



The Sycamore Islander

December, 2000

Volume 79, No. 12

December Meeting

The November meeting took up a motion to waive the three-year waiting period to obtain a Waiting List Pass for applicants over age 65. This was amended to allow such applicants to apply to the membership at a monthly meeting to grant an exception. Amended portions of another motion regarding the use and disposition of club canoes were also passed (see November's Minutes). Finally, the caretaker's quarter's project was reinvigorated with the creation of a new *ad hoc* committee to see to the project's completion.

The December meeting will be held at the home of Peggy Thomson on December 13th at 8pm. Agenda items include approving or modifying the slate of officers for 2001, the budget for 2001, and the caretaker's consideration. All members are encouraged to come and help the club make the decisions for the New Year -- not to mention -- the new 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 November 8 Meeting

Attendance: George Malusky II, Gerald Barton, Trip Reid, Caroline Gelb, Richard Bertaut, Ann Marie Cunningham, Renee Dunham, Carl Linden, Mardy Burgess and Al Brown, John Noble, Jane Winer, Beth and Michael Grant, George and Marcia Loeb, Chuck Pill, Brad Coolidge, Ned Goddard, Karl Kosok, John Matthews, Bill Bays, Tryon Wells

Prior to the meeting, our caretaker offered a tour of his living quarters. It was an opportunity for members to observe flood damage that had never been repaired. Parts of the wooden floor were rotted out, leaving holes for cold winter drafts and spiders seeking warmth. Members could also appreciate the challenge of redesigning the quarters to enable our caretakers to stay high and dry and have adequate living space. The tour was useful preparation for discussing construction plans at the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 8:15 p.m. Tryon Wells opened the meeting by explaining how the building committee, set up last July to ad-

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 November 8 Meeting (continued)

minister the planning and construction of new caretaker's quarters, was unable to meet for several months. This was further preparation for discussion later in the meeting. See **Old Business**.

Grounds: Trip Reid reported that on Rupert's Island there is no Kudzu growing. However, Oriental Bittersweet and Burr Cucumber – both native plants - are spreading and threatening other vegetation. Being native plants, they can be cut back, but not eradicated. On Sycamore Island, there is Kudzu, but it is not a significant problem.

Treasurer: Caroline Gelb reported everything is fine.

Clubhouse: The "Warm Room" is completed. Tryon Wells insulated and re-paneled the small room directly outside the women's locker room, creating a snug place for substitute caretakers in the wintertime. Tryon thanked those who had helped him and the Club members expressed great appreciation to Tryon.

Entertainment: Marcia Loeb reported that we are "gearing up for the workfest." They will be grilling chicken as usual and reminded us to bring accompaniments for the potluck lunch.

Islander: Jane Winer requests that we continue to submit articles, poetry, essays, etc. to keep the Islander interesting and informative.

OLD BUSINESS:

Applicants over 65 or with terminal illness

Luther Carter presented a motion reported in the October Islander that would waive the three-year waiting period to obtain a Waiting List Pass for applicants over age 65. Brad Coolidge presented the following amendment: Any applicant 65 or over or any applicant having a terminal illness may request of the membership chairman an exception to the

waiting period. The exception will be voted upon by the membership. The motion as amended was passed.

Club canoes

David Lyles' proposed amendments to the Club's standing rules concerning Club canoes appeared in the November *Islander*. The amended standing rules are shown below, with the proposed new text in *italics* and the voting results for each new part. Note that the rules pertain to the Club canoes, not to private boats.

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.

Passed.

- a. All persons using Club canoes or boats must wear an approved life preserver or personal flotation device (PFD) at all times.

This item addresses the liability issue, but it is difficult to enforce. Gerald Barton suggested an amendment that "persons" be changed to "guests."

The motion as amended was passed.

- a. Anyone under the age of 15 using a Club canoe or boat must be accompanied by an adult at least 18 years of age.

This item generated much discussion about the choice of age 15 and also what is meant by "accompanied."

Minutes of November 8 Meeting (continued)

The motion to table the vote on this issue was passed. Discussion will be continue at a future meeting.

15K. Supervisor of Canoeing

Shall:

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

Passed.

