



And three makes....

Photo by Norman Metzger

The Sycamore Islander

May 2005

Volume 84 No. 5

President's Message

Hearsay has it that last month's meeting was quite an interesting one. (I have no first-hand knowledge of it, as I was on vacation.) Your vice president, Jeff Komarow, ably chaired the meeting. One interesting item that was suggested and discussed was a recommendation that a defibrillator be kept on the Island, in case of emergencies. With the Island being rather difficult to get to, it could take an EMT a significant amount of time to arrive if one were needed. A member reported that the National Park Service has someone who could train folks on the Island on the use of a defibrillator and on emergency techniques. This member will investigate the matter further, and report back to us.

There was quite a bit of interest in the discussion about the two designs for the caretaker's quarters. A former Island resident shared her opinions on the plans, making some points that had previously not been considered. Be sure to read the minutes of the last meeting to better understand the discussion. The May 11th meeting provides the last opportunity for you to ask questions and express your opinion about the designs. A vote will then be taken at this meeting to decide the design that the committee will pursue. That means hiring an architect to flesh out the details. Any further changes to the design will be made because of engineering, architectural or regulatory reasons and cost estimates will be prepared based on that detailed design, to be considered and voted on at future meetings.

The next meeting will be on the Island at 8:00 on May 11. This is an important meeting. I hope you will be there.

— Ann Marie Cunningham

Upcoming Sycamore Events

May Meeting, Wednesday, May 11th, 8 p.m. At the Island. **VOTE** on the two renovation concepts as refined after the April meeting. [Pgs. 3 –4]

Annual Downriver Race, May 15th. Registration starts at 9 a.m. [p. 8]

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 e-mail attachments to normanmetzger@verizon.net. Telephone: 202/544-6027 or 202/445-5436 (cell). **Note to submitters of announcements, articles, or letters: The deadline for the June issue is receipt by the Editor by Tuesday, May 24th.**

Minutes of the April 13th Meeting

The regular monthly membership meeting was held on April 13th on the Island

Present Bill Bays, Brad Coolidge, Penelope Doolittle, Dick Doolittle, Renee Dunham, Faith Earll, Bill Eichbaum, Alan Gelb, Ned Goddard, Jeff Komarow, John Lentz, Carl Linden, John Matthews, Norman Metzger, Chuck Pill, Harvey Resnick, Johnna Robinson, Sally Strain, Holly Syrrakos, Peggy Thomson, Bernard Veuthey, Tryon Wells, Dave Winer, and Jane Winer.

Reports Vice President Jeff Komarow, presiding in the President's absence, called the meeting into session at 8:00 p.m. Treasurer Alan Gelb reported that the treasury ended the past year with \$70,000 in the black. Variable costs and expenditures for repairs were low and no costly capital improvements were undertaken. Insurance has been rising over the past several years and remains an uncertain factor in our future budgeting. Archivist Holly Syrrakos presented her annual report and spoke of the importance of a complete record of the minutes of membership meetings as well as the club's financial reports. The question of what kinds of materials are appropriate for retention in the archives was advanced and discussed. John Matthews reported that the clubhouse now has a new roof. The work took only six hours and was done for \$1,400. John said the work was excellent, the roof is rated to last for thirty years, and the actual cost of the work was thus far below the original \$6,000 budget estimate. What to do with the old shingles was discussed and there was agreement that someone should be engaged to remove them from the island. Those present were reminded that the new members Orientation would be held on April 17th as well as the flower walk at Carderock. The Workfest is scheduled for the 24th.

New Business Harvey Resnick made a motion that the club should obtain and keep on the island a portable automatic emergency defibrillator (AED). He said that these devices are easy-to-use, can save a life, and are more effective than CPR. After discussion Harvey withdrew his motion until the next meeting where fuller information can be provided on the utility of the device in emergencies, its cost, and how quickly 911 rescue aid can reach the island.

Presentation on Renovation Plans The meeting turned to the question of renovating the caretaker's quarters to provide living space above flood level. Two alternative plans were outlined: (1) The club room would remain essentially as it is now and the living space adjacent to the building's north wall converted into a caretaker's kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom as well as a new club kitchen in the area of the winter warm room and extending to the north wall of the building; or, (2) The club room would be extended to the outer north wall and the caretaker's kitchen and a club kitchen placed on either side of the extended club room and located in the same areas as indicated in the first alternative. In this case the caretaker's bedrooms and bathroom would remain downstairs. In both alternatives a stairway access to the caretaker's kitchen would be installed.

