove to keep warm as they had in years past. But as spring rolled around this year it was clear that the “warm room” was overwhelmingly successful, based on one very telling indicator – the wood pile, prepared at last fall’s workfest, lay untouched in its bin.

Warmth, glorious warmth.

—Photos by Tryon Wells

A single space heater plugged into the wall provides the only heat for the warm room but the lack of insulation last winter required the heater to be turned up to full blast to keep members comfortable. Hopefully, the new insulation will make the room more cozy and keep energy costs lower.

— Tryon Wells



Autumn Haiku

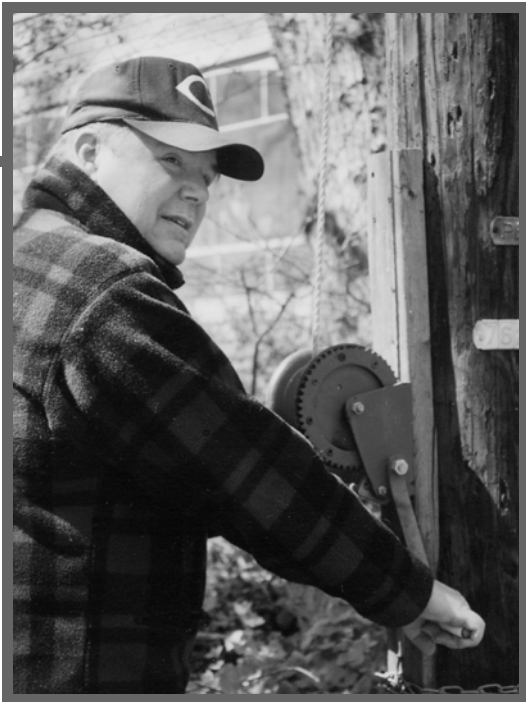
Last swim, river thick
with golden floating leaves. They
brush my face and arms.

—Sherry Pettie



Now is the time to grab your calendar and make sure you ink in November 18...

...as the day you will be on the Island for the Workfest festivities. You folks on the waiting list especially should take advantage of the opportunity to come down and meet Members and have a good time on the Island... to get involved...and experience that one thing normally denied... a fun weekend on the Island. Every Member is expected to make a service contribution, and as the last few years have seen a trend toward larger turnouts, the occasion has become more of a Funfest than a Workfest, as many hands make the onerous jobs go fast. Bring a dish for pot luck and help George and Marcia Loeb with the feast. A special effort should be made this year to incorporate the inclusion of children in the Workfest... where else in this world can they experience something akin to a community barn raising. And even if you do not make it down for the heavy lifting at 0900 hrs, come



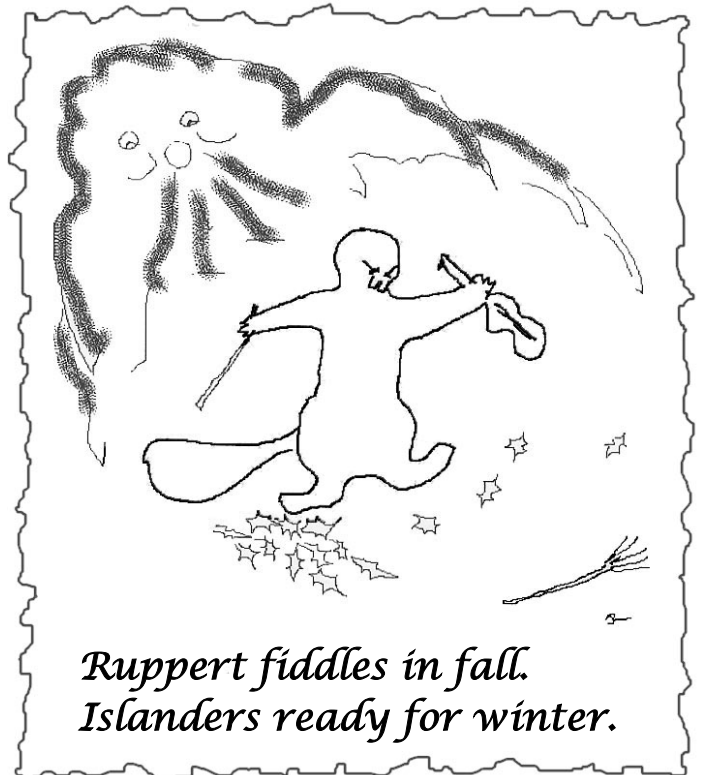
Doc, cranking up for the Workfest.