Your secretary would like to mention a few of the interesting statements made while discussing these issues. A state law already exists which requires that a life preserver be worn between the dates November 15 and May 15 while in water below the class 3 rapids rating. During the other times, state law requires a flotation device in the boat. When signing the log on the ferry, one is signing a liability form. Some members and guests are not aware of this.

Caretaker's quarters

Having seen the flood damage in the caretaker's quarters, the membership passed a motion made by Beth Grant to allocate up to \$3000 to seal and winterize the quarters.

It was also the sense of the meeting that the *ad hoc* committee resume and act as agent of the Club in administrating the building of the new caretaker's quarters. If the estimated cost exceeds \$31,000, the committee must seek Club approval. Al Brown and Mardy Burgess will chair the committee; John Matthews, Chuck Pill and Karl Kosok will be members of the committee. Other members are welcome to participate.

NEW BUSINESS:

Waived waiting period for families with young children

Jane Winer made a motion to amend the Club rule that new applicants wait three years before being able to obtain a Waiting List Pass. The amendment would waive the three-year waiting period to obtain a Waiting List Pass for a family with young children. The Club will vote on this at the next meeting.

Sponsors for new applicants and orientation

Tryon Wells made a motion to amend the bylaws to require that (1) a new applicant be sponsored by two members of the Club as our application form intends and (2) an applicant on the waiting list attend one Club orientation before becoming a member; likewise for a member before acquiring a Waiting List Pass.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15



Ruppert



Cartoon by Johnna Robinson

Workfest Report

—by Doc Taliaferro

This fall's Workfest was one of the best ever... the turnout was impressive and productive... and again there was so much accomplished by so many it will be impossible to credit each worthy name in these dispatches. The swimming float and dock were brought in, the picnic tables were moved to high ground, the gutters were cleaned, the floor insulation for the warm room was installed on the ceiling of the men's bathroom, new screening was installed on the porch, the Caretaker's air conditioner was uninstalled and moved to the shed, the outside flood lights were replaced and an experiment initiated to determine if long life bulbs are worth the extra

money, new hand railings and one new footing were installed at the towpath, a new door was installed for the caretaker's bathroom (actual privacy is now possible), wood was cut, a new step was installed on the towpath landing, leaves were swept off of the top of the canoe shed, new ceiling fixtures were installed in the caretaker's quarters, new metal cables were attached to the captain's float, the Clubhouse upstairs was cleaned, door frames and trim in the clubroom were painted, repairs were made to the wooden walkway, the metal cabinet in the women's bathroom was cleaned and painted, the up-island paths were raked and of course the lawn was raked and cleaned. Now folks... is this an impressive list or what...?

George and Marcia Loeb again organized the buffet event that brought the Members together for the main social gathering of the day. This year the ping-pong table was covered with potluck and the room filled with fellowship and that warm feeling of accomplishment. However, the Caretaker recommends that an investigation be made of the group that rakes the leaves each year... entirely too much fun and laughter seems to take place doing this job and surely something suspicious is going on. Men-

tion in the dispatches should be made of Jim Drew, who was literally the first to arrive and the last to leave; of Trip Reid and Ann Satterthwaite, who knew they would not be able to attend the Workfest and made a point to come down the Thursday before and spend much of the day doing grounds projects; of Sandy Robinson, also unable to attend, who came down the day before to clean out the refrigerator, taking a couple of hours and using a toothbrush to get the hard stuff; of Wayne Limburg, who returned another day to finish his project of new lights for the quarters; of Kent Halstead, Mark Flor, and Jim and Karen Foreit... whose association with the Island is only as guests but who came and put in a hard day's work anyway; and of Ned Goddard, who took on the nastiest task when he tried to unstop a "dirty" lady's toilet under the worst conditions one might imagine. All Members who attended are to be commended... take a bow!

The “Warm Room” Project, Final Installment



Tropical paradise

Greg and James Super having a go at caretaking on a cold November day.

The Warm Room was renovated last month with insulation behind all walls, the ceiling and under the floor. Though I liked the old siding in the room that served as its walls, the cost of finding and replacing it with similar material was, I felt, prohibitive. Instead, the walls of the room were replaced with a modern inexpensive composite board (a heavier and more durable version of the old pre-WWII beaver board) and trim was applied over the joints to mimic the style of the walls in the main club room. Even using inexpensive materials, the total cost of the materials wound up around \$700.00 for the composite board, plywood, electrical materials, insulation, trim, vinyl tile, caulk and paint.