Building Committee co-chair Chuck Pill made the main oral presentation on the two alternatives. The presentation was supplemented by scale drawings of the alternative plans and architectural models of the proposed renovations. The models only showed the layouts for the upstairs renovations where most of the major construction changes would occur. The evening's presentation and discussion will be outlined in the *Islander*. The May membership meeting is scheduled to vote on the two alternatives and will be asked to choose one.

Just before the presentation, Jim Drew recommended that a third alternative be considered and a decision on the two alternatives be delayed. He expressed concern over the high estimates of the costs of the proposed renovations and the effect such costs might have in raising dues past a level many members would find affordable. He maintained that raising the room levels would be the least expensive. Jeff Komarow said that this approach had been considered but that discussions with county officials indicated that there was little possibility that the county would agree to the variance this approach would require. The sense of the meeting was that any discussion of a third alternative should come at a later time. At this point the meeting proceeded to hear and discuss the formal presentation (described above) of the two alternative plans.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15.

-- Carl Linden, Acting Recording Secretary

April Orientation

Thanks to Joe and Tammy Belden, and cooperative weather, another well-run and effective Orientation was held for wait listers in April. As Tammy writes: “Members from seven families on the waiting list were there as well Club officers enlisted to speak and help during the orientation. It was a gorgeous Sunday morning and the walk around the Island —while various Club officers spoke about such topics as swimming safety, canoe use, Club history, the newsletter, etc., — was really pleasant. We ended the orientation with a potluck lunch at which we all got to know each other a little better and exchanged anecdotes about the Island.”



Club Officers orienting. Clockwise from top left: Tammy and Joe Belden, who organized it all, Jim Drew on canoeing, Tove Elfstrom on swimming safely, Captain Tryon Wells on much, and the President, Ann Marie Cunningham, pointing out some especially important matters.

Photos by Norman Metzger

Building Concepts for Decision at the May Meeting

Two concepts for remodeling the Caretaker's quarters were presented and discussed at the April 13th meeting. These concepts – see next page for the layouts – will be further discussed and **voted** on at the May 11th meeting at the Island. The chosen concept will be further refined in response to comments, and cost estimates for that design will be presented for discussion at either the June or July meetings, followed at subsequent meetings by a vote on the final design and on the estimated costs.

The two concepts are the same with respect to the existing Club kitchen becoming the Caretaker's Kitchen, and a new Club kitchen created at the northwest corner of the second floor (adjacent or combined with the existing Virginia side warm room). The two designs differ in their allocation of the remainder of the existing Women's' Locker Room. The 'Big Upstairs' Plan offers a large upstairs bedroom for the Caretaker; while the 'Great Club Room' Plan offers a larger Club Room and remodeled bedrooms for the Caretaker on the first floor.

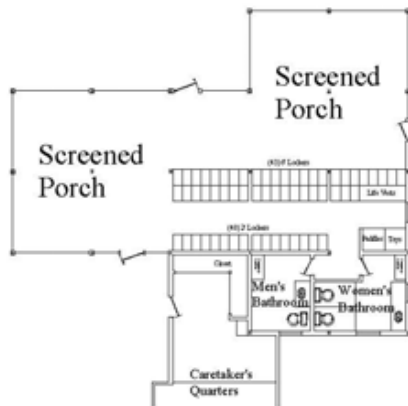
Chuck Pill and Ned Goddard,
Co-Chairs, Building Committee

