



Contemplating Spring

Photo by Sunya Narkyai

The Sycamore Islander

February 2006

Volume 85 No. 2

President's Letter

February is upon us. While the flora of the Island may be dormant, spring is just around the corner and there is much to be done to get the Island ready for the good weather. The existing canoe float is in sorry condition and will be replaced. This is not a small job. The ferry is in need of repair, and we will decide soon whether to repair or replace it. And there is the renovation of the caretaker's quarters. I now understand about the recurring nightmares Ann Marie told me she was having.

Hopefully, the Building Committee will have met and reviewed the architect's plans prior to the February membership meeting and can report on progress. The Building Committee will be working on a cost estimate, based on construction specifications and a construction plan, so that a full proposal can be submitted to the membership at a special meeting in the spring. There is, of course, the nagging issue of how the Club would pay for the project. As much as I like bake sales or selling cookies or t-shirts as fundraisers, these will not produce the funds the Club likely will need to finance the renovation. (No, we are not going to counterfeit Girl Scout cookies.) We have immense talent and creativity in the Club, but I have yet to talk to a member who has come up with a (legal) financing solution that does not involve raising dues. I deny that Ken Lay, Jeffrey Skilling, Jack Abramoff or Bernie Ebbers have contacted any of the Club's officers about alternative financing schemes. We have not talked about building an Indian gaming casino or a minimum security prison on the Island. And the Island is off limits to oil drilling. However, other ideas are welcome.

We are exploring the feasibility of a long-term bank loan if the Club votes to undertake the renovation. This could add \$100 a year or more to the cost of regular membership indefinitely. Another alternative is to finance the project through a refundable facilities assessment that existing and new members would pay

The Sycamore Islander is a monthly newsletter of the Montgomery Sycamore Island Club. 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).

The deadline for the March issue is Wednesday, February 22.

in installments and would be returned in whole or in part to a member when he or she resigned. If the Club chose the path of a refundable assessment, some form of interim financing would be needed, or the construction would have to be phased over several years so that the Club is not spending more than it is taking in through installments plus the use of some portion of the existing reserve. I would like to determine whether interim financing can be generated by loans from club members. For example, if twenty members were willing to *loan* the Club \$5,000 each, which would be repaid \$1,000 annually plus interest, then there is a good chance that the Club would not need to drag out the renovation, and the expense and restrictions of a bank loan could be avoided.

If you are in a financial position to make a loan to the Club and would consider doing so, please contact me. (My cell-phone number is 202.492.2003). If you call me, then I won't have to call you to find out whether internal financing is feasible. A bonus for calling me is that you avoid hearing my sales pitch. (Trust me, your soul will not find eternal peace unless you help to get the caretaker and his daughters out of their drafty shack without indoor plumbing or electricity!)

The February meeting should be interesting and informative. Hope to see you there at Carl Linden's house off MacArthur Boulevard, a mile or two from the Maryland-DC line. [Directions on last page.]

Remember that we are looking for volunteers to work on hospitality and events with George and Shelly Malusky. This is a great opportunity for those on the waiting list to become involved in the Club and get over to the Island on weekends.

Enjoy the Island. Pay your dues if you haven't already done so. And think spring.

--Jeff Komarow

Minutes of the 11 January 2006 Meeting

The January meeting was hosted by Larry and Anne Heilman in their home. Our new president Jeff Komarow called the group to order at 8:10 p.m.

Present: Jeff Komarow, Sherry Pettie, Tryon Wells, Norman Metzger, Andrew Umhau, Larry Heilman, Ann Marie Cunningham, Peggy Thomson, Faith Earll, Gerry Barton, Jim Drew, Renée Dunham, Jane Winer.

Minutes: There were no December minutes completed in time for publication in the *Islander*, so none were voted on. (Your new recording secretary hopes there will never be occasion to make this announcement during her tenure!)

Treasurer's report: Alan Gelb emailed in the following:

“Spending for the year 2005 was projected at about \$65,000 on the basis of our September figures. In the event, we spent close to \$66,000, somewhat less than our budget of \$67,095. Our income for the year was \$68,093 being made up of \$66,200 in transfers from accounts by the financial secretary and \$1,893 in interest. We therefore ended the year with a surplus of \$2,086, which adds to our balance carried into 2006. As of December 31, that balance is \$72,483. Net-

ting out about \$10,000, which is reasonable to assume as a working carryover, our reserve is effectively \$62,000.”

Financial report: The annual dues notices have just been sent out.