I may have honcho-ed the job, but want to thank all those who ably assisted in the project starting with Doc, who fought a fever but was available all during the week of the project. Other contributors include Jerry Barton, Chuck Pill, Renee Dunham, David Winer, Bill and Joan Kugler, Richard and Penelope Doolittle and the experienced counsel of John Mathews. And thanks also to Phyllis who put in a short carpentry stint but provided sustenance whenever it was needed.

—Tryon Wells



Last month’s *Islander* picture.
The ugly guts.



Same view with walls and paint.
Yes, beauty is definitely skin deep.

For the Record: A Sycamore Island Administrative Calendar

—by Tryon Wells

As lame-duck president, but continuing webmaster and historian, it has come to my attention that many members don't understand even some of the basics of how this club operates. In addition, last week former club president Brad Coolidge dumped some old Sycamore Islanders on me from the mid 1970s to the mid 1980s. One is struck when reading some of the issues being debated 25 years ago, how we go round and round on the same stuff again and again. Other things, like a suggestion written in 1976 about putting a "Member's Only" sign on the Maryland shore, seem to take 25 years to do (such a sign finally went up earlier this year).

I don't suggest that there is a real problem here – only that lots of members try to do what they can for the club while simultaneously leading their own lives. Much does get done – but much also falls through the cracks.

So this article is basically a calendar, on the main things that need to be done each year, and by whom, so that the Club can continue to run smoothly with a number of new procedures recently voted into effect. Much of this is a re-statement of some of the detail one can find in the Standing Rules, but I think putting it down in calendar fashion will be a helpful future reference for us all.

January

— Starting next year (2001), January is the only month that the club will take new club applications for membership. New applicants must call the Membership Secretary in January, obtain and then return their application before the month is out.

— The Supervisor of Camping and Parties produces his/her annual report of last year's large party statistics at the January Monthly Meeting. Also submitted is a list of members who are eligible to hold a large party in the coming year based on their club participation the previous year. (This new rule goes into effect in 2002, not 2001.)

February

— The club Archivist produces his/her annual report at the February Monthly Meeting and takes the past year's material to the Washington Historical Society (which is custodian of our historical records.)

— At the February Monthly Meeting, set the date for the annual Sycamore Orientation.

March

— If passed this coming spring, the end of March is the optimum time to hold a Sycamore Orientation for club applicants on the waiting list. It has been proposed that all club applicants be required to attend an Orientation before becoming either (1) club members or (2) before being granted a Waiting List Pass.

-- The March Monthly Meeting is traditionally the time that dates are set for the Spring Workfest (usually early to mid-April) and the Wildflower Walk (also usually early to mid-April).

April

— Treasurer to file tax forms with state and federal authorities.

— Set the date for the Annual Potomac Downriver Race with the Canoe Cruisers Association (traditionally held in early May).

— Spring Workfest

— The Wildflower Walk

May

— The Annual Potomac Downriver Race

— The May Monthly Meeting is traditionally the time that the date is set for the Sycamore Island Regatta (this can be scheduled anytime over the summer but has been on Labor Day weekend the past two years).

— The Membership Secretary produces his/her annual report at the May Monthly Meeting and new members are voted in.

— Enjoy the Summer –

Administrative Calendar

August

- The August Monthly Meeting is traditionally the time that the date is set for the Old-Timers Potluck Picnic.
- Determine the members of the Nominating Committee to help nominate club officers for the next year.
- Sycamore Island Regatta

September

- The Nominating Committee is announced at the September Monthly Meeting.
- Old-Timers' Potluck Picnic

October

- The October Monthly Meeting is traditionally the time that the date is set for the Fall Workfest (usually the weekend before Thanksgiving).
- The Nominating Committee submits a slate of officers of the club for the next year in time to be published in the November Islander.

