



Trophies

Photo by Whitney Pinger

The Sycamore Islander

September 2005

Volume 84 No. 9

President's Message

I've been away most weekends this summer. This has been a lot of fun for me; but the downside is that I haven't had much time to get to the Island to enjoy a peaceful respite. The last time I was supposed to be there was one of the days when it got to be close to 100° so we decided upon an alternate activity. I've mostly been in touch with the Island through our informal conversations at our meetings and email.

One email thread lately has centered around that fact that some activities, which have been enjoyed by many members and applicants over the last several years, don't necessarily occur on a regular basis. That's one of the beauties and drawbacks of having volunteers organize events. The beauty is that some activities get started because a member has a passion for something, and decides to share it with the rest of the Club. The drawback is that when volunteers who have led such successful events as the regatta are no longer able to lead the event, it dies. One solution to this problem is to have an "handover" meeting in January, where the outgoing officers will meet with the incoming president and officers to discuss the activities that occurred in the past year, with recommendations for the coming year.

George and Marcia Loeb were the long-time supervisors of entertainment when I first volunteered to do anything more than cleanup after the January 1996 flood. That was the revival of the regatta after a lull of many years. George Malusky, with Shelley, during the time the Loeb's were supervising entertainment, turned his passion for fishing into an event that has become a new tradition -- the fishing derby. Another recent tradition is the Island's participation in the Potomac River Watershed cleanup. This was started initially by Jennifer Esch, the teenaged daughter of wait-lister Vicki Judson. After a few years, Jennifer passed the responsibility to Renee Dunham.

The point to all of this is that there is no one person who is responsible for all the activities that occur on the Island. It takes many people to make the Island into the place that we all love, with the myriad of activities that we all care about. And, when there are interested people, it takes only small amounts of time and energy from each to make it all happen. At this handover meeting we will have in January, we will discuss the accomplishments and events of the previous year, and the wish list of activities for the coming year. Hopefully, this will lead to an even better year .

I hope to see many of you at the next Island meeting on September 14th, at 8:00 p.m. on the Island.

— Ann Marie Cunningham

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. Telephone: 202/544-6027 or 202/445-5436 (cell). **Note to submitters of announcements, articles, or letters: The deadline for the October issue is receipt by the Editor by Tuesday, September 27th.**

Minutes of the August 10, 2005 Meeting

We were unable to muster a quorum on this hot and occasionally rainy day. Those who did brave the elements were President Ann Marie Cunningham, Norm Metzger, Gerry Barton, Bill Eichbaum, Jim Drew, Jeff Komarow, Peter Winkler, Vicki Judson (waitlister, who also provided cookies), and vacation caretaker Dominique Maggio. While waiting for the quorum that never materialized, Bill Eichbaum entertained us with an account of his recent trip to the Galapagos Islands.

Jim Drew proposed that we consider having a cookout in the evening before July and August meetings. It could be a nice event and perhaps also increase attendance at those meetings. Alternatively, someone else suggested that we consider amending the Club rules to eliminate the August meeting.

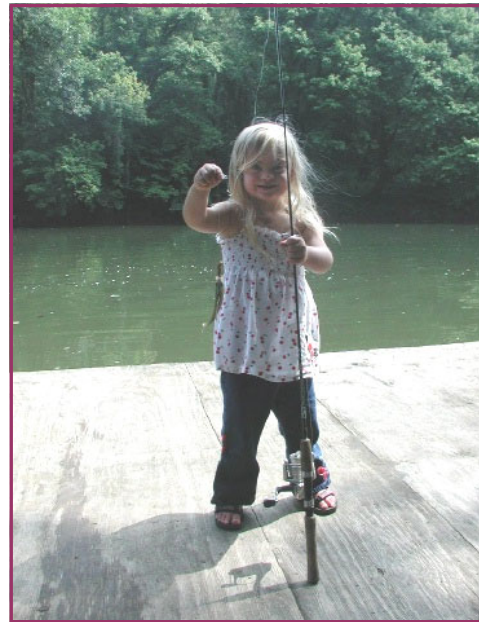
A question was raised concerning when the waiting list would be reopened, and to whom (children of members first?). Vice President (and former membership secretary) Jeff Komarow observed that it will be at least 3 to 4 years before everyone currently on the list will have less than a 10-year wait.

There will be no Club regatta this year. There will be one in 2006, run by Sherrie Pettie and Vicki Judson. In response to a question about the status of the clubhouse renovations, Ann Marie Cunningham stated that the Building Committee was at the point of hiring an architect to finalize our drawings. The drawings will then be used to solicit bids.

A question was asked about the Club's position concerning the effort of the new owners of the Sycamore Store to obtain zoning approval for their business. The sense of the meeting was that the Club is supportive of the effort; but there was no formal vote and we will not send a letter in support at this time, unless a letter sent later would be ineffective. Ann Marie said she would look into the matter.

