



The Sycamore Islander

May, 2003

Volume 82 No. 5

President's Remarks; May Meeting

Despite the last minute change of venue (high water caused the meeting to be relocated to Tryon Wells' house – Thank you, Tryon), a large group attended to hear the survey results. The results that were presented were not final, because additional responses have since come in. Here are the highlights:

- The senior members were the most active group of respondents, with 30% of eligible members actually responding. Regular members were next with 17%, and honorary and applicants were tied with 9% of them responding.
- Nearly half of the respondents reported being over 60 years of age.
- Every type of membership felt the Island was under-utilized, except the two honorary members.
- The respondents (by more than two to one) felt that the number of regular members should be increased.
- The question of reducing “waiting list fatigue” received more positive responses than any other question.
- The most popular way to reduce “waiting list fatigue” was to give a one-day pass for each contribution to the Club.
- There was general opposition to changing the selection process to favor those meeting the Club's needs.
- The eligibility for senior membership should be changed, according to the majority.

Detailed survey results are available on the web at www.sycamoreisland.org.

While there appears to be a strong sentiment to increase membership by changing the eligibility for senior membership and the number of regular members, it was felt that there is not enough information available now to understand the magnitude of the effects of such a change. Specifically, we do not have any information on the age of members, so we do not know how many people would be eligible to take advantage of senior membership if there were age were the determining factor, rather than years of membership. Jeff Komarow will lead a committee to learn more about the demographics of the club, and will recommend appropriate actions. Please contact Jeff if you are interested in helping.

Please read the minutes to learn of the other actions that were taken, and to understand the motion. **The next meeting will be held at 8:00 on Wednesday, May 14.**

Despite the postponement due to high water, we had a good turnout for the workfest. We got the

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 June issue is receipt at the Editors' address on May 29. Earlier submissions receive priority.**

President's Remarks; May Meeting (continued)

floats in, and the ferry out of the water. Hopefully, the leak in the pontoon has been plugged, and the ferry will float higher again.

I want to express my personal thanks to John Parrish and RG Steinman for leading the Annual Flower Walk. It has inspired me to investigate native wildflowers for my very shady backyard. I hope that they will be willing to do this again.

—Ann Marie Cunningham, President

Minutes of the April 9 , '03 Meeting

President Ann Marie Cunningham called the meeting to order at 8:10 p.m. Those present were: Bill Bays, Gerry Barton, Ann Marie Cunningham, Brad Coolidge, Jim Drew, Renee Dunham, Elissa Free, Alan Gelb, Joe Hage, Bill Hill, Lisa Kliefoth, Jeff Komarow, John Lentz, Carl Linden, George Loeb, George Malusky, Bill Marmon, John Membrino, John Noble, Bill Nooter, Sherry Pettie, John Stapko, Tryon Wells, David Winer and Jane Winer.

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

Communications: June 14th is the date for the downriver canoe race.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Alan Gelb reported that the treasury's finances are sound and its current transactions are proceeding in an orderly manner.

Financial Secretary's Report: Financial Secretary Lisa Kliefoth reported that so far \$54,000 has been received in dues with twenty- one regular members' dues not yet received.

Membership Secretary's Report: Membership Secretary Bill Marmon announced that April 26th is the date for the new members orientation starting at 10:30 a.m. on the Island. He said four regular membership vacancies have recently been filled. Jerry and Susan Symington, Witt and Anne Farquhar, Steve Jones and Donna Messerschmidt, and Steve and Penny Marcus are the new members.

Captain's Report: Captain Tryon Wells reported that high water is likely to cancel the work fest on April 12th. The alternate date is April 26th. A leak in one of the ferry's pontoons needs patching and strong backs will be required to dry dock the ferry for the repair.

Editor's Report: Editors Dave and Jane Winer reported that the June issue of the *Islander* will be the last under their editorship. A new editorship will have to be in place for the July and subsequent issues.

Caretaker's Report: Caretaker Joe Hage reported that he is ready for the work fest. Materials for screen repair are on hand. Alan Gelb will be point man for painting tasks. John Matthews has already fixed the canoe dock float. The men's room has been tidied up. Peter Liebenthal will be substitute caretaker during Joe's vacation.