November

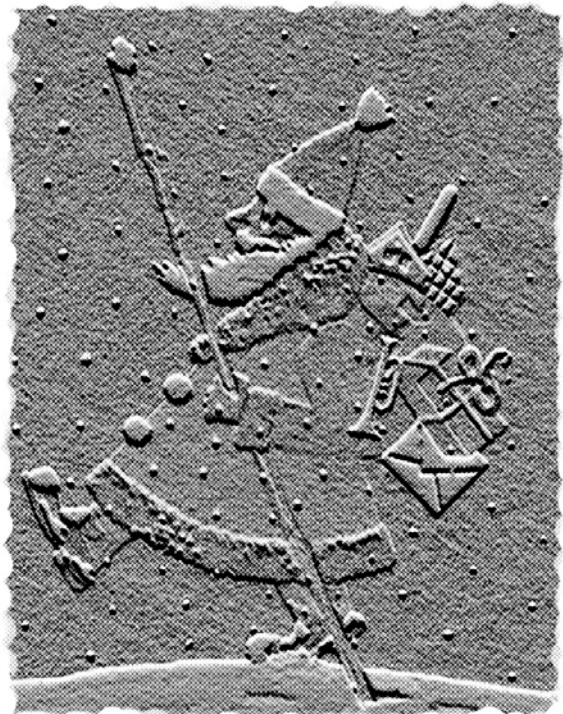
- The Treasurer produces his/her annual report of the preceding 12 months (the Club's accounting year) at the November Monthly Meeting.
- Fall Workfest
- The Personnel Committee meets to conduct a Caretaker Annual Review.
- The Finance Supervisor audits the club's accounts and helps the Treasurer prepare a budget for the future year.

December

- The December Monthly Meeting approves or modifies (1) the new budget, (2) the slate of new officers and (3) the Personnel Committee's recommendations regarding the caretaker and his/her annual compensation.
- Caretaker is offered and signs a 1-year employment contract for the next year.
- Financial Secretary sends out dues notices to all members and fee notices to all applicants on the waiting list. Financial Secretary also submits all files and other papers of historical value to the club Archivist by January 1st.

- Membership Secretary submits Membership Roster to be printed in the Sycamore Islander's January edition. Also submits all files and other papers of historical value to the club Archivist by January 1st.
- Recording Secretary submits all minutes and other papers of historical value to the club Archivist by January 1st.

I've tried to be as comprehensive as I can but may have missed things. Any members who know of any important items missed, please submit them to the *Islander* for next month so that we can have as thorough an administrative calendar as possible for the new century (or at least for the next year or two until we change all the rules again).



Notes from the Island

Wed 8 Nov A Member and his fishing buddy were down this morning, and when they rang the bell it was a lesson for us all. You may recall that Tryon Wells and John Matthews made adjustments to the newish large bell now hanging in the hickory tree near the deck. This is a large, clear bell that can be heard almost everywhere on the Island, and placed especially so that it may be heard by a substitute caretaker in the warm room during the winter when the doors and windows are closed. But it was also hoped that it would be heard further afield on the Virginia side of the Island... wind direction and intensity permitting. Well... today it was not. The would-be fishermen were left ignored on the landing while the Caretaker was puttering at the top of the Island. *Mea culpa*. One problem is that one still must swing the rope greatly to activate the big bell... doing the usual casual swing will only activate the cow bell and the bell near the Caretaker's quarters. So Members take note... do not be afraid to swing the rope vigorously if your first polite attempt does not result in a prompt ferryperson after a couple of minutes... and listen for the hickory tree bell.

The Caretaker is, of course, disappointed somewhat... having hoped that the new bell arrangement would allow him to visit the nether reaches of the island more frequently. Therefore, the old protocol of caretakers being restricted to the middle of the Island will be resumed, and should be continued by all substitute caretakers. However, attempting a serious swing to ring the hickory tree bell should be done only after no response is apparent to a first or second ring, and this is the way it should be, because if we attempt to adjust it to ring every time as the other two bells are, no one will be able to sit on the deck near the hickory tree bell when the ferry is in operation.