Finally, it was reported that we have been doing a little better of late getting members and waitlisters to volunteer for substitute caretaking. See you in September!

— Peter Winkler, Recording Secretary



Lessons and Rewards of the Fishing Derby

Photos by David Winer (left) and Whitney Pinger

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

Selections from the September 1930 Sycamore Islander

The big news and the big story in September was the Labor Day Regatta. It was Sycamore's "second venture in interclub events" and the Editor states that the Club improved its standing in the racing world.

"Monday's regatta was a surprisingly successful event even though Washington Canoe Club walked off with the cup and most of the honors. ...From the Sycamore standpoint, the regatta proved that we have a real and alive club spirit here at Sycamore and the more of that we can develop the better off we'll be."

In the first race the Club's entry was blown off course and was disqualified. Then things picked up with a second in the Senior Tandems and a second and fourth in the "Club Fours." [This races sounds like four people paddling in one canoe. We should remember that the canoes of 1930 were larger and heavier than the canoes of 2005.]

With obvious pride, the Editor writes,

"In the Mixed Tandem, Susanne Bradley and Kalil Ackad absolutely walked away from all contenders and that made the goose hang high for Sycamore. Loehler and Cole took second in the Tilt, Loehler doing some really clever work with the pole."

The weather accounted for another story entitled, "The Big Drought."

"The Potomac River, which as many of our readers may dimly recall, is all around Sycamore Island, is getting lower and lower and newspapers reports of the Weather Bureau's view say that it will get even lower in September. So many rocks are out of water—that the regatta course had to be laid out from downriver and with the finish line halfway up Sycamore and even in this deeper part of the river there were half a dozen groups of rocks so close to the surface that they had to be decorated with flags and buoys. Two Sundays ago a number of us went to Great Falls and crossed the river there on the rocks. We took some movies to compare with Harold's Great Falls flood movies."

And a story of a rescue...

"Mr. Partridge Effects Rescue of Two Ladies"

"A few Sundays ago Mr. Partridge invited two young ladies to go canoeing with him and one of the young ladies, with a child in her arms, rushed down the canoe runway with such speed that she dashed right down into the river and her babe floated off. Mr. Partridge leaped in and saved both the lady and child, getting his shoes and socks all wet.

"The hasty lady was our young daughter and the babe was her stuffed doll."

"Speaking of casualties, little Alice Whitman fell out of a hammock some time ago, but is now restored to health. When asked how she came to fall out, she pulled that old gag that she 'didn't come to fall out, the rope broke.'"

And, thus, another summer on Sycamore came to a close.

Perseverando, Carl Linden and the Monocacy Aqueduct.

"Dickerson, Md. -- Carl Linden's big Oldsmobile winds down Mouth of Monocacy Road for several minutes before the parking lot appears, empty except for one other car." So begins a 1996 article by Lawrence Biemiller in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Describing Carl as "an amiable Kremlinologist, political-science professor at George Washington University, and a 35-year member and two-time president of the C&O Canal Association," the *Chronicle* reports on Carl's efforts with others to restore the Monocacy Aqueduct, described by Carl as "the largest on the canal, 538 feet from wing to wing." The aqueduct was completed in 1833, worked until 1924, and by 1996 was, as the *Chronicle* reported, "awkwardly girdled with steel cables and beams that were part of a 'temporary' scheme to stabilize it."



Almost ten years later, on May 21, 2005, the restoration of the Monocacy Aqueduct was justly celebrated by some 300 participants who were treated to, among other things, *America The Beautiful*, sung by children from the Monocacy Elementary School and a fine talk by Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-Md) They were also treated to some spirited remarks by Carl, who, as Sycamoreans surely know, was Club president before Ann Marie. Carl took note that

Thanks to Troop 1018 for posting picture on http://www.troop1018.org/Past_Activities/Events2004/10_C&O_Hike/0410_C&O_hike.htm

it took ten years of perseverance on the part of the National Park Service, the Association, and many others, to prevent the loss of the severely deteriorating aqueduct and to return it to prime condition. Ben Wright [who supervised the Aqueduct's construction] would be proud of the fine engineers and craftsmen that have brought the structure's beauty of line and proportion back into view. They removed the stabilizing but obscuring "harness" fastened upon it after the ravages of the Hurricane Agnes flood of 1972, and gave it reinforced strength to face the forces of nature. It will last for a long time to come, if cared for and not again subjected to neglect. This happy outcome is the result of the enduring partnership of dedicated supporters of our historical canal park, both professional and volunteer. It is not inappropriate, then, to see the rededication of the Monocacy Aqueduct as a further chapter in the history of perseverance in America—now a case of perseverance in the preservation of our nation's historical treasures.

