



The Sycamore Islander

October, 2002

Volume 81 No. 10

October Meeting

The big news at our last meeting is that the rope swing is no more! The bane of Doc's existence is gone! Not only is the rope swing gone, but the entire tree has been removed. Apparently, someone was hurt, and then sued the Park Service. Joe Hage tried to convince the Park Service to cut only a few branches, to no avail. It's a real shame that something as simple, and so much a symbol of a healthy childhood, should have become so misused to warrant removing an innocent tree.

On a more personal note, during this past meeting I expressed my frustration that so much of the work that is done at the meetings gets reviewed, rehashed and frequently reversed, and possibly re-enacted. The particular issue this time was the repair of the well. The pump is cracked. The UV filter that kills bacteria in the water is buzzing loudly, and is past its expected life span. The well needs to be repaired. The fact that the water checked out safe last month is a stroke of luck. It is best to repair it now before it completely stops functioning, than to wait. The motion to fix the well passed with only one dissenting vote.

In an effort to help the Club move forward, I went to the library to learn about parliamentary proce-

dures. *Robert's Rules of Order* says that "a motion to rescind, repeal, or annul" "after adoption requires a two-thirds vote, or a majority vote with previous notice or a majority of the total membership." In our case, I would interpret "previous notice" to mean publication in the *Islander* prior to discussion and a vote. This seems to be a very reasonable rule – once something has passed, it is still possible to change if the situation warrants it, but a higher standard is required. I hope that this will enable our meetings to move through business more quickly, and be more enjoyable for all.

Hope to see you on the Island, October 9, at our next meeting.

—Ann Marie Cunningham, Vice President

Minutes of the September 11 Meeting

Attendees: Ann Marie Cunningham, Peter Winkler, Jim Drew, Jeff Komarow, Nancy Bower, Blair Bower, John Matthews, Pat Barry, Al Brown, Marty Burgess, Frances Short, Richard Dianich, George Loeb, Bill Bays, David Winer, Tove Elfström, Alan Gelb, Ned Goddard, Gerald S. Barton, John Wiebenson, Abigail Wiebenson, Tryon Wells, Joe Hage.

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 November issue is receipt at the Editors' address on Nov 1. Earlier submissions receive priority.**

September 11 Minutes (continued)

The meeting was held on the Island. In Carl Linden's absence, Vice President Ann Marie Cunningham chaired the meeting. The July minutes were approved by voice vote.

Membership Report: Membership Secretary Jeff Komarow stated in his report that there was one vacancy, and he nominated Cora Shaw and Bernard Vuethy for membership. Cora and Bernard, who stand at the top of the waiting list, applied for membership on October 20, 1993. The Club approved the nomination. Jeff stated that we are going to have to decide, by October or November, what to do about the waiting list in 2003: will we keep it closed to new applicants, open to family of members, or open to all?

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Alan Gelb circulated a written report of the budget as of the end of August, and he explained the highlights. There have been increased expenses because of the Caretaker transition, but we expect to end the year on budget, and with about \$50,000 in reserve. There was brief discussion about the replacement of the swim float and the refrigerator, and the electrical review, all of which were paid for this year. Alan observed that if we keep the waiting list closed to new applicants, we would forgo about \$2000 income in 2003. There was also discussion about the cost of the *Islander*, and a suggestion that we publicize more prominently its availability by e-mail. Alan suggested that, at some point, we reevaluate our insurance coverage. Currently we have \$1,000,000 in liability coverage. Is it enough? Do we have a member with expertise who can help with this inquiry?

Captain's Report: Acting Captain Tryon Wells reported that the large tree with the rope swing, just upriver from the Club, was removed by the Park Service, apparently because a youth was injured there and a lawsuit has been filed. Tryon suggested that we investigate the area around the swim float for underwater obstructions, to avoid similar consequences. Tryon

also reported on work to be done in November on our well, and informed us that he and Tove Elfström had built and installed a new swim float. It cost \$781, and they have high hopes that it will last much longer than its predecessor.