Captain’s report: Responding to a question about the bell, Tryon said that there are two little bells currently in service, and a big new bell is to be installed soon. He also reported that John Matthews is concerned about a weakened section of the towpath just downstream from the club. Gerry Barton added that we have a severe erosion problem at our own landing steps. The group’s consensus was that a member with good connections with the Park Service should contact it about both problems.



Photo by David Winer

Building Committee: Tryon reported that a Building Committee meeting with the architect scheduled for earlier in the evening had been cancelled. A discussion ensued about the status of the Building Committee’s efforts. Tryon reminded the group that the Committee had last met in August when a decision was taken to have an architect put together permit-ready plans and documents, and said that the cancelled meeting had been intended as an initial review of those documents.

Canoe training: Jim Drew said that Frank Dasplit will repeat his successful canoe training session in May, date to be determined. The event will be published in the February or March *Islander* [see page 5].

New business: There was discussion of Ann Marie Cunningham’s notice published in the *Islander*, which proposes making an amendment to the section of the standing rules that define the responsibilities of the president. There was spirited but civil debate about the proposal and all its ramifications. One revision was suggested, which Ann Marie accepted. She moved to add the following subparagraph to paragraph 16A of the Standing Rules:

- e. Have the authority to require that notice of new business be published in the *Islander* prior to voting at the next meeting.

The motion was seconded, voted, and carried by a majority.

Island events and participation therein: In other new business, the group discussed the special events to be scheduled for the upcoming year, which include the Spring Workfest, the River Cleanup, New Member Orientation, Flower Walk, Canoe Safety Training, Down-River Race, Summer Solstice Campout, Fishing Derby; Waitlisters Canoe Outing, Labor Day Regatta, Old Timers Picnic, and the Fall Workfest. The concern over lack of participation in Workfests was discussed, and Jim Drew offered to organize a telephone tree to get out the members.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

--Sherry Pettie, Recording Secretary

Missing Sycamorean: Jessie Bakeman

Jessie served as the Island archivist till six or seven years ago and at some point moved to New Hampshire. Recent *Islander* mailings came back. Anyone know Jessie? If so, status and contact information would be very welcome. Please tell our Membership Secretaries, Tammy and Joe Belden: 202-882-2224; tbel@loc.gov. Thanks.

Minutes of the Annual Meeting December 14, 2005

The meeting was hosted by Johnna Robinson.

Present: Peggy Thomson, Alan Gelb, Blair Bower, Nancy Bower, Brad Coolidge, Norman Metzger, Carl A. Linden, Susanna Membrino, John Membrino, Jim Drew, Larry Heilman, David Winer, Jeff Komarow, Ann Marie Cunningham, Jane Winer, Sherry Pettie, John F. Stapko, John G. Stapko, Bill Bays, Stephen Wolk, Jane Hill, Bill Hill, Judy Lentz, John Lentz and Peter Winkler

Call to Order: President Ann Marie Cunningham called the meeting to order at 8:20 p.m.

Minutes: The minutes of the November meeting were adopted, as corrected for spelling.

Communications: Ann Marie read aloud Blair and Nancy Bower's letter resigning from Club membership, after 35 years, and asked that it be printed in the newsletter. [Note: The letter was published in the January edition of *The Islander*.] Ann Marie then moved that the Bowers be given honorary membership in the Club. The motion was adopted by acclamation. Brad Coolidge, who like Blair is a past president of the Club, announced that he, too, was submitting his resignation, and that he was offering his Grumman canoe for sale. Ann Marie then moved that Brad also be given an honorary membership, and the motion was approved by acclamation.

Election of New Officers: Nominating Committee Chair Carl Linden read aloud the Committee's proposed slate of new officers, previously published in *The Islander*. The Nominating Committee proposed Sherry Pettie, currently No. 15 on the waiting list, for recording secretary. Ann Marie then moved for Sherry's admission to the Club as a Service Member. Ann explained the relevant portion of the by-laws. Vice President Jeff Komarow observed that Sherry has been active in Club activities and workfests, and that she was an excellent choice to be our first Service member. The motion for Sherry's admission was adopted by acclamation.

Those present then voted for the slate by acclamation. Jeff Komarow was elected president, replacing Ann Marie Cunningham, who served in the post for 3 years. Stephen Wolk was elected vice president. Although George and Shelley Malusky will once again serve as the supervisors of the Entertainment Committee, they have asked for volunteer assistance. After the vote, Jeff offered the Club's thanks to Ann Marie. Ann Marie stated that she would remain active in the Building Committee, the most important project of her presidency.