“Bedroom Upstairs” Plan

UPSTAIRS

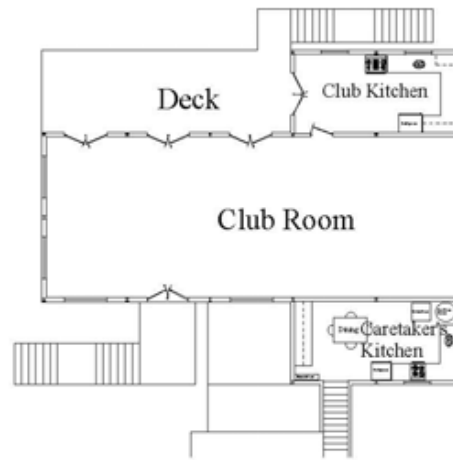


DOWNSTAIRS

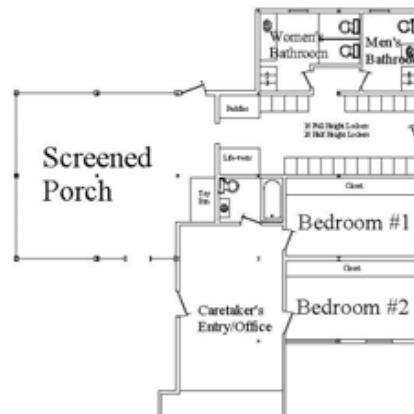


“Great Clubroom” Plan

UPSTAIRS



DOWNSTAIRS



From Holly Syrrakos, Archivist: 75 Years Ago At Sycamore Island

Selections from the May 1930 *Sycamore Islander*

The May meeting was called to order at 8:35 p.m., on the Island, with 12 in attendance.

The first order of business dealt with an immediate problem:

“In the absence of the Treasurer, Mr. E. Reese Thomson because of illness, the secretary read an informal Treasurer’s report which was accepted. The Secretary was instructed to handle disbursements for the club until the May [?] meeting be endorsing checks over to the parties to whom necessary amounts should be paid.

“The Captain of the Island reported that the water pump had been moved from the ladies’ room to the Men’s room and that it is in operation.”

In 1930, Sycamore Island ran on a stock ownership basis and they formed a committee “to investigate possibilities of canceling outstanding shares of the club stock.” There must have been some disagreement about how to proceed because the next statement reads, “The Secretary submitted a verbal report from Mr. Thomson, the former chairman of the committee as appointed at the March meeting, stating that he did not think it necessary to take any action with regard to outstanding shares other than to purchase any which might be offered to the club at the usual price.”

The financial report shows that the club paid \$46.17 to the IRS.

The final action has a familiar ring:

“Moved and passed that the Captain of the Island obtain estimates on repairing the ferry and metal boat and that the Executive committee be authorized to have such repairs made if the estimates meet with their approval.”

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

On another historical note, Peter Sefton a preservationist in Washington, DC, contacted me about a man we believe was a Club founder. From Sefton’s note:

“I’m writing about another Washington German-American’s home---611 K Street NW. You can see a picture at www.victoriansecrets.net/mountvernon/mve2.html. My research isn’t complete, but I think that this was the home of the same Matthew Ruppert who helped found the Club. He may have actually built the house, but I won’t know until I get to the Washingtonia Room and pull the permit. Mathew Ruppert kept a saloon at 1156 7th Street NW and yours [Sycamore Island’s] seems to have followed the same line of work. No one has applied to tear down Matthew Ruppert’s house at the moment. But the entire neighborhood around it is being redeveloped, and we’re trying to put together a proactive preservation effort. I think you’ll agree that it’s a great little house that’s good for another hundred years at least.”

View the house online, or drive by and take a look!

WILDFLOWER WALK

April 17, 2005

Text and Photos by Renee Dunham

The Sycamore Island flower walk went to Carderock this year. Islanders John Parrish and RG Steinman, members of the Maryland Native Plant Society, handed out a list of native flora, herbaceous and woody plants that included invasives in each category. We aced the flora list! If, in our imaginations, we had picked everything we identified, we could have hidden beneath the enormous bouquet. And, indeed, if we had eaten everything on the list that was edible, we would have had quite a tangy salad. Did you know that Spring Beauty leaves and roots are edible? Also, Ramps (intensely oniony), Spice Bush (mildly spicy), Garlic Mustard (garlicy/mustardy, of course), early Stinging Nettles (don't know), Hairy Sweet Cicely leaves (anisey), Ginger Root (right). I hope you are not going to go out and graze unless you know what you are doing. And I assume you will know to stay away from the poison Hemlock, which looks similar to the (also non-edible) Wild Chervil.

Among the woody plants were a few celebrities. John pointed out the largest Pawpaw (*Asimina Triloba*) tree in the region. Member Charlotte Brewer wrapped herself around it, ready-mouthed for the falling of autumn's ripe fruits (photo). We paid respects to a huge Box Elder Maple that had toppled from the river's edge into the water. RG called the Box Elders "healers of the land", as they are among the first to come back after forest damage (photo). John led us to what would have been the largest Chinquapin Oak (white oak family) in Montgomery County (photo), except that he wasn't able to find it again before deadline time on judging day. The Chinquapin Oak (*Quercus muhlenbergii*) likes rich soil. This one, surrounded by its babies, finds good nourishment for the whole family.

