



# The Sycamore Islander

April, 2002

Volume 81 No. 4

## April Meeting

The April meeting of the Club will be on Wednesday, April 10th at 8:00 pm on the island.

Our March meeting was held at the home of John and Judy Lentz. The meeting was well attended (38 present), was most lively and at times was punctuated with spirited debate on current issues facing the Club. Al Brown reviewed the work of the Building Committee to date and reported on the visit by a certified well driller to the island to examine the well and the water system and to suggest what might be done to improve it. Al made a motion that the well be reconditioned and a new ultra violet light unit be installed along the lines recommended by the driller. Some alternative ideas on improving the water supply emerged in the discussion of Al's motion. An amended motion was passed establishing a water committee to evaluate the various ideas and report its recommendations to the April meeting. The meeting discussed the issue of security on the island against the backdrop of recent instances of vandals tampering with the island ferry. Tryon Wells was appointed to look into security systems for the island and was authorized to spend up to \$2500 on a suitable system for the island. Brad Coolidge's motion, tabled at the last meeting, was reintroduced by ma-

majority vote. After animated discussion and debate the motion was defeated. (see minutes for details)

The meeting was adjourned after 10 pm and everyone enjoyed the excellent refreshments provided by our hosts, Judy and John Lentz.

— Carl Linden

## Minutes of the March 13 Meeting

Thirty-eight people were present at the Meeting, held at the home of Judy and John Lentz. President Carl Linden, presided.

**Attendees:** John Lentz, Al Brown, Mardy Burgess, Bill Marmon, Lucky Marmon, Candy Means, George Loeb, Nancy Bower, Blair Bower, Jim Drew, Harvey Resnik, Dorothy Fall, Pat Roth, John Matthews, Jane Winer, Tove Elfstrom, Frances Short, Bill Bays, John Stapko, Gerald Barton, David Winer, Peggy Thomson, Alan Boneau, Ann Boneau, Brad Coolidge, Ann Marie Cunningham, Chuck Pill, Pat Barry, Renee Dunham, Tryon Wells, Karl Kosok, Judy Lentz, Mark Schlefer, John Krasny, Caroline Gelb, John Noble, Terry Murphy, Jeff Komarow.

**Approval of Minutes:** A question was raised concerning the \$1500 worth of electrical wiring done on the Island. There was some confusion as to what was

*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 May issue is receipt at the Editors' address on April 27. Earlier submissions receive priority.**

## February Minutes (continued)

really done, whether the wiring in the Caretaker's quarters was brought up to code. The minutes were amended to note this, and an answer will be provided next month.

**Communications:** Doc has submitted a letter of intent to resign. The Personnel Committee met recently and decided to give him 5 of the 10 extra days he had requested as compensation for holidays that he works. The Committee will meet again soon with Doc. A number of problems are of concern, including three winter vandalisms on the island and the drinking water quality.

**Relief Caretaker Scheduling:** Lucky Marmon presented a list of recommendations for Responsibilities of Relief Caretaker Schedulers (RCS). They related to communication between the Caretaker, RCS and Relief Caretakers about the scheduling and filling the caretaking time. The Personnel Committee will ensure that they are agreeable to both the caretaker and schedulers. The one that relates to Relief Caretakers is:

*Relief Caretakers who cannot at the last minute fulfill their duty will attempt to exchange caretaking days with others on the printed schedule in the Sycamore Islander. They should notify the RCS of the change. If no substitute can be found, they should call the RCS, making sure the message is actually received. Do not rely on phone messages to RCS - as RCS may be out of town.*

**Membership Committee.** There are 22 new names of members' sons and daughters on the Island waiting list; they will know their position when their check is cashed. There is presently one vacancy and Harry and Trisha MacPherson will fill it. We expect a very small turnover of membership this year, not more than 5 or 6.

**Treasurer's Report.** Carolyn Gelb reported that everything was okay.

**Editor's Report:** Morris Cobern, our printer, has been very helpful in making sure the *Islander* gets

out on time. Several members responded to co-editor David Winer's call for help with the Adobe Page Maker software.

**Canoe Report.** A data base is working and all canoes are identified and assigned to their proper racks except for one un-identified one with "Dr. Pangloss" written on it.

