



Berm Bags (page five)

Photo by Norman Metzger

The Sycamore Islander

December 2006

Volume 85 No. 12

President's Letter

The December Meeting is the most important meeting of the year and the most fun. We have serious business to transact, which I will touch on later. Then, the meeting becomes a celebration of the Club, its members and the holiday season. We get a big turnout. Please bring an appetizer or a dessert. Our host for December says that he has enough wine and beer for everyone.

The December meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 13, beginning at 8:00 PM at the home of Larry and Anne Heilman, 46 Grafton Street, Chevy Chase, 301/657-3953. The location is in Chevy Chase Village, between Connecticut Avenue and Western Avenue. Larry and Anne live across the street from Peggy Thomson, who hosted the Club's December meeting for many years. **Please do not arrive at the Heilman's before 7:45 P.M.**, because Larry has a prior engagement earlier in the evening.

On the agenda for the business portion of the meeting are the election of officers for 2007 [page four], the approval of a budget [page three], and the establishment of dues and fees for 2007 [page two]. We may also have bid specifications for the renovation of the caretaker's quarters and the Clubhouse.

This *Islander* includes a slate of officers and directors for 2007 developed primarily by Carl Linden, a distinguished past President. Steve Wolk, our current Vice President, has decided to step down. Peter Winkler, who has held a number of officer positions in the past, has agreed to take on the VP role. I want to thank Steve for his service to the Club and Peter for stepping up to the plate. Even though we believe that we have a full slate of officers and supervisors for 2007, it is not too late to volunteer for a position. Many of the positions can be shared. I cannot overemphasize the importance of getting new

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 January issue is Wednesday, December 27 (Ho! Ho!)

blood into the Club's management. If you think that you might have an interest in serving as an officer or supervisor, don't hesitate to call me while the impulse is fresh. You can reach me at 202/492-2003.

I am sorry to report that Norm Metzger, Editor of the *Islander*, has announced that 2007 will be his last year as Editor. Norm has done a wonderful job of making the *Islander* a first-class newsletter. These are big shoes to fill. I intend to organize a small committee to search for a new Editor early next year. I would like to have a new Editor in place so that he or she can work with Norm on the November and December issues. Please let me know if you have any interest in becoming the Editor.

This *Islander* also contains a proposed 2007 budget and schedule of dues and fees. The increase is approximately five percent overall. Even with a five percent increase, the Club's projected revenue is slightly less than the budgeted expenses, which are conservatively estimated. Details will be provided at the December meeting.

I look forward to seeing you at the Heilman's on December 13th at 8:00 P.M. (but not before 7:45!).

— Jeff Komarow

PS. The best holiday gift I could get this year would be for you to volunteer to serve as an officer or supervisor in 2007.

MONTGOMERY SYCAMORE ISLAND CLUB		
PROPOSED 2007 DUES AND FEES		
	Current Dues (2006)	Proposed (2007)
Regular Members	\$300	\$315
Senior Members	\$150	\$158
Waiting List	\$23	\$24
Inactive	\$75	\$79
Canoe Rack Fees	\$28	\$30
Initiation Fee	\$58	\$60
Wait List Pass (includes wait list fee)**	\$150	\$158
Non-Rack Boat Storage	\$15	\$16
Large Party Fee (11-20 guests)	\$12	\$16
Large Party Fee (21-35 guests)	\$30	\$36

Sycamore Island - Proposed 2007 Budget

3% Inflation Factor Assumed

Variable Costs	2006 Budget	2007 Proposed
Capital Improvements	6000	6000
Entertainment	800	800
Islander	7000	6500
Construction Project	0	0
Membership	400	400
Grounds	600	600
Misc.	800	800
Professional Services	0	0
Repairs and Supplies	5000	5000
Sub-total	20600	20100
Fixed Costs		
Employee Expenses:	29386.8	32767.58
Insurance and Worker Comp.	13500	12000
Insurance, Bus	6000	
Medical Insurance	7500	
Tax:	2400	2500
of which:		
Fed	0	
Property	2400	
Utilities:	4500	6000
Bank charges	300	300
Sub-total	50086.8	53567.58
GRAND TOTAL	70686.8	73667.6

**Montgomery Sycamore Island Club
Nominations for 2007 Officers & Supervisors**

Officers

President**	Jeff Komarow
Vice President*	Peter Winkler
Recording Secretary	Sherrie Pettie
Treasurer**	Alan & Caroline Gelb
Financial Secretary	Lisa Kliefoth
Editor	Norman Metzger
Archivist	Holly Syrrakos
Captain* **	Tryon Wells
Deputy Captains* **	Larry Heilman & John Stapko

Supervisors

Finance**	Bill Eichbaum
Law**	Maurice Tobin
Grounds*	Penny Dolittle
Painting/Carpentry	Charles Pill
Website	Tryon Wells
Entertainment	George & Shelley Malusky
Camping/Parties	John Noble
Canoeing*	Jim Drew
Swimming*	Larry Heilman
Relief Caretaking	Maxine Hattery
Clubhouse	Karl Kosok