Budget: Co-Treasurer Alan Gelb gave the budget report. We will probably end the year with \$1000 to \$1500 less than projected. We put on a new roof, among other things. We have about \$64,000 in various savings accounts. Expenses were kept in check, although insurance and taxes were significantly up. The Club's income for the calendar year through September was \$67,000, and we will probably be able to make a slight addition to the reserve fund at the end of the year. The reserve fund was about \$50,000 2 years ago, and about \$60,000 1 year ago. Our current goal is to maintain that size reserve—roughly 1 year's expenses—but increase it in accord with inflation.

Alan explained that the proposed new year's budget is essentially the same as the past year's, with allowances for inflation. The budget does not set aside any money for construction funds, which we cannot estimate at this time. The proposed budget will require a dues increase. Dues for regular members are currently \$288, and Alan suggested a 5 percent increase, which would take regular dues up to \$302.40. Tryon Wells proposed that we round off that amount to \$300, and that we increase all other dues and fees in line with that increase. After a brief discussion, those present approved Tryon's proposal by acclamation. [Note: The new dues and fees were published in the January edition of *The Islander*.] Those present also approved a new salary and bonus, and a new salary structure, for the Island's caretaker.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m., after Jeff expressed the Club's thanks to Johnna, our host for the evening. Most of those present for the meeting remained to share good cheer and a bountiful array of refreshments.

-- Peter Winkler, Recording Secretary

From Holly Syrrakos, Archivist: 75 Years Ago At Sycamore Island Selections from the February 1931 *Sycamore Islander*

February was a busy month in 1931. A Valentine's Day Dance was set for Saturday evening, the 14th. All comers were promised a band, of "at least four pieces, the best dancing floor between Indian Head and Point of Rocks, and a valentine."

There was also a report of a very successful Pancake Supper, with a turnout of "fifty or more folks." Dining was followed by "music furnished by a pianist and saxophonist."

A near tragedy was reported as well:

"The Clubhouse Caught on Fire Sunday Morning, January 11th, and the dread cry of 'Fire' broke from brave Charlie DeMaine's blanched lips. Dropping a dipper full of water, Charlie sprang from the side porch with a fire extinguisher in hand and shot it on the flames issuing from the clubhouse wall near the stovepipe of the clubroom stove. Captain of the Island Jack Stodder ran for a ladder and ran back to the fire with one, which is more than many people remember to do when man's natural enemy—fire—gets going. They climbed up to the stovepipe hole and broke away some of the boards with the crowbar which Jack had obtained—that's right—Jack didn't get a ladder, he got a crowbar. Kalil tore down some of the burlap around the stovepipe and they soon had the fire out. Kalil was the nearest approach to a real fireman, since he was all for tearing down lots more burlap. A practical fireman would have broken a few windows and perhaps would have run out to the canoehouse and crashed in a few canoes.

Seriously, we were mighty fortunate to catch this fire at the start, thereby rendering it merely an incident instead of a catastrophe."

Stepping away from the serious, the editor reported, "There was lots of good ice skating on ice at the head of the Island during January. Lots of Islanders bought new skates and lots of them hit the ice at points not provided with skates. The sport became so popular that Dick rigged a few extra lights over on Midway Island and at the head of the main island so that the night skating would be better."

And, even though it was winter, there were the somewhat regular accounts of people falling into the river. Francis Cole fell through the ice while skating and "his faithful dog Jeeves, seeing his master in the water, likewise jumped in and after Francis had clambered out he had to get Jeeves out". However, Reese Thomson won the title of "King-Sinker" for 1931 because he was the first one of the year to fall overboard, out of a canoe, on Feb. 1. There's a title few want to share.

Cleaning and Paddling

18th Annual Potomac River Clean-Up - Saturday, April 8th, 9 a.m. to noon. Contact Renée Dunham.

Canoeing Class at Sycamore Island - Saturday, May 6, 2006 , 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. For all members and waitlisters. Frank Daspit is the instructor.

