



The Sycamore Islander

April, 2003

Volume 82 No. 4

River Cleanup on Saturday, April 5. See notice, p. 3

Flower Walk on Sunday, April 6. See notice, p. 8

Workfest on Saturday, April 12. See notice, p. 4

New Member Orientation on Saturday, April 26. See notice, p. 4

President's Remarks; April Meeting

Thank you for participating in our membership survey. The results are still being tallied, but the response was very gratifying. George Loeb has been poring over your returns, and will be sharing them with the rest of us. It's obvious from the comments that many of you put a good deal of thought into your responses. At our next meeting, the results will be presented, and we will begin to put together a plan to address your concerns. I hope to see many of you at the next several meetings as we determine the best way to implement your recommendations. One of the topics will be the service membership as proposed by Dave Winer, and whether your results and comments support such a change. Be sure to read more about the service membership concept in this issue. Our next meeting will be the first one on the Island this

season, at 8:00 on Wednesday, April 9. I'm told the bluebells will be in bloom, so you may want to come early and perhaps bring a picnic dinner.

The New Member Orientation is scheduled for Saturday, April 26. Attendance is required at an orientation at some time prior to becoming a member or getting a waiting list pass. This will be the only one this year.

On the following Monday, April 28, the long-planned well renovation and repair is scheduled to begin. The work should take about a week. Of course, it could be delayed or rescheduled due to weather or high water. Call ahead if you plan to come to the Island during the two weeks following April 28 to find out the status. It may be neces-

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 May 2. Earlier submissions receive priority.**

sary for you to carry your own drinking water during this time. But do come. Joe has been very lonely with the Island closed for high water or ice so much of the winter. And the Island is so beautiful in the spring.

—Ann Marie Cunningham, President

Minutes of the March 12 '03 Meeting

President Ann Marie Cunningham called the meeting to order at 8:10 p.m. Those present were: Bill Bays, Brad Coolidge, Ann Marie Cunningham, Jim Drew, Jeff Komarow, Carl Linden, George Loeb, John Noble, Fran Short, Joe and Mary Vogel, David and Jane Winer,

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

Treasurer's report: Treasurer Alan Gelb, who is abroad, sent his report to the meeting saying that the over-all condition of the Club's finances is good. He noted that, despite the cold winter, heating expenses for the Club House are less than last year.

Parties: John Noble stressed that a member must be present at all parties on the island.

Old Business: The meeting of the Flood Response Committee established at the last meeting has been delayed. Blair Bower, the committee's chairman recently underwent surgery and is recouping.

Ann Marie Cunningham reported that the Easterday Well and Pump Co. will begin overhauling the Club House well and water system soon.

New Business: After several months of discussion about ways to acquire a replacement Editor for the *Islander*, David Winer introduced a motion to allow the Club to fill positions through offers of conditional membership leading to regular membership. This new class of membership would entail a contract to perform service in exchange for

membership in the Club. David pointed out that even though we change the Bylaws, this does not require that we create a new membership, it only provides the flexibility to do so in case we need to fill a position in the absence of volunteers from within the Club. He noted that subsequent to mention of this Service Member suggestion, especially in a recent *Islander*, he has heard from five persons on the waiting list and two unaffiliated persons, all of whom have qualifications and a desire to edit the newsletter. The motion:

Change the Bylaws to create a new class of membership: Service Member, with full privileges and obligations during a contracted period of service, with Regular Membership to be accorded upon successful completion of the service contract. Contract terms and recommendation of a candidate for Service Membership shall be determined by the elected Officers of the Club and shall be approved by the membership by majority vote at a regular meeting of the Club. Should the position filled by a Service Member be that of an elected Supervisor or Officer of the Club, the approving vote shall also elect to the position.

The motion was seconded and will be voted on at the April meeting.

Caretaker Joe Hage will be on vacation from April 12 to 21. The Workfest is scheduled for Saturday, April 12th with the 13th, the rain date. While some food and drink will be on hand, the Workfest lunch is potluck with members bringing a dish for the lunch. It will be necessary to beach the Club ferry to perform repairs and to fix a leak in one of the ferry's pontoons.

