



# *The Sycamore Islander*

September, 2001

Volume 80 No. 9

## September Meeting

The next meeting of the Club will be Wednesday, September 12 at 8:00 p.m. in the Clubhouse. Doc will have the barbeque grills going beforehand for those who would like to grill before the meeting.

## Minutes of the August 8 Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Carl Linden. In addition to Carl, Bill Kugler, Peggy Thomson, Jane Winer, Frances Short, Jim Drew, Gerald Barton, Terry Murphy, Tove A. Elfstrom, Sherry Pettie, John Membrino, Jeff Komarow, George and Marcia Loeb, Brad Coolidge, and Ann Marie Cunningham were in attendance.

The minutes were approved as published in the *Islander*.

**Swimming Committee:** Peggy Thomson delivered a safety ring purchased by John Krasny for installation on the swim float.

**Relief Caretaking:** Terry Murphy reported that people are generally cooperative, that they feel caretaking is kind of fun, but that there are a few time periods that need to be filled.

**Financial and Membership:** Jeff Komarow reported that there is nothing new to report for either area, and that there will be no further activity this year unless someone withdraws from the Club, allowing a new member to join.

**Editor:** Jane Winer expressed gratitude for the good articles that have been submitted, and hope that people will continue to write about items of interest. It is very helpful if the author formats announcements so that they will appear as intended. The *Islander* is available in color from the web site. If interested in reducing publication & postage costs, and getting the *Islander* in color, contact Tryon Wells at: [tryon2@bellatlantic.net](mailto:tryon2@bellatlantic.net)

**Caretaker's Report:** Two teens swam from the rope swing to the Island, then stole the ferry, leaving it adrift in mid-channel. The Park Police were called, and within minutes, apprehended the two.

*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](mailto:davidwiner@erols.com) in all common formats. **Note to submitters of announcements, articles, or letters: The deadline for inclusion in the October issue is receipt at the Editors' address on Sep 27. Earlier submissions receive priority.**

## August Minutes (continued)

The two apologized, were chastised, then released. Officer Whiteman expressed concern about the rope swing and late night parties. Later, the rope was gone from the tree. Officer Whiteman and the Park Police force are to be commended for prompt and professional action.

**Old Business:** The Sycamore Island Code, published in the July 2001 *Islander*, received favorable comment and one correction. Further edits were made during the meeting that preserved the tone and focus on individual responsibility, while expanding the Guidance on Boating Safety to include Swimming. A motion was passed unanimously to distribute the code, pledge and guidance to all members each year with the membership materials, and to re-

quire that all members sign the pledge. (Note: the amended text is included in this issue of the *Islander* and is available on the web page under Official Club Information.)

The Old-timers Day and Pot Luck will be held on Wednesday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, with a rain date of September 13<sup>th</sup>.

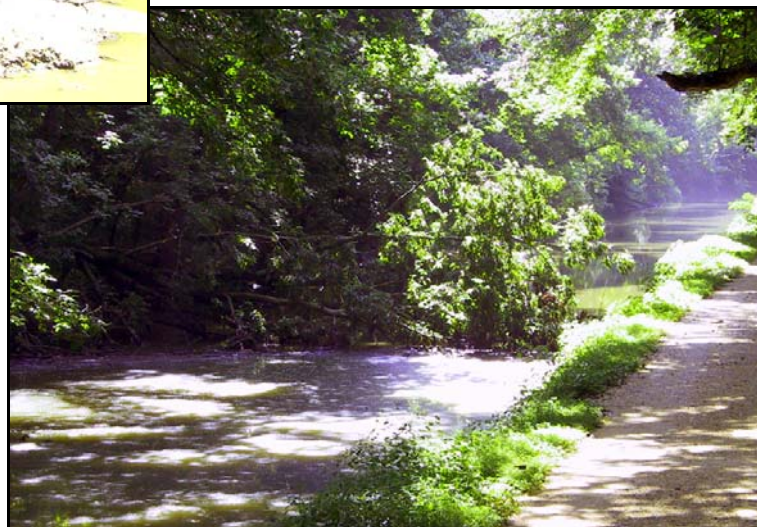
The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Grand Sycamore Regatta will be held at 1:30 on Labor Day, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, with a rain date of Sunday, September 9<sup>th</sup>. Everyone is welcome, including those on the waiting list. A pot luck supper will follow the contests. Help is needed. Please volunteer to keep score and to time events.

