



31 Jan 04

Doing the Push Stroke

Photo by David Winer

The Sycamore Islander

February 2004

Volume 83 No. 2

President's Message

At the last meeting, a member who had served as a relief caretaker expressed some concern about the rules for using the wood burning stove. Or perhaps the real question was about the lack of rules for using the stove. The stove is there for the use of members on cold days, so feel free to light a fire. But, please try to let it burn down a bit before you leave. Don't keep adding more wood right up until the end. Close all the dampers when you leave. And please let the Joe or the relief caretaker know that there is a fire burning. Another question was about the responsibility of the caretaker (whether it's Joe or a relief caretaker) to large parties. The host of the large parties is responsible for ferrying his or her guests to the Island, rather than the caretaker.

The annual dues notice resulted in a phone call and a letter to me, because of the latest increase. The dues have gone up for the last couple of years, after not changing for seven years. This person had several concerns. He wanted the caretaker's quarters to be improved, but he did not want the dues to continue to rise. He suggested that we increase the maximum membership by forty families, and that this additional income be used to pay for the building. The topic of the maximum membership has been discussed at a number of meetings lately; but to use the income generated from the new members to fund the building is a new idea. The survey that was conducted last year indicated that the Island is underutilized and that the membership could be increased, without adversely affecting our enjoyment of the Island. One way of doing that would be to create a new type of senior membership that is based upon age; but we do not have any demographic information about our members, so it is not possible to estimate how many members would qualify for that type of membership. That is why your dues notice requested the year of your birth. Of course, increasing the number of regular members would have a greater impact on finances than increasing the number of senior members. At our last meeting, we increased the number of regular members by five, to 160. This was done because it was felt that increasing the number by a small amount over several years would allow us to assess the impact of the additional members on the Island's ambiance.

Right now, we do have enough funds in reserve to fund the construction, as estimated by the last building committee. Of course, if that estimate holds, that would nearly deplete our reserve, so we would need a plan to rebuild the reserve over the ensuing years. One way is to request loans or contributions from members. Loans would have to be repaid over a number of years, which would require an increase in income (dues). It might be a useful discipline at this time to earmark the new members' dues for this purpose. If any of you have any suggestions or comments on this, please contact me at AMCunning@juno.com.

— Ann Marie Cunningham

February Meeting

Wednesday, February 11, 8 p.m.
Jeff and Sondra Komarow's home
9511 Linden Avenue, Bethesda; 301-897-5996

Directions

From the Beltway: Exit at Old Georgetown Rd south towards Bethesda. Left at Beech Ave. by the Bethesda-Chevy Chase YMCA. Continue on Beech Ave, to the end, which is Linden Ave. Right on Linden Ave. to 9511 (3rd house on the left after the turn).

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 Editor, Norman Metzger, 638 G Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003-2724 or by fax to 202/544-6027. Text and graphics may be sent as email attachments to nm2@bellatlantic.net. **Note to submitters of announcements, articles, or letters: The deadline for inclusion in the March issue is receipt at the Editor's address by February 20th.** Earlier submissions receive priority.

Minutes of the January 14, 2003 Meeting

The meeting was hosted by Star Mitchell.

Present: David Winer, Joe McBride, Gerry Barton, John Stapko, Star Mitchell, Carl Linden, Phil Thorson, Jane Winer, Jim Drew, Ann Marie Cunningham, George Loeb, Pat Roth, Joe Belden, Jack Sanders, and Peter Winkler

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 8:15 p.m. by President Ann Marie Cunningham. There were no communications to report.

Minutes: The minutes of the annual meeting were approved as published in the *Islander*.

Membership Report: Joe Belden, half of our new membership secretarial team (with his wife Tammy), reported that we had two openings for regular members. These were offered to Ralph and Betsy Stevens of Chevy Chase, Maryland, and Darina and Allan McKelvie of Washington, DC. They were voted into membership conditional upon Joe checking with their member references. Joe will report at the next meeting.

Canoe Supervisor's Report: Canoe Supervisor Jim Drew reported that it appeared that there were some mislaid or abandoned kayaks and canoes on the Island. He will see that they are claimed by their owners or the Club will assume custody of them. Jim also stated that we have to begin thinking about adding an additional canoe rack or two.

Building Committee Report: The new Building Committee Chair (and former club president) Jack Sanders observed that he had been involved in some earlier building projects on the Island. *The re-formed committee has met once so far, but membership has not been fixed and volunteers are welcome.* [See note from the committee chairman on page five.]