The membership survey questionnaire has been published in the *Islander*. George Loeb said some thirty responses have been received so far.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 and repaired to Carl Linden's kitchen where a variety of snacks and libations were served.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on the island at the Club House at 8:00 p.m. on April 9th.

VP's Vibes on Proposal to Create Service Memberships

At the April meeting, the Club members “in meeting assembled” (as the Standing Rules provide) will vote on a proposal by David Winer to create a new category of “Service Membership,” which can be used by the Club’s officers to obtain needed services that otherwise would be too difficult or expensive for the Club to obtain.

When David submitted his proposal, my first reaction was that it was premature since the Club was in the process of surveying the members concerning the size of the Club and other membership issues. Upon reflection, I think that David was right to bring his concept before the membership now for a vote. My vote will be guided by the willingness of the regular members, between now and the April meeting, to come forward, become involved in the operations of the Club, and help with the jobs that we have had difficulty filling for some time.

Several months ago, after five years of dedicated service, David and Jane Winer announced that it was time for someone else to take over as editor of the *Islander* and that they would resign after the Club found a replacement. Despite articles in the *Islander* and the efforts of David and the Club’s officers, we have been unable to find a new editor among the members. Similarly, we have had difficulty finding members willing to serve as Recording Secretary, one of the more important positions under the Club’s management structure. David’s proposal would allow the Club to enter into a written agreement with a non-member to assume a position, such as editor of the *Islander*, for a period of years in return for membership in the Club. There are four or five people on the waiting list who have indicated an interest in serving as editor if they could become members for their service.

From my perspective, the real vote on the proposal for service memberships will take place in the days before hands are raised for or against on April 9. My hope is that one or more members who have not been active thus far will “vote” to get involved and take on the editorship of the *Islander* and volunteer for other positions. The response of the membership will dictate my vote.

--Jeff Komarow, Vice President

River Cleanup on April 5: 9 a.m. to 12 noon

The 15th Annual Potomac Watershed Cleanup will be held from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Sycamore Island is an official private site (open only to members and their guests, and those on the waiting list) that is part of a multi-state effort taking place in Maryland, Virginia, D. C. West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. (Check potomaccleanup.org for more details on the region-wide effort.)

The Cleanup will be coordinated from the Island if the water level is low enough to permit access. Otherwise, we will still hold the Cleanup, but cover the canal side of the river on foot.

Please come help clean our river and get acquainted with other members. Wear sturdy boots or shoes and work gloves. We'll supply garbage bags (and have arranged to have a truck pick up the filled bags from the edge of the tow path).

Assuming that the river level is low enough that we can go on to the Island, we will have a light snack of fruit, crackers, cheese and cookies together at the clubhouse following the Cleanup. (Potluck donations gladly accepted.)

As a large group working together, we can do more and keep our river clean for canoeing, fishing, swimming, and enjoying. Come on down for a day of fun!

— Vicky Judson



The SPRING WORKFEST is Saturday, April 12

After one of the most snowy winters in recent memory, it's finally time open the windows and spring-clean the club. Starting time is 9:00 a.m. Bring your work gloves and tools.

Gang stuff: The swimming float needs to go out (river current permitting) and the ferry will likely be pulled up for a check-up (there seems to be a flotation question on one of the pontoons).

Grab & Growl: The usual fabulous potluck feast will be served in the early afternoon.

Morning Tasks

- Put out swimming float and cable
- Attach swimming ladders
- Replace boards in walkway
- Move picnic tables back on lawn
- Check and clean clubhouse gutters
- Screening repair and paint
- Sweep/dust clubhouse
- Clean bathrooms
- Clean and paint men's locker room
- Build safety-canoe rack
- Replace bottom step on MD shore steps
- Pull kudzu and English ivy off trees
- Check chicken-wire protection on saplings
- Remove tree debris from canoe shed roofs
- Pull in ferry for review and repair
- Replace plywood on ramp to canoe dock.

Potluck Feast

- Enjoy a great, hard-earned meal.

Cleanup

- Take up trash.



New Member Orientation

Sunday April 26--10:30 a.m. on the Island

All applicants on the waiting list are required to attend one club orientation before they are able to purchase a Waiting List Pass or to become new members. Club members and applicants on the waiting list mingle and get to know each other, while the club gets its chance to make some announcements to the next generation of Islanders.

