



Make Waves For Ducklings

Photo by Joe Hage

# *The Sycamore Islander*

*July 2005*

*Volume 84 No. 7*

## President's Message



### No More Ferry Service?

It's becoming harder and harder to find folks who are willing to volunteer a few hours as relief caretaker, and more and more work for Candy Means to solicit help. It was reported in the last *Islander* that there were two Saturdays where no one was identified as the relief caretaker. Even if there is no one to relieve him, Joe does have the day off. This means that you might arrive at the Island and find the ferry tied up and locked near the canal. If you know the combination, you are welcome to take the ferry across; but you become the *de facto* caretaker, and cannot go out in a canoe or away from the sound of the bell unless you return the ferry to the canal side where others can use it.

It's bewildering that there aren't more volunteers, especially from those on the waiting list. It is a wonderfully relaxing way to spend some time. Over the next few months there will be quotes in the *Islander* from some of the people about their experience as caretaker. This one is from Gordon Phillips, an applicant on the waiting list, "Running the ferry is a great way for wait listers to use the island on a Saturday. I bring my two kids and they get a great kick out of helping to run the ferry and also exploring the island. They get a chance to use the island while they are young before our 'number' eventually comes up."

***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 [normanmetzger@verizon.net](mailto:normanmetzger@verizon.net). Telephone: 202/544-6027 or 202/445-5436 (cell). **Note to submitters of announcements, articles, or letters: The deadline for the August issue is receipt by the Editor by Wednesday, July 27<sup>th</sup>.**

Just to expand on what he said, it's actually an opportunity for applicants to use the Island twice -- the day they're serving as caretaker and another day of their choice. That's because applicants earn a pass whenever they volunteer -- whether as relief caretaker, during a Workfest, helping Joe ready the Island for a flood, or in any other Club-sanctioned activity. But, clearly, relief caretaking is the most fun and least work of any of the other activities.

At the last meeting, the major discussion was how to finance the clubhouse construction. There were three main options:

The first was a one-time fee to cover the costs. One important consideration to any finance plan is how each class of membership, including applicants, are expected to contribute to the financing. For example, if there is a one-time fee charged to all regular members, should senior members and applicants who get a guest card pay half of that fee since their dues are half the regular dues? Or, should the current members bear the full costs, and the applicants pay nothing, even though at some future time they will receive full benefit from the expenditure?

The second option was to establish a fund to which members would contribute. New members would pay the fee when they join the Club. Their payments would be used to repay members who leave. Thus, all who benefit from the improved facilities would pay over time.

The third option being investigated is to apply for a mortgage. As the success of that option is beyond our control, we're continuing to consider the other options.

Since this is a very important issue that affects applicants as much as members, I would like to hear from applicants on this. Applicants cannot vote on official Club business, but they can participate in meetings. At this coming Club meeting, I would like to hear from applicants what they would consider to be equitable ways of sharing costs between current members and future members. Any suggestions would be taken as recommendations to the Building Committee. There will be no official vote on what option to pursue at this time. See you at the meeting on Wednesday, July 13, at 8:00 on the Island.

— Ann Marie Cunningham

## Winter Caretaking

*Sky dull,  
Air sharp,  
A few geese,  
Fewer visitors,  
Ice in the river,  
Still on the island,  
Earth asleep,  
Senses awake*

-- Wayne Limberg

## Minutes of the June 8, 2005 Membership Meeting

The meeting was held on the Island.

**Present:** Ann Marie Cunningham, Norman Metzger, John Matthews, David Winer, Jane Winer, Faith Earll, Gerry Barton, Harvey Resnik, Alan Gelb, Jim Drew, Ned Goddard, and Peter Winkler. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 8:10 p.m. by President Ann Marie Cunningham.