when you can. Last year people arriving in the afternoon gave a fresh surge.

Previous Workfests have seemed like those rare events where participation is its own reward. Think about it... many people who do not necessarily know one another come together in various small teams during the day to undertake a series of various tasks that singly are not very glamorous but together are crucial to making the Island ship-shape for the winter. Most of these teams are collaborative efforts where no one is the actual boss but where the better idea imposes its own authority to get the job done. Yet I dare say that when most people leave the Island they leave 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?

Remember... at this Workfest, we can take time to work on that other fun and important thing: a feeling of shared purpose and community.

Ruppert



Cartoon by Johnna Robinson

Montgomery Sycamore Island Club
Nominations for Officers and Supervisors
2001

Officers

President **	Carl Linden	301-229-2398
Vice-President	Anne-Marie Cunningham	703-876-9165
Recording Secretary	Renee Dunham	202-686-6451
Treasurer **	Alan & Caroline Gelb	301-229-5969
Financial Secretary	Robert Henry	301-229-4936
Membership Secretary	Tryon Wells	301-320-6762
Editor	David & Jane Winer	301-229-8963
Archivist	Holly Syrrakos	301-589-7255
Captain **	John Matthews	301-229-0234
Deputy Captain * **	John Stapko	301-953-1949

Supervisors

Finance **	Phil Jones	301-365-1719
Law * **	Maurice Tobin	202-232-0220
Clubhouse	Karl Kosok	301-589-0034
Grounds *	Trip Reid	202-363-8554
Painting/Carpentry	Charles Pill	703-524-8254
Website	Tryon Wells	301-320-6762
Entertainment	George & Marcia Loeb	301-652-4229
Camping/Parties		
Canoeing *	David Lyles	703-536-8692
Swimming *	John Krasny	301-564-0342
Relief Caretaking		

Caretaker

Doc Taliaferro	7023 MacArthur Boulevard, Bethesda, MD 20816	301-229-4921
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Board of Directors

Jessie Bakeman	Bill Eichbaum	John Michener
Blair Bower	Richard Fellows	Clifford Russell
Warren Brown	William Kugler	Jack Sanders
Betty Burchell	George Loeb	John Schubert
Bradford Coolidge	David Lyles	
Richard Doolittle	George Malusky	

STANDING COMMITTEES

* = Safety Committee

** = Personnel Committee

Proposed Amendments to Club Standing Rules Concerning Club Canoes

By David Lyles, Supervisor of Canoeing

These proposed amendments to the Club Standing Rules concerning Club canoes are offered with the concurrence of Deputy Captain John Stapko, chair the Safety Committee, for two reasons.

First, neither the Club By-Laws nor the Standing Rules make any provision for Club canoes, or assign responsibility for Club canoes to any of the Club officers.

Secondly, Doc expressed concern this summer after several incidents in which guests of the Club under the age of 15 were using the Club canoes with little or no adult supervision.

I propose two amendments to the Club's Standing Rules. Proposed new Standing Rule 6 would follow the Standing Rule on Club Property and establish rules for the use of Club canoes by members and guests. There are some who may resist the proposal that all persons using Club canoes wear life jackets at all times, but as a long-time paddler on the Potomac I feel very strongly that this requirement is necessary and appropriate.

The proposed amendment to Standing Rule 15K would place responsibility for Club canoes and boats with the Supervisor of Canoeing.

Proposed new text is printed in *italics*.