Preliminary 2006 Sycamore Events Calendar

Event	Date/Time	Contact	Rain Date
18 th Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup	Saturday – April 8, 2006 from 9 a.m. to noon.	Renee Dunham	
Annual Orientation	Sunday, April 23	Tamara and Joe Belden	Sunday, April 30
Spring Workfest	Sunday, April 30, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	Joe Hage, Tryon Wells	Sunday, May 7
Annual Flowerwalk	tbd		
Canoeing Class at Sycamore Island.	Saturday, May 6, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m	Frank Daspit and Jim Drew	
Downriver Canoe Race	tbd		
Summer Solstice BBQ, River Song Party and Sleepover	tbd	Joe Hage, Whitney Pinger	
Fishing Derby	tbd		
Sycamore Regatta	tbd		
Old-Timers Potluck Picnic	tbd		
Fall Workfest	Sunday, Nov. 12, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	Joe Hage, Tryon Wells	Sunday, Nov. 19

Sycamore Eats: Hit the Trail Mix

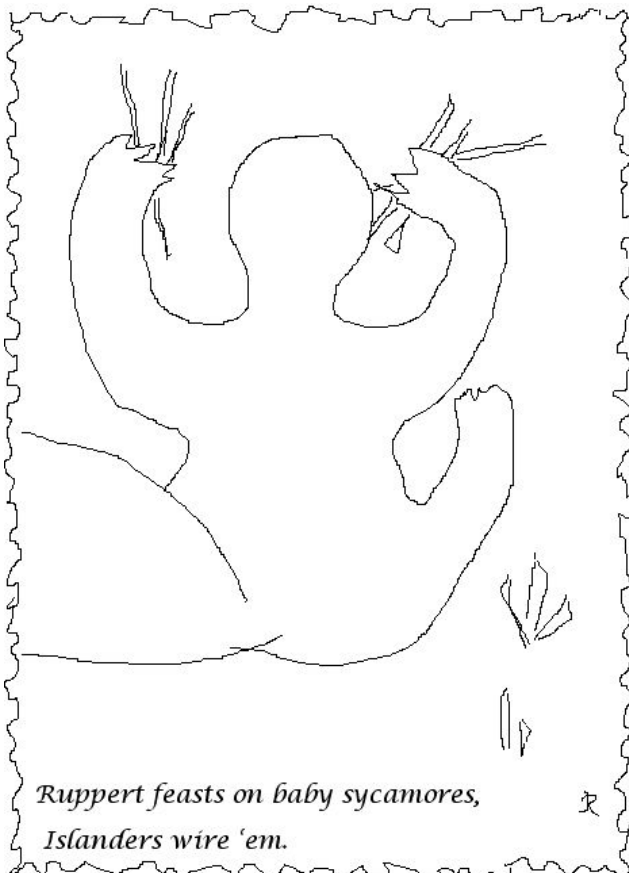
From Country Home magazine, October 2000. Courtesy of Mary Lynn Michael, a visitor to the Island during a wildflower walk, 13 April 05. Mary Lynn passed this mix around to the appreciative attendees. Scrumptious as listed, although I reduce the amount of 5-spice powder. – Dave Winer

1 Cup cashews	1/2 Cup sugar or turbinado sugar ^x
1 Cup dried apricots, quartered	1 Teaspoon Chinese 5 Spice Powder
3/4 Cup walnut halves	1/4 Teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 Cup shelled sunflower seeds	1/2 Teaspoon salt
1/2 Cup golden raisins	1 Large egg white
1/3 Cup dried cranberries	1 Teaspoon water

1. Heat oven to 225 degrees. In a large bowl, stir together cashews, apricots, walnut halves, sunflower seeds, raisins, cranberries, sugar, 5 Spice Powder, cinnamon and salt. Beat the egg white and water until frothy and fold gently into fruit-nut mixture.

2. Spread mixture out onto a non-stick baking sheet and bake for one hour. Cool on a rack and break apart into pieces. Store trail mix in an airtight container until ready to serve.

* “Turbinado sugar”? The Editor hopes that he’s not the only one who doesn’t know. Anyway it is, says a Google search, a type of sugar cane extract. It’s usually made by spraying the extract into a spinning cylinder or turbine, hence the name.



Ruppert

*—Created by
Johnna Robinson*

In Touch With Joe....

One more month to go and so far this winter has been pretty kind to us. I brace myself every year for the challenges of winter on the river, but this year the hardships have been few. I don't have any stories about chopping the ferry through the river ice or of pulling the canoe over the ice. I only had to shovel snow from the bridge once and we haven't needed crampons to get up the hill. It's been wonderful; but there is a down side. My ice skates sit rusting, wishing they could glide me through the frigid silence of a winter afternoon, my new cross country skis sit waiting for a snowy moonlit night and my sled longs to fly down the slopes of Battery Kemble. The cold brings solitude, too, and I miss sharing the trail with only the fox and the deer.

