

Two Events and One Non-Event

Annual Fishing Derby, Saturday, August 19
8:30 am– 12:30 p.m. [see p. six]

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

August General Meeting—CANCELLED

The Sycamore Islander

August 2006

Volume 85 No. 8

President's Letter

The big news at this point in the summer is that there is no news – or at least not enough news to cause Islanders to turn out for the monthly meetings. For the second month, we did not get a quorum for the monthly meeting. Since August traditionally is the month that the Club is least likely to get a quorum for a meeting and in the absence of any compelling issues that need to be addressed by the membership, the Club's officers are in agreement that the August meeting should be cancelled. Hope we'll have good weather and a good turnout for the September meeting, which is scheduled for September 13th.

As we go into the Fall, we should have a better idea of the nature of the repairs that the National Park Service will be making on the towpath by the steps to the ferry and the timing of those repairs. There should also be progress to report on the changes to the renovation of the Caretaker's quarters that are necessary to comply with the fire code.

Enjoy the rest of your summer and visit the Island. See you at the next regular meeting, on September 13th at 8:00 PM on the Island. **Again, no August meeting.**

-- 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. Telephone: 202/544-6027 or 202/445-5436 (cell).

The deadline for the September issue is Wednesday, August 30

**From the Archives, Holly Syrrakos, Archivist
59 Years Ago At Sycamore Island
From the April 3, 1947 *Washington Post***

Sycamore Island has long been a subject of curiosity in the Washington area. Articles about the Island appear periodically in all of the local papers. The following is from a clipping, found in the Sycamore Archives.

Anonymous Tip on Plane True—in a Way

A seaplane was reported “down” in the Potomac last night by an anonymous tipster.

The vicinity of Sycamore Island near Glen Echo soon was swarming with would be rescuers from the Montgomery County Police and Navy Department, and the Glen Echo Fire Department.

What’s more, the hubbub brought injury to Park Policeman John Hoffman, whose motorcycle was struck by an automobile at 28th and P Sts. NW, as Hoffman was answering the call.

But it was Jerry Wynkoop, 14-year-old St. Stephens School student, who set them all on the correct track.

That plane was down all right—“it’s been anchored at Sycamore Island since last Friday.”

“That is true,” said form. Maj. John A. Newman, of Sycamore Island. Newman flew the Republic amphibian from Long Island last Friday.





Take Comfort Where You Can

Not for nothing
are we given at least as much
sense as God gave a goose,
which we have no access to, sensewise.
We don't speak goose
nor recognize what body language
there may be in a body
which is mostly neck and dollop.
But down, now there is something
to build dreams on.
We have recourse
and in the morning the feathered snow
will have come and closed the roads.
Linger. Leave off.

— Michael Chitwood

Copyrighted by Michael Chitwood who kindly gave *The Islander* permission to publish this poem. Mr. Chitwood recently published *Finishing Touches*, a collection of essays and short stories. He has collections of poetry forthcoming from Tupelo Press and Louisiana State University Press.

A Sycamore Profile: Brad Coolidge

By Gerry Barton

Bradford Coolidge, one of the oldest members of Sycamore Island, joined the Club in September 1961, resigned his membership in December 2005, and was immediately elected an honorary member. Brad served the Club in many capacities over the years including two years as president in the early seventies.

Brad was born in Medford, Massachusetts. During his high school years he had a canoe on the Mystic River and would carry it across the Mystic Parkway to reach the river. It was a wooden Old Town canoe that his mother sold after he went to Japan. Brad graduated from Tufts and majored in history, economics, and government. He had a job on a newspaper in Tokyo for two years from 1937 to 1939, and spent three months in China in 1937. He returned to the United States and attended Harvard University where he received a master's degree in government.



John Matthews (I) and Brad Coolidge
Photo by Gerry Barton

After leaving Harvard, Brad joined the Foreign Broadcast Monitoring Service of the Federal Communications Commission. He worked at listening stations monitoring Japanese radio traffic in Portland, Oregon, and San Francisco,. He did this until about 1943 when he was drafted into the Army where he studied Japanese at the Army Intensive Language School in Wisconsin. After the war he joined the State Department, retiring in the early seventies, after stints in Japan, Thailand, and Turkey.

He and Jean, who met in Japan and married in 1943, have three children, girl-boy-girl, born in 1947, 1949, and 1951. They bought their current house from John Matthews just up the hill from Sycamore Island. Brad's boating experience was mostly sailing in Massachusetts. He had a 26-foot boat on a trailer and sailed in Massachusetts and on the Chesapeake Bay including trips down the Bay to the Solomons. Brad and his son Oliver built a few boats together, including a step hydroplane, eight feet long made of plywood with a 10-horsepower Evinrude outboard that they used on the Potomac at Seneca. They also built a small kayak that was destroyed in the 1972 flood.