Caretaker

Joe Hage 7023 MacArthur Blvd, Bethesda, MD 20816

Board of Directors

Jessie Bakeman	Carl Linden
Blair Bower	George Loeb
Warren Brown	David Lyles
Bradford Coolidge	George Malusky
Ann Marie Cunningham	John Michener
Richard Dolittle	Clifford Russell
Bill Eichbaum	Jack Sanders
Richard Fellows	John Schubert
William Kugler	Tryon Wells

(Standing Committees: *Safety Committee, **Personnel Committee)

Minutes: November 8, 2006

The November meeting was held at the home of Lauren Brandt and Jean-Louis Sarbib, who provided delicious food and drink. We were late in starting due to your Secretary's delayed arrival.

Except for approval of the Minutes, no other business was transacted.

Present: Gerald Barton, Lauren Brandt, Ann Marie Cunningham, Jim Drew, Alan Gelb, Larry Heilman, Jeff Komarow, George Loeb, Sherry Pettie, Trip Reid, Peggy Thomson, Tryon Wells, Steve Wolk.

Minutes: The October minutes were approved without changes.

Treasurer's Report: Alan Gelb reported that we will end the year roughly on-budget, and hopefully a little under.

As there were no other reports to be made, Jeff Komarow started a general discussion, the main points of which follow:

The Workfest was scheduled for November 12 (and since rescheduled twice to December 3) and hopes were high that a repeat of the Phone Tree would attract a big turnout. Gerry Barton reported that the washed-out trench along the ferry landing steps had been filled in by the Park Service, and that he and Jim Drew planned to build a berm with railroad ties to keep rainwater from washing over. Ann-Marie Cunningham suggested plantings so that roots could help hold the bank in place, and also encouraging people to walk on the stairs.

Joe Hage stopped in and expressed the need for crew leaders to organize and direct the increased number of workers. Jeff suggested a meeting in March to better plan for the Spring Workfest. Gerry Barton suggested mini-workfests on a monthly basis for specific projects.

Regarding the building renovation project, Anne-Marie said that Tryon was undecided on whether to apply for building permit before or after getting contractor bids. At this point, Tryon arrived at the meeting and said that he has asked the architect to put together bid packages for contractors, which he expected in that week. Larry Heilman asked why we did not get financing in place before applying for a permit. We need to find out the cost and get financing in place before any constructions starts, and getting financing in place could take a long time.

Special Assessment and Dues Increase: Jeff Komarow said this raises the issue of sequencing for funding. He had hoped that a vote on construction financing would coincide with determining dues for the upcoming year, but that's not going to happen. We can possibly vote in a special assessment later in the year. Those members who don't want to pay an additional assessment for construction need to be made aware that they won't get a refund if they wish to withdraw their membership rather than pay an assessment. We can put in the annual dues notice a note that we anticipate voting on a special assessment.

Jeff Komarow passed around a worksheet showing a proposed dues increase of 5 percent. Alan Gelb said that our increasing budget due to higher utilities and insurance costs, with reserves earning lower interest rates than in the past, necessitates a dues increase. Jeff Komarow said a 5 percent increase would only bring us up to the level of this year's budget. [See page two for proposed 2007 Dues and Fees.]

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

-- Sherry Pettie, Recording Secretary

From the Archives, Holly Syrrakos, Archivist

The First Meeting of the Sycamore Island Club 121 Years Ago

From the “Proceedings,” dated April 3, 1885:

“A meeting for the purpose of organizing a pleasure club was held April 3, ’85, at 7:30 p.m.”

A list of 12 names followed.

“The Club was organized by the election of the following temporary officers: W.D. Chadwick, Pres’t., S.R. Brooks, Sec., and M. Ruppert, Treas.

“On motion, the name of the club was called the ‘Sycamore Island Pleasure Club.’

“A committee was appointed to draft a set of rules and regulations governing the members of the Club.

“The chair appointed [a] committee on Rules...

“A recess of fifteen minutes was taken to allow the committee to prepare the rules.”

After the recess, temporary officers were elected followed by a few more action items.

“On motion, it was ordered that the expense incurred in building the boat be assessed pro rata against each member of the Club, and that the Treasurer be directed to retain from such assessment the money expended by him in building the boat.

“The Committee on Rules reported a set of rules which were adopted.

“On motion the Committee on Rules was continued and directed to report at the next Meeting any revised or additional rules that may be necessary.

“On motion that when the club adjourns it meet Wednesday, Apr. 8th at 7:30 p.m.”

Even though the specifics are not recounted here, by the close of the meeting all the members present were serving on either the Rules Committee or the Boat Committee—reflecting the spirit of volunteerism so much a part of Sycamore today.

Next month: The first rules.

**Mark P. Schlefer
580 West Hill Road
Putney VT 05346**

Dear Ann Marie:

Marion and I thank you for your kind letter and we thank the club for offering us an honorary membership. We appreciate both, particularly since we have not been involved in Club activities during the past several years, when I have been absorbed in another apparently failing effort—nuclear arms control. Let me tell you, and through you the Club, something of the countryside here and potential activities that would interest Sycamore Islanders.