6. Club Canoes and Boats

The Supervisor of Canoeing, with the approval of the membership, may purchase canoes or other boats for use by members and their guests. The following rules must be observed when using Club canoes or boats:

- a. Club members and guests use Club canoes or boats at their own risk.
- b. All persons using Club canoes or boats must wear an approved life preserver or personal flotation device (PFD) at all times.
- c. Anyone under the age of 15 using a Club canoe or boat must be accompanied by an adult at least 18 years of age.

15K. Supervisor of Canoeing

Shall:

- a. Have charge of the canoe house, canoe racks, *Club canoes and other Clubboats*, canoe landings, and boat landings, moorings and storage.

Notes from the Island

From a Substitute Caretaker...

Rene Dunham watched the Island while staff took a vacation:

Mon 11 Sep Marianne Ross arrived in the late afternoon to assist, enjoy, and share the night with me. Challenges were electronic in nature. Which phone was the Island phone and which the cell? (I'm am not a user of the latest in communication devices.) I used what I thought was the cell phone for a few calls home before suspecting that I was mis-using precious minutes. When I missed a phone call, I couldn't get the message machine to release its secret. It wasn't until the next day that I noticed there were TWO message machines and TWO cradles, and the secret was in the other machine. Now I carried the Island phone in my pocket. When bells blasted off all over the Island, I could smugly hit the ON button. But when I did that, it didn't speak to me. Ah, I see, the phone needs to return to its nest to regain its confidence to speak. Then there were all the light switches to find which did not correspond to light positions and the one for the kitchen ceiling light that roared at me and made the garbage disposal grind. By the next day I was already evolving into a higher life form and could now notice ceiling fans and deduce that chairs were created to reach the fan chains that made the fan blades twirl and skin feel good.

Tue 12 Sep Linda Friedland arrived mid-morning by invitation - a superb and passionate birder. Linda was hopeful to sight rare warblers on migration. Eleven o'clock wasn't a great time of day to be birding, but she caught a fleeting glimpse of some warbler that excited her but disappeared before she was certain of it's markings. She was so delighted to be on the Island that I think it responded by showing off to her. The flowers were profuse. The spider webs across the paths were each representative of a different family... five different kinds in all. (We later found there was a spider field guide.) One Green Heron hunting in the grasses off the towpath side of the Island turned into two herons flying off and one

snake about three feet long holding a five inch catfish in its jaws.

There was no way that catfish could wiggle itself free, but as long as it was breathing (binoculars are miraculous eyes), it was trying. We watched the snake dance with it for maybe five minutes, the snake tail drawing waves upon a rock that slanted upward from the river, the fish rooting the snake jaws near the water. The snake then relaxed into the water and swam with its prey out of our field of view.

One more drama was presented before lunchtime intermission. A demanding cry came from the trees above. A goldfinch flew to its fussing child, which looked bigger than its mother and quite capable of getting its own lunch. I think that's what Mother was telling it before she flew off. It followed her. There were a few skirmishes. The big little one was having a temper tantrum!

The evening was very busy. Three fishermen were out already and planning to return at sundown. Two women came to swim and accompanied me to the rock islands near Ruppert's Island while Marianne covered the ferry. Then Tove Elfstrom came to take his canoe home, concerned since the theft of a canoe from the canoe rack. Then Maria came with guest and swam to Virginia - and back. And each group returned separately on the ferry, magically turning my one plate of supper into five courses. I sure appreciate the Caretaker's good nature about interruptions. I relaxed and enjoyed everyone telling their own tales about their Island time.

I forgot to mention that Linda was stung in the hand by a bee while eating lunch here. She is sensitive to bee stings. We looked all over for an antihistamine. She ordinarily takes this for bee stings. Finding none, she left for the Glen Echo

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drugstore. I suggest we carry something for insect bites with the first aid.

