

The Sycamore Islander

August, 2001

Volume 80 No. 8

August Meeting

The next meeting, to be held on Wednesday, August 8th, promises a lively discussion as various aspects of the planned construction of the caretaker's quarters continue to dominate our attention. A larger group than usual attended the July meeting, including several people from the waiting list, and I hope that this increased participation continues as we address these important issues. The presence of waiting list members gives me confidence that the Club will continue to have a membership that is interested and committed to preserving the Island we love.

The participation of these members-to-be reminded me that some of you may not understand the need for improving the caretaker's quarters. Doc became caretaker in November 1996, after the river had risen twice earlier in the year, flooding the lower level of the Clubhouse and the quarters. The floods washed away some of the foundation supports for the floor joists in the quarters. The hardwood floors in the kitchen buckled and shifted. Temporary and partial repairs have been made, including using plywood for the kitchen floor. The particleboard in the bedroom and bath sagged and developed gaping holes under the bed, allowing insects and spiders to enter. Doc has been taken to the emergency room twice this year due to insect bites, at least one of that occurred while sleeping. Recent repairs have, hopefully, sealed the floors. But some of the joists are rotten

and the floors are not adequately supported. This situation must be corrected before winter comes again.

The plans for the new construction have gone through many revisions for a variety of reasons; one plan reduced the living space, other plans did not sufficiently protect against flooding. The current plan is believed to be strong enough to withstand any flood since measurements began, with the possible exception of the 1936 flood that destroyed the previous clubhouse.

The construction will be completed with funds the Club currently has. However, it will nearly deplete the savings. As has been reported in the minutes of several meetings since December, even without the construction costs, future budgets would be difficult to balance. As a result of inflation, our income from dues and other fees is less than the normal operating expenses. Expect to see in the *Islander* and in your mail information about proposals to rebuild the savings and to keep the budget in balance. This may take the form of voluntary loans/contributions, dues increases, and financial assessments levied against all members.

This has been a dynamic year in the Club, with many separate but related events coming together at one time. I hope you can attend the meeting to learn more and share your views. If not, you can receive information through the *Islander*.

—Ann Marie Cunningham, Vice President

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. **Note to submitters of announcements, articles, or letters: The deadline for inclusion in the September issue is receipt at the Editors' address on Sep 1. Earlier submissions receive priority.**

Minutes of the July 11 Meeting

Attendance: John and Ann Marie Cunningham, Ken Fassler, Nancy and Blair Bower, Jack Colwell, Bill Bays, Johnna Robinson, Jane and Dave Winer, Bill and Lucky Marmon, Mardy Burgess, Al Brown, Charlotte Brewer, Betsy Stephens, Alan Gelb, Paul Stanton, Gerald Barton, Fran Short, Bill Eichbaum, George Malusky II, Tryon Wells, Peter Fuchs, Jeff Komarow.

The meeting was called to order by Vice President Ann Marie Cunningham. The minutes of the June meeting were approved with an amendment to remove the word “unanimously” from the sentence stating that the motion to reimburse the caretaker for medical expenses relating to the spider bites passed.

Treasurer’s Report: Alan Gelb presented a report on expenses from January to June of this year. The expenses have been within budget expectations. Utility costs and insurance costs are rising. Pepco has given a \$500 rebate.

Financial Report and Membership Report: Jeff Komarow reported that there have been no changes in membership and the cash flow has been normal for this time of year.

Captain’s Report: Ken Fassler reported that he, John Matthews, Trip Reid and a gardener toured the Island to consider types of grass that grow well in a shady environment and plantings that would prevent erosion. The gardener will prepare recommendations and an estimate.

Caretaker’s Log: Doc Taliaferro had no additions to his log.

Building Report: Al Brown discussed problems in getting a building permit. The biggest problem is providing a site plan because there is no such detailed document currently in existence. Suggestions on how to create one were made. Blair Bower and Tryon Wells offered to help the committee. The committee will approach the permitting people to explain our unique situation, that typical concerns regarding traffic, parking, and neighbors are not applicable, in order to convince them that a complete professional site plan should not be necessary. After the permit is obtained, the contractor estimated seven weeks before construction can begin. The committee will act as quickly as possible to obtain the permit and begin construction in order that it can be completed before cold weather. If a building permit cannot be obtained, it would be possible to construct improved caretaker’s quarters without changing the clubhouse footprint, but that would add different challenges.

