



Photo by David Winer

# *The Sycamore Islander*

*July 2006*

*Volume 85 No. 7*

## **President's Letter**

We did not get a quorum for the June meeting. I see this as good news because it means that there are no burning issues that caused members to turn out in force. The bad news is that we could not elect Sherry Pettie, our Recording Secretary, as a regular member. Sherry is currently a service member, but now she is next on the waiting list.

Ann Marie Cunningham and our architect had a positive meeting with Montgomery County officials from the department that issues building permits. The only outstanding issue is how to comply with the fire code. We need to establish a fire wall between the caretaker's apartment and the contiguous non-residential space. Our Captain, Tryon Wells, will consult with our architect on how to resolve the issue. The plans can then go out for bid.

July and August are prime time for swimming in the river. Please remember that the river can be deceptive. The current frequently is much stronger than it appears. There has been one reported incident of a swimmer needing help. Please use common sense, and avoid swimming alone. If you do swim alone, be extra cautious about how far out into the river you swim.

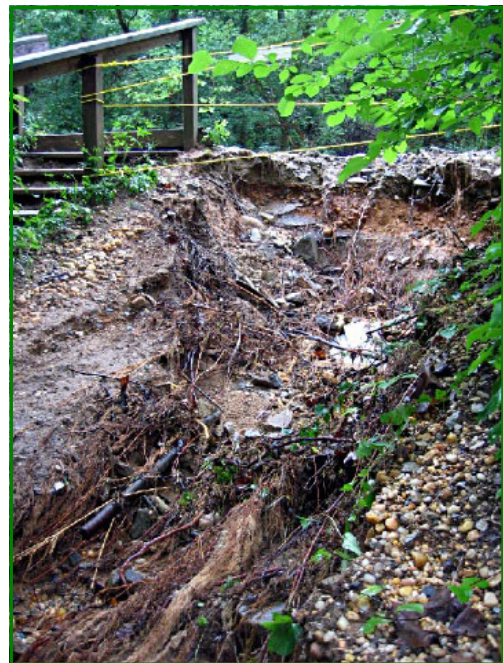
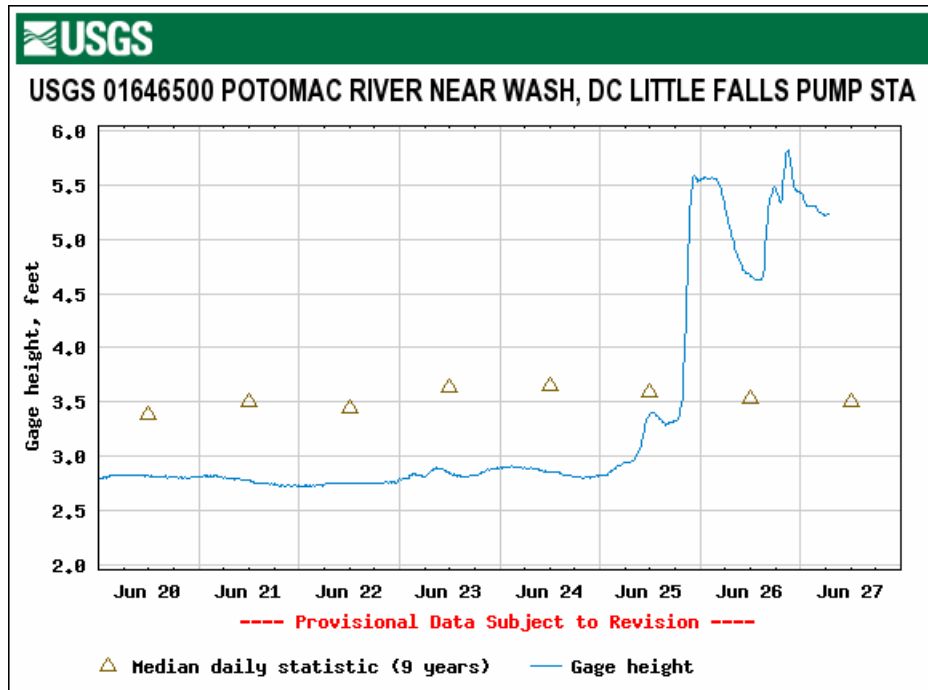
See you at the next regular meeting, which will be held on July 12<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 PM on the Island (assuming we get a quorum).

