



Bliss

Photo by Joe Hage

# *The Sycamore Islander*

*October 2005*

*Volume 84 No. 10*

## **President's Message**

As Fall approaches, it is time to begin thinking and planning for the next year. One of the primary activities that happens during this planning stage is to find a list of candidates for the offices and supervisory positions within the club. All of the positions have been filled by volunteers, and almost all of them require only a small commitment of time.

Traditionally, the positions have been filled by a great, fun-loving group of people who are committed to our Island, and to making and maintaining it as the wonderful, peaceful, natural getaway that we all love. Generally, there is a turnover in only a few of the positions each year. And as I'm only beginning to think about next year, I really don't know which offices will need to be filled. But I do know that there will be a position for you, if you want to become more involved with the Island. Please call me if you're ready to get involved.

If you want to get involved, but in a lesser way, plan on coming to the Fall Workfest. It is planned for Sunday, November 13<sup>th</sup>. The rain date is November 20<sup>th</sup>. The main tasks are getting the floats out of the water and raking. Raking is way more fun on the Island than at home. Really. But the best part of it all is the pot luck feast afterwards. The Captain, Tryon Wells, and Joe are responsible for the Workfest. Call them if there is anything you think of beside the leaves and the floats needs to be attended to. Mark your calendars. See you there.

In the meantime, plan on coming to our next meeting. It will be held on the Island on Wednesday, October 12, at 8:00 p.m.

— 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](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 November issue is receipt by the Editor by Wednesday, October 26<sup>th</sup>.**

## Sycamore Island Meeting Minutes, 14 September 2005

The meeting was called to order at 8:10 pm by President Ann Marie Cunningham. There was a quorum (at least 10 voting members). Members present were Jim Drew, Ann Marie Cunningham, Dave Winer, Peggy Thomson, Bill Bays, Jeff Komarow, Johnna Robinson, Jane Winer, Alan Gelb, Renee Dunham, Larry Heilman. Joe Hage was present for part of the meeting.

The past two months meetings were not official, as there were no quorums. The minutes of the June meeting were approved as printed in the July *Islander*.

Dave Winer reported on the installation of a new bell. It has a deeper tone than the cowbells and, it is hoped, can now be heard all over the Island. Renee reported that she had had difficulty raising Joe from the swim float. We will look into the problem. The action of the rope is slightly different.

The treasurer, Alan Gelb, reported that the bills are normal for this time of year. He has received a communication from the Maryland Dept. of the Environment requesting information about any possible lead-based paint in the living areas. We may have to run tests on all the paint surfaces. Vice-President Jeff Komarow will help him decide how to respond. Jim Drew, canoeing supervisor, reported that he hopes to build an additional rack for the lesser-used club canoes. This will be accomplished during the Workfest. The Workfest has been scheduled for Sunday, November 13, with a rain date of November 20.

Joe reported that Lowell School would again this year like to bring 50 school children on Thursday October 6, from 8:30am to 2:30pm. Joe says that this activity has been well supervised in the past, and it was approved. Joe also reports that we need two new small grills and a chain saw. These purchases can be made by the Captain since they have been budgeted under Capitol Improvements and Repairs. A new canoe dock is needed. Tove has been considering a design. Materials can be purchased after checking with the treasurer, Alan Gelb. Joe would like to activate a third phone line so the club line will not be busy due to the computer. This was approved. DSL will be considered, and the decision depends on the relative costs.

John Matthews was not able to attend, but he has been inspecting trees whose limbs could endanger the clubhouse. Also, a large poplar tree (tulip?) near the shed may be a threat. Joe feels that opening the canopy could encourage the kudzu and knotweed. The members discussed this and recommended that Johnna speak with an arborist to get a second opinion. A limit of \$100 was suggested.

Joe also brought up the question of allowing dogs on the island one day a month. Some members have inquired. The consensus at the meeting was that the "no dog" rule has a long history and doesn't need changing. Goats are allowed, if well behaved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10pm.

-- Johnna Robinson, Acting Recording Secretary

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

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

“Come to the Hallowe’en Party”

For ten years now the Sycamore Islander has “scooped” all other local publications by being the first to announce Sycamore Island’s Hallowe’en Party,—the biggest social event of the year.

As is customary, it will be a costume affair and Sycamore’s first families and best brains are now busy trying to figure out costumes which will disguise peculiar walks, increasing waist-lines, knock-knees, cauliflower ears and those other unfortunate anatomical deformities which are so apparent through most of our costumes.