Old Business: Tryon Wells' motion regarding a safety deposit box was put before the meeting. The proposal would provide keys to the box to three officers: the president, recording secretary, and treasurer. Currently, it was pointed out, we have no safety deposit box. After some discussion in which it was noted that we could sign up three people on a safety deposit account, a vote was taken and the motion carried. The suggestion was made that photocopies be made of all our important documents. Gerry Barton stated that there were copies of all or most of them at our archive.

The meeting then considered Vice-President Jeff Komarow's motion that we increase regular membership

from 155 to 160. Several members supported the proposal, stating their view that the Island was currently underutilized and that the increase was a small step. Others were concerned that we had no clear data on the demographic composition of the Club, and that it was unclear what the change would bring. One member asked if we could reduce the number of regular members if we did not like the result, and others answered that we could. One member asked if the Island's septic system could handle more usage, while another responded that that was an argument against large parties, not against an increase in membership. In the end, the motion was approved.

New Business: Phil Thorson, who has been a member since 1947, spoke about plans for new construction on MacArthur Boulevard that would involve cutting down trees and interfering with the view of the Potomac Overlook from the river. The Glen Echo Heights and Mohican Hills neighborhood associations have already written letters to the planning authorities opposing the construction, and Phil asked that the Club do the same. After some discussion, a motion was introduced that the Club write a letter in support of no disturbance of the area and preservation of the river view and against the cutting of trees in the area. The motion carried.

George Loeb let us know that he would be asking permission to host a school party this summer. It was suggested that Relief Caretaker Supervisor Candy Means remind relief caretakers that they do not have to run the ferry for large parties that take place on their watch. Someone else suggested that we investigate whether all of the bells connected to the ferry were in working order.

Pat Roth asked if we have a policy regarding use of the wood stove. She stated her view that relief caretakers, in particular, needed guidance as to what to do about wood stove usage on their watch, especially if they were leaving the Island with no one on it. Ann Marie said she would refer the question to Captain Tryon Wells.

Announcements: Dave Winer stated that *Islander* editor Norm Metzger was soliciting articles for the *Islander*. Several other members gave an update on the controversy over the proposed Georgetown University boathouse.

Ann Marie announced that the next meeting, February 11, would be hosted by Jeff Komarow.

The meeting was adjourned about 9:30 p.m.

— Peter Winkler, Recording Secretary

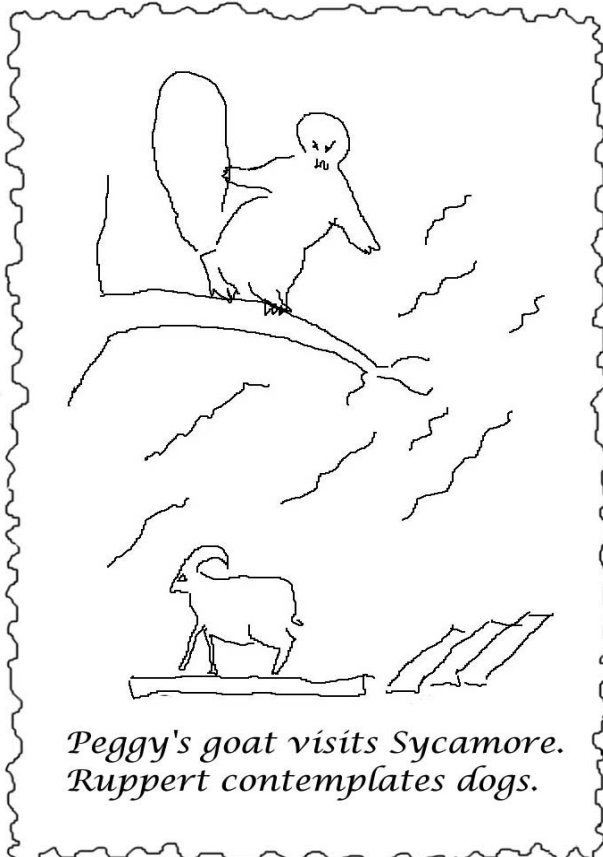
Sycamore Budget: Outturn* for 2003

We spent \$ 61,601 during the year. This is a little below the October projection, but two checks did not clear as fast as they might have, so overall spending has been close to the expected levels. The main factors for savings were underspending on repairs and supplies, as well as on grounds. This has partly been due to careful management by the caretaker and captain, and partly due to reduced levels of activity as a result of the persistent spells of high water. We managed to absorb much of the cost of the well through containing other capital spending. Our utilities came in lower than budgeted; this was due to careful management and a warmer than usual winter. The small surplus will contribute to sustaining our reserve against slowly, but steadily, rising prices. We were very lucky not to have sustained serious damage this year, with high water and falling trees. A few feet over, and the large sycamore that fell in the center of the island could have demolished part of our canoe shed.