**Captain's Report:** Brought up the subjects of the recent vandalisms and the well-water supply, both of which engendered much discussion.

**Vandalisms/Harassments.** Three incidents were all late at night and loosed the ferry; two incidents used a water conveyance to get to the ferry at the island, while one was done at the ferry landing. Tools seemed necessary for some incidents, suggesting pre-meditation.

1. Sat., Jan. 26. The ferry at the towpath was unfastened and released, along with the ferry rope. A sizeable fire had been made at the top step of the landing.
2. Sat., Feb. 16. The ferry rope was disconnected and the ferry was adrift. The vandals had pried loose the chain links with tools, thrown away one of the life buoys on the ferry, cut the ferry dock line, cut the yellow rope that is used to raise and lower the ferry pull rope, and messed with certain caretaker possessions not inside the quarters.
3. Tues., Mar. 5. The ferry was unhooked and floating off shore just out of reach. It was, however, hooked through only a small loop beneath the dock, never noticed by the Caretaker in his 5 years of service. It would seem the intruders knew about it and would have had to use a low kayak and a light to re-attach the ferry in the dark.

The Caretaker informed the club officers, and Park Police, including e-mail with details but a formal report probably was not filed.

## February Minutes (continued)

Actions to be taken, approved by membership:

1. File a formal report and document Police response.
2. Install an infrared camera on the clubhouse that would catch movement in the scene at the ferry and the steps and wake up the Caretaker or ADT (the security company). A motion was made to allocate up to \$2500 for Tryon Wells, who reported on this, to take this action (21 in favor, none opposed). He was asked to get a competitor's bid.

Well Water Supply. The ultra-violet light that purifies the water supply should be replaced. Further discussion came with the Clubhouse report.

**Building Report:** Al Brown, chair of the Building Committee, gave a full report of actions of the Committee (published separately), ending with discussion of the well water supply. Frank Easterday, a certified well driller, respected by the county for his work, inspected the well and suggested the well be re-conditioned, the ultra-violet light be changed and a switch be added that would stop the water flow when the light was not working. The light should be changed every two years, although the County recommends a change every year. (The work could cost from \$6000 to \$12000). Al moved that the club employ Easterday to re-condition the well and install a new ultra violet light. Other suggestions were made to deal with the drinking water problem: a possible distiller (as Bill Bays has one), connection with municipal water, a very good charcoal filter, a dual water-system, carry drinking water to the club, bottled water for the Caretaker. There was a question about PCBs in the water.

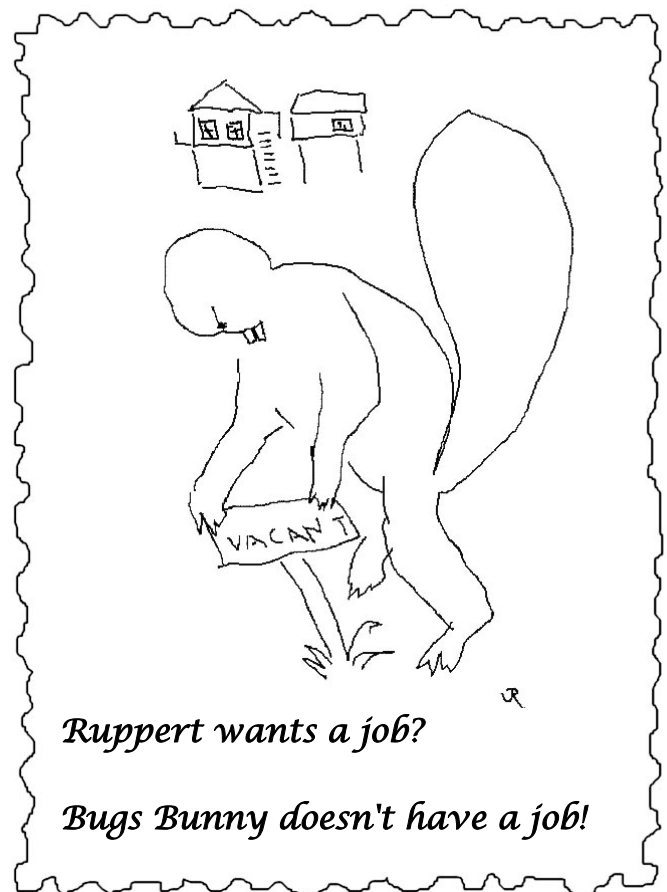
Al's motion was amended to establish a Water Committee to look into all the possibilities, and the motion as amended passed (20 in favor, 6 opposed) and report back in a month.