Don't miss this opportunity to learn how to make the most of your Sycamore Club Membership. Club officers and supervisors will lead a tour of facilities, explain policies, and outline safety rules. A cook-out lunch will follow at 12:00.

Please RSVP to Membership Secretary Bill Marmon or contact him with questions, 301-654-7893, William.Marmon@wcom.com. Bill Marmon, 4601 N. Park Ave. Apt 408, Chevy Chase, MD

In touch with Joe...

Spring has arrived on Sycamore Island. Despite the sad shroud of war that is hanging over us, the sun has coaxed the plants to emerge from the earth and given the birds a reason to sing. The snow and high water are gone, the air is warm and the river's less chilly. It's time for those of us who relish being on the water to smile because paddling season is here!

I'm really looking forward to April, not only because I'll be on vacation from the 12th to the 20th, but also because of all the great things going on here on the island. After a straight month of hazardous river levels the ferry is finally operating again and it will be fun to see some visitors for a change. I'm also looking forward to the River Clean-up, New Member Orientation and the Wildflower walk, all scheduled for this month. And now that the river is almost 60 degrees...we can paddle, paddle, paddle!

This past month has been rather uneventful. The river level was above 6 feet for almost the entire month, maybe a record. Of course this is a blessing in disguise, it is *much* preferred to have a month of slow melting snow than one big, quick, flood of snowmelt. We did have some minor flooding events but I now know what to expect and there was little cause for anxiety. The winter was fun and challenging but frankly I'm happy to see it ending so we can once again use the island.

I have some rather disgusting news to report. I'm sure everyone is aware of the 72" sewer pipe that runs along the canal. From what I understand, it's not uncommon for this pipe to overflow. Sometimes there's a blockage but usually when there is an overflow it's due to excess volume in the pipe caused by large amounts of run-off like we had recently when all the snow melted. When the volume exceeds the capacity of the pipe, raw sewage is forced out of the pipe and flows directly into the canal. The canal became thick with algae and as the algae died and decomposed it sucked all the oxygen from the water. This caused a fish kill. I called the director of natural resources for the

park, Diane Ingram, and she confirmed my suspicions. The evidence of where the overflow occurred can be seen just below lock 7 at a manhole cover there. The canal between lock 8 and



The Park Service has placed warning signs along the canal and here at the beginning of the path down to Sycamore Island.

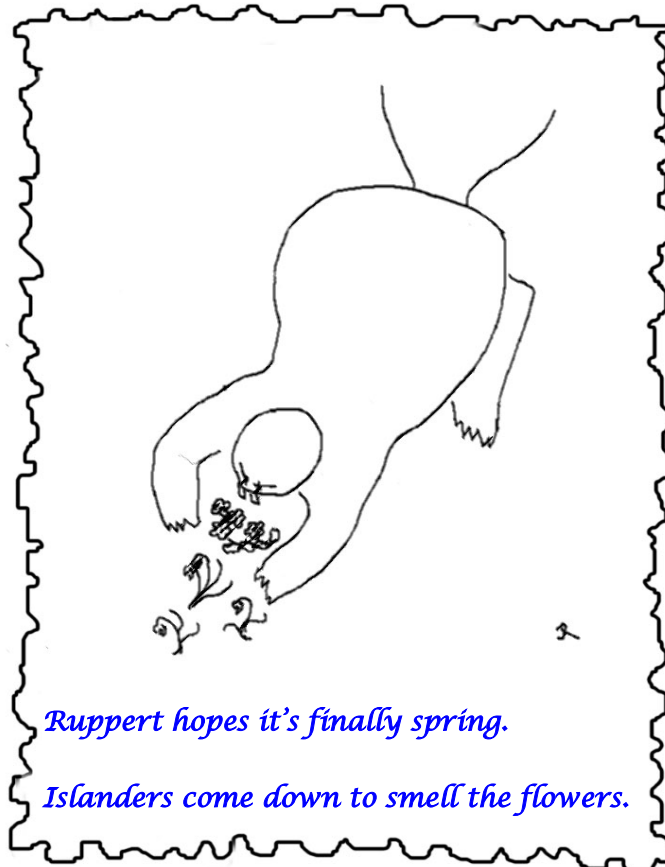
Fletcher's is now contaminated and signs are posted along the towpath warning people to stay clear of the water in the canal. It's looking better now, but earlier this month the canal was thick with sludge, grease, and dead fish floating on the surface.