-- Jeff Komarow

*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](mailto:normanmetzger@verizon.net). Telephone: 202/544-6027 or 202/445-5436 (cell).

**The deadline for the August issue is Wednesday, July 26**

## Legacies of the June Rains



Photos by the intrepid Jane Winer

## Update on the Sycamore Store

by Sherry Pettie

It has been two years since I interviewed architect Dean Brenneman, the new owner of the Sycamore Store, about his plans to have that little wooden structure designated worthy of historic preservation and move his professional offices there. But the weather-beaten zoning notices are still in the front yard, so this week I made some phone calls to find out why it's taking so long.

Before buying the property, Brenneman completed several months of feasibility study and found the County and all the neighbors but one excited about his plans. But his research had no way of revealing the extremes to which that opposing voice was willing to go to block his preservation efforts, including hiring a lawyer and turning the hearings into a long, drawn-out, expensive and difficult process. Despite this, Brenneman sounds amazingly upbeat. "The Hearing Commissioner will render a decision late this summer," he said. "It's looking promising and we're hopeful."

At this point he has succeeded in securing Historic Designation for the store and a Zoning Text Amendment that allows his firm Brenneman & Pagenstecher to apply for use of the property as professional offices. The final step is approval of a Special Exception to allow their use and occupancy of the Store. The actual hearings and testimony in this final process have been completed, and now everyone awaits the Hearing Examiner's decision.

I spoke with two of our Club members who were among those testifying at the County hearings in favor of preservation. Phil Thorson moved to his home on MacArthur Boulevard in 1947 and used to buy all his groceries at the Sycamore Store. He loves the idea of preserving this "quaint reminder of earlier days," and sounds excited about the grocery counter that will remain in the reception area and the restoration of the lighted sign. In addition, he was motivated to testify because Brenneman's plan will prevent the obvious alternative: "Someone else coming in and building as big and as high a McMansion as they can."

Harry Schwartz testified because he felt that it would be "a travesty to lose this landmark building that sits on the corner and lets you know you've arrived at Glen Echo Heights." Schwartz, the former director of public policy at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, also felt that his professional background gave him added perspective that might be useful in the hearings. In his experience it is rare for someone to be willing to rehab a property with historic value for a new use consistent with its original use. This situation was unique because usually when people want to preserve a building, no one comes forward with an economically viable proposal. The property was on the market for months. "I was amazed when Brenneman came along and was willing to preserve the store," he said. "We should be giving him a gold medal because he's the only person who stepped up and said 'I'm willing to save this landmark'."