Pat Barry stated that we should immediately contract to have bottled water for the Caretaker—for the short term. Pat became head of the water committee, made up of John Noble, John Stapko, John Matthews, and Bill Bays.

Brad Coolidge's motion, which at last meeting had been tabled for several months, was voted (14 to 13) to be brought back on the table. The motion consisted of four parts, two thanking the caretakers and Al Brown and the House Committee for their work, and two parts which seemed to "halt" or "hold in abeyance" the committee and the money (\$30,000 and cap of \$50,000) allocated for the new caretaker's quarters. Brad expressed interest in having the membership involved in the building decision. Ann Marie Cunningham suggested that a survey of the club members be taken as to their thoughts about the club, the caretakers, and the new Caretaker's quarters. Brad Coolidge's letter in the *Islander* and a response by Al Brown could be included. The motion was defeated (16 to 9).

—Mardy Burgess, Volunteer Secretary

## Ruppert



Cartoon by Johnna Robinson

## Caretaker Resigns

Doc Taliaferro, Sycamore Island Caretaker these past 5 years, submitted his resignation to the club on March 12. Despite valiant efforts to change his mind, Doc reconfirmed his decision to leave at a Personnel Committee meeting last week.

Doc and Phyllis have been a warm and welcoming presence on the Island and we all wish them well. Doc does not have immediate plans, and will remain on the Island as a substitute caretaker while he and Phyllis plan their future.

Doc and Phyllis have always been more than caretakers. Participants in almost every Club activity, these two joined us in making the Island an active, happy place ever since they arrived. We will miss them.



Sometimes they were our cheerleaders.



Doc Taliaferro, our familiar welcoming committee of one.



A natural leader, Doc was ever ready to pitch in to guide Islanders. Here, a fall orientation.



## Calling All Islanders

The departure of Doc and Phyllis brings up several problems, two immediate and one longer term.

### Recruiting a new caretaker.

Doc is willing to help us with the transition and stay on duty at a day rate until we find a permanent caretaker. We appreciate Doc's readiness to do this. This is a good arrangement and should prove helpful in giving us time to evaluate applicants and to find the right candidate.

We all know persons who may be interested in the job of caretaker. Islanders should think about the qualities needed in a caretaker and forward to the Personnel Committee names of suitable candidates. There may be a need for an interim caretaker, say for the summer, while we are winnowing candidates for the long haul.

The Personnel Committee consists of Carl Linden, Ann Marie Cunningham, Alan and Caroline Gelb, John Matthews, John Stapko, Bill Eichbaum, and Maurice Tobin. Call Carl (301-229-2398) or Ann Marie (703-876-9165) if you have any ideas or candidates in mind. Candidates may also submit a resume and cover letter to Carl Linden, 6406 Ridge Drive, Bethesda, MD, 20816 or by e-mail to

**clinden@gwu.edu.**

### Covering the Island.

If you would be willing to serve as caretaker for a night, or a week or two, let the Personnel Committee know. It may be that a number of us are eager to play Huck Finn for a while.

### Flood Emergencies.

In the past... there hasn't been a flood since 1996, when there were two.... the old stalwarts knew what to do, they organized themselves and flew down to the Island to assist with the necessary tasks. This includes stringing out the canoes on long tethers, raising the ferry cable, putting away floatables, turning off the electricity and rescuing the caretaker. It requires strong backs, excellent canoe skills and a knowledge of the river. The old stalwarts are willing, but not so able anymore. It's time to recruit some younger machos who could and would take over in a flood emergency.

## Islander Profile: Phil and Jinny Jones

—by Jane Winer

When Phil & Jinny Jones joined Sycamore Island Club in 1961, they had no idea what they were getting into. Phil followed the lead of his longtime friend John Thomson and joined because John had figured out that a canoe was the answer to the problem of getting to work while finessing the jam over Chain Bridge. (This was before the Beltway existed.) Imagine the glee with which the idea was hatched and shared among John Thomson, Phil Jones and John Heidemann. The paddlers would commute by car as far as parking to access the Island and from there the chore would turn into an adventure. Working for the Agency and commuting by canoe: Shades of Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons*—for grown-ups!