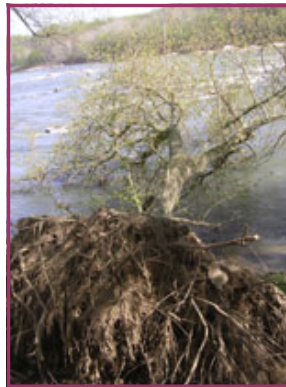
To qualify in the competition for biggest tree, that tree must have a single trunk at the height of 4-1/2 feet above the ground. It may branch above that line, but not below. The formula for measurement is the sum of: circumference in inches at 4-1/2 feet above ground (14'8", or 176 inches) height in feet (taken by an altimeter) – we guess it is about 100 feet tall, 25% of the average crownsread in feet - 26 feet.

Our Chinquapin Oak summed in around 300.

Thank you John and RG for the glorious afternoon you created for us.



Charlotte Brewer
and the Pawpaw



Box Elder



Chinquapin Oak



Squirrel Corn
Photo by Marcia
Loeb

POTOMAC RIVER CLEANUP DAY

Text and Photos by Renee Dunham



Joe's Sword, handy for those who leave trash at the Island.

The water level at Little Falls was 7.5 feet and rising. The Island “closed” sign was posted at the towpath stairs. I waited there for other Sycamore Island volunteers who might appear for the April 2 Potomac River Cleanup. As wait listers Vicki Judson and her son Tom arrived, a cyclist peddled by, heading upriver. He wore no helmet, but his chest was well protected by a full, white beard. The bundles on his bike rack were secured under a camouflaged tarp. “How far are you going?” I asked. “California,” he said. This is going to be an interesting day.

As the Island was inaccessible, we started collecting trash along the towpath. In a little while, we were joined by Joe Hage – and by rain. A young woman jogged by in shorts and midriff, as unperturbed by the shower as we were. Our burden was light until we got to the steep slope below the Lock 7 parking area where toss-over bottles and cans were abundant. A stroke of lightening and a roll of thunder alarmed us, but it did not recur. Perhaps it was a sign that Joe was about to discover a treasure in the underbrush - a narrow, steel sword in its sheath! Had some Civil War soldier abandoned it in flight, or left it behind, weak from typhoid? Relic or replica? Joe was delighted with his find. And we were delighted with Tom’s impromptu work of twisted wire, hubcap, and a green, plastic thing-a-ma-jig, quite suitable for the Hirshhorn sculpture garden. Then it poured. The feeder stream that flows into the canal across from the Island landing was gushing like Great Falls. We couldn’t get much wetter. Joe and I finished off the collection on the slopes below the canal overpass.

This was the 17th Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup, coordinated for the Potomac Conservancy by the Alice Ferguson Foundation, an educational organization for “teaching students their vital role as stewards of the earth’s natural resources.” The cleanup sites were distributed along the Bay, tributary streams, creeks, and in parklands where trash could be washed into waterways. Sites were located throughout the 14,670 square miles of drainage area in Washington DC, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. This is a different way for me to think about the Potomac River. There is a lot of water in that shed! The average flow is 7 billion gallons per day. (The largest flow measured at Washington DC in March 1936 was 275 billion gallons per day.) Thirty-six hundred volunteers helped in the 2004 cleanup. Over the past 17 years, 1022 tons of trash was removed , including 10,000 tires.



The waste tire issue is a huge issue. Waste tires never degrade. Only a small percentage is recycled. They can be made into mats, highway noise walls, pavement sealers, playground surfaces, soil amendments, brake pads, and area footing. Most are stockpiled, becoming a fire hazard and breeding grounds for mosquitoes that can spread encephalitis and West Nile Virus. Thirty-three states ban whole tires from landfills. Private property owners who have allowed others to dump tires on their property are awaiting the day when tires would be valuable for their petroleum content. (Information supplied by the Potomac Conservancy.)

Also in the tally of trash recovered from the Potomac were microwaves, dryers, refrigerators, baby strollers, car parts, suitcases, sneakers ...and one sword with sheath. See Joe smile!

