

Minutes of the June 11, 2003 Meeting

Because of high water, the meeting was held at the home of gracious hosts Alan (off globetrotting) and Caroline Gelb. President Ann Marie Cunningham called the meeting to order at 8:15 p.m. Those present were David and Jane Winer, Gerald S. Barton, Bill Marmon, Johnna Robinson, Ann Marie Cunningham, George and Marcia Loeb, Jim Drew, Terry Murphy, Star Mitchell, Jeff Komarow, John Stapko, Caroline Gelb, Joe Hage, and Peter Winkler.

Minutes: The May minutes as published in the *Islander* were approved.

Communications: George Loeb reported that he had received a check from Discovery Creek for their use of the Island in June and August.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Alan Gelb reported via e-mail to Caroline Gelb. All is well.

Membership Report: Membership Secretary Bill Marmon reported that, following the election of new members at the May meeting, the membership is now steady at 155 regular members.

There were no reports from the Financial Secretary or the Captain.

Editors' Report: Former co-editor Dave Winer reported that new *Islander* editor Norm Metzger has stipulated a short deadline for his first edition. Dave urged everyone to comply with this deadline and to otherwise help Norm become established as editor.

Caretaker's Report: Caretaker Joe Hage reported that the recent rains have made it

easy to spot roof leaks, which he will endeavor to repair. The water heater may also have a leak. The swim float needs to be put in place. Former Captain John Matthews is working on a plan to extend the dock on the canal side; it will help protect the ferry. Joe also reported that the work on the well was very near complete, and he will be forwarding the bill to the Treasurer.

Dave Winer called everyone's attention to Joe's frequent commentaries on the Club's website.

Entertainment Report: Committee chairs George and Marcia Loeb reported that they and the Maluskys, who will chair the committee next year, were at work setting up the mid-summer night's party. [Subsequently, cancelled for this year, alas] The Loeb's also reported that they had looked into ordering new club T-shirts. Dave Winer stated that he could supply the computerized version of our logo. After some discussion, it was agreed that the Loeb's should order 200 shirts for future sale, and that they could use their discretion to order green shirts and perhaps some white shirts. In the future, they may place an order for hats. Dave Winer mentioned that, in the meantime, the embroiderer at Georgetown Park can put the logo on a shirt or hat that you either supply or purchase there.

President's Report: Ann Marie passed around a mockup of the one-day pass that we will give out to applicants who provide service to the Club. Tryon will print them on card stock. The card has blanks to fill in the name of the person, the service performed, and the initials of the authorizing agent.

Canoeing Report: Canoeing Supervisor

Jim Drew reported that the May canoe class had been canceled because of high water. Instructor Frank Daspit will be away until late August, when the class will be rescheduled. Jim also reported that the canoe racks are full now, and there is one person waiting. If someone is aware of an abandoned canoe in the shed, please let Jim know.

Marcia Loeb reported that the Regatta will be held this year on Labor Day, September 1. The Loeb's will be busy celebrating their 50th anniversary, and the event will be run by Bill Banta.

Old Business: Star Mitchell reported on the Canoe Cruisers' downriver canoe race, now scheduled for Saturday, June 14 [rescheduled to June 29th]. They are planning on using the Club as the terminus of the race, and Star will consult with Joe Hage on Friday about the water level. There followed a discussion of the Club's high water policy. Officially, the Club closes when the water level is 5 ft. The Caretaker, however, has some leeway: He can open the Club if the water is higher but dropping, and close the Club if the water is lower but rising. It was observed that the Caretaker always has the authority to close the Club if, in his judgment, conditions are unsafe.

New Business: None

Announcements: Ann Marie reminded everyone of upcoming events: the Canoe Cruisers race, the mid-summer night's party, the regatta, and the old-timers' picnic, which will probably be held in September. There will also probably be a fishing derby, in August, under the direction of George Malusky. [Now scheduled for Saturday, August 16th.] Gerry Barton asked about the feasibility of a club-wide picnic; Ann Marie invited anyone who might like to run such

an event to please step forward.

Next Meeting will be held on the Island in the Club House at 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 9th.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05. The participants, rather than braving the torrential rain, returned to the excellent refreshments provided by our host, Caroline Gelb.