...Perhaps we should add, for the benefit of new members, that Sycamore’s Hallowe’en Party is always enjoyed by everyone. We always have good music and our new club-room is an ideal place to dance. If the night is warm you can also dance on the porch—there’ll be almost a full moon.

#### *Trip Report*

“Mosquitos [sic] Enjoy Company of Sycamore Islanders at Bear Island”

Several Saturdays ago about [15!] of us went up to Bear Island for a weekend camping trip, thinking that the cool weather would have discouraged the mosquitos up there. However, the weather turned warm again that day and we had mosquitos all night but we also had a mighty good time. A shower slowed up the making of camp and when we all finally reached Bear Island after the rains had stopped, we found that we’d left the meat for the night’s supper behind at Sycamore Store. It was about nine-thirty before we finished supper.

Kalil, as usual, did a lot of tricks to keep us from getting too comfortable but the funniest episode was when Kalil went out to let water down off the top of the tent and the entire pool of water on the tent, about one fluid gallon, ran down Kalil’s neck.

Sunday we came down the river and had quite a lot of trouble getting around Stubblefield Falls due to the extremely low water. Most of us came around the Virginia shoot but had to wade to get our boats over the rocks. Several boats got badly torn on rocks in the chute down past Gravelly Beach (immediately above Herzog’s Island) and a lot of bailing was done between there and Sycamore.

#### *More important competitions*

“Dick Takes Fourths Place in Nine-Mile Canoe Race”

W.C.C. [Washington Canoe Club] held a nine-mile canoe marathon on Sunday, and Dick Ackad entered for Sycamore. Millar of Potomac came in first in the time of 2 hours, 1 minute and thirty-six seconds [2:1:36]. Dick was bunched with the first three, considering the length of the race, and really made a good showing. Greenley of Red Triangle was second and May of Dundalk (Baltimore) was third. The above were all single blades, the double blades racing for other prizes.

For those of us who paddle, that would be a much faster race in the Spring—if you managed to stay in your canoe.

*As fall sets in, have a wonderful Halloween and remember, at the Sycamore Island party, “four out of five people present are always in costume.”*

## In Touch With Joe.....

I've got groundhog problems. I wasn't sure at first why the bricks covering the floor in the screen porch and locker room were dropping and leaving big holes but it didn't take long to figure it out. When I went to fix these dangerous holes, I realized that there was a long tunnel about six inches wide running under the bricks. I removed brick after brick as I followed the tunnel until it led me to what I think was a hibernation nest. The nest was just under the bricks in the middle of the porch and was a perfectly round hole ten inches across and ten inches deep. It was packed tight with dried leaves and grasses and there was so much leaf litter in that small hole that it filled a kitchen trash bag. As I began to throw many shovels full of dirt in the now exposed trench, I began to appreciate the industriousness and engineering capabilities of this large rodent. I had to question, as I shoveled a large wheel barrel full of dirt into the hole, "how did this animal dig this long tunnel and nest and what did it do with all the dirt it had to move"? I filled the hole and put the two dozen bricks back in place, knowing, sadly, that I'm no match for a tireless burrower like the groundhog.



We saw the deer again yesterday. I was pulling John Matthews back to the mainland when we noticed the majestic profile of a large deer with a full rack of antlers. It was standing right there on the bank at the head of the Island looking like a scene from Bambi. I dropped John off and watched the deer as I hurried back to get the camera. I crept up to the head of the Island hoping to get a quick picture. I spooked it from the river bank and saw the chunky buck dash through the woods. I tentatively looped around to the head of the Island in pursuit of my quarry, but never caught another glimpse. I checked the river for a pair of antlers. Nothing. I gave up chase and wondered how the beast eluded me as I walked back to the swim float. I stood on the table by the swim dock and took a last look back into the darkening woods and there it was, less than fifty feet away. I readied the camera and slowly walked toward my prey. I managed to get within thirty feet but stopped suddenly. This deer didn't seem afraid and those antlers were beginning to look very threatening. My heart was racing as I clicked off some pictures, thinking the buck was going to dash at any minute. Once the pictures were taken I shifted my attention and stood there eye to eye in the presence of this very large and confident creature. I tested the situation and made a slight move toward it. The tail went up, but instead of running, this buck did a kind of bull-in-a-bullfight move and scratched the ground with its hoof. I decided to back off and rushed back to the house to show the kids my pictures. Soon afterward, I went for a swim and took a stroll to the top of the Island, hoping to see the deer again. There it was, just sitting there among the paw-paw trees not far from the trail. I passed without stopping. The deer stared as I passed.