**Communications:** Ann Marie reported that Club member Jack Sanders had advised her that the authorities were considering discontinuing the use of the Little Falls gauge measuring the Potomac River water level. Tryon wrote to the USGS and heard back from them: funding for the gauge has been approved. Ann Marie added, however, that we have inquired of the USGS about the status of other gauges, and that inquiry has not been answered.

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

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Alan Gelb reported that our finances are on an even keel. A question was asked concerning when an audit would be conducted. Ann Marie said that Bill Eichbaum, the Finance Chairman, is responsible for an audit, and she will contact him.

**Islander Report:** *Islander* Editor Norm Metzger reported that all is well with *The Islander*.

**Canoeing Report:** Canoeing supervisor Jim Drew reported that, for the last 3 years, the number of personal canoes on the island and the number of racks for them has been about equal; currently, we have one unused rack. Jim is discussing with others plans for an additional ground rack for club canoes.

**Caretaker's Report:** Ann Marie reported that there were several days recently when there was no one signed up for relief caretaking. What to do? Ann Marie or Candy Means will write up something for *The Islander* to encourage more volunteering.

**Old Business:** Harvey Resnik raised the issue of the Club's purchasing a defibrillator for the Island. He has researched the issue and found two companies that would sell one to us. One of those companies would offer on-site training to six individuals. The prices were between \$2,042 and \$2,195, with varying extras and warranties. We discussed whether we would be competent to use a defibrillator, and the question of liability. We also discussed whether we could prevail on a generous donor to purchase a defibrillator for us. In the end, it was agreed that Ned Goddard would write up the issue for the next issue of *The Islander* [see p. 5] and that the purchase would be discussed and put to a vote at the July meeting. We then discussed the need to remind the Park Service and the Glen Echo Fire Department of

where we are, in the event of an emergency. Joe Hage and Ned Goddard will undertake discussions with them.

**Building Committee:** Ned Goddard advised us that the June *Islander* contains an up-to-date report of the Committee's efforts. "Plan B" has been taken to an architect, Pat Barry, who is a Club member. Pat and the Committee have discussed some modifications to the design that would facilitate a general contractor coming up with a modular bid. John Matthews has also assisted, at no cost to the Club, in "spec-ing out" the construction in more detail; for example, determining the order in which the work will be performed. The hope is that we can solicit and receive some bids within the next 30 days. In the meantime, the finance subcommittee of the Building Committee has discussed a number of ideas for raising the necessary funds, including (1) assessing all members, and (2) instituting a "facilities fund," comparable to community swimming pools, that members would pay into and be paid back from upon leaving the Club. The subcommittee has also discussed various fundraising ideas, such as holding a dance or an auction, selling naming rights, and soliciting loans from members or commercially. Alan Gelb suggested that there were many ways we could raise funds; for example, by offering a "lifetime membership." The subcommittee understands the need to pursue its mandate without delay.

We then discussed the fairness and the practicalities of an assessment and a facilities fund. The sense of the meeting was that it would not be fair for the entire cost of construction to be borne by the current membership, but that we also owe an obligation of fairness to those on the waiting list and other future members. And, we do not want to dramatically raise the cost of membership. It was suggested that we could raise some of the money by assessment, and some of it through borrowing. The subcommittee is looking into the possibility of a commercial loan. Ann Marie raised the idea, when we have the options defined and narrowed down, of holding a special meeting, on a Sunday afternoon, to allow as many people as possible to attend and vote. The sense of the meeting was that it was a good idea.

**Final notices:** The Club's mid-summer sleepover will take place on the Island on June 25-26. The next meeting will take place July 13, on the Island.

— Peter Winkler, Recording Secretary

The Building Committee co-chairs, Ned Goddard and Chuck Pill, report that "The Building Committee is reviewing the final version of the bid document, the design and specifications for the prospective bidders. It is envisioned that the materials will be sent out for bid in the next month, and by the September meeting we will present a budget and construction plan of action. The budget would then be voted on at the October meeting."