No cars but car tires

John Krasny

John F. Krasny, who with his wife Mary was a member of Sycamore Island from 1987 to 2004, died of congestive heart failure April 8 at Asbury Methodist Village in Gaithersburg, where he lived. He was 90. John was born in Vienna, Austria, came to the United States in 1938, and served in the U.S Army as an intelligence officer for the 5th Armored Division, where his stints included interrogating German prisoners. He was awarded the Bronze Star. After the war, he built a career in textile technology, serving for many years until his retirement at the National Bureau of Standards, now the National Institute of Standards and Technology. He published over 80 technical papers and was awarded a medal by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The Washington Post in its April 17th obituary noted that John “used creative methods to gather intelligence—for instance, they would telephone an Axis armaments factory, impersonate a German officer and attempt to order certain weapons to ascertain whether production was underway. In his unpublished memoir, Mr. Krasny said that interrogators discovered in advance the German troop buildup for the Battle of the Bulge. The information, gleaned from prisoner interviews, was passed to Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, but he and his colleagues felt that their warnings were ignored. ‘For me, knowing that SHAEF had strong warnings but did not act upon them remains the most frustrating event in my life,’ Mr. Krasny wrote.”

Survivors, in addition to Mary, include two sons, Frederick A. Krasny of Houston and Edward W. Krasny of Barcelona; a daughter, Dr. Marianne Krasny of Ithaca, N.Y.; and four grandchildren.

Reminder: The Annual Downriver Race is Sunday, May 15

Registration for racers starts at 9:00 a.m. at Great Falls. The race starts at 10:45. If you cannot race, please join us on the Island about 11:00 a.m. to help at the finish line and/or help with lunch and awards. If you feel that you just cannot paddle, I need **LOTS OF VOLUNTEER HELPERS**, including people to help by paddling up from the Island to show paddlers the route. Get involved and meet new friends! Contact Star Mitchell (below).

Commemorating Our Deceased Paddling Buddies

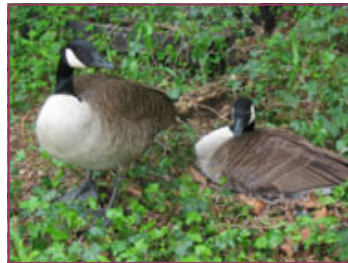
At the awards ceremony for the Race, we would like to remember and read out the names of our paddling buddies who have passed on to the great wide river up above. I do not know the names of all of these people. Please send me the name(s) of anyone who should be remembered at the ceremony. I am relying on you to help us remember all the many paddlers who are no longer with us. Please send the name of any paddler you know who has departed this earth in order that we may remember him/her at the ceremony. Thank you. Contact Star Mitchell at 301-530-3252 or kayakingvstar@aol.com.

— Star Mitchell, Race Chair

The April Workfest: Many Hard Workers and Two (Very) Wary Watchers



Photos by Matt Newman



Ruppert

*Created by
Johnna Robinson*

Ruppert loves sycamore trees,

Islanders count 'em.

In Touch With Joe...

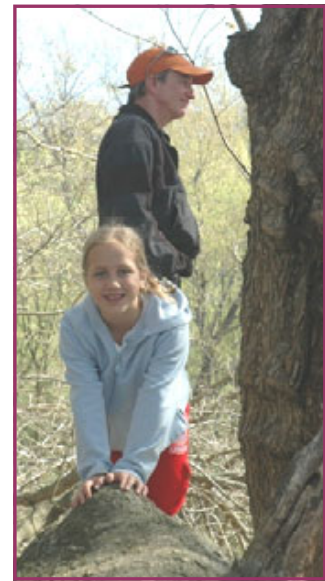
The "busy" season has officially started and there couldn't be a better time to visit the Island. The weather has been fantastic, and with the bluebells at their peak the Island is awash in soft hues of green and blue. The sun dances through the newly emerging canopy as the air is filled with bird song. Everywhere I look I see birds of all colors, shapes and sizes: Yellow-rumped warblers, red-necked grebes, cormorants and wood ducks by the dozen, and even a great white egret majestically feeding along the shore. The fish are becoming more active now too and it's exciting to see the calm surface of the river broken by the occasional splash of a hungry fish.