Photos by Joe Hage.



## Time for *Growing Native*

From Jennifer Schill, of the Potomac Conservancy....

This October, join in the fifth annual *Growing Native* to collect the seeds of future streamside forests. Since 2001, thousands of *Growing Native* volunteers have collected enough seeds to generate nearly four million seedlings—enough to reforest almost 35,000 acres. These seedlings are planted along streams, thereby protecting water quality by filtering out polluted runoff and preventing erosion.



To participate in *Growing Native*, all you have to do is gather seeds, separate them into bags according to type, and deliver them to your local drop-off site. You can collect in your own backyard or at an organized collection site, which you can find posted at [www.growingnative.org](http://www.growingnative.org). Drop-off sites, also listed online, will accept seeds throughout October.

“*Growing Native* is an easy way for everyone to help protect the health of their local streams,” says Colleen Langan, *Growing Native* program coordinator. “But several simple steps are critical to ensuring that the seeds you collect can one day be used to reforest our communities.”

Photos by Jen Schill (above) and Bridget Fico



The most important of these steps is separating seeds by type. Identification charts are available online to help you distinguish species. It is also important that you use paper, dry weave, or burlap bags, and that you keep seeds cool and dry until you deliver them to a drop-off site.

*Growing Native* is made possible thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Ford Motor Company and Aveda, and is coordinated by the Potomac Conservancy on behalf of the Potomac Watershed Partnership.

For more information, a complete list of collection and drop-off sites, or to register for *Growing Native*, visit [www.growingnative.org](http://www.growingnative.org).



High and (Almost) Dry. Joe in the middle of the canal.

Photos by Kaylen Hage

## Life and Death on the C & O Canal

What to do for Halloween on the C&O Canal? I put on a long dress and bonnet, and play a small role in a canal drama that took place when the mules were still walking the towpath everyday. And it is not just me - about a hundred other volunteers appear at the Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park in Great Falls, Maryland to stage a night-time interpretive event for the public. A dozen historical scenes are enacted in and around the Tavern, lit only by kerosene lanterns: justice is done to a mean mule driver, President Madison encounters refugees on his exit from burning Washington, Prohibition bootleggers use the old locks to do their wickedness... and much, much more. A small group of visitors is led through the sites by lamplight and every fifteen minutes, a new group starts out. In one hour, you are guided through scenes of struggle and survival on the C&O Canal during its construction and operation.



Did you know that this has been going on for nine years? The interpretive park rangers do the research on the events,

make up a short script for each scenario, and let the volunteers loose to improvise the dialogue while sticking to the facts. Did you know that the second floor of the Tavern has dozens of costumes stored away - dresses and vests, boots and bonnets, shawls and jackets, and plenty of safety pins to make things fit?



I thought that our adventurous Islanders might like to know that this is going on in our Potomac River neighborhood and invite you to come out this year. Come as spectators or volunteers (children welcome for both) to act, help with food, guide, carry lanterns, etc. It being Halloween, I must warn you that some of these scenes lean to the scary or bloody. The little kids seem to understand it as a Halloween thing, however, and I don't recollect any trauma. The park does not recommend the program for children under seven. The kerosene lanterns are ready to go. Are you?

Details: Saturday, October 22, 2005, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m., Great Falls Visitor Center. Reservations and prepayment required. Adults, \$6.00; Seniors (62+), \$4.00; Children (4—14), \$4.00. Call 301-767-3714 for reservations and information.

To volunteer, contact Ranger Lynn Barrett at [Lynn\\_Barrett@nps.gov](mailto:Lynn_Barrett@nps.gov) or Ranger Mark Myers at [Mark\\_Myers@nps.gov](mailto:Mark_Myers@nps.gov). You can also ask me questions: Renee Dunham (202) 686-6451 or [rgdunham@erols.com](mailto:rgdunham@erols.com).

-- Text and Photos by Renee Dunham

## World Canal Conference 2005: Rough Seas on the Gota Canal

By Carl Linden



Greetings from The Admiral of the Queen's Canals.  
Source: <http://www.5.auderis.se/wcc2005/Frameset.asp>.