Entertainment Committee's Report: George Loeb reported that arrangements for food and refreshments have been made for the Workfest and New Member Orientation.

Canoeing Supervisor: Canoeing Supervisor Jim Drew reported that Frank Dasplit will teach an open-to-all canoeing class starting at 10:00 a.m. on May 17th.

Old Business: The survey of members on Club policies now underway was discussed.

So far sixty three-responses to the questionnaire have been received representing some 15% of eligible members. The survey committee will study and evaluate the results of the survey. The two most noted issues in the responses were “waiting list fatigue” and the need for a system of day passes giving Island privileges to those on the waiting list who provide help in carrying out Club tasks and duties. Ann Marie Cunningham will prepare a draft motion on a pass system.

The motion on service memberships published and discussed in the last issue of the *Islander* was read to the meeting by Dave Winer. The motion was moved, seconded, and debated. The question was called and the motion was passed by a 13 to 6 vote. The motion thus met the two-thirds vote requirement for inclusion of its provisions in the By-laws.

New Business: Bob Lentz reported that a kudzu and ivy cutting project is scheduled for April 26th from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Participants will meet in the parking lot opposite the Sycamore Store. Those who are signing up for the task are asked to bring suitable cutting tools (bow-saws, pruners, clippers, etc.) for the occasion. Participants will be working with National Park Service on this project. Ann Marie Cunningham’s proposal that the project be a Club sponsored event was unanimously approved by the meeting.

The meeting also gave its authorization to the Memorial Day weekend “bird paddles” to be led by Johnna Robinson and Dave Winer in association with the Maryland Ornithological Society State Conference.

The meeting also authorized the hosting of an upcoming children’s discovery program on the island which George Loeb will oversee.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m. Refreshments were then provided by the meeting’s gracious host, Tryon Wells.

New Editor for the *Islander*!

Subsequent to the new By-law that would allow us to contract for a position (such as Editor) in exchange for membership, a member has stepped in to serve as our Editor. Norm Metzger will assume the duties starting with the July ’03 issue.

This means that at this time we will not need to reach out beyond the members. we have discussed with Norm how we have carried out the work, and are pleased that he wishes to continue in the same manner. Norm plans to use much the same software and hardware. He will continue with same commercial printer (Morris Cobern of Allied Printing in Silver Spring) who has been so helpful and supportive of the *Islander* over the past five years.

Being Editors of the Sycamore Islander has been a grand experience for us. We hand over the reins to Norm happily because this is such a good job. It has also been a gift to us: the Editor must get to know members of the Club. —And how else would we have met the real Ruppert?

—Dave and Jane Winer

Club Canoes reserved.

The Club is providing our canoes in two short sessions so that the Maryland Ornithological Society State Conference may experience birding on the river. Groups of ten birders will be accompanied by Sycamore Island members on Sunday, May 25 at 3:30 p.m. and Monday, May 26 at 8:00 a.m.

Islanders and their guests are expected please to return all Club canoes at the above starting time on Sunday the 25th. On each day, the canoes will be used by the MOS guests for a relatively short time, approximately two hours.

Tiptoe Through the Trillium (Tromp on the Lesser Celandine)

— by Ann Marie Cunningham

The first thing we learned on the Spring Flower Walk was to identify the lesser celandine. This was the beginning of a lesson on native plants and invasive species. The lesser celandine, while it does have a pretty yellow blossom, is an invasive species that is crowding out many of our more fragile native plants. When we were walking in areas where the ground was covered with wildflowers, we were encouraged to step on the lesser celandine and garlic mustard, and to try to avoid damaging the native plants. The lesser celandine made a nice rounded clump that was an excellent stepping stone.



The leaders' briefing at the ferry landing.

Our guides, R.G. Steinman and John Parrish were very knowledgeable and interesting. They shared cooking tips with us as they discussed the flavors of many of the wildflowers. Spring beauties were abundant. They have a delicate pink blossom with dark pink lines running through them. They're relatively common in the floodplain just above the Island in the area between the canal and river. I've seen them many times before, yet I have trouble remembering such a simple name. Perhaps this time the name will stick.