Looking forward to 2004, there are signs of higher insurance charges ahead, and we are likely to see levels of routine spending and utility costs at slightly higher levels than in 2003. At \$64,600, the approved 2004 budget is about the same as that for 2003. For some time the Club has been operating with an income base that is slightly less than its approved routine budgets. The recent adjustment of dues and fees places us on a sound footing for 2004.

— Alan Gelb, Treasurer

* "Outturn" is a new term for the *Islander* Editor, and perhaps also for some readers. However, it is exactly right, its primary meaning, notes the OED, being "The quantity turned out or yielded; produce, output; an amount or result attained, as distinct from an estimate." There is also a secondary meaning in that "outturn" in the sport of curling means "A turning motion given to a stone which causes it to curve to the left." Doesn't apply here. If you want the stone to curve right, it's an inturn, natch.



Ruppert

*—Created by
Johnna Robinson*

From Holly Syrrakos, Island Archivist: 75 Years Ago At Sycamore Island Minutes from the February 11, 1929 Meeting

The meeting was held on the Island, called to order at 8:20 p.m. by Vice President Custis. There were nine members present, including the Vice President.

- “Moved that \$40 be appropriated for new posts for the tennis court (net posts) and for cement, gravel and sand to set the same in cement.” A Committee of DeMaine, Custis, Thomson and J.E. Hummer was appointed to inquire into the question of steps to be taken to improve the tennis court.
- “Moved that a regatta be held on Decoration Day and Labor Day or as near those dates as practical. A regatta committee...was appointed.
- “Moved and passed that Mr. Henry B. Norment’s loan of \$25 to the Club building fund be accepted with a rousing vote of thanks. (Mr. Norment, a relative of Dr. Custis, reading of our doings in the Sycamore Islander, wished to help the Club in some way and Dr. Custis suggested a loan to the Building Fund.)
- “Moved and passed that the Club purchase 2 dozen canoe paddles (W.C.C. type) from Thomas Enyon [of Toronto, Ontario], said paddles to be placed in the custody of the Captain of Canoeing and sold at \$3 apiece.”

The club approved expenditures including \$35 for a typewriter and \$25.48 to the “Internal Revenue.” The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Also from Holly: Tough Times for the Captain, from the February 1929 Islander

“During the latter part of December our Captain of the Island got mixed up with the Potomac River, with the result that he was in bed with a pair of hot-water bottles for a week or so and then was in bed without any hot-water bottles for a few weeks longer. He is now back at work but still has to take it easy.

“So many interesting stories of how Brother Cole happened to get his feet wet have gotten about that we might as well tell our version,—which will be somewhat more truthful than most things you read in this peerless sheet. It seems that Cole and two lady members were coming downstream with a boatload of greens for the Christmas party. The boat struck a rock in the swifter water over by the Virginia shore (below Beall’s shack) and Cole lost his balance. He decided that if he tried to climb back to a balanced position the load might be dumped into the water—ladies and all—so he dropped in the river (entirely ignoring the fact that women and children should leave first and that a captain should stay with the sinking boat,—showing that there are exceptions to every rule). The water was only about knee-deep at that point and Cole stood in the water and told the ladies to get an oar which had dropped over-board in the excitement and which was floating away. It was about four minutes before Cole got out of the water and by that time his legs were numb. They seemed all right when he got out of the water but the next day they troubled him and they’ve been doing that more or less ever since, which puts it mildly.

“However, we’re glad to state that Captain Cole is now restored to health and is preparing an endorsement for Lucky Strike Cigarettes. His endorsement reads as follows: “It gives me great pleasure to endorse Luckies and I want to say that if I didn’t like Chesterfields better, I would have been smoking a Lucky while standing in the river. When I got back to the Clubhouse I noticed that one of the boys who was rubbing my legs was smoking a cigarette and I thought it was a Lucky but he told me it was a Camel.”

Photo by David Winer



In Touch with Joe....