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

### Selections from the July 1930 *Sycamore Islander*

If you've been an avid reader of this column, you might have noticed that the last six entries have been drawn from the Minutes of the Club. In July 1930, the *Islander* reappears.

“Come to the Island Saturday Evening for the Supper; the Movies; and Maybe the Dancing!”

The article announces the buffet supper on July 12<sup>th</sup> and then goes on...

“Matters have gone from bad to horrible on this question of members advising the supper committee whether they're going to attend. One party not so long [ago] was attended by forty-six people after four had said they were coming. Fortunately enough, the chairman had sense enough and luck enough to hit things somewhere near right...”

Then it's back to the business of boats.

“Our new ferry...[is] a lighter and faster boat than the old one but still won't carry you up the hill.”

Next, a very nice take on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

“Some of the biggest crowds we've had at Sycamore in some years were at the Island last Friday, (the 4<sup>th</sup>), Saturday and Sunday and most of them seemed to be impressed with the fact that Sycamore is hard to beat as a place to bring the family for a swim, lunch and an all-round good time, all without a long drive. You can reach Sycamore in half an hour in your car and yet be as far from the city as Chesapeake Bay.”

Doesn't seem like travel time has changed much.

Now the story of the *Islander's* disappearance.

“Wave of Prosperity Revives *Sycamore Islander*”

“Thousands of people have wondered what has happened to the *Sycamore Islander* since it last appeared in February and a couple of them have called us up to ask about it. When the Club made the last payment on the new clubhouse, money was rather scarce... now that our membership has increased just a little and money will be a little more plentiful....”

Those who fell overboard—were they canoeing or swimming?

“Bus Whipple, Rodman, Dick and Kalil Ackad and Ed Wilcox turned over in fast water. The movies to be shown partially record their initiation into that honorable organization known as the Sinker's Club. Jack Stoddard and Ruth Gessford also joined the Sinkers by turning over just below Great Falls with Bus Whipple who was apparently afraid that his initiation had not been a success so [he] turned over again.

And a report on fishing conditions...

“Some months ago the government, having heard of the difficulties which our Sycamore fisherman have had in catching fish, dumped some thousands of bass in the river around here. To date, only one of these fish has been pulled out—Mr. Whipple did that—and it looks like the government will have to put fish in buckets right on the Island if matters are to be really improved.”

## Proposal for Emergency Defibrillator for Sycamore Island/911 Calls

Member Harvey Resnik suggested at a recent meeting that the Island purchase a defibrillator and, with the advice of the Director of Purchasing at Suburban Hospital, has come up with two options, listed below, for the membership to consider. Both maintain the latest state-of-the-art defibrillator, battery backup, paddles, case, and equipment warrantee. We will request a statement that neither equipment option is a manufactured product of either Guidant Corp. or Medtronic, which have been recently cited in the *Washington Post*. The key difference between the two options reflects onsite defibrillation training of six individuals versus a training video:

### Option One Chesapeake Training Corporation

Zoll Medical Products Defibrillator  
Standard First Aid Kit  
Onsite Training for Six individuals in CPR and Defib  
training  
(additional training for minimal extra cost)  
Extra Set of Paddles valued at \$45.95  
**Cost: \$2,195**

### Option Two X-Ray Vision of Virginia

PowerHeart Products Defibrillator AFD-G3  
Standard First Aid Kit  
Defibrillator device operation and training video  
**Cost: \$2,042**

The cost of purchasing a defibrillator is not a budgeted item, and at last meeting three options were discussed: Two are donations, either in the form of a member(s) funding the purchase or arranging to have a defibrillator donated to the Island (or other lower cost option). Should this not occur, the motion would be formally put before the membership to debate and vote on the purchase of the defibrillator.