April was a big month for club events. We had the Orientation and flower walk on the 17th and the postponed Workfest on the 24th. I was so happy that the weather cooperated during the Workfest especially since it had to be re-scheduled. (The funny thing about that is that the river never got as high as predicted and we could have had the Workfest on the 10th after all. Oh well, you can't win them all.) The Workfest went very well and I was very impressed that all the old roof shingles (a new roof was put on the clubhouse on the 12th.) got bagged and almost half of the 120 bags we used made it into the truck and to the dump. There was also a painting crew, a clubhouse cleaning crew, a beaver wire crew, and a group of burly islanders moving heavy docks into the river. Another group gathered river trash (old tires, coolers, refrigerator door and plastic bottles that washed down in the last flood) and brought it over to the towpath to be picked up later. It was great to have so much good help since I felt like I spent my whole day driving the truck up and down the towpath. I'd like to thank the Maluskys for providing us workers with delicious nourishment all day — not only did they bring a big burger barbeque lunch but they also had breakfast covered with coffee, bagels, bacon and more. I think we all had a good time and one brave soul, Hillary Thompson, even went for a swim to be the first try the swim float this year. The water was about 60 degrees (brrrrr)!

I missed the flower walk and I'm anxious to hear how it went; but I did attend the Orientation and it was a pleasure to meet some new faces. I'm always surprised at how little some people know about the everyday workings of the Island and I'm hoping that the Orientation will inspire people to come down more than once or twice every five or ten years. Tammy and Joe brought a wonderful spread and that, combined with the potluck dishes, made for a lavish lunch with good conversation with interesting new members-to-be.

Besides the work that was done at the Workfest some other notable projects were completed this past month. One of the first things you'll notice if you come down here is that the ferry pier has been extended. All I did was mention to John Matthews the idea of extending the pier and literally the next day he shows up with the materials and plans we need to get it done. (Because of erosion and deposition the north bank of the Island has extended toward the mainland, making it necessary to dredge the channel by hand in order for the ferry to reach the old pier.) We also built a small auxiliary canoe dock for those times when the big dock is out of the river and we put a new deck on the canoe ramp. The Doolittles planted some sycamore saplings so if you see a stick with a green ribbon on it sticking out of the ground try not to step on it.

It will be sad to see the bluebells go (no more excuse for not cutting the lawn) and I'm trying to drink in these perfect days while they last. It's the Aprils and Mays that get me through the Februaries and Marches of Island life. Now is the time to enjoy your Island, while it's in its prime.



Joe upstaged by Lauren Phillips at the Orientation..
Photo by Norman Metzger

Saturday Relief Caretakers May—June

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|
| May 7, 2005 | 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. | | |
| | 3:00 p.m. - dark | Holly and Pierre Welch/Faith Earll | 202-541-0313 |
| May 14, 2005 | 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. | Sherry Pettie | 202-965-5366 |
| | 3:00 p.m. - dark | Morris Coburn | 301-536-6435 |
| May 21, 2005 | 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. | | |
| | 3:00 p.m. - dark | | |
| May 28, 2005 | 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. | Gordon Phillips | 301-320-0594 |
| | 3:00 p.m. - dark | | |
| June 4, 2005 | 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. | Larry Heilman | 301-657-3953 |
| | 3:00 p.m. - dark | | |
| June 11, 2005 | 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. | | |
| | 3:00 p.m. - dark | | |
| June 18, 2005 | 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. | | |
| | 3:00 p.m. - dark | | |
| June 25, 2005 | 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. | | |
| | 3:00 p.m. - dark | Rosemary Hart and Craig Iscoe | 202-244-5967 |
| | | | |

*** Caretaker Volunteers ***

To volunteer, contact Candy Means 301-320-5270 or candymeans@comcast.net.

Large Parties

| Date | Time | Who | What |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| May 15th | 10:30 am to noon | Charlotte Brewer | Wildflower walk with 25 to 30 people |
| May 21 st | 10 a.m. to dark. | Alan and Caroline Gelb | 35 persons at a graduation party |

A large party application form may be printed from the Club's web page at
<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/systems.htm>
 To request a form through the mail, call the Supervisor of Parties, John Noble
 e-mail: jnoble@shs.net, phone: 240- 747-4810, fax: 301-320-4216



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

FIRST CLASS MAIL

May 2005

- Building Plans—Decision Time
- Repairing the 1930 Ferry
- Box Elders and Squirrel Corn
- The Sycamore “Tire Store”



Toothwort

Photo by Marcia Loeb