A Box Elder tree in bloom along the canal

John challenged us to find trillium and ramps. The trillium is one of the native species that we saw, which had a large dark purplish bud and three broad green leaves. Ramps are in the onion family, but with broader, softer leaves than I would expect from an onion. They weren't yet in bloom.

Have you ever paddled up about a half mile from the Island and seen two very large trees close together? They are probably the Shumard oak. It's one very large and very old tree with a split trunk. While no one knows for sure, we wondered if it was there during the Civil War.



John Parrish identifying a plant on the forest floor.

English ivy, another invasive plant, was growing up the trunks of trees. If left alone, the roots, digging into the bark, would eventually kill the tree. RG was pleased to see that the ivy had been cut, enabling the tree to recuperate. I was pleased to tell her that some of our members had led an attack on English ivy and kudzu. John and RG showed us the difference between the way the ivy



These gorgeous Trout Lilies were a special find.

dug into the bark, while the Virginia creeper, a relative of grapes, has tendrils that coil around whatever it can get a grip on. The creeper does not hurt the trees at all. Our leaders also pointed out a grapevine that was the biggest specimen they had ever seen, a huge, massive vine on its supporting tree.



RG Steinman has a rest on a convenient grape vine .

Another invasive vine that we saw, with which, hopefully, no one had a close personal encounter, was poison ivy. Many in the group were surprised

to learn that poison ivy could cause an allergic reaction at any time of the year. Even the bare vine in winter and the dried leaves can cause a rash. Remember – leaves of three, let it be.

John and RG also had helpful advice about growing native plants in your back yard. They gave us web pages to the Maryland and Virginia Native Plant Societies. When I told Tryon about them, he surprised me by telling me that there are links to them from www.sycamoreisland.org.

Our trip ended on the Island where we sat on the Captain's float, ate our lunch, and admired the Virginia bluebells. The bluebells were covered with pinkish buds. Two weeks later, at the workfest, the buds had blossomed into blue trumpet-shaped flowers and covered the Island with their beauty.



The author (left) lunches with friends on the Island.

The group that participated in the walk was larger than usual, and I know that we are all grateful to John and RG for guiding us. We are thrilled to hear that they are willing to do this for us again.

—Photos by Jeff Komarow and Dave Winer

Ann Marie Cunningham was elected President of the Club this year. Although she writes the monthly commentaries about the meetings, this is her first full article for the newsletter.

Ann Marie and her husband, John, have been very enthusiastic members of the Club for eight years.

Spring Workfest

Delayed a week by high water, but good work and good fun as always.



This was only muck-work.



Gabfests at the Workfest.



We do doors too.



Unstoring the picnic tables.



A clean sweep fore, aft, and topside.

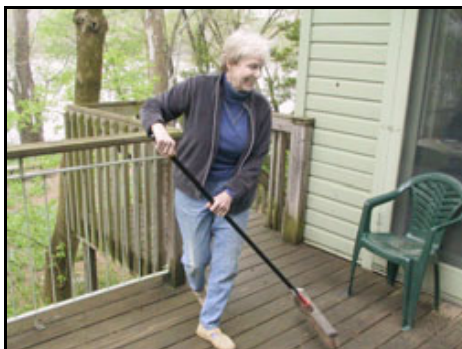


Exhausted workers recuperating.

Caretaker Joe was off to Italy but he left a long list of chores for us. Captain Tryon Wells cracked the whip to assure that everything got done—and it did!



Poling the ferry back from drydock.



A.k.a. Broom Dancing.



Substitute ferry gets the job done.



Block that ivy!

THIRD ANNUAL CANOEING CLASS ON THE ISLAND: MAY 17

Member Frank Daspit will conduct a canoeing class on the Island on Saturday morning, May 17, for all interested members and wait listers.

The class is designed for both adults and teenagers who are new to canoeing or who just want to brush up on their technique. The canoe classes of the last two years - also taught by Frank - have been a good time and a great success.

Amendment to the Standing Rules Proposed.

Wait listers may be offered guest passes for service to the Club.

At the May 14 meeting an amendment to the Standing Rules will be voted upon which will amend the second-to-last paragraph of section 12 by adding, "An applicant who assists in the operations and maintenance of the club by participating in an approved activity such as relief caretaking, a workfest, or a committee, shall be eligible to receive a guest pass for each service. The guest pass shall entitle the person and up to nine guests to use the Island's recreational facilities for one day."