Currents and Waves

- Summer arrived on June 21st but then so did more rain, washing out the Midsummer Night's Festival. George and Marcia Loeb report that "we will put off the Celebration for this year, and celebrate in 2004. The gods are against us this year!"
- Get ready for the Fishing Derby in Mid August. A terrific opportunity for a productive day on the Island with surely great fish stories to tell afterwards. Join the Derby on Saturday, August 16th, starting at 8 am and going to early afternoon. Pot-luck lunch. And prizes! For details: [George Malusky](mailto:George.Malusky@yahoo.com) toofish2001@yahoo.com or 301-871-1707





My Goal for the *Islander*

Thomas Jefferson on arriving in Paris as U.S. Ambassador was asked about his feelings in replacing Benjamin Franklin. Jefferson responded that he could not hope to replace Franklin but could only succeed him. I have no hope of replacing Dave and Jane. My single goal is to try to come close to the superb job they did with such grace, style, and diligence.

— Norman Metzger



Ruppert meditates on the meaning of rain.

Islanders face the towpath, waiting for summer.

Hooray for Paddler/Birder/Biker Co-editors Jane and David Winer

— By Peggy Thomson

Jane and David Winer! They've treated us to five years of *Sycamore Islanders*, those welcome mailings—fun, interesting, delightful. How do we sing the Winers' praise? We can coo CALLOO! We can shout CAL-LAY! More appropriately, perhaps, pour buckets of prize river water on their creative heads. For, yes, they've kept us happily in touch with our Island's life.

Just now, having re-reread all those issues, I've also talked with that co-editing pair. I've learned how David, having studied up on *Desktop Publishing for Dummies*, decided on Lucida Calligraphy for the tall bold title—*The Sycamore Islander*—and for Johnna Robinson's Ruppert mischiefmaker cartoons as well. He picked sans-serif **Zapf Humanist** type for the headlines and **Times New Roman** for the text. It's Jane who attended to the newsletter's grammar and punctuation. It's David who attended to the spacing, the look of each page, involving a shift from one to two columns of type and from the traditional tree-scene masthead photo to a different photo for each issue. They both wanted many more pictures in each issue, and David supplied much of the animated photo coverage of our regattas and workfests (which, judging by the laughter volume, are now said to be more like funfests instead).

They wanted also as many contributions as they could get from members and from people on the waiting list—their writings, drawings, photos, poetry. "I wanted people to see the newsletter is written by members and wait-listers, and we editors *edit*. At workfests, at orientations, I'd set the hook. We were looking for authors. We'd suggest topics and offer to take the pictures." Jane adds, "It was our encouraging people in this way that made the process so rich and wonderful for us."

David sought out Islander children—the boy who built the logs & limbs/flotsam & jetsam fort on the lower Island and the ten-year-old girl who wrote "The Reluctant Camper" about her change of heart once she saw the fun in a Midsummer Night camp-over on the Island, her only complaint being the too-peppery French toast for breakfast. ("And *I* did the peppering," Jane admits to me.) Never mind the pepper, I just wish I'd been



David and Jane with their five years of *Islanders*.

— Photo by Peggy Thomson

there to hear George Loeb's morning talk on solstices and to see his 3-D Stonehenge model.

All the re-rereading I've just done has reminded me of the wonderful material culled for us by Jane and Dave. Sure, they properly covered all the meeting minutes, changes in by-laws, new Club rules, dues and treasurer reports, the status of our drinking water. Good for them! But the items I pounced on were not these.

Just consider all the reports from members on their canoe adventures in far off places. There's John Lentz's "Paddling through Grizzly Country"—on the Horton River, north, from Great Bear Lake to the Arctic. There's Renee Dunham's report on wooden-canoe paddling on Chesuncook Lake in Maine and her discovery of the Caucomgomac River as an effective swear word for yelling. We read of Lucky and Bill Marmon canoeing the Upper Missouri; Sandi and Jeff Komarow in Oregon paddling the Upper Klamath Canoe Trail; Star Mitchell and her snow time at the Minnesota Boundary

Waters where—though not canoeing—she learned the skills and commands of dog sledding.