The birding has been very good this month. The rare, Red-necked Grebe became a common sight and the warblers and other migrants have been spotted passing through. The cormorants have returned and the geese have all claimed their nesting spots on the island. Looks like four nesting pairs of geese will be calling this home for a while. For you Blue Bell fans, the first of those flowers are just starting to bloom now.

I have turned on all the water to the clubhouse so now the toilets and sinks are usable again. I also made a new place for the sign-in sheet. Not a lot of other projects to report but with the nice weather my list of chores is quickly growing. If you miss the workfest and you want to help out, just let me know, there are always fun projects that we could do.

—Joe Hage, Caretaker

Ruppert



Cartoon by Johnna Robinson

Washington Canoe Club holds Silent Auction: April 26

The 2003 Silent Auction, sponsored by Clyde's Restaurant Group and Binary Arts, will be held from **4:00 to 7:00 pm** on **Saturday, April 26th** at **The Lab School of Washington**, 4759 Reservoir Road N.W., Washington, DC (intersection of Reservoir Road and MacArthur Boulevard, Northwest). Admission is \$20 per person for those 15 years of age and older. Those 14 and younger are our guests. Refreshments will be provided by Clyde's Restaurant.

The auction will include boats, paddling related items, theater tickets, books, art work and historic photographs, dining opportunities, and other fun and exciting items. The auction catalogue will be posted (and updated) on the WCC web site (www.wcanoe.org) starting early April. For additional information please contact marcycanoe@yahoo.com.

Easily recognized and a landmark in Georgetown for almost one hundred years, Washington Canoe Club is one of the two boathouses just north of Key Bridge on the Potomac River. Built in 1904, the WCC building was designated a District of Columbia landmark in 1973. It was further designated a historic building with the National Register of Historical Places and listed on the inventory of historic sites in the United States in 1991. While the WCC building has withstood floods and ice jams throughout the years, nature and time have taken their toll.

In order to ensure that the building will continue to grace the banks of the Potomac River and provide a facility for training athletes for another century, the ***Friends of the Washington Canoe Club***, a not-for-profit organization, was founded. The Friends of WCC is raising funds to support repair and renovation of the building and provide coaching for Olympic sprint canoe and kayak activity at the WCC.

Kudzu Campaign Resumes Saturday, April 26

Now includes three Citizens Associations

Two years ago this spring, 27 Sycamoreans and other enthusiasts initiated the first group effort to control the kudzu and English ivy vine growths that are killing big trees along our stretch of the Potomac. Following preparations that Phil Thorson and John Matthews had made, they assembled at the parking lot on MacArthur Boulevard above Sycamore and, with loppers, pole cutters, and hand pruners, attacked the invasive vines growing into the trees around two giant kudzu patches along the Boulevard.

After some useful but limited path cutting and hand spraying in the late summer, John found a commercial sprayer who for a modest price would spray Roundup not only on the regrowths at the edges but also over the entire patches from which the regrowths sprang. Our Club contributed \$100 toward the cost of the herbicide.

The results were more encouraging than expected, with only 20 to 30 percent of the plants showing life in the spring of '02. Unfortunately,



Phil Thorson and then-Captain John Matthews spearheaded the earlier attacks on exploding kudzu invasion.

the cuttings and re-spraying that were needed to follow up were not done then because no successors were found to organize the projects when Phil and John were not able to continue.



Results of Roundup application last year—treated kudzu below MacArthur Boulevard succumbed to the spray.

This year the three citizens associations flanking MacArthur Blvd. in the area are taking up the battle. Our own Sycamorean, John Lentz, is part of the core group from the Mohican Hills Citizens Association assuming the lead. He is organizing the initial group effort – to sever the kudzu vines that survived and are again climbing trees. He has set the last Saturday morning in April, the 26th, from 9:00 to 1:00 for that project. So bring your tools and gloves to the same parking lot on MacArthur that morning. The cause is a worthy one, the companionship is good, the exercise is moderate, and no herbicides are involved. In case of serious rain, make it a week later.