A long discussion ensued concerning the proposed method to restore the reserve funds that will be depleted as a result of the construction, and the need to provide the membership with details of the proposal in advance. The vote last month authorized the treasurer to obtain voluntary advance pledges and/or payments. Once the success of this effort and the final construction costs are known, the treasurer will provide a detailed proposal that may include increases to dues and fees and possible assessments to all members. The proposal will be presented and discussed at a regular meeting, then published in the *Islander*, and voted upon at a subsequent meeting.

Tryon Wells eloquently expressed his concern that last month’s anonymous call to Montgomery County accusing the club with wrongdoing may have a serious detrimental effect on the Club’s reputation. He strongly expressed his opinion that any member who disagrees with policies that have been approved at club meetings should accept the majority will, and not injure the club’s excellent public record with authorities such as Montgomery County and the National Park Service. He recommended that such behavior be considered grounds for expulsion from the club.

Editor’s Report: Dave Winer reports that members have contributed a lot of good material for the upcoming August issue. Tryon Wells has made *Islander* issues back to January 2001 available on the website via a monthly notification e-mail.

New Business: Jane Winer described how she got into trouble swimming when the currents were stronger than expected. She asked that life rings be placed on the float and dock. This matter is being referred to the Swimming supervisor John Krasny.

Bill Bays moved to: “Publish full minutes of the meeting in the *Islander* subsequent to any meeting and the issues discussed at the meeting and an accurate account of any discussion of issues and the vote count pro and con of any issue voted upon.” It was pointed out that the minutes attempt to do this now, and that if any issue is not adequately presented, the minutes can be amended at the following meeting. The motion was defeated by a vote of 6 in favor, 12 opposed.

A motion was made, then withdrawn, regarding prior notification to the membership of proposed actions that have significant financial impact on the Club.

-John & Ann Marie Cunningham, Acting Secretaries

Midsummer Night Party

— Doc Taliaferro

Despite the intermittent rain, the front cleared through in the late afternoon, and over 80 intrepid Islanders showed up for the Caretaker's Wife's Midsummer's Night Party. The sun later shone and the sunset was brilliant. We know that the primary objective of coaxing children down to meet and make friends was achieved because of the exchanging of telephone numbers that took place before they parted company Sunday morning.



As to the adults... well... the party was a raging success not because the Caretakers hoisted the party flag but because so many interesting members showed up and made it so. What we have learned is what a perfect Midsummer's Night Party would look like next year, whether the Caretakers are here or not.



Chris Grant and Robert Gelb would be in charge of ferry operations... doing it and signing up others. Frank Daspit and Nell Hennessy would again give canoeing classes...

extremely popular this year... and issue the certificates made up by George and Marcia Loeb. Shelley Malusky would be in charge of the arts and crafts program in which all the kids make very neat and very special commemorative T-shirts... so popular it had to be repeated the next morning. Vicki Judson and Jennifer Esch would be in charge of the face painting. Caroline Gelb would handle the scavenger hunt for kids 11 and above. Vicki Judson and Jennifer Esch would lead the treasure hunt for kids 10 and below. The "Husky Men Team" would pick up and move all and any heavy things required. Richard Bertaut would be on duty or supervise the shifts of adults serving as Responsible Adult and/or lifeguards at the swimming area.



Sherry Smith would manage the potluck dinner set-up team. George Loeb would be in charge of the 3 grills and oversee those that interned under him this year. Paul Lang and Susan Elfstrom would spearhead the clean-up effort. Rene Dunham would lead the unique type of group charades that was so popular this year that the campfire program had to be postponed so another round could be played. George Malusky and sons would be the Fire Marshals and be in charge of setting, lighting, and monitoring the campfire. Cindy Bertaut would lead the campfire program. Ned Goddard would lead the nighttime Island walk. Vicki Judson, Jennifer Esch, and Shelley Malusky would coordinate a unique breakfast of French toast made on vagabond stoves.