There's special stuff in every issue: George Malusky on fishing, Carl Linden on restoration of the old Monocacy Aqueduct, profiles of longtime members Jinny and Phil Jones and of our longtime Captain, John Matthews. There's Renee Dunham on Betty Burchell's archaeological studies on Ruppert Island and along the Potomac shores—signs of Indian settlement, of old fishing weirs and ferry crossings, although we have no clue (or do we?) about the mysterious old cannonball found on Ruppert).

I like the coverage of Oldtimers' Day picnics and the "Hear Ye, Hear Ye" notices of Regatta events: Round-the-Island Race, Drowned Rat and Sink-or-Swim Relays, Jousting, and the Raw Egg Toss. Good pictures of young James Super's tug-of-war birthday party! And it's a treat to look at the late '70s snow scenes of Penny Doolittle, Bob Sinclair, Lydia Weber crossing the Potomac on foot to Virginia and to read Penny's account of this thrilling and easy way for the canoe poolers to walk to work, just as she remembers—our family does also—the joy of skating across the river on smooth ice.

At the photo spread of Ice Action (hockey) at Lock 7, I got the joke of the sign: Please Stay Off Ice When Thawing (take that, you thawers!). I did not catch on here to David's joke inspired by his meeting the kid with a frozen worm dangling from his fishpole. What David reported (it sounded real to me) was a fishing tip garnered by Sycamore's fishermen Bill Bays and George Malusky. These two, with zero luck at fishing through the ice, asked help, it seems, from a clearly successful old fisherman, who, annoyed, said "Yh hummysf hwavl tchee wmmmsos WMAMM," Asked again, he spat first into his hand, then shouted: "You have to keep the worms WARM!" I'd guess our two master fishermen were as surprised as the rest of us by their role in the joke.

Not to be overlooked: Important letters to the editor were given their space—Brad Coolidge's urgent plea to make a study of our septic system and our well a top priority; Sycamore architect John Wiebenson's caution (I've lost his eloquent words) that in expanding the Clubhouse we take care to protect the nearby

trees and to retain the nature-friendly, unobtrusive image of our Club.

From botanist Jane Hill came a fascinating piece on the sycamore tree, whose common name may come from the Greek *sykon* (fig) and *moron* (mulberry). The American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*, named by Linnaeus and meaning "bread" and "western") had giant forms that could stable a horse, a cow, a pig or shelter a whole family in the same way that the smaller descendants now shelter raccoons, possums, owls and wood ducks. Another botanist, a visitor, wrote to the *Islander* that some of our mentioned phlox are actually not phlox but Dame's Rocket with four (not five petals), native to Europe where it was a favorite flower of Marie Antoinette. She also identified our Elephant's Foot blooms, white Snakewood, Sneezewood, too, and an invasive Mile-a-Minute weed that members were urged to remove. (Can this have referred to the kudzu that our Phil Thorson has led so many work gangs to attack?-- reminding Islanders to "keep your enthusiasm and your tools sharp.")

Yet another visiting botanist said that, edging cautiously around two Canada geese, she'd stopped amongst the blooming Bluebells and counted ten flower species within ten feet of her. "I felt I was standing in a 13th Century French tapestry." Indeed, Wildflower Walks have been a beautiful Island tradition from the time of Phil Stone and carried on since by Joan Heideman and Ellen Richards, most recently by RG Steinman and John Parrish. The lists of sightings are all there on *Islander* pages, drawings, too, and photos by the Winers—as of the autumn bloomers: The stunning Great Lobelia and the delicate Mistflower. Do we remember that our Virginia Bluebells are *Mertensia virginica*, Spring beauty is *Claytonia virginica*, Solomon's seal is *Polygonatum biflorum*, Toadshade is *Trillium sessile*? How dignified of Dutchman's-breeches to be *Dicentra cucullaria*, and, adding to Renee's botanical swear words, how about *Glechoma hederacea* for Gill-over-the-ground?