Islander Report: Editor David Winer reported that the next issue of the *Islander* would have an article and photos of the new float. Recently, there has been sufficient content to maintain a 12-page edition. David also praised Tryon's work on the website and Joe Hage's Daily Log. David also solicited articles for the *Islander*.

Entertainment Report: Entertainment Committee Chair George Loeb reported that the Annual Regatta was a big success. An article about it will appear in the next *Islander*.

Canoe Report: Canoe Supervisor Jim Drew reported that the Club has two canoes for sale. They are advertised in the *Islander*, and they are "good deals." Jim also reported that, this Saturday (9/14), from 10 to 12, Frank Daspit will lead a class in canoeing for beginners. In discussion, someone reported seeing a water moccasin near the swim float. Others scoffed at the idea of a water moccasin this far north.

Caretaker's Report: Joe Hage reported that he, like many others, enjoyed the Regatta. He also spoke about the tree removal (see above), which took place on September 10. In addition, Joe reported that the ferry may need work. Others suggested that repair would not be difficult, and member Richard Dianich volunteered to lend his expertise to the effort, probably at the workfest.

Workfest: Ann Marie raised the subject of setting a date for the Fall Workfest. After some discussion, it was agreed that the date would be November 16, with the following Saturday (November 23) as the rain date. In the meantime, the Caretaker and the Acting Captain will prepare lists of projects.

September 11 Minutes (continued)

Old Business: Gerry Barton commended the work of our substitute caretaker for July, Drew Walsh. He suggested that we honor Drew by offering him a place on the waiting list. After some discussion, those present voted to place Drew on the waiting list, at the bottom and subject to payment of the application fee, effective January 1.

George Loeb raised the issue of revisiting the categories of membership, in particular, the idea of our moving to Senior Membership those regular members who are eligible and who do not use the Island. Also, George suggested that we give consideration to moving up people on the waiting list who perform services for the Club.

New Business: Blair Bower raised the question of why, if the well tests okay (as reported in the latest *Islander*), we are going forward with more work on it. The question provoked a spirited discussion, both about the well and Club's propensity for revisiting already decided issues. On the subject of the well, some pointed out that it had cracks and that it was necessary to show the authorities that we were doing all we could to keep it in good order. Others questioned the propriety of spending the money now. Ann Marie spoke about the difficulty of serving as an officer of an organization that constantly revisits issues. Pat Barry joined her in observing that a lot of work had been done to get us to this point with respect to the well, and in contending that we should go forward with what we have previously agreed to do. Blair stated that it was imperative that we keep accurate records of our work on the well, a point on which all agreed. Tryon will maintain those records.

Tryon's motion to change the by-laws to exempt memorial services from the Club's large party regulations (August *Sycamore Islander*) was taken up. He stated that, among other things, this would relieve club officers of the responsibility for ruling on requests for exemptions on an ad hoc basis. After a brief discussion, the motion was approved.

Abigail Wiebenson requested permission to bring a group of 100 students and teachers to the Island on September 26, a Thursday, from 10 to 2 p.m. After a brief discussion, the request was approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m. Respectfully submitted, Peter Winkler, Acting Secretary.

Potomac River Mystery

It would appear that during times of drought, millions of gallons of Potomac River water go missing between Point of Rocks and Little Falls. The mystery is why.

So it was that Julie Kiang and Erik Hagen of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin visited Sycamore Island recently and met with Islanders Blair Bower and Tryon Wells. The Commission wanted to inquire whether the Club would help them unravel the mystery by letting them, in cooperation with the US Geological Survey, sink a couple of narrow pipes on the Island several feet down to help them determine groundwater levels. They are trying to sink shafts up and down the mystery stretch of the Potomac wherever they can get permission. The pipes would be marked as USGS pipes and would be sunk away from active areas of the Island. No special equipment is required to drive in the pipes, just a sledge-hammer and some willing muscle. If the Club desires, after the drought period passes, the pipes can be removed, or left, as the Club indicates.