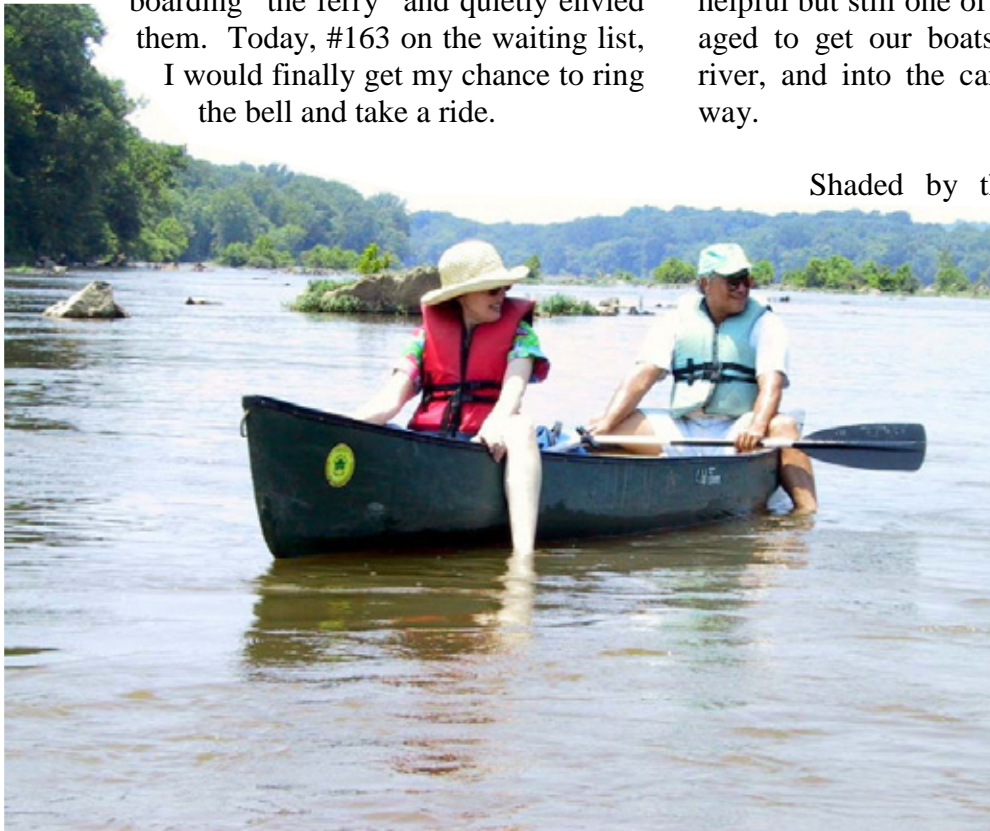
And if we were really, really lucky, we would get George Loeb to repeat what was by all accounts the most interesting event of the party... his breakfast presentation of a program about Stonehenge... complete with model.

And those of you who let the clouds deter your attendance... eat your hearts out!

Sycamore Island Canoe Trip: June 30, 2001

—Dot Procter

Finally, my first glimpse of Sycamore Island. For several years now, I have seen people boarding “the ferry” and quietly envied them. Today, #163 on the waiting list, I would finally get my chance to ring the bell and take a ride.



The author and her husband taste the joys of the river on their first Club outing.

As I boarded the ferry, I had the feeling I was back in camp and there were no counselors. It was just me and the other campers. I liked that feeling. No one directed us, or checked us off a list or even greeted us. Like kids, I just asked some fellow campers, “What do we do? Where are the canoes? Where are the paddles and life vests?”

Walking up to the storage porch and through the rickety screen door, I felt right at home. Yes, I know this place. I have been here many times in my life. I know the smells, the pile of paddles, and the old lockers lined with signs of summer: faded beach towels and drying bathing suits. It was all so familiar as waves of childhood summers flooded my memory – Maine, New Hampshire, Canada, etc.

With paddles chosen and life vests on, we

picked out canoe and Dave greeted us with a counselor’s reassurance (maybe an assistant counselor, helpful but still one of us). Soon we had all managed to get our boats into the river, out of the river, and into the canal. And we were on our way.

Shaded by the overhanging trees and vines, the canal was inviting. Smooth, with a gentle breeze, we comfortably paddled our way towards lock 7. There were six canoes and two kayaks. Dave and Jane were our hosts and guides. Then we had Ann and Sherry, Bill and Jane, Steve, his two sons, and Jennifer and Mike, and Marc and myself in the canoes. Tamar and Paul each had their own kayak.

With yellow, red and blue life vests, various colored shirts and hats, and one yellow and one turquoise kayak, we were



Sherry Pettie and Ann Lucy glide in the shade along the canal.

water surrounded by a tunnel of green foliage.

We had our first challenge portaging over Lock 7, but soon continued our dreamy paddle up the canal. At Lock 8 we hauled our boats out and found a shaded grassy spot to eat our picnic lunches.