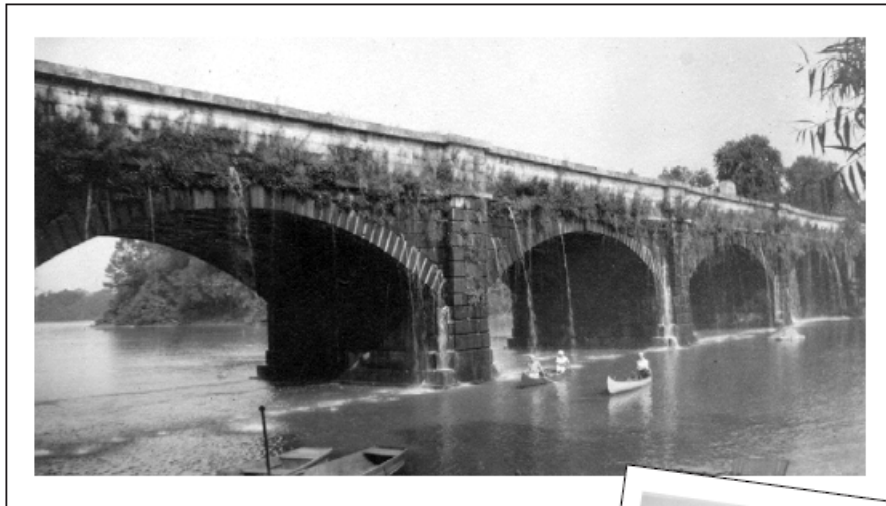


Dean Brenneman (l) and Peter Pagenstecher, partners in Brenneman & Pagenstecher, Inc. a residential architectural and building firm in Kensington, MD. Photo by David Winer

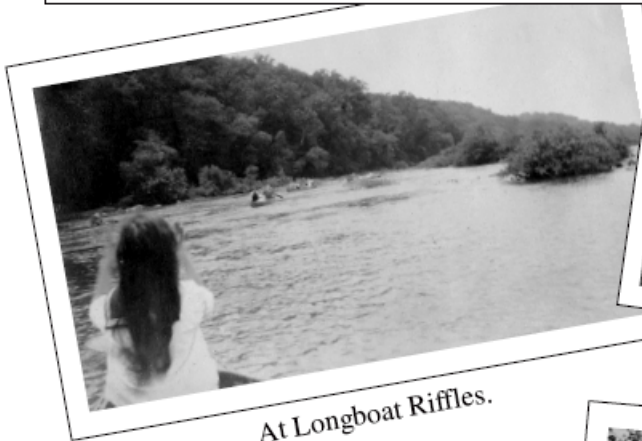
**Holly Syrrakos, Island Archivist....**

**From the Archives: 89 Years Ago At Sycamore Island**

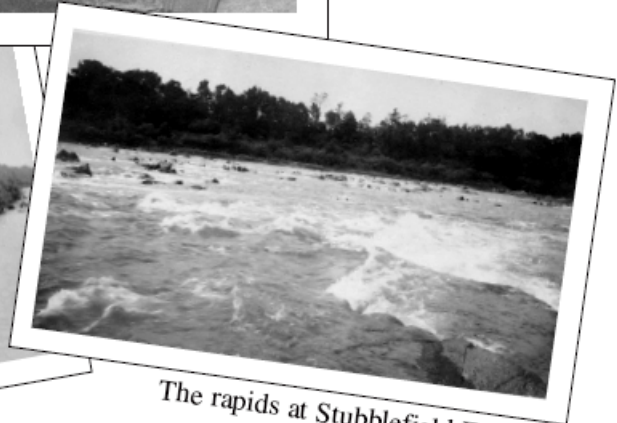
In July of 1917, a group of Islanders made a canoe trip from the Monocacy Aquaduct down the Potomac River to the Island. They were able to reach the mouth of the Monocacy traveling upriver by barge on the C&O canal. The photos are from that trip down the river.



Starting out at the Monocacy Aquaduct.



At Longboat Riffles.



The rapids at Stubblefield Falls.



Stillwater just below Stubblefield.



Some of the intrepid Sycamoreans.