Perseverando? Carl used that word and of course explained it:

Perseverando may be rendered as "By Persevering" and bears the sense that by means of perseverance noble work is done. Perseverando appears at the base of the seal [of the Canal Company]. Above the motto is a sketch of a portal of the Paw Paw Tunnel. Could there be a better evocation of the perseverance that the canal project demanded of those who toiled to build it?

Carl also evoked *Esto Perpetua*, which

means, roughly, that the task of maintaining the canal is continuing and perpetual. And so it is. The eleven aqueducts are links in a chain of connections. They need attention. The beautiful Catoctin Aqueduct was brought down by a flash flood in 1973, and it cries out for rebuilding. The continuity of the towpath is also essential in sustaining the integrity of the 185-mile-long park that begins at our nation's capital. The Widewater break in the towpath is now under repair, but the two-mile-long break along the Big Slackwater above Dam #4 is in dire need of fixing. The detour on county roads around the break is hazardous and a threat to public safety.

N.B. The *Islander* Editor thanks Ned Preston, the Editor of *Along the Towpath*, the splendid newsletter of the C& O Canal Association, for his help in preparing this article.

N.B. 2 Re being an "amiable Kremlinologist", Carl's many books include THE book on the Soviet Politburo, *The Soviet Party-State : The Politics of Ideocratic Despotism*, 1983.

Bucks for the Gorge

The Maryland Congressional Delegation just got \$500,000 for, according to *The Northwest Current*, “environmental restoration work in the Potomac Gorge, the 15-mile stretch through which the Potomac River flows from Theodore Roosevelt Island to the Great Falls rapids.” [Kayakers and canoeists will be pleased to learn that the Potomac now flows upstream. Assumedly, it still flows downstream. But the Editor digresses.]

The Nature Conservancy, in its statement, commented that

The funds will be used to mitigate Federal roads-related environmental degradation in the Potomac Gorge by mapping and controlling invasive species that are spread by roads, and to develop improved floodplain maps that will help protect Federal and county parkland, roads, and other infrastructure.

The Potomac Gorge, the fifteen-mile river corridor from Great Falls to Theodore Roosevelt Island, is considered one of the most biologically significant natural areas in the eastern United States. This 10,000-acre area of the Potomac River supports more than 200 rare species and natural communities, and is one of the most ecologically diverse areas in Maryland, Virginia and the region.

“While much of the Potomac Gorge is in public parkland, its exceptional natural areas are seriously threatened by the many damaging effects of roads, from stormwater runoff to habitat fragmentation to the spread of invasive species,” said Nathaniel Williams, state director and executive vice president of The Nature Conservancy in Maryland/DC. “This appropriation will help provide support needed to restore degraded areas along the Gorge. It will benefit one of our nation’s highest priority conservation areas, and help towards protecting water quality in the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay. We commend Senators Paul Sarbanes and Barbara Mikulski for including this project in the transportation bill.”

“The environmental health of the Potomac Gorge is important to the well-being of the entire Washington Metropolitan Area,” said Sen. Paul Sarbanes. “This funding provides some of the needed resources for restoration efforts within the Gorge and helps to maintain the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay.”

“The Potomac Gorge is our heritage – it’s part of who we are as Marylanders,” said Senator Barbara A. Mikulski. “That’s why I am proud to work in the Senate with my colleague, Senator Sarbanes, to put money in the federal checkbook that builds our communities and protects our environment. We want future generations to be able to enjoy the natural beauty Maryland has to offer.”

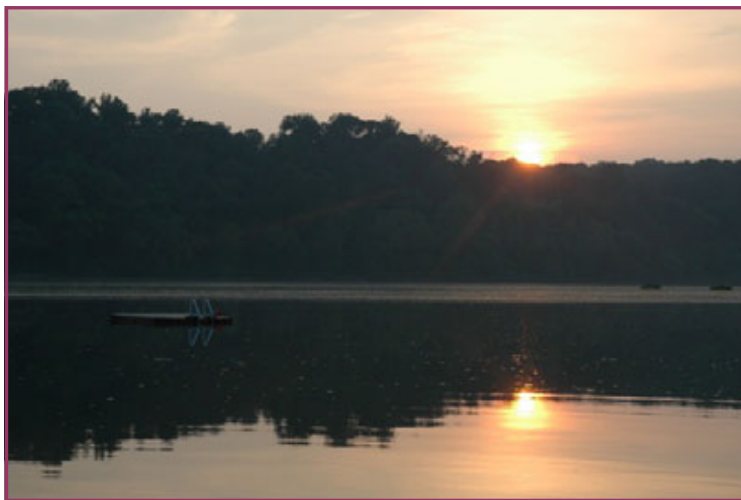


Photo by Norman Metzger

Congress approved the Transportation bill and signature by the President is expected in August [Done]. This appropriation provides an excellent opportunity for coordination between the Maryland State Highway Administration and the National Park Service for environmental restoration in the Potomac Gorge.