Paddlers dine Chez Lock Eight.

Now to the river, our next challenge. Navigating through stinging nettles, poison ivy and mud (while admiring the wild bergamot flowering profusely) we all made it safely into the Potomac.

The sun was hot, but the breeze and the water soothed us. We all took on the challenge of the mini-rapids with Dave's wise guidance and enjoyed our drift down-river towards the Island, dangling our feet in the water to cool our steamy bodies. Timeless.

As we passed by the swimming floats, we could tangibly feel the pleasure of a cool dip in the Poto-



Jane and Bill Hill relax near the Virginia Shore.

mac. I had been waiting for this dip for many years. And after making our way around the island, to the boat dock, getting all the boats out and cleaned off, equipment properly stowed, we were free to jump in.

I walked over to the docks, through the dappled light, drenched with sweat and full of anticipation. The Potomac. A swim in the Potomac finally, after all these years. And, it WAS heavenly. It was delicious.

But it turns out the adventures for the day weren't quite over. As Sherry and I wallowed on the float, we heard a small, sweet voice beside us, ever so politely, asking for help. Jane had jumped in with a full set of clothes on, including blue jeans, a long-sleeved shirt AND shoes. She was making her way out to a rock when she realized she was beginning to be overwhelmed by the heavy wet fabrics surrounding her. Sherry jumped to the rescue and led



Sherry Pettie helps Jane Winer swim against the current.

her back to safety.

Tamar, Jane, Dave, Marc and I then made our way back to the ferry. Sherry stayed out on the float, taking full advantage of her day on the Island. What a treat!

—photos by David Winer

Dot Procter and Marc Bergeron live within walking distance of the Island. They look forward to moving up on the waiting list.

Canoeing the Upper Missouri

--Bill Marmon

My wife Lucky and I have recently returned from one of the world's great canoeing treats—the stretch of the upper Missouri River commencing at Fort Benton, Montana, and running east for 150 miles through breathtaking scenery--happily preserved in pristine condition as a National Monument under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The trip retraced the historic Lewis & Clark expedition and was filled with inspiring history, magnificent scenery. A fabulous trip into a magical scene, much of which can be accessed ONLY by canoe.

Lucky and I made the six-night-seven-day “float” in 17-foot Old Town fiberglass canoe with some friends. We traveled in relatively lavish backwoods style with the Missouri River Outfitters, which supplied the canoes and an excellent guide, a first-class cook, and pontoon canoe raft to carry tents, cooking gear, drinking water, ice and even a top-of-the-line portable potty. We were resupplied on day four at Judith Landing at river mile 89.

While the river has a brisk 5 mile-per-hour current and a few “riffles,” it lacks any real white water. Accordingly, the river is suitable for almost any level of canoeist, who is willing to sleep in the wild.

Stephen Ambrose, who chronicled the Lewis & Clark exploration in best-selling “Undaunted Courage,” includes several chapters on this stretch of the journey. Meriwether Lewis and his hearty band traversed this part of the river twice--upstream on the way out to the Pacific and downstream on the way back. Ambrose notes in his book that he has personally retraced, via canoe, this section 10 times and says: “Of all the historic and/or scenic sights we have visited in the world,



this is number one.”

We put in at Fort Benton, a colorful and historic frontier town, with a contemporary population of about 1,200. But 100 years ago it was a lusty boom town as the western-most terminus for the steamboats that plied the upper stretches of the Missouri commencing in 1830's and playing a key role in settling Montana. The old spirit of the town has been recaptured in the recent restoration of the Grand Union hotel, on the riverbank.

Lewis & Clark spent about three weeks going up this stretch of river. Many of our campsites along the river under large cottonwood trees, were made on the same ground used by Lewis' “corps of discovery” in the spring of 1805 as they moved into areas that no white man had ever seen. The wild beauty of the terrain has been well-preserved and must look very much as it did two hundred years ago.

On day two we glided into the spectacular “white cliffs” area formed by a perpendicular bands of sandstone on both sides of the river several hundred feet high and populated with weird structures



and ghost like “hoodoos.” The cliffs are sometimes broken by jutting walls of harder igneous material known as “shonkinite.”