## Sycamore Island Regatta

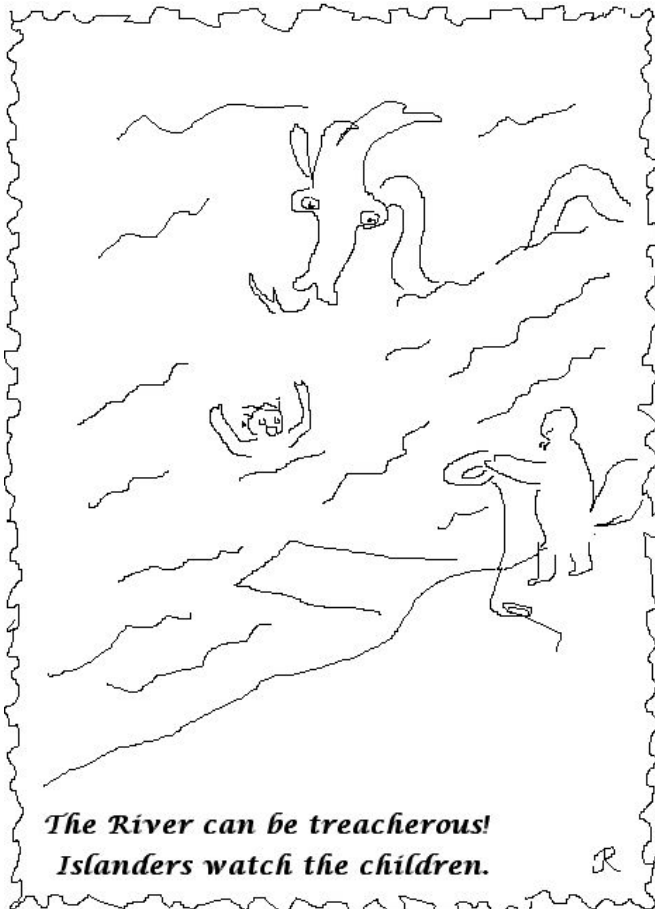
**Monday, September 4, 2006, 1:30 PM till dark**

After a brief hiatus, the Sycamore Island Regatta is returning. (We know you all missed it last year.) Mark your calendars for this celebration open to all Sycamore Islanders – including folks on the waiting list. Especially welcome: kids and their families. Events include:

- The famous canoe dash around Sycamore Island
- Lance-a-lot jousting tournament
- Balloon stomp
- Egg toss
- Other exciting contests (contact organizers to add your favorite)

Games are followed by a pot-luck. The Club will provide main course and you folks bring side dishes, desserts, or drinks to share. To volunteer or get more details contact:

Vicki Judson, [JudsonVA@aol.com](mailto:JudsonVA@aol.com), (301) 320-5787 or  
Anne Waidmann, [waidmannba2@hotmail.com](mailto:waidmannba2@hotmail.com), 703-536-3168.



*Ruppert*

*—Created by  
Johnna Robinson*

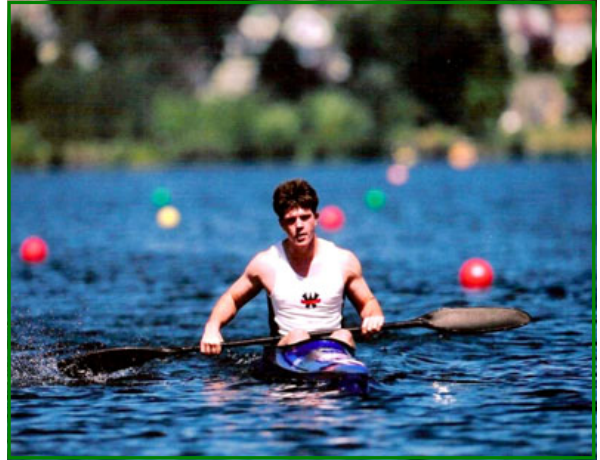
## James Super

### Top Male Kayak Paddler at 2006 Collegiate National Championships

James Super of Arlington, Virginia, was recently named top male kayak paddler at the 2006 Collegiate National Championships for Sprint Canoe and Kayak, held at the Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista, California, May 12-14, 2006. James, 19, racing for the Stanford University canoe and kayak team, finished first in all the men's one-person sprint kayak events at 200-, 500-, and 1,000-meter distances. The canoe and kayak team, coached by Gina Sanchez, is a club sport at Stanford, and Super has been named team captain for the next school year. The team placed second overall in the championships after Georgia Tech. Super, currently a freshman at Stanford, graduated in 2005 from Wakefield High School in Arlington.