—Ann Marie Cunningham, Acting Secretary



The recent heavy rains left destruction along the canal. This picture shows how an overflowing Little Falls Creek, normally carried under the canal, has washed away an embankment into the canal. Near Lock 5.

The storm hit close to us too: just below the canal bridge at Sycamore Island a tree now blocks the passage on the canal.





## **TO ALL SWIMMERS:**

The swim float which is out in the river is now below the swim dock; this can make swimming back to the swim float difficult if the river is high. All swimmers should consider these points:

- Never swim by yourself.
- Ask yourself: should I go into the water if the river is high? Can I handle turbulent, fast water?
- Never swim in regular shirts and slacks - they become heavy and may sink you.

If you decide to swim, swim upriver (avoiding the submerged tree which is at about 10 o'clock from the float if you look upriver), so it will be easier to return to land. If you are out in the river, and feel uneasy about getting back to shore:

- Call for help.
- Don't overexert yourself - swim as calmly as possible towards shore at an about 45 degree angle to the current with your head pointing upriver and toward the shore - this way the current will help push you towards the shore. If you swim straight to the shore, the current will take you down much faster than when you swim at an angle (Note: not everybody agrees with this, but it was confirmed by kayaking experts at two local sports stores and is also based on my 70 + years experiences in river swimming, including the Danube, Colorado, Potomac, etc.)

- Try to land where there are roots or bushes to help you get out, or on the upstream side of the Captain's float.
- Warn others at the swim float and the caretaker that you encountered more current than was apparent from looking at the river.

### ***If you notice a swimmer who may need help:***

- Call for additional help, and do one or more of the following, depending on the situation :
- Hold out the pole which should be hanging from the big tree near the swim float;
- Throw the safety ring from the swim dock or swim float;
- Swim towards the person, bringing along flotation - the safety ring, noodles, an innertube, or life preserver .
- Take the safety canoe from near the swim dock along with the life preservers to the swimmer.

—John Krasny, Swimming Supervisor

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### ***A caveat to a piece of the above advice:***

As John Krasny acknowledges, there is disagreement about swimming at 45 degrees to the current. Swimming at any angle into the current will require an increased expenditure in energy required to get to shore. Put another way, for any conditions of swim speed and current speed, a

swimmer will use more strokes to get to shore if angling into the current. We agree that if you swim straight for the shore with a sideways current, you will land farther downstream than if you angle into the current.

—David Winer, Co-editor

## **The Sycamore Island Code**

As Sycamore Islanders, we seek an environment in which members of the Club can relax and find enjoyment in ways that protect our safety and that of our guests, as well as the natural environment. The natural and recreational aspects of Sycamore Island depend on our personal concern both for each other and for ourselves, along with our collective respect for the beauty and power of nature. We take upon ourselves individually and collectively the nurturing and preservation of the Island's environment. We realize that as part of the Sycamore Island Club community, our actions affect those around us as well as the natural quality of the Island. We understand that membership in the Club includes a commitment to the Island and to the Club membership.

### **The Pledge**

I hereby agree to support Sycamore Island and honor its Code. I understand that it is my duty to act in a manner that respects the concerns and safety of all members and the natural aspects of the Island itself.

### **Sycamore Island's Guidance on Boating and Swimming Safety**

You are responsible for your own safety.

The river is beautiful, but it is dangerous. Conditions on the Potomac River vary widely from relatively safe to very hazardous depending upon water level, strength of the current, temperature, wind speed, and submerged hazards.

Maryland law requires that a personal flotation device (life jacket) be worn while boating by:

- All children under the age of 7 at any time of year, and
- All persons from November 15 to May 15.

Sycamore Island requires that life jackets be worn at all times when using Club canoes.

Club canoes cannot be used when the:

- River level is above 5 feet, or
- Water temperature is below 55°.

Your safety depends upon your skill as a canoeist or swimmer, and your awareness of river hazards.

Be a competent swimmer.

Understand the risks of boating and swimming alone.

Avoid hazardous wind conditions (e.g., whitecaps on the river).

Recognize the danger of Brookmont Dam.