This year's World Canal Conference was held in Sweden, August 22nd to 27<sup>th</sup>. The Conference was wonderfully well organized and a delightful experience for all. Our hosts provided superb hospitality, good food and entertainment. Claes-Goren Osterlund, the Superintendent of the Gota Canal, was master of ceremonies for the whole affair. With a bit of dramatic flair he welcomed the assembled conference delegates garbed in a classic Admiral's uniform (not "Admiral of the Queen's Navy" but rather "Admiral of the Queen's Canals"). On another occasion he attended a banquet in kilts. The Vikings, after all, spent a lot of time in Scotland. Claes directed all our activities with consummate skill, finesse, and great good humor. He led Conference participants on a tour of "Six

Canals in Six Days" by boat and bus across the breadth of Sweden. We stopped at various towns along the way and were warmly welcomed and feted. Always with us was a fine Swedish accordionist who played for us and accompanied our singing. We also had to learn a classic Swedish song of romance, "The Dance at Sunnano," and do a rendition of it near the end of our trip. We were treated to fine entertainments at various stopping points by musicians, singers and even actors who did skits on episodes in the story of the building of the canals. One actor played a rather comic King Oscar. At a stop on the old Hjalmar Canal, we were welcomed by a fine band in full uniform playing upbeat tunes for us. We could always count on a coffee and tea stop between meals. We were also warmly welcomed by mayors and local people at banquets held in various towns where we stopped at day's end. On the last day in Stockholm we boarded a Swedish excursion boat and took a tour among nearby islands and had a fine lunch aboard. Our six days ended with our return to Stockholm. Our hosts bid us a fond farewell as we went ashore. Stockholm sparkled from the sun's rays reflecting off the waters surrounding the city.

You could certainly say, figuratively and literally, everything was smooth sailing for us on this journey. Smooth sailing, of course, is the prime advantage and settled expectation of travel along "Stillwater" canals over natural water ways. Surely, no turbulence could afflict us. We were wrong. Mother Nature had something else in mind for us. She corrected our presumption as we ventured out on Lake Vättern, a large and deep lake which the Gota Canal route crosses. She gathered storm clouds around us and told Aeolus to whip up some big waves. Our two passenger boats, old canal steamers, now diesel-powered, began pitching sharply from side to side. Happily, our accordionist was there when he was needed. He sustained our spirits with cheerful and rousing tunes while one of our Swedish hosts led us in singing. Thus, our thoughts were kept on an even keel, so to speak, as we were tossed about by the tempest. At last we reached Sjotorp, a small lake town and docked in calm water. We visited a canal museum there and, among other things, read about one of the builders of the Gota Canal who had drowned when his boat capsized in a storm on Vättern. Better that we learned this *after* and not *before* our voyage. Now we all had a good story to tell about a memorable episode of the 2005 World Canal Conference.

Of special interest for *Sycamore Islander* readers is the Dalslands Canal, one of the six canals we visited during the conference. The Dalslands Canal heads northward and goes through a series of lakes and into forest country. There are rustic campsites with lean-tos at well-placed intervals. This region is a canoeist and kayakers paradise. You can obtain an informative and detailed booklet entitled "Canoe Country" from Dalslands Kanal AB (e-mail: [info@dalslandskanal.se](mailto:info@dalslandskanal.se); [www.dalslandskanal.se](http://www.dalslandskanal.se)). For that matter, you can go by sail boat, passenger boats, motorboat, canoes & kayaks on Sweden's many canals. You can also cycle your way along the Gota Canal route which crosses Sweden from Goteborg on the east to Stockholm on the west. So there is plenty to do in Sweden for all who like to mess around in boats.



## Nature Day at the Catskill Estate

By Gerry Barton

We purchased our Catskill Estate four years ago with the target of moving there. Shortly after our closing, 9/11 changed our plans, so we still have our home in the District and our membership in Sycamore. At the Catskill place in Saugerties, NY, we have two red houses built 8 feet apart, and a red garage converted into an art studio for my daughter. The houses are in the middle of two acres of mostly cleared land surrounded by forest. The view from the rear of the homes is up and west about three miles towards Overlook Mountain, at the southeast edge of the Catskills. We are surrounded by a private park, Opus-40, that is almost all forest. Woodstock is about 2 miles to the west. Catskill Park boundaries are less than a mile away. We cannot see or hear neighbors for the most part. There is a wealth of nature.