James is the son of Sue and Greg Super, who have been members of Sycamore Island since the 1970s. Readers may remember *Islander* stories in years past about some of James's memorable birthday parties and treasure hunts on the Island. James is also a member of the Washington Canoe Club (WCC), Washington, DC, located on the Potomac River near Key Bridge in Georgetown. He has raced competitively since 1997 for the WCC kayak team, currently coached by former Olympic sprint kayak coach, Jerzy Dziadkowiec. At the 2005 USA Canoe and Kayak National Sprint Championships held in Seattle, Washington last year, James raced with Geoff Calhoun, Andrew Soles, and Tom Dziadkowiec in the 4-person kayak that won the senior men's 1,000-meter race to capture the Eric Feicht Memorial Trophy for WCC. He will compete again for WCC at the 2006 National Sprint Championships to be held in Gainesville, Georgia July 24-29 at Lake Lanier (venue for the 1996 Olympic flatwater events).

For more information about opportunities for children and adults to train and compete in the sport of flatwater sprint canoe and kayak, please contact James at 703-892-1846.



James Super takes a break after getting fourth in the 1000 meter final at the 2005 USA Canoe/Kayak National Championships.



James Super, Geoff Calhoun, Andrew Soles, and Tom Dziadkowiec racing last year for the Washington Canoe Club in the 4-person kayak that won the senior men's 1,000-meter race to capture the Eric Feicht Memorial Trophy for WCC at the 2005 USA Canoe and Kayak National Sprint Championships held in Seattle, Washington.

## Sycamore Solstice

The Summer Solstice River Song Party was a great time despite calls for flash floods and the threat of rain. About 50 people of all ages gathered together for swimming, a delicious potluck BBQ chefed by the amazing griller, George Malusky, and music that went well into the night. About 7 pm the rain came upon us so we moved into the clubhouse for almost three hours of music and singing. When the thunder stopped and the rain lightened, a hearty group of hot singers of all ages dove back into the water. We all left the Island happy and satisfied, except for one intrepid family who decided to camp but ended up being rained into the clubhouse. Come to the Island for the 4th of July...more fun then!

— Whitney Pinger and Roger Pollak



Photos by David Winer

## In Touch With Joe....

### Thursday -- June 1, 2006

The swimming season is now in full swing and everyone is coming down to the river to cool off. I finally jumped in for the first time on Saturday; usually I'm in by late April but this year it was too cold. I had twenty five-year-olds here on Tuesday and yesterday there was a party of ten that came down for a picnic. The fishermen are also out now that the water is warm and the fish are active again.

### Monday -- June 5, 2006

I finally spent the night on Ruppert's Island. I took two thirteen-year-olds up there Saturday night and the three of us had a great time canoeing and camping. The stinging nettles were everywhere but we came prepared with a weed whacker and a machete and were able to carve out a nice spot for our campsite.

### Tuesday -- June 6, 2006

There is strange white fuzz everywhere. I guess its pollen from the trees and the fuzz from the cottonwoods. Since we haven't had any rain it's had a chance to accumulate on everything. I swept off the canoe shed yesterday; it's really in need of a paint job. I think I'll make a bid to the Club to paint the old metal roofs. I also spent some time clearing spider webs from all the windows.

### Wednesday -- June 13, 2006

The young eagles are still hanging around the nest but it won't be long now before they are able to fly and hunt for themselves. The mulberries are just about all gone and happily that means the geese have all gone as well. I've been busy stirring things up in the men's locker room. I moved the door to the bathroom down there and moved a bunch of lockers around too. I organized the life jackets and I even painted! It looks much brighter and roomier in there now. We just saw our resident barred owl. We were waiting for the school bus when it flew up and landed on the big spruce tree in front of the Sycamore store. Today is the last day of school so I should see a bit more activity down here soon.

### Friday -- June 16, 2006

The river is low, especially for this time of year. I'm not complaining, a low river means it's easier to pull the ferry; but I am concerned about this drought and what it might mean for my water supply. The weather is beautiful again today and I should get some business. Yesterday, we were honored to have a long-time member, Phil Thorson, down here. He's been a member since 1947!!! It was great to see the two old-timers, John Matthews and Phil, chatting by the canoe shed. I guess if you live in the woods you'll see a tree fall sooner or later, but it was startling to be on the swim dock when a huge limb broke from a tree and loudly crashed into the river. The owls woke me again last night with their eerie hoots and chattering.