Accompany your guests who swim or use Club boats.

Supervise your children who swim or use Club boats.



# Islanders take a canoeing mini-vacation

—David Winer

Last year we described in the *Islander* a trip to the Adirondacks for the annual Wooden Canoe Heritage Association's "Assembly" at Paul Smiths College. This year the same four of us (Jane and I, and Jane and Bill Hill) attended the same affair, but this

First of all there were our many friends from all the former years of the Assembly. Then we had the usual overwhelming number of restoration and how-to workshops. And as usual the schedule included all sorts of activities such as camp fires, quilting lessons, bird walk, auction, star gazing, and talks about canoe history. Admittedly, the one lake didn't offer trips to connecting lakes as in the Adi-



**On Keuka Lake the author has a go at sailing a rare all-wood Willits canoe made long ago in Washington state.**

time in the Finger Lakes area of New York, staying at Keuka College. There was considerable concern over the new venue... that it might not work well for the hundreds of wooden canoe enthusiasts. But as it turned out, we needn't have worried.



**A car-top trip to Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge on Cayuga Lake included a portion of a commercial canal connecting to Seneca Lake. Here our group of eleven canoes starts off anew after a lift of about fifteen feet.**

rondacks, but still there were excellent paddling and sailing opportunities. Of course, some of the best parts of the four-day event were opportunities to admire all the gorgeous restored canoes, to chat with current canoe makers, and to try out each others' boats in the water. We look forward to next year's Assembly, wherever it may be.



**Everyone loves to ogle the restored and to-be-restored beauties on the lawn. Usually, each owner places a description and history page in the bottom of each canoe. Many discussions ensue among owners and admirers.**

## Potomac Conservancy volunteer opportunities:

### *Boaters to patrol Potomac banks.*

The Conservancy is seeking volunteers, preferably paddlers with their own boats, to "adopt" identified sections of river and commit to regular patrols to keep watch for changes to the river and its landscape

River sections will vary in length and difficulty of paddling. Along some sections of river monitors might elect to patrol their site by foot. At a minimum, volunteers (or groups of volunteers) should be able to commit to one patrol of their river section per month.

Our River Monitor Program aims to establish regular volunteer patrols along priority river sections that keep an eye out for pollution, illegal dumping, fish kills, tree cutting or other development activity that might pose a threat to the health of the Potomac River.

If you are interested in learning more about this program or want to get involved contact Matt Berres, Director of Community Action at:  
703.276.2777, ext. 203 or Berres@potomac.org

### *Increasing the diversity of native tree stock.*

On October 20 and 21, Potomac Conservancy and Potomac Watershed Partnership are organizing the second annual Potomac Watershed Weekend to raise awareness about land and water protection efforts throughout the Potomac River Basin.

To celebrate Watershed Weekend this year, conservation groups throughout the watershed will be participating in "Growing Native," a native seed collection effort to increase the diversity of native tree stock for local restoration projects.

State nurseries are experiencing a shortage of native sapling stock due to the ever increasing demand for trees, particularly for ecological restoration projects. To replenish their supply, the Conservancy and the Potomac Watershed Partnership is sponsoring "Growing Native" to collect a large number of native tree seeds that will be cultivated for replanting at restoration projects in 2-3 years.

The Partnership is currently seeking partner organizations across the watershed to host seed collection sites and volunteers to participate in this first-of-its-kind event in the Potomac Watershed.

For more information please contact Christine Rodick, Growing Native Coordinator at: 703.276.2777 ext. 208 or



**What's going on in the river?**



**Nibbles!**



## Sycamore Island Club Logo now available.

A number of members have asked about having our Club logo available for putting on articles of clothing. Enchanted Embroidery, a shop in Georgetown Park, has worked with the Sycamore Island logo to create an excellent embroidery version suitable for these purposes. The embroidered logo is now available for members and other Club supporters.


Individuals may stop by the shop in Georgetown Park and have the logo put on articles in stock, from a large selection of shirts, jerseys, caps, and hats. You can arrange to have the logo placed on your own garment if it fits the embroidery machines.



Laura Dobson adapts the logo for embroidering machines. A prototype cap is to her right.