Tryon and Blair, with a nod from Caretaker Joe Hage, could see no good reason not to grant the request, and so a small USGS work detail inserted the pipes in early September. The Club should expect occasional monitoring of ground water levels in the pipes by a USGS team until the drought period is over.

The Rope Swing



Sequence photos by David Winer

Summer...



Photo by Maria Stenzel

Winter...



Nevermore.

On September 10th 2002 the National Park Service cut down the Rope Swing Tree. The big machinery was brought in and the chainsaws were let loose on this healthy tree. There were shouts and screams of protest from a couple of young people who happened to be there but their cries were unheeded and soon silenced by threats of arrest.

Island member Stan and I were there to take pictures and pay our respects to this big, beautiful and very old [about 170 years] tree. The impressive limbs were cut and quickly craned out of the water onto the shore. One by one huge sections went crashing into the river sending out big waves that rocked our canoes. We looked on as if hospice workers sitting by the dying bed of a respected friend. Most of the work was done by noon with the last cut completed the following day, leaving the trunk neatly trimmed back to the riverbank. The Rope Swing Tree has been reduced to a heap and now there's a big empty hole where this mighty sycamore once lived.

—Joe Hage

Notes from the Caretaker

It's been another great month down here on Sycamore Island. The weather has been superb but September has been marked by continued drought conditions with river levels at record setting lows.



My daughters and I are settled in now and we're getting used to the Island lifestyle. My older daughter is now expert on the ferry while the younger one is practicing her "J" stroke. Swimming after school is another of our favorite activities. Soon the swimming will be done as the forest begins to show signs of the fast-approaching new season.

The island has by no means been busy but there were several events and Island activities this past month. The Regatta started the month off with a bang, fun games and some pretty tough competition. There was a mid-week event when the "Old Timers" had their annual picnic. I participated in an excellent canoeing class given by Frank Daspit early one Saturday. Dave and Jane Winer hosted the Montgomery chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society for their annual canoe/bird watching trip and The Lowell School had a field trip here on the 26th. It was great to show the kids how to appreciate the river.

Of course this past September will always be remembered as the month that the old Rope Swing Tree was cut down.

—Joe Hage

Old Timer's Day

September 17, 2002

Today is perfect weather with the river sparkling, warm with a breeze. About 15 of us met for a sumptuous pot-luck lunch with almond cake with a raspberry sauce, buckwheat side dishes, carrot dips and about 7 other wonderful dishes.

We told stories about mountain climbing and foreign travel. Betty Burchell had climbed in the Selkirks of



Feasting is always a part of the annual get-together.

British Columbia and Mount St. Elias in Alaska, and John Krasny had climbed the Alps, the White Mountains and the mountains in Colorado. Rene Dunham and Rosalie Fedoruk had trekked in Nepal.

We talked about the advantages of kayaking and canoeing and how much we would enjoy yet another lesson. Bob Rosenberry, a guest who visited the Island with his friend Greg Custis when they were boys, reminisced about being on Sycamore in the 40's wrestling on a raft and canoeing up the river to Glen Echo in January.

Gerry Barton remembered building Sycamore's tool shed in the late 80's. He said that we had monthly work fests to accomplish this task and he felt that he was living on the Island.

It was a special day.

—Rosalie Fedoruk

... And there was more talk that flowed along Leisure River for those of us who were lucky enough to be there. Margaret Custis had a treasury of Sycamore Island history to tell. Margaret and her husband joined in



And, oh, the stories...

1948, but if you think that is early, she related that her father-in-law was among the founding members. His five sons must have enjoyed this Island, as one of the brothers was instrumental in enabling the Club to hold its own and not be taken over by the National Park Service.