### Wednesday -- June 21, 2006

I finally have my phone and Internet working again, a tree fell and snapped my phone line up on the parkway and it took some time for Verizon to get around to fixing it. There is an important event taking place this weekend, The Bioblitz (<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/blitz/>). Over 115 scientists will be in town volunteering their time for the survey, often staying out through the night for their surveys. The event is based out of Glen Echo Park, MD. Educational events will be open to the public through the weekend and a final species count will be announced Sunday, followed up in one year with a publication of findings in the journal *Banisteria*. Volunteers are needed throughout the weekend for a variety of tasks, including helping with set-up and breakdown of tents, tables and chairs, registration, meal set-up, data recording, and other tasks related to running this large volunteer event. This is a great opportunity to interact with biologists from many places and watch as discoveries are made. Volunteers are needed to help with base camp set-up, registration, meal set up, driving, etc., in two or four hour shifts 10am-10pm Friday, 6am to 10pm Sat and 6am to 6pm Sunday. Please sign up to help! Contact Mary Travaglino at PotomacGorgeVol@tnc.org or call 301-897-8570 if you would like to sign up to help out. I decided to help out by offering the Island as a place for the scientist to camp while they're here. I talked with the coordinator and it looks like we will have about twenty scientists here on Friday and Saturday night. They will be hard at work all day and won't show up here until 11:00 p.m. They all leave again by six a.m. so I don't think it will affect most Islanders. I'm glad that we are able to provide this much-needed camping space and do our part for a very worthy cause.

### Friday -- June 23, 2006

We see the adult eagles almost everyday and sometimes we see them together by the nest feeding their young. I can't be sure that there are still two baby eagles in the nest. It won't be long now before the young ones leave for good. Air Force One flew by yesterday. It was impressive to see it zoom by below the tree line at a hundred miles an hour with its fighter-jet escort. Our tax dollars at work. I've been enjoying the most idyllic summer days down here this week; this is really the time to be on Sycamore Island. I've had my young nieces and nephews here this week and we have been having so much fun fishing, swimming, watching beautiful sunsets and thunderstorms, and sleeping outdoors.



## Saturday Relief Caretakers July—August

July 1, 2006	9:00 a.m. - 3:00		
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Marianne and Phil Ross	301-229-6690
July 8, 2006	9:00 a.m. - 3:00		
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Lafe Solomon	301-229-3116
July 15, 2006	9:00 a.m. - 3:00		
	3:00 p.m. - dark	Alan Gelb	301-229-5969
July 22, 2006	9:00 a.m. - 3:00	Gordon and Linda Phillips	301-405-0347 (W)
	3:00 p.m. - dark	David Holdridge	301-657-8536
July 29, 2006	9:00 a.m. - 3:00	John Stapko	301-953-1949
	3:00 p.m. - dark		
August 5, 2006	9:00 a.m. - 3:00	Deborah Behr	301-770-0044
	3:00 p.m. - dark		
August 12, 2006	9:00 a.m. - 3:00		
	3:00 p.m. - dark		
August 19, 2006	9:00 a.m. - 3:00		
	3:00 p.m. - dark		
August 26, 2006	9:00 a.m. - 3:00		
	3:00 p.m. - dark		

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

### Large Parties

Date	Time	Who	What	How Many
01-Jul	12-7 pm	Marianne & Phil Ross	Birthday Party	35-45

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: 301-468-6433



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### **Upcoming Sycamore Events**

July Meeting, July 12, 8 p.m. At the Island

August Meeting, August 9, 8 p.m. At the Island

Sycamore Regatta, Monday, Sept. 4th, 1:30 p.m. till dusk. [See p. 5]

N.B. General Meetings are held at 8 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month.



Ready! Si Ross, son of Garth and Christy Ross.

Photo by Joe Hage