One of Brad's favorite Island stories is the 1972 flood. He was Island President but was away in Massachusetts when the flood hit the Island. This was a major flood with the water about half way up the locker room walls. Blair Bower was Vice President and had to handle the details himself because of Brad's absence. Brad remembers Frank Davis, who was the caretaker when he joined the Club. After Frank died, Club members went up river, brought rocks back to the Island, and built the fireplace memorial to Frank that is just down river from the canoe shed. Remember Frank the next time you hike down to the bottom of the Island.

An amusing memory is of Island canoe races. One race had paddlers alone in the bow of the canoe. The canoe would veer hard left, then hard right. Brad remembers these races as great fun. He remembers a beautiful wooden canoe owned by a member who joined the Club in 1918, who passed it on to his kids who used varnish to try to repair it. Brad bought it and discovered that it was a Canadian canoe built in Montreal by a company that built glider airplanes during the war. Brad gave it to an antique boat museum in Clayton, New York.

This is my third profile of Sycamore Islanders and they all live close to each other. Brad and John Lentz live across the street from each other and John Matthews lives a long block up the hill. I believe all three live in houses that John built. It is a Sycamore Islander enclave. I remember Brad as being a strong voice of reason at Club meetings for many years. His knowledge of Club customs and activities and his easy-going nature helped to bring stability to many contentious meetings.



Please Join Us For the
Sycamore Island Regatta
Monday, September 4, 2006
1:30 PM till dusk

After a brief hiatus, the umpteenth annual Sycamore Island Regatta is returning! Mark your calendars for this Labor Day celebration open to all Sycamore Islanders – including folks on the waiting list. Everyone is welcome, especially kids and their families and the young at heart.

Events include:

- The famous canoe dash around Sycamore Island
- Lance-a-lot jousting tournament
- Balloon stomp
- Egg toss
- Swamped canoe race
- Canoe over canoe rescue
- and more.....

Games followed by a pot-luck starting at 5-ish. Club will barbecue main course and you folks bring side dishes, desserts or drinks to share. Come any time and join us for all or part of the fun.

To volunteer or get more details contact Vicki Judson, JudsonVA@aol.com, (301) 320-5787; Sherry Pettie, sherry@pettie.net, (202) 965-5366; or, Anne Waidmann, waidmamba2@hotmail.com, (703) 536-3168.



FISHING DERBY



- What:** Sycamore Island's Annual Fishing Derby
When: Saturday, August 19
Time: 8:30 am– 12:30 pm
Who: All members, wait list members and their families & guests
Why: Fun, social life, food, exercise and maybe some excitement

PLEASE JOIN US

The fishing at Sycamore Island is the best it's been in years. Lots of bluegill, smallmouth bass, catfish and big carp have been spotted and are now waiting for you! So please come on down and join in the fun of catching fish, telling fish stories, and later having a cook out. Prizes will be given for the person who catches the BIGGEST FISH, MOST FISH, and the infamous WALLEYE AWARD! A BBQ lunch will follow the day's events.

Please let George or Shelley Malusky know if you plan to attend:

301-871-1707 or email at

shelleymalusky@verizon.net.

In Touch With Joe....

July 6

So much has happened since my last entry back on June 23 that I don't know where to begin. First, I feel very fortunate that the Island was not completely washed away by the recent rains, and my heart goes out to those who weren't as lucky. I was sure that I would have to cut my vacation short and rush back to the Island to rescue my things; but the river gods were smiling on me and I was able to stay in Bethany Beach (where it wasn't even raining). The Island is back to normal except that the swim float is still over 100 yards downstream from the Island. I think it would have gone over the dam if it were not for the heroics of Tryon Wells, Dave Winer, and my friend and substitute caretaker Dominique Maggio who came down in the rain to tie it to a tree.

We had ten canoes venturing onto the river at sunset on Tuesday night to watch the fireworks. It was so much fun paddling in the moonlight and we weren't disappointed by the fireworks either. What a show!

The roof above the Club kitchen has gone bad and I pulled two very wet and ant-infested planks down from the ceiling. John Matthews and son were down to assess the damage and it looks like the roof will need to be replaced.

July 7

I noticed last night that we lost a large black walnut tree. It must have fallen during that first wave of heavy rainfall we had two weeks ago. It damaged some other trees and left a big hole in the canopy. The heavy rains eroded much of the topsoil on the Island and now the bulbs of the blue bells can be seen poking out of the washed-out hillsides. The rain also carved out miniature canyons and made little mesas where there was a pebble or a stone to keep the dirt from washing away. Some of these stones caught my eye and, after examining them, I think they may be chips from making arrowheads.