Meriwether Lewis described the white cliffs: “The water...has trickled down the soft sand cliffs and worn it into a thousand grotesque figures, which with the help of a little imagination...are made to represent elegant ranges of lofty free stone buildings...some columns standing...others lying prostrate and broken...niches and alcoves of various forms and sizes never had an end...vast ranges of walls of tolerable workmanship, so perfect indeed that I should have thought that nature had attempted here to rival the human art of masonry had I not recollected that she had first began her work.” (Lewis’s bizarre spelling has been standardized.)

Most days we had time to take an interesting and often challenging hike up into the rocky “breaks” and gullies running perpendicular to the river (photo, opposite page). Sometimes we would visit the crumbling remains of early homesteaders or “wood hawkers.” The latter sold wood



to the passing steamboats, which consumed 25 cords a day going upstream. One hike took us high up a cliff to a rock structure known as “hole in the wall,” which features a large hole hollowed out by wind and rain erosion at the top of a sharp sandstone tower. On the water and before/after hikes we swam in the pleasantly cool river. The river is brownish--not unlike the Potomac after a rain--but clean to swim, but not to drink without boiling.

The rhythm of canoeing, swimming, and hiking was wonderful. However, I was always happy to get back into the canoes and out on the open water and be moving toward the next incredible geological permutation.

The weather was outstanding for most of the trip—warm and breezy during the day and cool in the evening. (The altitude of the river is about 2500 feet.) On day five, however, we hit powerful 35 knot

headwinds, not uncommon on the river, which raised two foot white caps and make forward progress difficult and challenging. The winds continued for most of the day and several canoes, including the pontoon craft of the guide, were partially swamped. We finally made camp, got into our tents, and experienced one of the most violent and prolonged thunderstorms I have ever encountered. The next day the weather was perfect.

Wildlife on the river and on the banks is diverse and abundant. There are over 200 species of birds, and we must have seen at least 50 of them. The buffalo of Lewis’s day are gone, but we did see some big-

horn sheep from a distance. This species was reported by Lewis & Clark but it became extinct by 1916. The Montana Fish and Game Department has successfully reintroduced several large herds.

At about noon on day seven we pulled into Kipp’s Landing, at the end of the “scenic river monument” and

the beginning of Charles Russell National Wildlife Refuge. Missouri River Outfitters was there to take us and canoes back to Fort Benton for a long hot shower in the Grand Union. (406-622-1882)

There are a dozen or so outfitters in the area, but I highly recommend Missouri River Outfitters, run by Larry and Bonnie Clark (406-622-3295, www.MROutfitters.com). They offer first-rate equipment and experienced guides. Our guide, Lonny Gorbstedt teaches science at a local high school and had an encyclopedic knowledge of the flora, fauna and geology as well as the Lewis & Clark connections which give a special dimension to an area that is already, as Lewis wrote, rich with “visionary enchantment.”

The Marmons live in Somerset in Bethesda and are active Islanders and Potomac paddlers.

Notes from the Island

Fri 22 Jun The other afternoon there was an enormous clamour of geese on the lawn... and after it did not abate over time the Caretaker investigated to see what was the matter. Were the crows trying to make off again with a gosling??? Were there intruders chasing the geese??? Had some rival gaggle tried to take over the grazing on the lawn??? In fact... the lawn was deserted except for two geese carrying on in a loud and obnoxious manner... very loud... and it took a few moments to figure out that this was a domestic squabble between a goose couple that was so loud and disagreeable that all the others had sensibly left the area so as to spare their senses and avoid the display of rude. The two geese were separated by 50 feet... pacing...not looking at each other... but obviously trading non-stop insults at each other. Yelling at them to be quiet did no good. It was reminiscent of a comedy routine by the Bickersons... except both seemed mad and outraged and were yelling at the same time. The Caretaker tried to explain that a human couple would never exhibit such shameful manners towards each other... but the decibel level merely rose higher and he retreated behind a closed... but unfortunately not sound-proofed door.

Tue 26 Jun Questions have been asked about the many potted plants bordering the lawn. This is actually a tree garden... a result of the efforts of Grounds Supervisor Trip Reid to pot up fifty-plus bare root sycamores and silky dogwoods obtained from the Potomac Conservancy during the Spring. The Club has offered to care for and nurture these potted trees so that they will be strong when they are planted out in the Fall. It is expected that the Club will retain a few for planting on the Island. While here the trees serve as a sort of on-going laboratory project of conservation at work and an example for Islanders of all ages who might wish to be involved when planting time comes.