Note that this is a proposal, and therefore may be passed, defeated, or amended at the meeting.

Ruppert



Cartoon by Johnna Robinson

Orientation for new members on April 26.



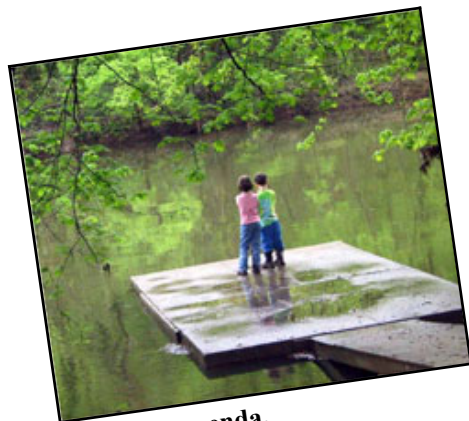
Our ever-faithful entertainment committee.



Late arrivals face a gauntlet.



Canoeing matters matter a lot around here.



Their own agenda.



Lunchtime discussions: point and counterpoint



Preaching the Glories of guest care-taking.



The swimming pool.



Caretaker Joe explains the ferry operations and courtesies.



Rewards for patient attention during the briefings.

Message from the President of the Washington Canoe Club to our President

From: Lawrence C. Schuette
To: Ann Marie Cunningham
Subject: Georgetown University Boathouse

Hi Ann Marie,

In my infinite free time I'm the president of the Washington Canoe Club. Sally Strain gave me your name. I wanted to make sure you and your members were aware that GU wants to (is planning to) build a boathouse just upstream of WCC. The structure is 300' long, 60' high and 60' wide. A rapidly growing coalition is opposed to the structure being built on the floodplain and on NPS land.

It blocks the view of the Key Bridge from the C&O canal (to the point that the C&O Canal Association is opposed to the construction), and will put vehicle traffic on the Capital Crescent Trail for about 800'. This is just the first step in a long march upstream into the Potomac River Valley - which as you know was just nominated by Scenic America as a site facing imminent harm. Well, this pretty much defines harmful.

You can see the facility (in limited views with little or no perspective provided) at www.guhoyas.com

On May 19 the DC Zoning Commission will consider whether to zone the parkland property adjacent to WCC to accommodate development. Currently the land is unzoned, and should remain unzoned, with no new construction. You can see the Zoning documents at:

<http://www.dcoz.dcgov.org/services/zoning/>

What can you do?

Text of suggestions for writing letters is omitted because the deadline for receipt (May 4) has passed by the time of publication of this issue of the Islander.

... attend the Zoning Commission hearing on May 19. This may be the last chance to stop this project. ... The meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. May 19th.

Room 220 South
One Judiciary Square
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Hear Ye, Hear Ye, Announcements:

LOCKER LOTTERY! If you are a member or on the waiting list and you are interested in having a locker on the island, call me or send me an email and I will put your name in the hat. I have an undetermined number of lockers available and I will have the drawing before the next *Islander* comes out. If you already have a locker please let me know so I can put your name on it. —Joe Hage

DOWN-RIVER CANOE RACE: The annual CCA race ending at Sycamore Island is on Saturday June 14.

ATTENTION! RELIEF CARETAKERS: Please, please, please take care when you are running the ferry. The pontoons on which the ferry rides are tough-looking, but they are NOT. Docking the ferry on either side of the slough takes *finesse*, otherwise we damage the pontoons and stairs as well. Please *ease* the S.S. Sycamore into dock as if you were putting a sleeping baby to bed!

In touch with Joe...

There are many beautiful places in the world and during this time of year people travel long distances to visit these exotic places. You can go to Holland to see the tulips, the mountains to see the wild flowers or travel to the prairies or the coast to see huge flocks of spectacular birds as they migrate northward along ancient flyways. Yes, there are a million places you could go, but to be on Sycamore Island in April is truly one of the greatest places you could ever want to be.