Also at the meeting, Ned Goddard reported that a 911 emergency call made from the Island's phone would not properly identify the correct location of the Island to responding emergency personnel. It was found that the Glen Echo Fire Department would be sent to the postal address of the Island on MacArthur Boulevard. Ned is following up with Joe Hage to provide a more accurate geographic location of the Island to Verizon's personnel, Glen Echo Fire Department, and the National Park Service. This would include map and directions, to be posted by the Island's main phone, and at the emergency services location previously mentioned.

-- Ned Goddard

## Minutes of the February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2005 Meeting

[The Editor is a shamefully late in publishing these minutes but at least got the year right.]

The regular monthly membership meeting was held on February 9<sup>th</sup> at Carl Linden's house in Brookmont. Before the meeting was called to order those in attendance were treated to a slide show by Roy Sewall who is preparing a picture book of the Potomac from Great Falls to Washington. A number of familiar yet striking scenes were shown. [The book, *Our Potomac* by Roy Sewall, is out and will be reviewed in the August *Islander*.]

President Ann Marie Cunningham called the meeting to order at 8:45. Last month's minutes were approved. Lisa Kliefoth reported that five applicants for membership have met the Club's requirements. The meeting unanimously approved the five new members. [March *Islander* has details.] Orientation is scheduled to be held April 17<sup>th</sup>. Tryon Wells reported that a good price has been obtained for shingling the clubhouse roof. John Matthews has a roofer willing to do the roof for \$1400. At that low price, however, the club will have to do the clean up. There will be a 30-year warranty on the roofing and the shingles' color will meld with the clubhouse green. The Workfest is scheduled for April 10<sup>th</sup> with April 24th the rain date. Penny Doolittle reported that chicken wire has been put around trees to hold off the beavers, but there is little evidence of damage to Island's larger trees. Any new trees planted will be of a flood resistant variety. Ann Marie reported that Jack Sanders has resigned as the Building Committee chair. Finding a new chair was discussed but those present agreed that the matter could be dealt with at next month's meeting.

Attending the meeting were Tammy Belden, Charlotte Brewer, Brad Coolidge, Ann Marie Cunningham, Penny and Dick Doolittle, Jim Drew, Joe Hage, Laurence Heilman, Sandi and Jeff Komarow, Carl Linden, Marcia and George Loeb, Norman Metzger, Star Mitchell, Johnna Robinson, Sally Strain, Dick Walker, Tryon Wells, and Dave and Jane Winer. The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 and the host served refreshments.

-- Carl Linden, Acting Recording Secretary



## In Touch With Joe...

This past June was probably the busiest month I've had on the Island so far. It makes sense that June would be busy but I guess in past years the bad weather and river levels kept people away. This June, of course, was different. All of the large-party events were able to take place and no one had to be turned away because of high water. We had girl scouts getting badges; we had graduates celebrating the end of school, and we had the Summer Solstice Sleepover, (and this year we had it in June and the weather was perfect unlike last year when it was held in July and the humidity was dreadful). We even had two luaus here in case you were wondering about the Aloha sign above the ferry landing or the monkey in the clubhouse.

The longest day of the year was followed by a full moon and it was really quite awesome when it rose golden orange over the river matching the color of the day lilies that now speckle the Island. There are many other summer wild flowers coming out and some aquatic plants as well. There is one arrow arum just downstream from the Captain's Float and there is a grassy plant growing around all the rocks in the river that has the most beautiful and delicate orchid-like white flower outlined in purple. What a treat it is to swim out to the rocks in the middle of the river and find a bouquet of these tiny flowers. The baby geese are grown now; the little wood ducks are almost as big as their parents, and there seem to be many more grackles and blackbirds on the Island than in past years. One day we saw a deer jump off the Captain's Float. Unfortunately, the ground hogs are still here fattening themselves up for their long hibernation under the clubhouse.

Besides cutting the grass and pulling up the kudzu and cleaning up before and after parties, I've been doing some painting. I'm finally getting around to painting over the outdated blue trim in my living room. I'm painting the walls a warm cream color and the trim I'm painting to look like finished wood to match my furniture.