As for birds, one of David's *Islander* lists—in taxonomic order, mind you—includes 37 species seen around the Island. These editors are devoted birders. When David invites his Ornithological Society pals for the annual "bird paddle," he picks October—

“when a warm river and frosty air make for a magically misty atmosphere.” And they see kingfishers, herons, cormorants and ducks. They spot migrating warblers flitting in the trees, a good show of Cedar Waxwings, of woodpeckers (Sycamore is famous for its Pileateds), and Osprey.

The Winer newsletters continued the tradition begun by John Thomson of Caretaker reports, which are highly popular. Doc Taliaferro was a natural at writing *Notes from the Island*. He was a guy tuned to the Island life all around him, as was his welcoming wife Phyllis, initiator of the Midsummer Night campout parties. It was Doc who clued us in that the ice was always talking, sounding sometimes like a great crack or like a great cable—snapping. He’d report on the chorus of boom crash thud bang caused by the slow steady rain of black walnuts onto the canoe shed. In February it was the gaggles and more gaggles of geese returning from the south and how, when the Bluebells appeared, the cacophonous goose racket intensified; how, too, when the goose hotels on the Island floats were filled, his shovel came into full use. Doc was always good at recording the antics of the creatures with whom he and Phyllis shared the Island. We’d hear about flagrant, mindless, obscene duck cavortings or about the ruckus in the men’s locker room when a raccoon got after a garbage can. It was two days after Doc had counted 17 trees recently nibbled that Doc wrote: “He did not come in the night stealing from shadow to shadow...creeping fearfully toward his target. No, he came...while there was still daylight and took half the bark from the tree near the house. The beaver has struck again!! Brazenly!!”

When Doc and Phyllis said their gracious goodbyes, our current Joe Hage came on—fun, friendly guy with his playful daughters Kelsey and Kaylen. (Interestingly, it was Kaylen who found the 16-inch sycamore leaf—to match one mailed to the Winers by a former Sycamore member, wanting to know: Could such a biggie possibly be from a sycamore?) Joe on the job ventured right in to composing his *In Touch with Joe* column. It can only make one wonder: Are Sycamore caretakers hired on the strength of their sensitive-to-nature musings and their skills of expression? We were soon caught up in Joe’s tracking of animals by their footprints in the snow and in his close looks at Red-necked grebes. Then we got the drama of his first flood. Joe had turned up the canoes and secured them. He’d tied down the picnic tables. Then with help from Ann Marie Cunningham and Tryon Wells (and David Winer, who’d come to photograph)

Joe coped with a breakdown of the ferry as he tried to cross in the high fast-moving water.

Which brings us to these retiring editors. Now, we can say that, with Norm Metzger taking over of the editorial pen, though there’ll be no more tandem motorcycle trips for the Winers to deliver camera-ready newsletter copy to the printer, there’ll still be motor biking aplenty for them. For sure. I never knew it before, but these vroomvroom vehicles are how Jane and David first met. It was when she, biking on the streets of Georgetown, waved her helmet to the guy who was biking past her. And he, with great good sense, responded by circling back.

So, what, we may ask, is ahead for these released-from-duty editors? Both are retired folk—Jane, from teaching, David, the onetime Navy pilot, from his work on Operations Research for the Federal Aviation Administration. For sure, they’ll be birding and biking, who knows how far and how wide. What they’ll not retire from is the Potomac River. As new grandparents, they’ll be riding the Sycamore Clipper with now four-months-old Thalia, showing her birds, Bluebells and boats—perhaps even in a magical mist. “And,” says David, “at Jane’s *urgent* request,” (Jane rolls her eyes) “I *will* get to writing about my Navy flying days.” We readers await.



Why are they smiling?

Photo by David and Jane Winer

Peggy Thomson is the author of many wonderful children’s books and a member for 42 years.

In touch with Joe....

*Rain, rain, go away
Don't want to build an ark today.*

I saw this on a billboard down at the beach and it made me think about this past spring and all the rain. Yes, the amount of precipitation that we've had to endure has now reached biblical proportions. Maybe instead of a ferry I should have an ark.

I want to welcome the new editor. I'm looking forward to many more quality editions of the Islander. I feel bad for all of you dues-paying islanders; it's a shame that no one can use the island. The weather has been so bad that people may start asking for a refund on their annual dues. I'm afraid the board may ask me to return some of my salary. I still work, even if the ferry isn't operating; but I still feel a little guilty when I don't have to pull the ferry.