Mon 2 Jul There seems to be only one goose couple remaining in the area... the others have gradually left during the past week. About ten days ago... when the water was very high... we were able to closely observe the goose technique for transiting from Sycamore to Ruppert's Island by using the river currents. A large gaggle swam towards the tip of Sycamore hugging the Virginia side of the Island and then... upon reaching the little island that used to be connected to Sycamore... launched themselves into the main river current and while being swept downriver worked hard to get to the lee of the larger island in the middle between Ruppert's and Sycamore. After a brief rest, they repeated the same technique to cross the main current to get into the lee of Ruppert's

where it was easier to work up to the bottom of that island to spend the night. We have decided they do not like the bottom of Sycamore, as there are too often night time fishermen close on the Maryland side nearby.

Watching them struggle so hard with the high water current one wondered why they did not simply take to the air for the short hop to Ruppert's. As Mother Nature practices total energy efficiency... the only answer can be that the geese use less energy struggling to swim than to fly a short distance.

Tue 3 Jul Have you ever looked closely at the bark of a sycamore tree to notice how different it is? It is smooth and not gnarled or ribbed like typical tree bark... but greenish-brown that peels from the trees in rectangular strips that resemble parchment to reveal a pale inner layer beneath. Here on the Island we have entered the season of falling sycamore bark... and visitors to the Island will now see the grounds littered with it.

Mon 9 Jul It has been a busy holiday week... and some of the multitude visiting were nieces and nephews of staff... hence the tents seen on the Island. The Caretaker realized he had guests and that some were female when he walked into the bathroom and noticed... how could one not... that there was no available horizontal space anywhere that was not covered with foo-foo bottles containing lotions and potions and tinctures and smellies and other unidentifiable but surely noxious liquids such that merely touching the bottle would suck the manhood out of any fellow. Ominously, the hanging towels were folded and hung with a military precision that defied any male to touch them... and the normal, manly cleansing soap on the sink was replaced with something stinky with perfume called Kiss My Face. In the shower... eyes shut against the soapy water... reaching sightless for a razor that was not in its accustomed place... the hand instead knocked down three of the strange bottles that seemed perched precariously everywhere. The Caretaker fled to the men's locker room bathroom to sulk.

Sat 14 Jul It is impossible to walk silently in the woods at night with all this darn sycamore bark lying about and crackling with every other step. If one was not aware of this ongoing fall of flaking and peeling bark falling from great heights, one might be alarmed by all the creepy sound at night. Under the trees at night there is a constant rain of "stuff" falling on the ground or anyone sitting out. In the dark it is impossible to tell if it is tree sweat, or bug urine, or small and solid larval life forms transiting from tree life to ground life. And of course, the

Notes from the Island (continued)

larger sound of the falling bark makes larger the sensation of any falling and human-impacting mote. Staff is forced to endure these nighttime conditions in order to continue to gather more data on the on-going firefly project.

Thu 19 Jul Sherry Pettie came aboard with a question regarding the supposed methane bubbles continuously seen in the shallows around the Island. It seemed to her that she had noticed that there were more bubbles just before rain and thunderstorms... and since the Caretaker had written in a previous Log entry about his "serious study" of methane bubbles... she wondered if he could confirm that these instances of more bubbles correlated with the decreased barometric pressure associated with such weather conditions. Well... a long silence ensued as the Caretaker tried to think about the phrase "serious study"... but in fact could only think about the number of times and entries about which the Caretaker's Wife had said "You can't write that stuff in the Log... no one will understand your sense of humour or that you're kidding." Fortunately, Sherry's scientist son Seth broke the silence by pointing out that a bottle of Sprite opened when the air pressure was high probably had less fizz than a bottle opened when the barometric pressure was low. You can imagine how easy it was for the Caretaker to be agreeable.

Fri 20 Jul From the Captain's float one can look downriver and see where the two massive sycamore trees have fallen into the river perpendicular to the Island. The closest fell in 1998 and the one further downriver fell almost exactly a year earlier. Many members have lamented the deterioration of the graceful arch formed by the closest fallen sycamore and the stylised artiness it gave to the downriver view. Few remember that the fallen tree beyond provided the same touch the first year it fell... and fewer still remember that there was a third fallen sycamore about the same distance further downriver... but time has had its way and that part of this first tree to fall that lay in the river has now gone to earth... or river. Taken together, these three trees display nature's pattern so graphically... as one after the other they follow each other exactly in their path to dissolution. One can look at the tree beyond the closest and see what the closest will look like next year. Visitors have come to photograph the nearest tree at the height of its style... but some would say the greatest art can best be appreciated as a pattern wrought by time.