The proprietor has agreed to a volume discount for an initial order of baseball-style caps. These are in an olive-gray cotton of excellent quality, with a leather strap and buckle for size adjustment. The discount price for the baseball caps is \$17.00. Our initial discount will also apply to a high quality soft hat with an all-around brim and a clever elasticized hatband inside that will fit all size heads (at least for adults). This hat provides shade around your head and rolls up to fit in a pocket. The hat discount price is \$30.00.

A sample of the hat and cap will be available at the September 12 meeting as well as a sample of the embroidered logo. Doc will collect checks in person or by mail through September 18 (mail: Sycamore Island Club, 7023 McArthur Blvd, Bethesda, MD 20816). Make the check out to “Enchanted Embroidery” in full amount for all caps and hats, and indicate on the check how many of each. We expect to have the caps ready for pick up on the Island by Saturday, September 22.



Laura Dobson  
Owner

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**Where to go to make individual arrangements for putting the logo on garments.**



**The embroidered Club Logo.**

## Notes from the Is-

**Mon 30 Jul** The Caretaker always cringes when walking into the Ladies' Locker Room. After all... just what are his responsibilities here? Now, the Caretaker occasionally finds panties and other esoterica lying about the premises that is best stashed away out of sight there, but always feels he is violating some inner and forbidden sanctum when entering. Are all those doors open and all that mess strewn about because of some secret female rites... or has some vandal been let loose and not been reported? Should any attempt be made to gather and straighten and shut doors? Not on your life!!! The Caretaker is a married man and knows better than to mess with stuff like that!!! After all... the vandal has gone unreported and unmentioned for years and thus the state of that room must serve some mysterious purpose the Caretaker is gratefully unaware of. So men... if any woman gives you grief concerning the state of the Men's Locker Room... which is, as we all know, in the downstairs "flow through zone" and looks that way because it is obviously visited by high water... do not actually laugh at them, but smile, and offer to accompany them upstairs. If you dare!

**Wed 1 Aug** The large, similar, strap-like leaves are planted near and lost among the daylilies, hyacinth, and daffodils in the Caretaker's garden between the quarters and the slough. Like the daffodil and hyacinth, the leaves die back and the plant forgotten. Then... one day... one looks around and there are these huge, fragrant, pink blooms shooting on stalks right out of the ground... and one realizes why it is called the resurrection lily (*lycoris squamigera*). Also known as autumn amaryllis, these were planted originally on the riverside of the Clubhouse where the deck now stands, and were saved by the heroic efforts of Holly Syrrakos before construction of the deck. They also serve as a monument to how rapidly the Club is changing, because the deck itself was only constructed about 8 years ago, and yet, as the waiting list now outnumbers the Members, and also because those on the waiting list 8 years ago are now new Members, this means that the majority of the families affiliated with the Club have no memory of this significant change in the physical plant of the Island... or how it has changed the way the Island looks and can be enjoyed. Can you... dear Member-reader... remember the way the autumn amaryllis was glorious and lit up the river side of the Clubhouse only 8 years ago? Who says "future shock" is not alive and well?

**Fri 10 Aug** Rounding a corner yesterday the Caretaker was surprised to encounter four geese. They seemed pretty bedraggled and looked to be travelers, but still, it is unusual to see them this time of year. And then, going in and opening yesterday's *Wall Street Journal*, the front page of the Marketplace Section featured a large article entitled: "The Bane of the Billionaires: Their lush lawns

befouled by Canada geese, Seattle's moguls fight back – to no avail." The article was an examination of how the geese are spurning traditional migration habits and becoming year round residents... encouraged by large grassy lawns that are ideal goose habitat. It was also a humorous romp that poked fun at the massive resources of money and personnel and gadgetry that Seattle's wealthiest have dedicated to the problem "to no avail," in order to avoid stepping in goose poo. The article will be clipped and kept upstairs for any Member who still harbors a forlorn hope that the meager resources of the Club can affect our own problem.

**Wed 15 Aug** Again this morning the Caretaker considered... with great trepidation... taking on the utility drawer. You all have a drawer like this... where you have put the flashlight, screwdriver, and tape so that you can easily find it. And it also collects anything else that seems important but for which timing or convenience inhibit proper filing, so much so that after a while it is downright difficult to find the flashlight, screwdriver, or tape without taking most of the contents out while the drawer is rifled through. One day... and in our house this seems to occur about every three months... the utility drawer becomes so full it is difficult to open. Then ensues a month of denial... until it becomes near impossible to open... and finally must be taken out and examined next to the garbage can... where a third is thrown out, a third is stashed somewhere else, and a third is left in... like starter yeast to make it grow again.