I forget sometimes that I don't live a typical suburban lifestyle. I forget that not everyone has to remember a flashlight or a lifejacket when they leave the house. I forget that a river crossing and a quarter-mile hike a few times a day somehow gives me a less obstructed view of the rhythms of nature. And I forget how the river affects me and how its gentle power is a constant, though not always conscious, reminder of my human limitations. Yes, sometimes I forget, but when the wind blows cold and hard across the water on a cloudy winter's day, I remember.

The river and the cold have conspired to become co-creators of the most beautiful sculpture. The frozen river has become a canvass for the artistic whims of the freezing water. From above looking down, the river is a myriad of white shapes trapped under layers of textured and fissured glass. A closer look reveals the geometric precision of the ice crystals whose forms are as varied as snowflakes -- from miniature spires to intricate basket weaves with patterns both subtle and complex.

The freezing temperatures and bitter wind are making their mark on the character of the island and offering us some new challenges. I learned the hard way that it's very important to block the wind from blowing in under the house lest your drainpipes freeze. Also, I've been reminded of some of the hassles of winter commuting when the ferry is uselessly stuck in the ice. Happily, my pipes have cleared now and with a little practice the canoe-sled trip across the ice isn't so bad. The frozen river has its advantages as well. Soon we may be able to *walk* off the island, and the ice keeps the beaver out. Most of all we can't wait to ice skate on the canal!

The geese seem to be slow in colonizing the island this year, irregularly gathering at the foot of the island. I saw my first winter migrants, three female hooded-mergansers right outside my window. The Carolina wren has been my winter buddy. After all the songs of the other birds have long faded away the Carolina wren still blasts us with its early morning call. Did you know they have as many as 32 different songs? I discovered its nest the other day, neatly built in the bow of an upside down canoe. It's inspiring how tough and resourceful these little birds are.

See you on the canal!



Joe showing his "artistic whims" with an ice dance. Photo by Renee Dunham.

On The Caretaker's Quarters

Weather has kept the 14-member committee working on plans for the caretaker quarters from having more than one meeting over the past few months. An optimistic committee chair, former club president Jack Sanders, has scheduled the next meeting for February 8. After its first meeting, the group decided it would be essential to have its next gathering at the clubhouse in order to look over the physical layout directly.

— Jack Sanders

Annual Sycamore Calendar*

Monthly membership meetings are held on the second Wednesday of every month starting at 8 p.m. and are usually done by 10 p.m. Meetings are held on the Island, except for the winter months (December – February) and high water. Events listed below in bold are open to all.

JANUARY

- The Supervisor of Camping and Parties produces his/her annual report of last year's large party statistics at the January Monthly Meeting.
- Final budget for previous year presented.

FEBRUARY

- The Club Archivist produces his/her annual report at the February Monthly Meeting and takes the past year's material to the Washington Historical Society, the custodian of our historical records.

MARCH

- At the March Monthly meeting, set the dates for the Spring Workfest, Wildflower Walk, and Club Orientation.

APRIL

- At the April Monthly meeting, set the date for the Annual Potomac Downriver Race with the Canoe Cruisers Association.
- **Orientation**
- **Spring Workfest**
- **Wildflower Walk**

MAY

- The Membership Secretary produces his/her annual report at the May Monthly Meeting and new members are voted in.
- At the May Monthly meeting, set the date for Mid-Summer's Night Campout (closest Saturday to June solstice).
- **Annual Potomac Downriver Race**

JUNE

- At the June Monthly meeting, set the date for the Sycamore Island Regatta (traditionally on Labor Day weekend) and the Fishing Derby (July or August).
- The Personnel Committee meets to conduct a caretaker mid-year review.
- **Mid-Summer's Night Campout**

JULY

- **Fishing Derby**

AUGUST

- At the August Monthly meeting, set the date for the Old-Timers Potluck Picnic (September).
- Determine the members of the Nomination Committee to help nominate Club officers for the next year.
- **Sycamore Island Regatta**

SEPTEMBER

- The Nominating Committee is announced at the September Monthly Meeting.
- **Old-Timer's Potluck Picnic**

OCTOBER

- At the October Monthly Meeting, set the date for the Fall Workfest (usually two weekends before Thanksgiving).
- The Nominating Committee submits a slate of officers of the Club for the next year in time to be published in the November *Islander*.

NOVEMBER

- **Fall Workfest**
- The Personnel Committee meets to conduct a caretaker end-of-year review.