John Krasny talked about the textile research work he had done. Picture him in a Wolverine hood, half-way up cold and windy Mt. Washington. His task was to compare other hoods to Wolverine, which had excellent properties. The military preferred not to chase Wolverines for their fur.



Jessie Bakeman in the latest "Island wear."

There is no draught. Not if we measure the depth of our pleasure on a beautiful day, the rich experience of our members and friends, the fund of stories to hear and tell, the abundance of good food on a weathered wooden table. I am an Oldtimer's Groupie now. Sneak out of work next year. You will not want to miss it.

—Renee Dunham

New Swimming Dock —by Tove Elfström

Since at least two years ago I have had the notion to rebuild the swimming dock and motion the Club to change its name. The proper name ought to be *Sycamore Island Swim and Canoe Club*, because what my family mostly does when we visit is to go swimming. Of these two tasks I decided to take care of the easier one first: to rebuild the dock.

My chief concern was all the children that cheerfully ran down the gangplank and jumped in, without much thought to slippery or splintery surfaces. Down South, where I come from, we use gray decking paint mixed with a little sand so that is what you first will notice as you step on board, so to speak. Underneath that thin layer, however, are the things that I hope will make it worth the effort (and expense) that the Club, Tryon Wells, and I put in. He showed me a year ago a marine equipment catalogue and in it I found float blocks that were designed to last at least 10 years. Even if they are punctured they will not take in water because they are filled with closed-cell foam. Each block carries 550 pounds and we put one in each corner. The dock itself weighs about 600 pounds, so its carrying capacity is a little more than 1500 pounds. The other benefit of these blocks is that they do not wear off in small grains of orange or white that then sullies the shores of the river.



Our new dock awaits the throngs of happy swimmers.

The wood is all treated lumber, including the 3/4-inch top plywood panels. We fastened it all together with 3-inch stainless steel screws so that it would not rust or work itself apart. The nails of the old dock had to be beaten down every so often to prevent them from performing involuntary surgery on unsuspecting passing feet. I hope these screws stay put. In addition to that, we also added 5-inch x 1/4-inch decking screws in the corners just as extra reinforcement where the most stress is. I hope we can rebuild the gangplank as well, using the same sand-paint mixture for more surface grip.



The author, fitting the frame to the floats.



Tryon and Tove, assembling the structure.

This was my first official act as the Island's swimming supervisor, but a huge amount of credit should go to Tryon Wells who was ready, at the drop of a hat, to help out. It was he and Joe Hage who ultimately launched it one late afternoon when I had to run to another appointment. Drew Walsh, too, helped out by turning the plywood sheets to dry them out before we could paint them. David Winer brought wheels that we will fit onto these floats to ease them up out of the water. I have a design for this in mind—that I hope will work.

Whatta Regatta! by Caitlin DePorter

You should have been there! The Sycamore Island Regatta! It was the best! Just as we arrived, Race-around-the-Island was ending. It looked really fun and I wished I was there for it.



Next we did jousting, which is when you go out in a canoe with a partner, and on the pier they hold out a long stick with a ring on it. The point of the game is



to spear the ring. The person in the back of the boat steers and the other has a stick that she uses to get the ring.



The next event was the Egg Toss. Me and my dad were on a team. The object of the game is to throw the egg without breaking it. Every time you throw the egg and catch it, you step back one step. The last group standing won.



The next event was another egg event, the Egg Races. Everyone got on two teams and each team was given an egg and a spoon to carry the egg. Each person on the team ran the relay race. If you drop the egg and break it, you had to run to the tree where the woman with the eggs was standing, grab another egg, and start running again. The team that finished first won.



Then we did the Three-legged Races. My sister and I were on a team. The strings to tie your legs together hurt, so everyone used bandanas or sweatshirts. We used my dad's sweatshirt. Eve-



ryone had to race around a tree, around a second tree where we did the egg race, and back to the starting line. My sister and I fell once, but other than that we were fine.