N.B. The Editor thanks Trip Reid for telling him about this welcome event.

In Touch With Joe...

I can't believe that it's been three years since I loaded all my worldly possessions onto the ferry and started my new life on Sycamore Island. And as I watch the news of the flooding and misery caused by Hurricane Katrina I can't help but feel very fortunate that those three years have been unmarred by any major flooding... but, then, it's only a matter of time.

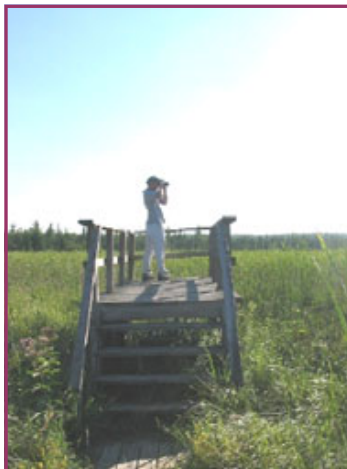
The last two weeks of August were really great down here, the humidity subsided and the river was nice and clear for swimming. The fishing was good too and we had an impressive turnout for the annual fishing derby with many anglers taking advantage of the perfect conditions; even I caught a bass. It was fun to see all the people and activity on the Island and my girls seemed to be happy to be back on the Island, too, even if it did mean that school was starting again (Kelsey starts high school this year!). I've been doing more paddling as well and I've been going through the canoe shed and sampling some of the boats that are there collecting dust. The sunsets seem to be better this time of year too and it's a real Sycamore moment to swim out to the swim float when the sky and the river are bright pink and orange.

The first two weeks of August I was on vacation. I spent the two weeks at a cabin on a lake near a watery playground known as Traverse City, Michigan. I really liked it there and I did a lot of paddling. I kayaked in some of the dozens of lakes that dot the landscape, all with public access, and I also found three beautiful rivers to float. The most exciting river was the Boardman that flows north through Traverse City before emptying into Lake Michigan. The mouth of this river is quite urban and looks more like a canal as it flows past the marinas, the breweries and the trendy shops; but, just outside of town it's much more interesting. The upper Boardman (or would it be the lower Boardman since it flows north?) is lined by rich parkland. Here the river drops several feet within a two-mile stretch of bouncy class-two rapids. The best part is that it is lined by a manicured trail that made for a leisurely jog back to the van and an easy solo shuttle. The other rivers I did were flat, fast-moving watery pathways meandering through the countryside and like the Boardman they were crystal clear and pretty small (about the size of Antietam Creek). The neat thing about the Platte and the Betsy were that they flowed past giant sand dunes and emptied into Lake Michigan with its waves and white sandy beaches.

I'm looking forward to September on the Island. It's a great time to be outdoors either playing or doing some of the projects I've planned. I want to paint the roof of the canoe shed and we're hoping to build another canoe rack like the one for the club canoes. I also want to get rid of all the invasive plants on the Island. I really need help with this. If anyone is inter-



Swingin' Dad Photo by Kelsey Hage



Traverse City

Joe on the "Grass River", in the Grass River Natural Area, a 1,160-acre park comprised of wetlands and wildlife habitat purchased over the past 32 years by concerned citizens.

The Boardman River Guardian statue by artist Dewey Blocksma.



Saturday Relief Caretakers September—October

September 3, 2005	9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Toby Smith	703-553-7732
	2:00 p.m. - dark	Chris Grant	301-986-1084
September 10, 2005	9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Abigail Wienbenson	202-332-6857
	2:00 p.m. - dark	Nell Hennessey and Frank Daspit	202-526-0157
September 17, 2005	9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Toby Smith	703-553-7732
	2:00 p.m. - dark		
September 24, 2005	9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Lee Gravatte	202-333-6830
	2:00 p.m. - dark	Tory Ruttenberg and Greg Ferenbach	202-244-9488
October 1, 2005	10:00 a.m. - 2:00		
	2:00 p.m. - dark		
October 8, 2005	10:00 a.m. - 2:00		
	2:00 p.m. - dark		
October 15, 2005	10:00 a.m. - 2:00		
	2:00 p.m. - dark		
October 22, 2005	10:00 a.m. - 2:00		
	2:00 p.m. - dark		
October 29, 2005	10:00 a.m. - 2:00		

*** Caretaker Volunteers ***

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

Large Parties

No Large Parties reported for September .

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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Upcoming Sycamore Events

September Meeting, Wednesday, September 14, 8 p.m. At the Island.

October Meeting, Wednesday, October 12, 8 p.m. At the Island.

* Island Membership Meetings are always on the second Wednesday of the month.



And still more trophies!
Photo by Joe Hage