There's been a lot of work going on here lately. Unfortunately we had to replace the hot water heater. Even though it was only six years old, it started leaking and before long it was losing about a gallon every hour (of course this happened while my girl friend and her mother were visiting). I was able to keep a bucket under it but not before the floor and the carpet got soaked. The water heater is behind the wall in my bathroom so I had to move the washer/dryer and part of the wall to get to it. The plumber and I were able to remove the leaky, fifty-gallon heater to make room for the new forty-gallon one. We also managed to get the really old, (circa. 1970), heater out of the closet as well. This older one was only a twenty-galloner but was taking up quite a bit of space and I wanted to get it out of there before it decides to start leaking. The plumber redid and removed some of the redundant pipes and valves and I disconnected the wires and removed an old electrical outlet we didn't need. The plumber even took both the old water heaters with him to the dump. I was very pleased with the work and it feels great to have my bathroom back to normal.

The phone man had to come out and replace a fuse in our line. Apparently we had a lightning strike that took out the phone connection. I'm afraid the lightning strike might have damaged my computer as well. I had it unplugged but I didn't think to disconnect the phone line, so I couldn't get on the Internet and enter my daily log into the Sycamore web site.

The surveyors were here. And it won't be long now before Pepco puts up our new utility poles. My next chore has to do with a very large limb that has fallen in the middle of the path to the captain's float. It fell from the old silver maple and it covers the field from the base of the tree to the picnic tables, thirty feet long with an eight-inch diameter and full of leaves. These are the times I wish I had a chainsaw.

The ground hog is becoming a nuisance. It devoured a rose bush and it is starting to eat all the sassafras trees. I know it's not the beaver doing the damage because the teeth marks are not the same. Speaking of the beaver, I spied it at about five o'clock one morning, but it took no notice when I shined my light on him and reluctantly waddled back into the water only after I'd walked right up to it. The two mulberry trees are drawing a crowd. Not one of those berries has gone to waste. The geese and ducks eat from below, the squirrels and birds from above and even the ground hog found a way to climb the tree to get his share. We caught sight of it as it jumped from the tree the other morning. I've seen a lot of mourning doves as they pair up on the ground in groups of six or more. The same goes for the gold finches, as they pick insect from the flood litter. One day I was crossing the field to get a closer look at the gold finches and I almost stepped on a six-foot black snake. I didn't think that this type of snake had rattles but it did manage to get my attention with a tiny rattling noise coming from its tail. I've seen the colorful Baltimore oriole and I think I saw a prothonotary warbler.

Wishing you a dry summer, Joe

Sunday Relief Caretakers July - August 2003

Date	Time	Name(s)	Telephone
July 6, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Abigail and John Wiebenson	202-332-6857
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Jennifer Urquhart and Mike Edwards	202-244-0446
July 13, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Dave Narrow	301-897-5619
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Bernard Veuthey and Cora Shaw	202-362-5859
July 20, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Johnna Robinson	301-229-5421
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Whitney Pinger	202-686-5443
July 27, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Leanne Rees	301-365-5048
August 3, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
	3:00 p.m. - dark	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
August 10, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Penny and Bob McNulty	301-229-6453
August 17, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Silvija Strikis and Miguel Browne	703-748-4671
	3:00 p.m. - dark	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
August 24, 2003	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Eric and Rene Simpson	703-821-7556

*** 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
July 30	9:45 to 2:30 pm	George and Marcia Loeb	35 to 40 for Discovery Creek School Picnic
August 1	1 to 7 pm	Karl Kosok	35 for Birthday Party for 11-yr old
August 28	7 p.m. to dark	Bill and Rochelle Banta	NAMI Family Picnic

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/spackle/islander.htm>

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July 2003

- Celebrating five years — 60 issues! — of David and Jane Winer's *Islanders*.
- *Currents and Waves* on what will happen and what didn't.
- Ruppert confronts rain, rain, rain.



George Malusky with a preview of what's in store for you at the Fishing Derby on August 16th.