Thu 9 Nov Finally it is raining (well, drizzling, anyway), after the driest October in recorded history, and thus certain materials, especially the wood torn out of the walls in the warm room, can be "disappeared." This being a semi-public record one might not wish to go into details, but it has always been fascinating how one little wooden twig, with a tip coated with phosphorus and sulphur, can reduce great piles of material to constituent elements. This is an onerous all day chore, requiring constant attendance, wa-

ter hose at the ready, all other responsibilities in abeyance, a large area raked and cleared, and little if any wind. Other things that "disappeared" included a couple of years of *Horticulture* magazine, treasured but until today un-revisited copies of *Texas Highways*, many *New Yorker* magazines (interestingly, a magazine that more than a few Members can not bear to throw away and thus is brought down and left for the elucidation of others), and almost twenty years of various canoeing magazines... although a 1984 issue of *Canoe* magazine featuring "Cruising the Yukon" with Robert Service was saved. You have all been there, that moment when previously cherished words and pictures are being consigned to history's final dissolution... those sweet/sad moments of the last flip-through.

Yes... it was an onerous day to have to spend out of doors... the warm, light drizzle... no Members... the fall colors... that certain quality of light... please, please, don't throw me into that briar patch again.

Mon 13 Nov Would you believe that the noon weather actually had an announcement that this was National Storm Preparedness Week? Some well-meaning bureaucrat has issued this from somewhere intending, one imagines, to turn our thoughts to getting ready for the coming cold season. This is an alert that, like the squirrels, one should hasten to gather one's nuts before the approaching storm. Frivolous one might think, except that even now snowstorms rage in the Dakotas where, like some other parts of the country, the weather is such an integral and serious component of people's lives that no warning is needed because the outdoor condition is too frequently "in your face." Unlike here, where we bask in that best of all outdoor places, a "Zone 7" gardening zone. And being basically urban and hence disconnected from the natural environment except by deliberate effort, perhaps it is wise the bell be rung to draw our attention to the obvious. The fable of the preparing ant and the playful grasshopper springs to mind.

Wed 15 Nov So there they sat yesterday... outside in the cold... Miss T and the Caretaker... who was performing his assigned duties as warm cat lap... as the 5 o'clock Florida deadline came that would allegedly determine the leader of the free world. What to



Notes from the Island

do... rush inside and stare at the box with the rest of this country? Safe to say, no toilets in this town were being flushed at or just past the top of the hour. Despite the cold, a magnificent dusk was in progress... a phenomenon that would not be repeated, unlike the indoor punditry. The priorities seemed clear... dusk witness must be performed... the free world must get along as best it can... the cat must not be displeased.

Wed 22 Nov Lest there be any doubt... the temp fell to 26 degrees last night on the Island... and winter has arrived down here. Previously we have been sheltered somewhat by the microclimate dictated by the surrounding water temperature, but you will note that the river temp has now fallen to 38 degrees. This means we have reached the seasonal crossover point where river temperatures no longer moderate the Island temperatures but instead will keep them below what y'all will experience "up the hill" in the real world. So, should Indian Summer visit, and the desire to flee urban conditioning and take refuge once more in beauty win out... remember to bring one more layer with you when you come down here.

Fri 24 Nov The first indication of how bad it was came upon returning late at night from Thanksgiving frivolities when the Caretaker's Wife exclaimed "Oh no... we know what that sound is." Well folks... "That sound" is unique... and occurs when the ferry is breaking ice. Sure enough, this morning the slough was frozen three quarters of the way across... the slough being the side of the river between the Maryland shore and the Island. Unfortunately, the ice had to be broken through to answer the bell at 0800 hrs to get a contractor working on winterising the quarters. More unfortunately... overnight the shrimp had danced with the truffles and it was a bleary and groggy Caretaker who answered the bell. The moral of the story? Take the alka seltzer before going to bed, not at 3 a.m.

Thu 30 Nov A Member has asked about the responsibility and authority that can be exercised by Substitute Caretakers. The story that raises the question has to do with an early spring Sunday when a new Member who did not seem to know his way about took his family out in a canoe on a day when it was not wise. The Substitute Caretakers advised against it and the situation was such, with approaching storm and wind, that had they felt empowered

with sufficient authority they would have forbade it. We have oft suggested that a Substitute Caretaker should function, in military parlance, as the responsible Duty Officer, and thus represent all responsible authority of the Club subject to an appeal to the Club Captain. In fact, the Florida Supreme Court (known to accept silly petitions) would probably rule that unlike a regular caretaker, who is after all an employee... a Substitute Caretaker, by definition a Member and hence part owner of the Club, must have powers and authority on the Island second only to God.