I didn't go to the White Mountains this year so I don't have any hair-raising, mountaineering stories to tell; but I did find an adventurous hike right here at my doorstep. I decided to do the Key Bridge to Sycamore Island circuit hike. The key to this hike is making it back across the river to Sycamore and to do this I had to shuttle a canoe over to Virginia. Since the hike was early on a Saturday, I took advantage of a brightly moonlit Friday night to stash the required transport. The night was warm for January but there was an up-river wind that made pulling the canoe a little difficult. I made it across, slow and steady, and was surprised to see the lights of Chain Bridge in the near distance and the lights of the Marriot hotel further down in Rosslyn. I locked the canoe to a tree and hid the paddles under a fallen tree, took a minute to enjoy the view of the Island in the moonlight, and headed home to bed.

A bald eagle passed overhead when I started out the next morning. It was going to be a good day! The weather was unseasonably warm so the towpath was busy with people as I made my way to Georgetown. The warm weather was crazy and instead of seeing small flocks of snowbirds (juncos) I saw a phoebe busy staking out its nesting territory as if it was springtime. I made it to Key Bridge, spotting a red-shouldered hawk on the way. I also stirred up a huge gathering of mourning doves (about sixty of them) as I cut through the woods near Fletcher's Boathouse. The wind on the bridge was fierce so I reached for my windbreaker only to find that my pack was slightly open and my jacket with my hat and gloves was not there. The blunder wasn't life threatening, but my sweater does little to block the wind. I hurried to the Virginia shore for the shelter of the trees.

The hike from Key Bridge to Chain Bridge was great, and even though I've driven along this shore many times, hiking it gave me a whole new perspective. I passed half a dozen wild streams as they cascaded down the high bluffs of the Virginia shore, walked along sandy shores, and scrambled up rocky cliffs, finding beautiful scenery at every turn. The wind was blowing incessantly and the river was covered with big whitecaps as gusts of 50 mph rushed down the Gorge. I decided not risk a canoe crossing in this weather and instead crossed the river at Chain Bridge. I hiked home keeping an eye out for my lost windbreaker. It was almost a week before I had a chance to finish my hike but it was another warm day as I headed up river from Chain Bridge. This part of the trail doesn't skirt the river but instead follows Pimmit Run up to the earth works of Fort Marcy, a Civil War fort. I saw a sharp-shinned hawk near the creek and there was a big red fox at the fort. The trail is then squeezed between the parkway and a residential area until it drops back down to the river right across from the Island. I checked for signs of the eagles as I passed the backside of their nest and I soon found my canoe waiting to take me back to the Island.



Photo Montage by David Winer

Your dues at work! The Caretaker (and friends) trying out the new ferry. Come on down!

Saturday Relief Caretakers February—March

February 4, 2006	11:00 a.m. - dark	Jeremy Symington	301-229-1058	
February 11, 2006	11:00 a.m. - dark			
February 18, 2006	11:00 a.m. - dark			
February 25, 2006	11:00 a.m. - dark	Andrew Umhau	301-652-1915	
March 4, 2006	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Abigail Porter & David Kay	202-537-5451	
	2:00 p.m. - dark			
March 11, 2006	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.			
	2:00 p.m. - dark			
March 18, 2006	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.			
	2:00 p.m. - dark	Bruce Gaber	301-654-7479	
March 25, 2006	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.			
	2:00 p.m. - dark			

****** Caretaker Volunteers ******
To volunteer, Maxine Hattery at 202-362-1361 or hattery@aol.com

Bring some really good trail mix (p. 7) and enjoy a quiet time at the Island.
 Contact Maxine! Help the Island!

Large Parties

No Large Parties scheduled for February and March

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: 301-468-6433



The Sycamore Islander

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To view this month's Sycamore Islander on the
Internet, go to:

<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/repartee/islander.htm>

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Upcoming Sycamore Events

February Meeting, February 8, 8 p.m..

Hosted by Carl Linden. Carl lives at 6406 Ridge Road in Bethesda. To get to his house from the Sycamore Store:

Go South on MacArthur Boulevard toward Washington; turn right onto Maryland Avenue; turn left onto Ridge Road. 6406 Ridge Road is on the right.

March Meeting, March 8, 8 p.m.. At the Island.

N.B. Monthly meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month.



Cannon at Fort Marcy
Photo by Joe Hage