Very early on a recent Saturday morning I was exercising on the back deck. Thirty minutes of stretching and trunk exercises keep my back in shape since I damaged some disks about 3 ½ years ago. The deck overlooks the back yard where the bluebird box sits and then the forest and up to the Overlook Mountain above Woodstock. I heard this crashing and looked at the field near the trees. A large doe came out of the woods and bounded across the field into the woods at the northern edge. Then I looked back where she came from and a large coyote came out of the woods and stood in the field for about 30 seconds before going back into the forest. It was orange-brown, very bushy, and had a beautiful tail. First one I've seen so well. From pictures, the western ones always appear thin and mangy looking. This was a beautiful animal. We know they are there because we hear them screaming in the night when they have a kill or a feast or whatever arouses them. They sound like screaming soprano divas, not the howling heard in the movies. We have to keep the cats in at night to keep them safe.

Later in the day, maybe about four in the afternoon, the kids and grandma and I were on the deck and patio. I saw an unfamiliar grayish mound back there at the same location I saw the doe and coyote. As I watched it started to move. We decided that it was not another coyote, but a grey fox. Again, a beautiful animal. I got the binoculars and we were all able to take a look as it was there for about five minutes. Seemed to be eating off the bushes, maybe some leftover huckleberries. Barb says she has seen a mother turkey herding her 6 "turklets" around the edge of the yard for several weeks, but I have not seen them yet. Did see a nice single adult back in the same area as above.

Thunderstorm watching is a special event, especially when the sky lights up over the mountains: nature's fireworks. A few weeks ago there was a terrific thunderstorm with very strong winds. I was sitting at the desk watching out the window to the front yard and a 50-foot high tree fell. Swoosh. It was all rather silent. Makes one understand the term "widow maker" a little better. It missed the house and me by 20 feet and the car by 15 feet. No damage at all, but it is still there waiting for me to attack with chain saw.



## Saturday Relief Caretakers October — November

October 1, 2005	10:00 a.m. - 2:00	Patricia Benton	301-229-1359
	2:00 p.m. - dark	Fred and Tina Ohly	703-356-9425
October 8, 2005	10:00 a.m. - 2:00	Jane and Bill Hill	301-365-1874
	2:00 p.m. - dark	Eric and Rene Simpson	703-821-7556
October 15, 2005	10:00 a.m. - 2:00	Christy and Garth Ross	202-244-5379
	2:00 p.m. - dark	Linda and Robert Blair	202-364-8747
October 22, 2005	10:00 a.m. - 2:00	Morris Cobern	301 365-3767
	2:00 p.m. - dark		
October 29, 2005	10:00 a.m. - 2:00	Dorothy Barthelmes and Bob Henry	301-229-4936
	2:00 p.m. - dark		
November 5, 2005	10:00 a.m. - 2:00	Marianne and Phil Ross	301-229-6690
	2:00 p.m. - dark		
November 12, 2005	10:00 a.m. - 2:00		
	2:00 p.m. - dark		
November 19, 2005	10:00 a.m. - 2:00		
	2:00 p.m. - dark		
November 26, 2005	10:00 a.m. - 2:00		
	2:00 p.m. - dark		

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

To volunteer, contact Maxine Hattery at 202-362-1361 or [hattery@aol.com](mailto:hattery@aol.com) .

### Large Parties

Two weekday parties reported for September 27th and October 5.

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

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### Upcoming Sycamore Events

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

November Meeting, Wednesday, November 9, 8 p.m. (Location tbd)

Fall Workfest, Sunday, November 13th;  
Raindate, November 20th

*And keep in mind....*

October is the month for *Growing Native* (p. 5)

A Canal Halloween (p. 6)

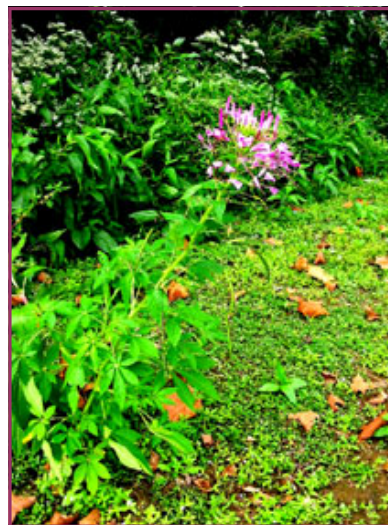


Photo by Joe Hage

Joe writes that "there is an amazingly beautiful and rare (for the Island) flower growing on the beach at the foot of the Island. I couldn't find it in my flower book and it may be some kind of nursery escapee with its large purple/pink blooms." The Editor's gardening consultant identifies it as a cleome and "they are hard to get rid of."