**Thu 16 Aug** The Caretaker has few delights like encountering a chair that has been moved and set out somewhere on the Island by some mysterious person that seems precisely located for some purpose as yet unknown but potentially discoverable. Who can resist sitting in such a chair and trying to intuit the purpose for its precise location? Is there some direction for which the line of sight might reveal some hidden perspective, as in a great Japanese garden? Was there an angle for which some wildlife observation was just right... and hence the purpose ephemeral because connected to some moment in time? Did some personal epiphany occur, which is recreatable for anyone able to decipher the elements of time and space and location in a certain way? What thought bubbles were loosed upon the wind from this place... timeless in importance when created... but as fragile as soap bubbles and as quickly forgotten?

Hence each chair is a game waiting to be played... and a good example can be had from the chaise longue often set up by Sunday's substitute caretakers near the ferry. Each substitute caretaker has a personal reason for the nuances of location. In some cases the position is aligned to afford a clear line of sight through the trees to the towpath ferry landing. In others the position allows the individual to



## Notes from the Island

cleverly see the ferry landing while remaining hidden. But whether moved one foot or many... the location is different for every individual... and thus the Monday Morning Caretaker always makes a pilgrimage to the chaise longue for the treat of discovery.

**Mon 20 Aug** Courtesy of Swimming Supervisor John Krasny, there are now new life rings on both the swimming dock and the swimming float... and new life rings bedeck the Island ferry. A new life ring had been purchased and placed on the swimming float... but always managed to mysteriously return to the swimming dock and get tied up. Now there are enough to cover all the bases. Years ago there had been life rings on the swimming float... but they were removed because the kids got into the habit of playing and throwing them at each other... so this is also an experiment to investigate improved kid manners. Hanging from the swimming area tree there is also a long boat hook pole to extend to anyone in trouble.

**Thu 23 Aug** When the large maple tree overhanging the Clubhouse was cut down this spring, the Caretaker had noted with interest when one of the crew had cut a piece of sassafras tree root and chewed on it, claiming it was a natural stimulant. The Caretaker could also remember being told something about this as a Boy Scout back in the mists of time... something to do with Indians chewing the root. So finally... yesterday... in lieu of coffee... the Caretaker cut some root from one of the Island's own sassafras trees and chewed... to see what would happen. The root is very aromatic and it is easy to smell the connection with root beer. When chewing seemed not to make the Caretaker sit any straighter in his chair... the root was boiled for a tea. Sweetened with sugar, the tea was actually tasty. Those of us of the Forrest Gump generation can remember that the cowboy with the white hat always walked into the saloon and ordered "sarsaparilla"... and although Webster no longer defines just what it was... surely it was a precursor to root beer... itself allegedly a stimulant. Funny how these drinks start out... remember, Coca Cola originally had the same ingredient people now take cocaine for. As to the tea... yes... there was a small lift and energy increase... but not so much as to deter the Caretaker from taking "real" drugs... that cup of coffee... an hour later.

**Mon 27 Aug** It was a bleary morning around here... the Caretaker's Wife had slept on the couch and everyone had been up late after we had been awakened by critter sounds in the bedroom wall. There were scurrying and gnawing sounds and one could only wonder what in the world they could be chewing on in there (hopefully, not wiring insulation)... and why whatever was tasty had to be in a bedroom wall instead of some other. The cats were lectured regarding their responsibility in these mat-

ters, and actually feigned interest for a while, but neither of them showed any inclination to go outside or do anything. Mind you... it was not a loud sound... and had it been a noisy fan or partying teens at the rope swing there would have been no problem getting back to sleep. But there is something about such gnawing sounds in the wall that activates primitive emotions... especially when the last time such sounds were heard in the walls it turned out to be rats.