Wed 13 Sep Another delicious morning swim. The river is so gentle. After breakfast, a slow, quiet walk along the upstream paths. Silly me - even though I know better, I expected the same things to happen today as yesterday; I looked for the dancing snake and the Green Herons as if they were stationary street signs in my neighborhood. But I had to substitute watching an insect of wasp proportions searching about on the ground. For what? Without my reading glasses I couldn't see what was causing it to topple onto its head occasionally. When it divided into two insects, one flying off the other, I decided to stick to large print.

Crack! I looked in the direction of the sound to see a doe leap through a thicket of tall flowers with dry, fallen limbs in the underbrush. Then it was out of sight. I started walking in her direction, but then decided to let it be. A deer on Sycamore Island! An exciting little secret. The closest similar feeling was when I was pregnant and walking around with internal giggles.

John Krasny ran the ferry for me later at 1 p.m. during the Old Timers picnic. He insisted I go kayaking, bless his heart. What he gave me was the opportunity to see a deer mid-river swimming toward Ruppert's Island to graze on its shore.

—*Rene Dunham*

And from our regular Caretaker...

What would we do without Doc's contributions?

Mon 2 Oct It seems as though for the last two months there has been a steady chorus of boom... crash... thud... or bang. Anyone on the Island who hears this looks up at the sound. And the suddenness and loudness can be alarming for the uninitiated. The cause is the slow but steady rain of black walnuts fall-

ling from the big tree near the canoe shed that are hitting the tin roof. Since this tree is over a hundred feet tall, the velocity and speed of impact can vary... but it is always dramatic. Today it has seemed as though there has been one every fifteen minutes or so, and one wonders if some danger sign should be posted, especially if one imagines the consequences of such a walnut achieving zero velocity on the top of someone's head. Certainly your Caretaker creeps by at the margin of the drip line or scurries from shed to shed. Besides, it is downright difficult to walk under this tree because two months of bombardment has left the ground so covered with the equivalent of very large marbles that footing is chancy. It is a bumper crop for sure, as we do not remember so many falling for so long. Furthermore, walnut trees being the first to start losing their foliage in the fall, it is now possible to look up to where the leaves are thinning and see lots of spheroids still clinging. So be alert, and remember to bring your hard hats if you plan to hand out at that end of the lawn.

Fri 6 Oct It has been a desperate search... to no avail. The situation is critical. The geese are back... migration is in progress... the goose hotels are crowded every night... by this we mean the floats... and the red snow shovel which is used to remove the goose poo is no where to be found.

Sat 7 Oct This is the season not only of presidential debates but also of abundant mouse and vole gifts from the cats. Mostly dead, of course. It is hard for critters of any size to move about the Island quietly with all of this crackly leaf fall. All of this is disturbing to the Caretaker's Wife, a compassionate liberal, who invariably gathers the cats to give them a lecture on their Buddhist non-violent responsibilities. Barney and Miss T listen attentively, but there is, of course, no change in their behaviour. Then there is usually an announcement by the Caretaker's Wife that the cat's rations need to be increased so that the poor felines will not feel the urge to chase harmless creatures. Once Barney was seen to sort of smile at this announcement, and the Caretaker has suspicions that the cats are smarter about this than they let on... but he is not silly enough to mention this. He did once foolishly offer his own opinion that the problem would go away if the cat's rations were cut to the point where both the catching and the consumption

Notes from the Island

would take place out of doors and thus out of sight... but he was then accused of being a closet Conservative and was promptly dismissed from all duties having to do with cat food... other than lugging heavy cases of it down the hill. Still, there is probably some hope that increasing rations will result in fatter cats that will at some point result in slower cats and thus finally in higher Sycamore mice/vole life expectancy. No political metaphor is intended.

Thu 19 Oct Migration is in full swing, and Islanders who are birders are reminded that sitting on the captain's float is front row to avian activity along the Potomac gorge, one of the major migration highways. Occasional flocks of various kinds will fill the air with their presence, both visual and auditory, and watching large flocks manoeuvre this way and that above causes one to wonder if there is a group gestalt, the way they move with group unison and purpose. The similarity to the movements of a school of fish is identical.