July 9

Tryon and I went out to rescue the swim float on Friday. These kinds of projects are never straight-forward and always require a bit of creativity and a lot of back work. Tryon arrived with 200 feet of rope. After gathering the necessary tools, among them my climbing ascender for gripping the rope, we paddled out to the wayward float. Our plan was not to get the float back in position, but to merely free the anchor and get it to safe harbor. There was a very impressive length of rope holding the float to a tree on the Island; and, of course, this rope was a magnet for large trees and debris, making our task that much more challenging. Convinced that the anchor was indeed stuck we planned to secure a new line to the Maryland shore and then cut the other line in the hopes that this would free the anchor. The wind was blowing pretty hard down river and Tryon had a tough time starting off with his 200-foot line. The wind died briefly; Tryon got close to the shore, but he was still thirty feet from the closest tree.

Then the back work started. I cut the old line and sent the float adrift and, while Tryon feverishly paddled toward the shore, I began to pull on the anchor rope. Whatever we did seemed to help because I was able to gather in a lot of anchor line and, with all my might, I held the anchor off the river bottom while Tryon towed us in. Tryon finally reached the trashy shore and with a groan I dropped the anchor. It was inspirational the way Tryon fearlessly stepped off

the boat into the thick, wet and smelly mud to reach a tree on the bank. Now that our anchor was free, our next task was to retrieve the other rope, the one with the snag of trees stuck to it. It took some time, but we managed to free the rope. Once again, Tryon heroically braved the mud to refasten the rope on the Island so that it would reach the float. Once we had a new line from the Island to the float we cut the line to the mainland, hoisted anchor, and pulled the float up close to the Island. We decided to wait until we had more help to get the swim float back to its proper place. It might not sound like a lot of work but it took the two of us over three hours to accomplish.

July 10

The swim float is now back in its proper place thanks to the hard work of a few devoted members. Tryon Wells, Bruce Gaber, Mac Thornton, Andre Thornton, John Membrino and I gathered on the Island yesterday at about noon and went to work. I put on my waders and did my part by holding the float from the shore while the five of them manned canoes. It was no simple job and I'm sure it was entertaining to watch us as we slopped through the mud on the bank trying to keep the float from getting snagged. Tove and Susan Elfstrom also showed up in time to take pictures and add some crucial assistance. Happily, the wind was blowing up river and a lot of muscle power was all we needed to get the swim float operational again, well almost, I still need to attach the ladder. Thanks to everyone who helped and to those that wanted to help but couldn't make it.



Photo by Tove Elfstrom

July 11

I just met long-time member Joe O'Boyle. Joe is a plumber and he very generously offered to help me fix the outdoor shower. I visited him at his home on Iroquois Road, a house he built, with help from John Matthews, back in 1953. I found him in his surprisingly large back yard where he had two sheds full of plumbing parts and a kennel for his award-winning beagles. It was great to hear him talk about the way the area has changed as he patiently fiddled with our broken faucet. His was one of the first houses in the area. Back in '53 when he moved in there was still a working truck farm next door. He said he had to put up a fence to keep the chickens out of his wife's flowers. He also told me about a log cabin that used to be at the end of the street. I watched as his expert hands loosened the rusty fittings and replaced the worn parts, stopping occasionally to spit tobacco. I found out that his wife, Pauline, is bedridden but Joe still takes on some plumbing work even with his two replaced shoulders and one replaced knee. I'll have to find more plumbing work for him to help me with so I can hear some more of his old-timer stories.

July 21

I called Louise Rogers yesterday. She and her husband George Rogers were the ones who lived at and operated the Sycamore Store for all those years. I'm sorry to report that George died about a year ago, but Louise was very glad to hear from me and very interested in all the happenings around Sycamore Island. I told her that I would forward my Islanders to her and she said she would love that.

Saturday Relief Caretakers August—September

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	Warren Brown	410-295-0377
August 26, 2006	9:00 a.m. - 3:00		
	3:00 p.m. - dark		
September 2,	9:00 a.m. - 2:00		
	2:00 p.m. - dark		
September 9,	9:00 a.m. - 2:00		
	2:00 p.m. - dark		
September 16,	9:00 a.m. - 2:00		
	2:00 p.m. - dark		
September 23,	9:00 a.m. - 2:00		
	2:00 p.m. - dark		
September 30,	9:00 a.m. - 2:00	Rich Lodish	301-656-2148
	2:00 p.m. - dark		

****** Caretaker Volunteers ******

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

Large Parties

No Large Parties Scheduled for August and September

A large party application form may be printed from the Club's web page at
<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/systeps.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



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Internet, go to:
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FIRST CLASS MAIL

Upcoming Sycamore Events

August Meeting—CANCELLED

Annual Fishing Derby, Saturday, August 19
8:30 am– 12:30 p.m. [see p. six]

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

September Meeting—Wednesday, September
13, 8:00 p.m. At the Island.

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



The Captain Supervising
Photo by Tove Elfstrom