We also did Tip-the-Canoe at the end of the day. One person goes out, tips the canoe, fills it with water and rows it back to the dock. You try to do it as fast as you can. The person who does it the fastest wins. At the time we started, the wind got

very high. One boy went out and was being pushed down the river toward Little Falls dam. He was a good canoeist and he made it back, but he didn't do the contest. His parents weren't there to tell him he shouldn't go. But my parents were there and when I wanted to tip the canoe, they said it wasn't safe.

People came back from the Tip-the-Canoe race shivering. Sometimes the skies were sunny and sometimes cloudy. The air was kind of cold but felt good. The water was pretty cold.



There were a fair number of people at the Regatta. Everyone I met was very nice. I saw some people I met at the orientation last Spring, including Mr. Winer, who asked me to write this article.

I also met the new Caretaker and his daughters, who seem really nice. My name is Caitlin and my sister's is Kelsey. The Caretaker's daughters' names are Kelsey and Kaylen. Kelsey goes to Pyle and Kaylen goes to Wood Acres Elementary School. We are both in the fourth grade at Wood Acres!

If you didn't make it to the Regatta this year, we hope you can make it next year!

Caitlin is 9, and aspires to writing and journalism. We hope she will contribute further to the Sycamore Islander. Her parents, Dana Boyd and David DePorter, are on the waiting list.

Last Chance!!
Fall 2002 Orientation on Saturday, October 19. RSVP

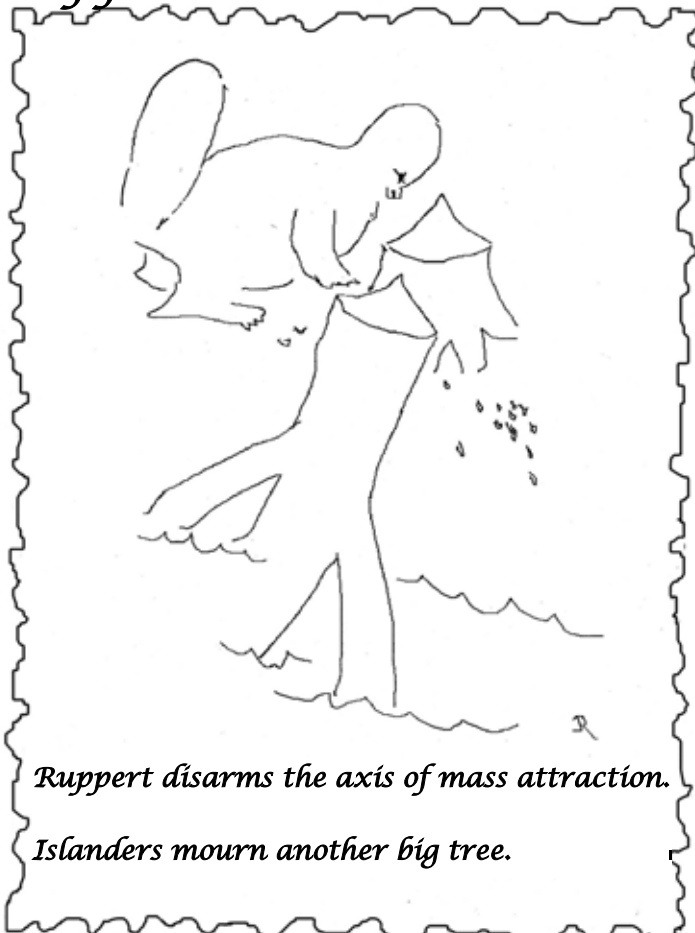
The Club will hold its Fall 2002 New Member and Waiting List Orientation on Saturday, October 19, 2002. Remember that applicants on the waiting list cannot obtain waiting passes or become members without going through an orientation. There probably will be only one orientation in 2003, so mark your calendars and don't procrastinate!!

We will begin at 10:00 a.m. and conclude by 12:30 p.m. with lunch to follow. Come out and meet the new Caretaker and his family. What better way to spend a fall morning than walking 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 e-mail him at JeffKomarow@aol.com. Offerings of side dishes and desserts will be gratefully accepted.