Anyway... there is a green heron that frequently likes to hang out at this nearest fallen sycamore that is not shy and seems not to mind people hanging out at the Captain's float. Look for it when you come down... it is often there

but not seen... and if you are lucky you will get a very close performance of it grooming, fishing, and eating.

Sat 21 Jul Caretaker predecessor Peter Jones conveyed a theory about Island use that has seemed confirmed in the almost five years we have been here. In this theory, summer seasonal use of the Island is determined by the weather patterns of late Spring. If the weather pattern is good and favors frequent use of the Island... a habit of visiting the Island is established that will continue all year regardless of how oppressive and icky the summer weather may be. If the early weather is wet and dreary... other activities are scheduled for children and family and the Island no longer appears at the top of the Summer "fun things to do list"... and this behavioral conditioning persists and continues even in the face of a cool and brilliant and sparkling high Summer weather pattern... like the one we are in now.

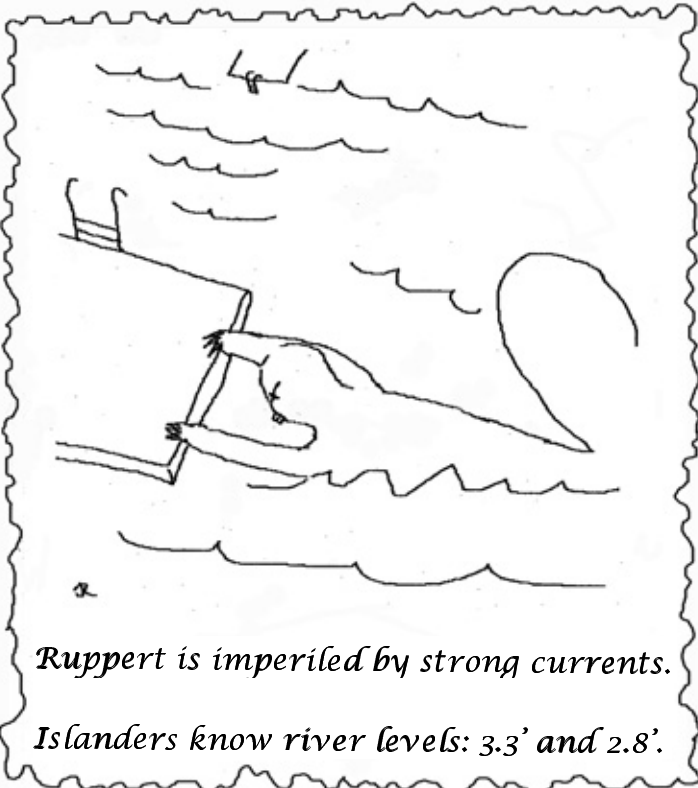
The Caretaker continues to be perplexed to go down to the ferry when the Island opens at 0900 hrs and see that no line of waiting Members has formed. So Members... snap out of it... break the shackles of your conditioning... get down here... where better can you enjoy and appreciate the best Washington summer weather in living memory?

Mon 23 Jul Any reader of this Log will understand that there are those Members for whom fishing down here is serious business. Perhaps one should rather say serious fun... but in any event their degree of seriousness can evoke images of a professional SWAT team about to enter the fray. Thus it is that when such experts come up empty handed, as they all have these last few weeks, there is "serious" wailing and gnashing and ranting and general unhappiness with the state of the river and the mystery of the missing fish. However, yesterday, young Ben Friedmann caught a foot-long fish off of the Captain's float using a hook he had baited by merely dipping it into Crisco. And then, we just got this e-mail query about all this "fish poppycock" from Eric Simpson: *We cooked out there Sunday. We threw a line out 20 yards while we cooked and chatted. Hooked 2 catfish of a little over a foot long with cheese squares with the pole stuck in a chair. Also saw innumerable fish jumps. What fish are missing?*

—Doc Taliaferro

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

Ruppert



*Ruppert is imperiled by strong currents.
Islanders know river levels: 3.3' and 2.8'.*

Cartoon by Johnna Robinson

Distinguished Islander Dies

The Sycamore Islander is sad to relate the news that 33-year member John Holdridge died last month, July 12, of pulmonary fibrosis at age 76. John was a lifelong China scholar and Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. State Department. In 1971, as a member of the National Security Council he accompanied then-National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger on the now-famous secret trip to Beijing to begin the transition to normality in U.S.-China relations. He then served as the Deputy Director of the U.S. mission in Beijing from 1973-1975, as U.S. Ambassador to Singapore from 1975-1978, Assistant Secretary of State from 1981-1983, and as U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia from 1983-1986. He retired in 1986.