DECEMBER

- The December Monthly Meeting approves or modifies (1) the new budget, (2) the slate of new officers, (3) the Personnel Committee's recommendations regarding the caretaker and his/her annual compensation, and decision (if any) on dues.
- Financial Secretary sends out dues notices to all members and fee notices to all applicants on the waiting list. Also submits all files and other papers of historical value to the Club Archivist by January 1st.
- Membership Secretary submits Membership Roster to be printed in the *Sycamore Islander's* January edition. Also submits all files and other papers of historical value to the Club Archivist by January 1st.
- Recording Secretary submits all minutes and other papers of historical value to the Club Archivist by January 1st.

*This calendar is very much the work of Tryon Wells, with a few changes/additions by others. Please note that the dates for many events – the fishing derby, downriver race, and so – tend historically to be moveable. For example, the times for the Downriver Race have varied the past few years. Keep alert! Read the *Islander!* And, yes, the Editor is aware that this calendar should be published in January. Next time. Not least, the calendar surely needs corrections, additions, or deletions. Tell the Editor.

Nothin' Doin': a Quiet Time on the Island mid January



Solitude



X-country country.



Disturber of the peace.



Little island downstream.



Transportation Plans A and B while executing C.



The way over.

Photos and Captions by David Winer



Captain's Float iced in.



Swimming season starts soon.



Excitement awaits the adventurous.



The way back.



Reservations not needed.



It's comin' to get ya...



Warmth in waiting.

Saturday Relief Caretakers February-March

February 7, 2004	11:00 a.m. - dark	Paul Wohlford and Claire Blanchard	703 848-9440
February 14, 2004	11:00 a.m. - dark	Louise Meyer	202-328-6834
February 21, 2004	11:00 a.m. - dark	Tom Hylden and Shelley Davis	301-951-4156
February 28, 2004	11:00 a.m. - dark	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
March 6, 2004	10:00 a.m. - 2:00	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
	2:00 p.m. - dark	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
March 13, 2004	10:00 a.m. - 2:00	Leslie Lipschitz and Susan Schadler	301-656-6403
	2:00 p.m. - dark	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
March 20, 2004	10:00 a.m. - 2:00	Iris and Larry Miller	202-244-0772
	2:00 p.m. - dark	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
March 27, 2004	10:00 a.m. - 2:00	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	
	2:00 p.m. - dark	<i>Call to volunteer!</i>	

*** Caretaker Volunteers ***

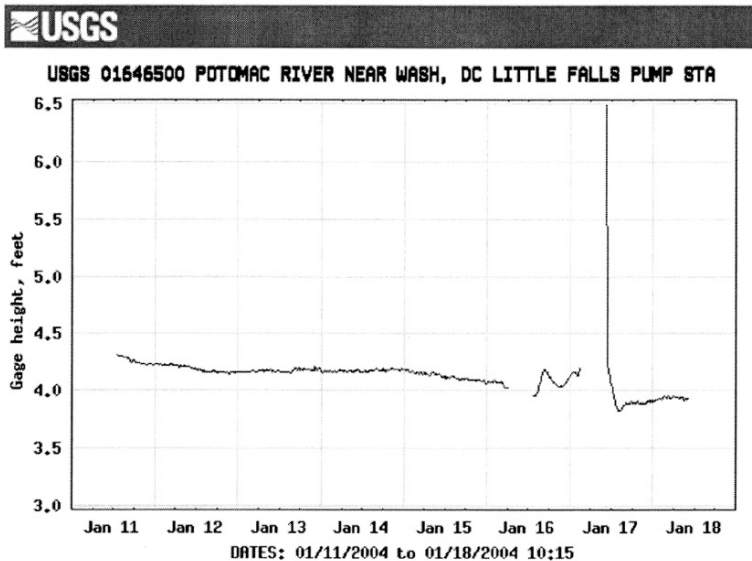
To volunteer for Saturday relief caretaking, call Candy Means: 301-320-5270.
Volunteers from the waiting list are encouraged. It's a great way to spend time on the Island!

Large Parties in February: None Reported

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



“OK. I give up.”

The Little Falls Gage
“coping” with a frozen Potomac.

From Morris Cobern



The Sycamore Islander

6613 80th Place
Cabin John, MD 20818
ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

<http://www.sycamore.org>

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

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February 2004

- A Sycamore Calendar
- Nothin' Doin'
- Sycamore 75 Years Ago
- Perils of Being the Captain
- Sycamore Outturn 2003



Why Doesn't My Hand Move?

Photo by Renee Dunham