We also need volunteers from members and anyone on the waiting list who has already attended an orientation to operate the ferry, go food shopping, set up, cook and serve lunch. Participation will count towards member participation obligations. Again, please contact Jeff Komarow.

Ruppert



Ruppert disarms the axis of mass attraction.

Islanders mourn another big tree.

Cartoon by Johnna Robinson

Note sent to the Supervisor of Parties

John,

As you instructed, I did indeed attend the membership meeting and Lowell was granted permission to use the Island on Thursday, September 26th. There were 98 4th-6th graders and 16 adults (plus all health records, a full emergency kit, a certified life guard in case of an unwarranted emergency with the Potomac, and extra drinking water). The river, canoes and floats were off limits to all and the students were totally reliable about abiding by our rules.

It rained or drizzled the entire day and everyone had a terrific time. Teachers had organized all the children into teams; throughout the day (from 10-1:30 when the rain got a little fierce and we thought it best to leave a half hour early) they proceeded through 5 initiatives which were located in front of and behind the canoe shed, at the volleyball area and in front of the screened porch. The last one was an Island hike with our environmental science teacher who is also Joe's sister. We took staff to the Island prior to the trip to meet Joe and scope things out. In short, I think we addressed all concerns about danger, organization, behavior and adequate staffing.

—Abigail Wiebenson, Director Lowell School

Sunday Relief Caretakers October-November 2002

Date	Time	Name(s)	Telephone
Oct. 6	10:00 - 2:00	Cathy & Bruce Gaber	301-654-7479
	2:00 - Dark	Jody & Bobby Benjamin	301-652-0834
Oct. 13	10:00 - 2:00	Wayne & Cissie Coy	202-686-5778
	2:00 - Dark	Peter & Debra Friedmann	301-365-4140
Oct. 20	10:00 - 2:00	David Holdridge	301-657-8536
	2:00 - Dark	Barbara & Fuller Torrey	301-229-5619
Oct. 27	10:00 - 2:00	James Drew & Severina Riviera	202-462-3836
	2:00 - Dark	Liz & Dallas Jones	301-571-4942
Nov. 3	10:00 - 2:00	Bill & Joan Kugler	301-652-0132
	2:00 - Dark	Dick Jung	301-654-9732
Nov. 10	10:00 - 2:00	Adrienne Allison	301-951-8007
	2:00 - Dark	Werner & Karen Gundersheimer	202-333-6697
Nov. 17	10:00 - 2:00	John & Susan Membrino	301-229-1154
	2:00 - Dark	Frank Daspit & Nell Hennessy	202-526-0157
Nov. 24	10:00 - 2:00	Penelope Mitchell	301-229-4605
	2:00 - Dark	Renee & George Dunham	202-686-6451

*** Caretaker Volunteers ***

To volunteer for Sunday relief caretaking, call
Bill & Lucky Marmon: 301-654-7893 or Howard and Candy Means: 301-320-5270

Volunteers from the waiting list are encouraged. It's a great way to spend time on the Island!

Large Parties October 2002

Date	Time	Who	What
Oct. 19	2- 6:15 p.m.	Peter Winkler	25-35, NLRB Enforcement Div. incl. children

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, phone: 301-320-3554, fax: 301-320-4216



The Sycamore Islander

6613 80th Place
Cabin John, MD 20818

<http://www.sycamoreisland.org>

To view this month's Sycamore Islander on the Internet, go to:
<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/gringo/islander.htm>

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October 2002

- Rope swing in the news again.
- Robert's Rules' recent return.
- Old Timers frolic.
- A swim dock for the ages.
- Regatta a big splash.
- Fall Orientation: Be there or be left out.



Close to the action.

The Regatta this year had the best contests ever.

*Thanks, organizers George and Marcia Loeb,
for all you do.*