**Jinny and Phil Jones at home in Bethesda.**

Sycamore Island Club seemed to be a sleepy place with a lot of old members, so the commuters didn't even join at first but borrowed a canoe with the blessing of the Caretaker. Eventually, however, word came down that if they wanted to continue the practice, they must join the Club—so they did—without benefit of a Waiting List. They



**Phil delights in his beautiful euphonium.**

did, indeed, have many adventures, and one that Phil relishes in retelling is the time the river was well on its way to freezing over by late afternoon. This made Phil very anxious but John Thomson reminded him he had stowed a "secret weapon" in the canoe to get them all back to the Island. The weapon turned out to be an ice axe, and it did the job.

Phil & Jinny currently enjoy Honorary Membership in the Club, and no longer attend meetings regularly. Phil belongs to 3 or 4 bands or musical groups and plays the piano, organ, harpsichord and euphonium. The organ and harpsichord share a room, one of several music rooms in the house. In between demonstrating his skill on the keyboards, Phil played the euphonium for us as well. If you've never heard one played, it is a jolly instrument, half the length of a tuba, with a mellower tone. Phil told us that all four of their children are musical and have their own CD's on the market—with their own music—and he not a one, but his smile of pride and delight showed just how much he cared about that!

Ten years ago, when David & I began going to Island meetings, Phil was usually in attendance. I remember that when Phil had something to say, people listened. He was, after all, Treasurer of the organization. Peter Jones, the oldest son, told me that he only began to realize and



appreciate the level of his father's involvement in the Club when he--Peter--became Caretaker. "It was impressive," he says, thinking about his Dad's service as Club Treasurer "for the umpteenth year." Peter recalls how his Dad liked paddling up to Lock 8 by way of the canal, putting into the river, and riding back down. Once, the trip combined with fishing in an original way--Peter was paddling bow through rapids and Phil, astern, was distracted when a fish jumped into the boat. Phil managed to corral the fish in the boat with a cushion while they kept on paddling back to the Island--with fish for dinner.

Peter remembers that Jinny became an officer in the Club about the time that he became Caretaker. Jinny is an accomplished "Puzzler" (as in winning word contests conducted by Master Puzzler Will Shortz) and a whiz with computers. When it was time to bring Island business practices up-to-date, Jinny became Financial Secretary. But she had also logged in many years as



**Jinny enjoys the garden: camellias are among her favorites.**

Entertainment Committee chair. When the family joined, she was in charge of four children--all under the age of 10--and she found others on the Island eager to join forces to plan and execute entertainments for the kids. One year they organized an Easter egg hunt so the Moms blew eggs endlessly, it seemed, and dyed them--then stuck them on twigs all over the Island. One time was enough for this particular undertaking! Jinny reminds us of the role the steps to the Island once played. They ran straight down the hill--between MacArthur Boulevard (there was no Parkway then) and the canal, an intense hike, up or down, and no switchbacks to help keep the cool acquired from a dip in the river in summertime. You were hot again when you reached the top. Of course, if you had gotten chilled on the Island on a cold day, well, you were certainly toasty by the time you got back to the top of those endless steps.

Once I asked Peter Jones about his interest in birds and flowers. I assumed that he had acquired his knowledge while "growing up" with his family on the Island. I was wrong. Peter told me he started to take an interest in nature when he became Caretaker--when his Dad gave him a pair of binoculars. Isn't that just like a musician to know when to strike a note--the right one at the right moment?



**Phil rescued this pipe organ from a garage. Restored now, it's a featured part of their music room.**

## Springtime Family Game Night on April 20

**Welcome the springtime, family-style, with a game night on the Island starting at 4 p.m. on April 20.**

Come on your own or with children – yours or your children’s children. This sort of gathering has been seeding itself on the Island for a while, appearing in various forms, like the Regatta and the Overnight of last year. It is a native species and thrives well in environments where simple pleas-

### *Dumb Crambo—Clapping Game—Balloon Stomp—Pizza: Are we having fun yet?*

ures are sought and where a mixture of generations enriches the soil. (We could use a little rain, too, but maybe not on that afternoon.)