Watching this island of barren trees and mud blossom into a lush and vibrant paradise has been amazing! I was so excited when I returned from my trip to Italy (more on that later) to find the Island and the rest of the gorge in full bloom. The new leaves created a canopy around me as I walked down the trail in a tunnel of sun and shade. A bright white cloud of dogwood flowers hit me as I crossed the footbridge over the parkway, and then I saw the redbud trees with their wonderfully contrasting violet-red flowers suspended against a backdrop of early spring green. The sweet fragrance of some snowball-looking flowers made me stop and bury my nose in the little bundles of puffy flowers. When I looked down onto the river from the top of the hill it seemed so calm and green and inviting, (not at all like it was ten days ago as it unleashed the last of some of its winter fury). As I stood on the ferry feeling very tranquil, (jet-lag you know) I thought of how great it is to go away to an exotic place like Italy and have an excellent vacation and still not be disappointed when it's time to go home. Yes, there I was back on Sycamore Island in April, the trees and the river were heavenly green and the sky and the Island were blue.

The bluebells are all but gone now and shade is dominating the island. The goslings have been hatched and the tree swallows have returned. As I watch this vibrant season unfold I can't help but ad-

mire the intense and highly vigilant parenting exhibited by the birds here on the island. The geese can be a nuisance the way they dominate the island, but just imagine the amount of energy necessary for them to ward off so many intruders day after day just to protect their unborn offspring. Together they do everything in their power to ensure the survival of their kind. If only we could be so committed. The other day I watched as a male cardinal aggressively pecked at the bumper of my van. I didn't understand at first but then realized that the bird was attacking



its own reflection, diligently protecting its territory and nest. The cowbird on the other hand is a different story. I've seen cowbirds here regularly at the feeder, and they will lay their egg in another bird's nest, making them do the hard job of parenting. The migrating shad are another great example of this monofocus on parenting. I went down to Little Falls and watched as thousands of these fish struggled single-mindedly against the powerful Potomac to do their part for the survival of the whole.

On to less philosophical topics, they have been working on the well all week so we have had to adjust to life

without running water. The crystal clear water they are now pumping from the well is encouraging, so it has been worth the inconvenience. There was some leftover pea gravel from the well project and I used it to cover the bare ground under the steps in front of my door. It should help cut down on the amount of mud that gets splashed onto the walkway and tracked into the house. I built a little roof above my front door to give us a place to take off our shoes outside of the rain. That will be a big improvement! I got the primer coat on the walls in the men's room, its looking better all the time! I had to repair/patch the floor in my bathroom. The toilet was sagging through the rotten plywood so I laid new flooring over the old and I now have a sturdy throne. I'll have to write about my trip to Italy some other time, I need to get this article to Dave Winer before the deadline. See you on the Island.

Sunday Relief Caretakers May-June 2003

Date	Time	Name(s)	Telephone
May 4, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Bill Eichbaum and Sarah Fox	301-229-1713
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Mary Ann Stein	301-229-8657
May 11, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Silvija Strikis and Miguel Browne	703-748-4671
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Eric and Rene Simpson	703-821-7556
May 18, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Bernard Veuthey and Cora Shaw	202-362-5859
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Leanne Rees	301-365-5048
May 25, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Kirk Renaud	301-718-9632
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Garrett and Jean Rasmussen	202-337-3396
June 1, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Penny and Bob McNulty	301-229-6453
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Judy and Richard Hope	202-232-2445
June 8, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Jean and Garret Rasmussen	202-337-3396
June 15, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Star Mitchell	301-530-3252
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Donna Mateski	202-256-8157
June 22, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Toby and Janet Smith	703-553-7732
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Chris Weals and Amy Hancock	301-320-7075
June 29, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Cecily Abram and Francis Short	301-229-0440
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Janis and Richard Pappalardo	301-229-8360

*** 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 May 2003

Date	Time	Who	What

No Large Parties are scheduled for the month of May.

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: janoble@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/trunnion/islander.htm>

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May 2003

- New Editor to step in.
- Service Membership approved.
- Super Flower Walk this year.
- Workfest: late but great.
- Orientation readies members-to-be.



Drydock. Our ferry has been down by the bow for months—the result of water inside from crash-damage to the stems.

A Workfest task: pump out the water and epoxy the break. More heroic efforts will be needed because water continues to seep into the pontoons.