It was two years ago that we had this same problem. It was just after we discovered that the unusually cute squirrel eating fallen birdseed on top of the air conditioner had a most un-squirrel like tail. And instead of clawing up the side of the walls to get close to the bird feeder, these new rodents seemed to trot up vertical walls effortlessly. These were no slant-headed and squinty-eyed rats like some cartoon, but actually handsome critters... we thought cuter than the Island squirrels... and they seemed cheerful and almost tame in disposition... and had they just stayed out of the walls at night we could have all lived in harmony. But a sleepy and cranky Caretaker's Wife is less eager to cross the water and climb the hill early in the morning in order to work and support the Caretaker in the style to which he would like to become accustomed, so drastic measures had to be considered. And here we are again.

Now, if we had farm cats or country cats this would not be a problem... and the Caretaker would not be so annoyed with the cats because they would "do the right thing" so he would not have to blacken his karma by killing. The Caretaker has advanced the argument in the family councils that one difference between city cats and country cats is the amount of dinner served... and that if less cat food were served the rat problem might go away. But the Caretaker's Wife always votes with the cats in such councils, and everyone is then offended and grumpy that such things were even discussed. Drastic measures can be easily considered if the option is living with grumpy cats... *et al.*

**Fri 31 Aug** A great thing about the Log is the ability to look back in time when folks wonder aloud about things being "different from last year." Interesting things that were different last August include: Deformed frogs were seen on the Island ... The sweet autumn clematis flowered three weeks earlier ... Last year by 21 Aug unseasonably cool nights had diminished the spider webs, this year they are barely getting started ... Also by this date the river water had cleared so much that visiting the Captain's float was like going to an aquarium ... By 23 Aug we had seen the first falling leaves. —Doc Taliaferro

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

# Ruppert



Cartoon by Johnna Robinson

## AGAIN THIS YEAR: OLD-TIMERS DAY SEPTEMBER 12

On this occasion a gang of Sycamoreans gets together for some good old fashioned visiting with friends. They show up around noon and stay as long as they wish.

Anyone who has been an Islander long enough to consider himself or herself a fixture in the Club should plan to join the group. Lunch is pot luck, bring what you wish to share.

Rain date is the next day, Thursday, September 13.



For weeks a log has been trapped against the fallen Sycamore below the Captain's Float. This in turn captured an enormous amount of unsightly flotsom.

A number of members and Doc have worked to clear the debris. Here, our Captain himself, John Matthews, and wife Barbara are sweeping out the last of the mess.

Good riddance to an ugly nuisance, and thanks to all who helped.

## September 3 Regatta

Waiting for the Round-the-Island Race. Canoes line up under the ferry rope... anticipating the starting signal.



At the end of the race. The exhausted leaders approach the finish line... yep, the same ferry rope.

Look for more about the Regatta in the October issue of the *Sycamore Islander*.

## Sunday Relief Caretakers September 2001

Date	Time	Name(s)	Telephone
Sep 2	9:00 - 2:00	Susan Benson	202-546-1016
	2:00 - dusk	Bill Banta	301-718-4217
Sep 9	9:00 - 2:00	Jim Drew & Severina Rivera-Drew	202-462-3836
	2:00 - dusk	TBA	—
Sep 16	9:00 - 2:00	Bob Braunohler	202-291-3717
	2:00 - dusk	Patricia Hartge	301-907-6657
Sep 23	9:00 - 2:00	TBA	—
	2:00 - dusk	Milton & Patricia Cerny	703-527-4376
Sep 30	9:00 - 2:00	Mary George Kronstadt	202-966-7757
	2:00 - dusk	Al & Marty Brown	301-229-9577

### \*\* 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!

*Volunteers from the waiting list are encouraged. Don't forget: Relief Caretakers sign in too!*

## Large Parties

Date	Time	Who	What
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 <a href="http://www.sycamoreisland.org/systems.htm">http://www.sycamoreisland.org/systems.htm</a> — or — To request a form through the mail, call the Supervisor of Parties, John Noble e-mail: <a href="mailto:jnoble@erols.com">jnoble@erols.com</a>, phone: 301-320-3554, fax: 301-320-4216</p>			





## *The Sycamore Islander*

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September 2001

### **This Issue:**

- Some current advice.
- Sycamore Code, deciphered in plaintext.
- Keuka canoeing.
- Caps driving us logo.
- Doc's drawers.



**Boarding Party.**

photo: David Winer