Now I’ll describe.

We’re partial to games of creativity and humor and have three in mind for starters. Two are carryovers from the Overnight. If you were there for that event, you will remember the rather silly time you had trying to stomp on balloons that were tied to other people’s ankles. Of course, they were trying to stomp on yours too. A little like real life but without the everlasting scars. That one is mainly for getting warmed up to the idea that your skills have nothing to do with age and intelligence. On second thought, I don’t know what it has to do with anything.

Also from the Overnight event is “Dumb Crambo,” a charade in which our Island children stole the show with such cleverness that we adults had to terminate the game to save face. This charade version is based on rhyme. It was taught to me by a lively woman in her 80s whose summer cabin in the White Mountains of New Hampshire was the cozy stage for this unique charade. We never knew its origin, but many years after she died, a book

found in her cabin library provided a clue. A collection of games published by a Boston church organization contained “Dumb Crambo.” The forward in this book explains that with the trend of more time for leisure, people are likely to get into trouble unless engaged in innocent leisure activities. I’d say that might still be the case.

About now, we may be getting hungry. The main course will be supplied by your Island entertain-

ment committee and, for simplicity, that will be pizza delivered from the outer world. Anyone with ambitions for grilling can step up and take charge, but I think that, in the event of rain, pizza is more waterproof. You may bring supplements to share, but be sure to bring your own water to drink.

The third event planned is the “Clapping Game,” so named by the children in New York City who invented it. I learned this game from Trina, a New York actress whose day job is to engage school children in dramatic play. Trina was my Thanksgiving houseguest last year when she taught us the game. (Nobody there under 22 or older than me and I won’t say.) We played it for three consecutive nights, so it comes tested. In the Clapping Game, the only clue to what you must do is how loud we clap for you. It actually works.

I hope you will come. Rain will not deter us, as we can gather in the Clubhouse. Call if you have questions. Call to tell us you are planning to be there, as we need an estimate for dinner. Contacts are Renee Dunham (202) 686-6451 or Jane Winer (301) 229-8963.

—Renee Dunham



## Letter sent to participants in the kudzu and ivy battles:

Dear “Save the Big Trees” Participant,

Enclosed is a reprint from last December’s “Sycamore Islander” which tells briefly how the effort that we 25 bravely began one Saturday morning last May came out at the end of the first season. That outcome far exceeded anything that I think any of us expected at the outset. We’ve got the kudzu reeling, not just at the edges where we clipped originally, but throughout the two big patches we concentrated on.

That outcome was due partly to team effort, partly to persistence, and partly to John Matthews’ smart thinking. This year we need to follow up with selective spraying of remaining kudzu clumps at the right times and cutting the slower growing English ivy vines that have crawled up the trunks and are spreading out on the branches of many handsome trees in the same stretch along MacArthur Boulevard.

Similar needs also exist in numerous other locations along the river, but it seems to me that we should continue to concentrate on the patches we’ve begun. One reason is that we have official permission to work there, and at least for now we don’t have in the park-owned areas closer to the water.

Another reason is that we also wanted our efforts to serve as a demonstration effort to show what a few determined citizens can do when government agencies concerned don’t take care of a problem - in hopes that other citizen groups will follow suit. Thousands of passers-by can see the results where we have worked. (Hey, maybe we should put up a modest sign they can read.)

To carry on the attacks on the main offenders during the spring and summer we need a small leadership group who between them can:

- a. organize another “big trees” day to whack English ivy sometime before hot weather, hopefully attracting even more willing workers for it;
- b. collect a few hundred dollars from various possible sources to pay for the herbicide and a spray rig for a more limited kudzu kill probably in the late summer or early fall; and
- c. figure out better ways of both dividing up the work and publicizing what we are doing than we did last year.

As for that leadership, John and I have put in a good bit of time and effort and some funds and, while we got real satisfaction out of the results (including getting to know some fine people), we are not going to continue in any leading roles. We are not as spry as we used to be and have other responsibilities that need attention, so we know it is time for others to take over this one.