The club extends its heartfelt sympathies to his wife Martha, son and current member David Holdridge, daughter Pat Holdridge, son Geoff Holdridge and John's six grandchildren.

Islander to be available electronically.

Would you would prefer to download the *Sycamore Islander* electronically, instead of receiving the mailed version? The club can notify you by e-mail when each issue is available. This notice will include a direct click-link to the newsletter on the Sycamore Island website. You can then view or print the issue on your own. The newsletter can only be reached through this e-mailed link.

Electronic distribution will reduce our mailing costs, the amount depending on the extent of participation. If you have the Adobe Acrobat Reader, you may try out this new capability for this August issue at:

<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/publish/islander.htm>

If you would like to receive future *Islanders* this way, **in lieu of the printed version by U.S. mail**, please send an e-mail note to tryon2@bellatlantic.net.

-- Tryon Wells, Webmaster

Fishers Notice:

Jim Cummins, Interstate Commission Potomac River Basin (ICPRB), 301-984-1908 x106, asks that club fishing members report to him identification of any shad, stripers, or white perch seen or caught in our area of the river above the dam.

OLD-TIMERS DAY

Bill Kugler and Peggy Thomson have selected the date for this year's Old Timers Day: Wednesday, September 12, on the Island of course. This is the week after Labor Day. Rain date is the next day, Thursday, September 13. Noonish.

The definition of "old-timer" is up to you. Anyone who has been an Islander long enough to consider himself or herself eligible is indeed so. Pot Luck as usual.

Hear ye, Hear ye! Regatta 01

The 6th Annual **Grand Sycamore Regatta** will be held at 1:30 PM on **Labor Day, Monday September 3rd, 2001** with the *next Sunday, Sept 9th, as a rain date.*

There will be canoe races, bag pickups, jousting, and novelty relays afloat. There will also be events ashore for landlubbers. Everyone, including those on the WAITING LIST, is invited to participate, and to a pot luck supper after the contests, followed by awarding of PRIZES. So: bring a dish to pass, either proteinaceous, carbohydellicious, or vegefabulous. Drinks will be provided. Be prepared for a good time. The more the merrier! Would you like to be a race monitor?? A setter-upper?? A skill demonstrator?? Help is needed!! Call George or Marcia at 301- 652- 4229.

Sunday Relief Caretakers July-August 2001

Date	Time	Name(s)	Telephone
July 1	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	John Cunningham Maxine Hattery	
July 8	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	Jasper & Fern Ingersoll Priscilla Roosevelt	
July 15	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	Terry & Patricia Murphy Greg Hitz	
July 22	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	Carl Linden Terry Murphy	
July 29	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	Peter Winkler & Barbara Kraft TBA	
August 12	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	TBA TBA	
August 19	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	TBA Harry & Marinda Schwartz	(301)229-2285
August 26	9:00 - 3:00 3:00 - Dusk	Jay & Fern Ingersoll Peter & Julia Smith	(301) 270-5219 (703) 385-2883
<p>** Caretaker Volunteers *** Call Patricia & Terry Murphy (301)-263-9766 or Brian & Anne Waidmann (703-536-3168) to volunteer for caretaking . It's a great way to spend time on the Island! <i>Volunteers from the waiting list are encouraged. Don't forget: Relief Caretakers sign in too!</i></p>			

Large Parties

Date	Time	Who	What
Aug-07	9:30-2:30	George Loeb	35-Discovery Creek Children's Museum
Sept. 1	4:00 p.m.	Alan Gelb	21-35 guests
Sept. 15	4 p.m. -next a.m.	Susanna Membrino	Girl Scout Overnight, 20 guests
<p>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, John Noble e-mail: johnoble@erols.com, phone: 301-320-3554, fax: 301-320-4216</p>			



The Sycamore Islander

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August 2001

This Issue:

- Contingency Funding after construction.
- Partying all hours of the night.
- Wait-listers go canoeing... and like it.
- Canoeing vacation out West.
- Weaving an *Islander* web.
- Old-Timers Day coming to an island near you.



Beside the swimming dock.

—Photo by David Winer