I won't be here July 8, 9, or 10, so my friend and climbing partner Duncan and his family will be watching the Island for me.



Photos by Joe Hage. Can anyone identify the moth?

### What's Up, Doc?

**The Editor thought that a piece from Doc Taliaferro, Joe's predecessor as Island Caretaker, might be of interest to readers. He asked Doc. Didn't get an article (yet) and instead got this note:**

"I was involved in a project to help restore the Buddhist tradition to Mongolia. I have just returned from three weeks and our monk there has been keeping a blog; so, should anyone be so terminally bored that they might wish to know what their old Caretaker is up to they can find out by going to: [http://danzanravjaa.typepad.com/my\\_weblog/](http://danzanravjaa.typepad.com/my_weblog/)." You'll need to go to the May 2005 posts beginning about May 20th and earlier.

## The Baby on the Pool Table and Other Stories

By Peggy Thomson

What a surprise! Quite out of the blue, I've had a call from a Margery Glass in North Carolina to report she was sending me a batch of early 1920s photos that she thought Sycamore might like to have. They came. And she's right. The pictures are a delightful bit of Island history—15 or so of them—black and white. Right away I singled out four of them—not the best by any means but ones I thought needed added captioning. The rest I put away in a “safe” place (more of that later).

I phoned Margery Glass (a fellow octogenarian). Clearly she enjoyed the quizzing, and she happily chatted out her memories of good times at Sycamore as the child of members Ruth and Rodger Gessford. She talked about tennis on the Island's clay court (was it still in use?), about tennis matches, Halloween parties with everyone in costumes, and jousting matches (even I, a recent member from the '60s, remember those) with jousters standing in two canoes and using long poles to topple each other into the water. The clubhouse then had a sleeping porch with Army cots and curtains between the men's and women's sections. Once, as a baby, she even got to spend the night on the pool table.

The clubhouse was all white, she remembers, with tent campsites to the rear and wonderful wildflowers all about in the grass. “We heard katydids, and I always listened to hear katydidn'ts.” The clubhouse kitchen, she adds, had a wood stove, used by all. It had long tables with benches on the Virginia-side screened porch. It had a piano and a pool table.

As for the campsites, they were raised platforms with canvas tents. “Our family's,” she recalls, “had a table and a stove.” And nearby friends were Carl and Mary Stodder, Nell and Doc Custis and their young.

As for the Caretaker, he seems to have fascinated young Margery with his knife sharpener that he operated by a foot pedal. It was also from him she learned that the thunder she'd hear in a storm came from gnomes who were knocking down pins as they bowled. Now we know.

The Sycamore store at the top of the hill she remembers as being run by “Boots” and Mary Jane Johnston. “You could buy salmon there,” she told me. What really amazed me in her telling was how much time her family spent on the Island. “Mother and daddy,” she recalls, “had an apartment on Connecticut Avenue, and through my first four years, mother and I stayed for long periods of time—days and nights—at the Island, and daddy would ride out from work on the Glen Echo street-car.”

Also remembered: a nearby island called Snake. I do see Snake on a map, but it's down almost to Little Falls. And when she asks if that might be where her family paddled once for an overnight, I think not. Perhaps it was Ruppert's she's thinking of. She adds that her parents frequently paddled her through rapids, and she adds—news to me—that in those times there were no life jackets sized for small kids.

And so, and so, I come to the sad and deeply embarrassing part of my report. I can't find the main batch of photos (including the liveliest and the best). I remember my concern for a “safe” place for stashing them away. Yes, were they shelved with Sycamore papers? Carefully filed? Slid between books to keep them flat? Or boxed with other favorite photos? I'm determined to find them. Over

the many weeks I've searched and searched. I know these pictures are, sure, safe—but but but...It can only be distressing to me—on behalf of the generous donor, on behalf of the Sycamore members to whom they would (they WILL) be of great interest.