This means that others who want to keep the project going will need to do some communicating about how a new leadership cadre can be assembled and start operating. An initial get together for exchanging ideas might be a useful early step. Since individual participants may not know many others, John and I will be happy to serve as a drop box for expressions of wanting to be involved. So please give us a call at 301-229-0234 or 301-229-2645. The future of “Save the Big Trees” will be in your collective hands.

With appreciation and thanks,

Phil Thorson

## Spring Orientation on Sunday, April 14 — RSVP

The Club will hold its Spring 2002 new member and waiting list orientation on Sunday (yes, Sunday), April 14, 2002. Remember that applicants on the waiting list cannot obtain waiting passes or become members without going through an orientation; so don't procrastinate!!

We will begin at 10:00 a.m. and conclude by 12:30 p.m. with lunch to follow. Why stay inside on a Sunday morning and give yourself a headache trying to do your taxes when you can be out on the Island???

We need you to RSVP, especially if you plan to stay for lunch, so we'll have enough food. Please call Jeff Komarow (301-897-5996) or email him at JeffKomarow@aol.com. Offerings of side dishes and desserts will be gratefully accepted.

Jeff is also looking for volunteers from



**Indoor session of the Fall '01 orientation.  
Jeff Komarow leading off the discussion**

members and waiting listers who have already attended an orientation to operate the ferry, food shopping, and setting up, cooking and serving lunch. Participation will be counted towards member participation obligations.

## Spring Workfest set for April 27

The Spring Workfest gets the Island ready for the warmer months to come.

Floats and picnic tables need to be put out and other "stuff" will be tackled to get the club ready for "the season" (which WE get to enjoy!).

All members and club applicants are encouraged to come, get some exercise and help devour the **fabulous potluck feast**. Work starts around 9:00 a.m. Bring tools if you have them and come help.



**"Be happy in your work..."**

**Tove Elfstrom at the  
Fall '01 Workfest.**

## Sunday Relief Caretakers April-May 2002

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Name(s)</b>	<b>Telephone</b>
Apr-07	10:00 - 3:00	Lucky & Bill Marmon	301-654-7893
	3:00 - Dark	Judy & John Lentz	301-229-4968
Apr-13	10:00 - 3:00	Sherry Pettie	202-965-5366
	3:00 - Dark	Abigail & John Wiebenson	202-332-6857
Apr-21	10:00-3:00	Susan & Wayne Limberg	703-533-8639
	3:00-Dark	Beth & Michael Grant	202-234-7547
Apr-28	10:00-3:00	Susan & Greg Super	703-892-1846
	3:00-Dark	Bobbi & Philip Brown	301-656-6991
May-05	9:00-3:00	Nancy & Winston Wiley	301-299-7586
	3:00-Dark	Fred Wright/Catherine Seibert	301-229-7184
May-12	9:00-3:00	John & Ruth Stapko	301-953-1949
	3:00-Dark	Peter & Julia Smith	703-385-2883
May-19	9:00-3:00	Margaret & Patrick Barry	301-229-5351
	3:00-Dark	John & Jyl Pomeroy	703-243-8256
May-26	9:00-3:00	Eric & Rene Simpson	703-821-7556
	3:00-Dark	Norman & Nancy Metzger	202-546-1034

**\*\*\* Caretaker Volunteers \*\*\***

To volunteer for Sunday relief caretaking, call

Bill & Lucky Marmon: 301-654-7893

or

Howard and Candy Means: 301-320-5270

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

**No Large Parties have been reported for April 2002**

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: [jnoble@erols.com](mailto:jnoble@erols.com), phone: 301-320-3554, fax: 301-320-4216



## *The Sycamore Islander*

6613 80th Place  
Cabin John, MD 20818

<http://www.sycamoreisland.org>

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

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April 2002

### **This Issue:**

- Caretaker Doc to depart.
- Search Committee seeks new Caretaker.
- Improvements to water system proposed.
- Island security system planned.
- Family Game Night set to go.
- Islander Profile: Phil and Jinny Jones.



A sure sign of Spring: getting the fleet ready at Fletchers. Hordes of fishers will soon descend on the river. Sycamore Island fishers should be getting their gear ready too. Look for the Fishing Issue of the *Islander* in June.

—Photo by David Winer