Fri 1 Dec You will notice in the parking lot on the parkway that there are some colored stakes driven into the ground near the two trash receptacles. Happening by when Park Service employees were installing them, the Caretaker inquired as to their use. Seems they are not at all related to the trash receptacles... but are instead located to mark the location of the metal gratings of the storm drains. Why...? Well, seems these poles are so the drivers of the snowploughs will know where the drains are. We do not remember this from last year. Considering that these poles are taller even than the trash cans... one can only ponder what the Park Service must know about the coming winter snows that we do not.

—Doc Taliaferro

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



Proposal: A Formal Sycamore Island Orientation

—by Tryon Wells

Even back in the 1970s, members wrote in the *Islander* their concerns that though the club had recently increased its membership (from 140 to today's 155 regular members), what the club was getting were more members but less participation. More recently, the notion of an annual Sycamore Orientation held every spring for club applicants on the waiting list, is a latter-day response to the same concern. The content and conduct of the event I will leave to the members interested in those details, but I formally propose the following requirements on the persons on the waiting list in future years, starting with next year (2001).

Add the following requirement to Standing Rule 11, Application for Membership:

“Before an club applicant on the waiting list can be admitted to regular club membership, the applicant must attend a formal club Orientation.”

Add the following change (in italics) to Standing Rule 6, Waiting List Passes:

6. Waiting List Passes
Waiting List Passes may only be issued between January 1 and March 31. 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, *and if the applicant has attended a formal club Orientation*, the Membership Secretary may issue to such applicant a Waiting List Pass valid for the year in which issued.

Of course, adoption of these changes to the standing Rules will necessitate that a “formal club Orientation” is organized and held every spring so that applicants on the waiting list can meet their requirement before becoming members or getting Waiting List Passes. I would recommend that the Membership Secretary be given the responsibility to seeing that the event occurs each year, whether or not he/she actually conducts it.

Add the following duties to Standing Rule 15E, Membership Secretary:

15E. Membership Secretary
Shall:

...

1. See to it that a formal club Orientation event is organized, publicized and conducted each spring to introduce the club's events, procedures and rules to club applicants on the waiting list. Be sure that a record of club applicants that attended be kept so that this application requirement be recorded for each club applicant.

I have every confidence that members interested in organizing and conducting such an orientation will do so every year without fail.



Sunday Relief Caretakers

Date	Time	Name(s)	Telephone
December 3	11:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Penny and Dick Doolittle Jeanne Asherman	301 229-5632 301 587-6990
December 10	11:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Rene and Eric Simpson Susanna and John Membrino	703 821-7556 301-229-1154
December 17	11:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Ann and Ted Zahn Sandy and Jeff Komarow	301 566-9749 301 897-5996
December 24	11:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Nancy and Norman Metzger Ned Goddard	202 546-1034 301 229-5660
December 31	11:00 - 2:00 2:00 - Dusk	Star Mitchell Maxine Hattery	301 530-3252 202 362-1361

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

Call John Krasny (301-564-0342) or Jeff Komarow (301-897-5996) to volunteer for caretaking in January. You can also contact them by e-mail at jfkrasny@erols.com or jeffkomarow@aol.com

Winter on the Island is special and the new warm room is very cozy. Volunteers from the waiting list are encouraged. It's a great way to spend time on the Island!

Large Parties December 2000

Date	Time	Who	What
No	Large	Parties are scheduled	for 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

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December 2000

This Issue:

- Guests in club canoes must *wear* PFD's.
- Rascally beaver on winter sports.
- Workfest accomplishments (plentiful).
- Bell-ringing advice for ferry passengers.
- A calendar for the Island year.



— photo by David Winer

First step: demolition.

The old (not very) Warm Room is no more. Last month, Tryon Wells spearheaded the huge job of tearing out the old walls and ceiling, insulating, electrifying, constructing new walls, and painting. Other volunteers added significant contributions, but Tryon labored mightily for many days on this job. Many thanks go to Tryon, *Our Hero*.