An effort will be organized subsequently to raise around \$400 for a re-spraying of the kudzu regrowths near the end of the growing season.

John or his colleague, Arrigo Mongini, President of the Mohican Hills Association, would appreciate calls from individuals who would like to help in either or both of those activities as well as associated tasks like publicity, telephoning, etc. They can be reached at 301 229 4968 or 301 229 1653 – arrigomongini@AOL.com.

Annual Flower Walk: Don't miss it, this Sunday, April 6.



The Island's "lawn" is covered by Blue Bells at this time of year.

shrubs. Our leaders will seek out a giant, rare Shumard Oak, and will also look for the uncommon Chinquapin Oaks along the way. RG and John expect to show us the rare White Trout Lily, Wild Blue Phlox, Golden Ragwort, Virginia Blue Bells, and other herbs, flowering and not. They will identify our common and magnificent floodplain trees, including Silver Maple, Box Elder, Hackberry, Black Walnut, and Sycamore, and some of the typical floodplain plants such as Spring Beauty and Yellow Trout Lily.

We are fortunate this year to have a new set of leaders step forward to direct our Spring Wildflower Walk. New members, RG Steinman and John Parrish, dedicated enthusiasts of the local wild trees, plants, and flowers, heard about our annual get-together and promptly volunteered to lead the walk.

The meeting place is at the ferry steps, Sunday, April 6th. From there, they will guide us upstream a half-mile or so toward lock 7.

People on the waiting list are not only welcome, but are encouraged to attend.

The walk will widen the usual focus on blooming wildflowers to include trees and

Due to frequent floodings and disturbance, the Potomac River Gorge harbors the highest concentration of rare plants in the State of Maryland, if not the mid-Atlantic. This disturbance in the alluvial floodplain soil brings many non-natives; the leaders will point out what is native and what has been introduced.

The walk will take place even in the rain, so be prepared if the day is showery. Bring beverages and a bag lunch to eat together back at the Island. Further plant explorations might take place there afterwards.

Call RG Steinman or John Parrish if you have any questions, 301-565-2025.



From left to right: Trout Lily, Golden Ragwort, Blue Phlox. Photos from Sycamore Island Spring '02. —photos on this page by David

Winer

Sunday Relief Caretakers April - May 2003

Date	Time	Name(s)	Telephone
April 6	10:00 a.m. - 3:00	Rich Lodish	301-656-2148
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Norman and Nancy Metzger	202-546-1034
April 13	10:00 a.m. - 3:00	Pat and Richard Roth	202-686-0270
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Warren and Ann Brown	410 295-0377
April 20	10:00 a.m. - 3:00	Frank Daspit and Nell Hennesy	202-526-0157
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Wayne and Susan Limberg	703-533-8639
April 27	10:00 a.m. - 3:00	Steve Newman and Mary Tisdale	703-528-4352
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Barbara and Stott McCoy	301-320-4322
May 4	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.	Bill Eichbaum and Sarah Fox	301-229-1713
	3:00 p.m. - dark	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
May 11	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.	Silvija Strikis and Miguel Browne	703-748-4671
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Eric and Rene Simpson	703-821-7556
May 18	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.	Bernard Veuthey and Cora Shaw	202-362-5859
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Leanne Rees	301-365-5048
May 25	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Garrett and Jean Rasmussen	202-337-3396

*** Caretaker Volunteers ***

To volunteer for Sunday relief caretaking, call 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

Date	Time	Who	What
April 1	2 to 4 p.m.	Garret Rasmussen	20 at children's birthday party
June 3	10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.	Renee Dunham	31 Kindergarten students

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/fidelis/islander.htm>

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April 2003

- Service Membership proposed, discussed.
- Tasks for the Workfest: Uncle Tryon wants you.
- Caretaker makes it official—It's time to paddle.
- Wildflower walk (this Sunday) includes trees.
- Only time this year: New Member Orientation.



Time for the Spring Workfest. See what a good time it is: Tove Elfstrom obviously enjoyed his opportunity to help out at the club last year.

—photo David