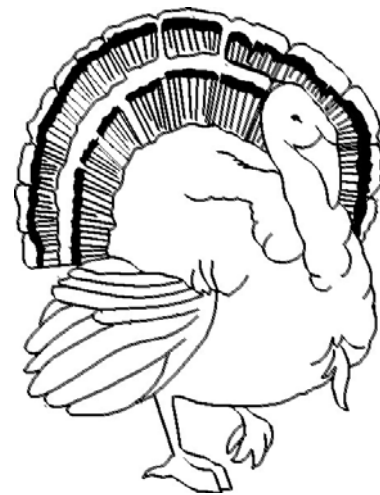
Mon 23 Oct Jessie Bakeman had a small party here this Saturday, and as she and her party were leaving, the Caretaker commented gratefully that they were taking not only their own garbage, but also that garbage and trash that others had left in the kitchen. When the Caretaker commented that it seemed that Members were increasingly leaving their garbage behind, Jesse was quick to point out that it was the Caretaker's own fault for letting the Members get sloppy, remembering that previous Caretaker Frank Davis "never let Members get away with that sort of thing. In those days the (Member) substitute caretakers were expected to clean the Clubhouse and scrub the floor." How times have changed!

Wed 25 Oct Today Home Depot managed to deliver the materiel needed to continue work on the warm room upstairs... after the third try. Such a saga, but mind you, the Island is not the easiest place to deliver anything to. First one must attempt to explain why the actual address on the order is meaningless as the delivery address. Then one advances to the plea to have the driver call before coming so that he can be made to understand why he should go to a parking lot on the Clara Barton Parkway to meet some guy with a key and not to some address on MacArthur Blvd. The drivers are definitely put off when informed that the reason they have to remember a clearance number ob-

tained beforehand from Park Police is because it is otherwise illegal to drive a truck onto the Parkway. But that is nothing as the tension when they turn off of the Parkway at Lock 5 and see for the first time the bridge and towpath that they must navigate. Here the Caretaker unlocks the gate to the towpath using the key given him by the Rangers for which he had to sign innumerable government forms, raise his hand and swear an oath, and generally be made to understand that if he ever lost said key his best hope would be to flee to Canada. Now it is important for the Caretaker to keep the conversation rolling with studied nonchalance as though everything is normal despite the several places where the towpath narrows at where it has been partially washed out and where the view of the river from the cab of a big truck can only be described as precipitous. The drivers are always told in advance about the place on the towpath where they can turn around, although not that it was designed for golf carts, but this is always forgotten as they pull up to the ferry landing and grasp what is actually involved. The Caretaker is always ready for the inevitable "You expect us to what?" and here is where max charm must be put into to play... or failing that... a twenty dollar bill.

—Doc Taliaferro

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



Sunday Relief Caretakers

Date	Time	Name(s)	Telephone
November 5	10:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Linda and Richard Riegelman Joan and Bill Kugler	301-229-2871 301-652-0132
November 12	10:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Melinda Wolff and Peter Gillon Fran Rothstein and Steve Wolk	301-765-0562 301-656-7667
November 19	10:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Beth and Michael Grant Sue and Greg Super	202-234-7547 703-892-1846
November 26	10:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Susan and Wayne Limberg Marilyn and Peter Fuchs	703-533-8639 202-362-8348

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

Call John Krasny (301-564-0342) or Jeff Komarow (301-897-5996) to volunteer for caretaking in 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!

Large Parties November-December 2000

Date	Time	Who	What
No	Large	Parties are scheduled	for November or December.

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

6006 Welborn Drive
Bethesda MD 20816-1158

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November 2000

This Issue:

- Fall Workfest (Funfest?) looms.
- Slate proposed for December Elections.
- Local Warming.
- Proposing Standing Rule VI.
- Mentioned: deer, fish, birds, snakes, bees.



The Island awaits.

— photo by Jane Winer