P.S. Let me add that Margery Glass is touched to know that a Hage daughter attends the Thomas Pyle school as Pyle was the principal of BCC when Margery was a 1941 graduate. Also, in closing words to me she admits to being a bit sad to think that the clubhouse with current rebuilding plans may become less rustic than in her happy memories. "I was born in 1923 and the Club disappeared in the 1936 flood. We watched from the bridge over the canal. I've never forgotten the power of water."



Snowy view of the porch across the front upstairs



The "canoe house and runway" with canoe racks on both sides. "On the right side of the sleeping porch, the ladies' side, that's where I listened for the katydids."



Ice skating on the canal—Margery's parents in the center, Ruth and Rodger Gessford (newsletter editor), and, right, Kalil Ackad, who paddled a kayak, the first young Margery had ever seen. [Note that Kalil and Ruth also show up in the July 1930 *Islander*.



This would seem to be today's route of the ferry, remembered by her as "the float"—and seen across the way, she refers to Lovers Lane on the Virginia side

N.B. For high-resolution images of these photos, send a note to the Editor, [normanmetzger@verizon.net](mailto:normanmetzger@verizon.net). Better have broadband!



## Saturday Relief Caretakers July-August

July 2, 2005	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Lyle Blanchard	202-364-9579
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Gordon Phillips	301-320-0594
July 9, 2005	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.		
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Norman Metzger	202-445-5436
July 16, 2005	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.		
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Carole Trippe and Kit Bigler	301-469-1515
July 23, 2005	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Mark Brenneman & Ann Kip	301-587-4919
	3:00 p.m. - dark		
July 30, 2005	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.		
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Jody and Bobby Benjamin	301-652-0834
August 6, 2005	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.		
	3:00 p.m. - dark		
August 13, 2005	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.		
	3:00 p.m. - dark		
August 20, 2005	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.		
	3:00 p.m. - dark		
August 27, 2005	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.		
	3:00 p.m. - dark		

### \*\*\* Caretaker Volunteers \*\*\*

To volunteer, contact Candy Means 301-320-5270 or [candymeans@comcast.net](mailto:candymeans@comcast.net).

### Large Parties

No Large Parties reported for July.

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](mailto:jnoble@shs.net), phone: 240- 747-4810, fax: 301-320-4216



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## *The Sycamore Islander*

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

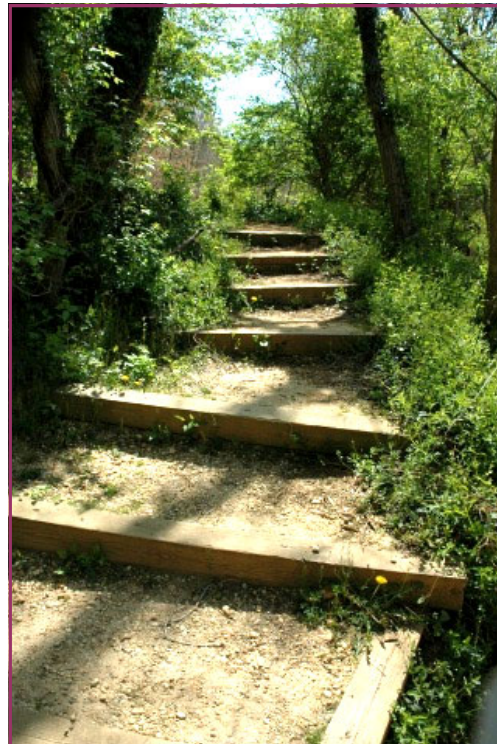
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### **Upcoming Sycamore Events**

July Meeting, Wednesday, July 13, 8 p.m.  
At the Island.

August Meeting, Wednesday, August 10,  
8 p.m. At the Island.

N.B. Monthly meetings are always the second Wednesday of the month. Members and applicants welcome.



Stairway to Paradise Photo by Norman Metzger