The Connecticut River threads its way between New Hampshire and Vermont. The fall line at Bellows Falls is some 15 miles up river from Putney, and the River here is swift moving but smooth. On an autumn Sunday you may find as many as 75 or a hundred single-person shells in a regatta on the River. The license plates show that the participants come from all of New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania and perhaps others. I did not notice a Maryland, Virginia or DC license plate, but there were a great many cars. A college classmate of mine has been rowing a shell on the Potomac for 60 years. There are, of course, good put-ins along Connecticut riverbank for canoes or kayaks.

The West River — more properly, the West Branch of the Connecticut — flows in at Brattleboro, some eight miles down stream from Putney. It offers fine, exciting, but safe, white water for more experienced canoeists and kayakers.

The flood plain on the Vermont side of the Connecticut is wide and farms flourish on its rich soil, including dairy, sheep, and an occasional horse farm. The railroad track runs between the river and the farms, and carries the Amtrak "Vermont" to the Canadian border. I-91 also runs parallel to the river north to the Canadian border. It opens up the country to views of the gentle mountains of Vermont and the harsher beauty of the White Mountains in New Hampshire. I think it offers one of the finer of the interstate highway drives without damaging the countryside. Trees cover most of Vermont. There are no sycamores, but we have great sugar maples, white pine trees that soar 70 feet or more into the sky, beech trees, both red and white oak trees, and many paper birch trees.

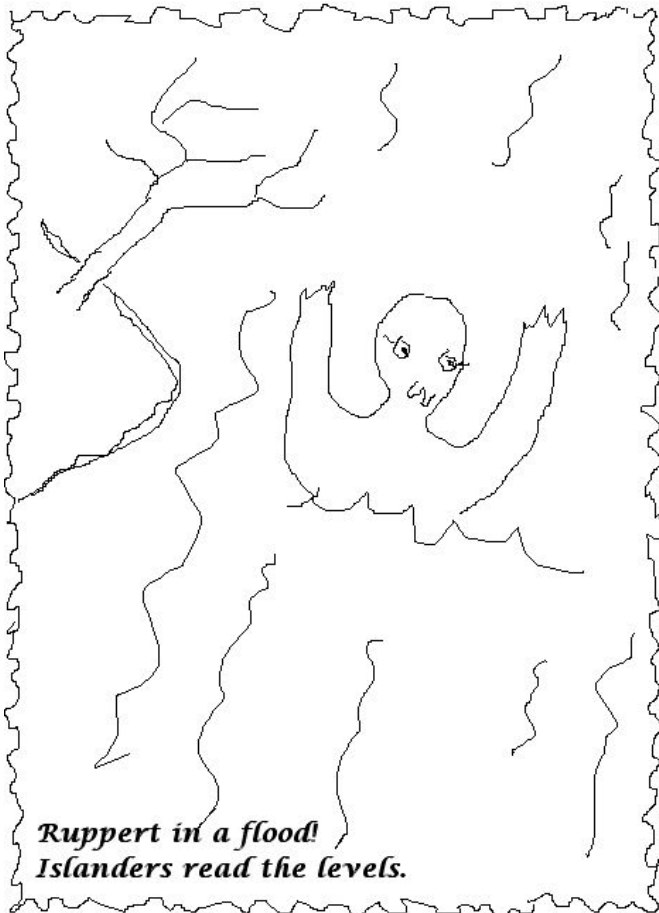
We live on our farm on West Hill. It is often said that Vermonters need to have one leg shorter than the other to walk along the hills. On the low hills orchards cover much of the open land, mostly apple, but other fruits and berries as well. West Hill constitutes a shoulder of Putney Mountain, which for a short walk (one cannot call it a climb) offers the finest view for the least work I have ever known. To the west, the Green Mountains rise in front of the sunset, if you're there at that time, and to the east you see Mount Monadnock, all alone, in the shape of Fujiyama.

Our warm regards to Sycamore Islanders....

Mark and Marion Schlefer joined the Club in 1967. Excerpts are from a letter to Ann Marie Cunningham, former Club president. The letter was sent months ago and the Editor offers only the usual excuses for not publishing it sooner.

From the Potomac Conservancy via Trip Reid....

“The Middle Potomac Region—the stretch of the river between Point of Rocks to its confluence with Rock Creek—was recently designated by Scenic America as a 'Last Chance Landscape.' This recognition is given to places with outstanding scenic and recreational resources that are threatened by development and other challenges." This passage comes from the *Good Neighbor Handbook*, a handy and useful 42-page publication of the Potomac and Nature Conservancies designed as a primer on protecting and enhancing this portion of the Potomac. It contains ten informative sections, on native plants, invasives, wildlife, etc., each section with good references to pertinent literature and internet sources. The book can be read on and/or downloaded from the Potomac Conservancy website, www.potomac.org (scroll down the right side of the home page to find it).



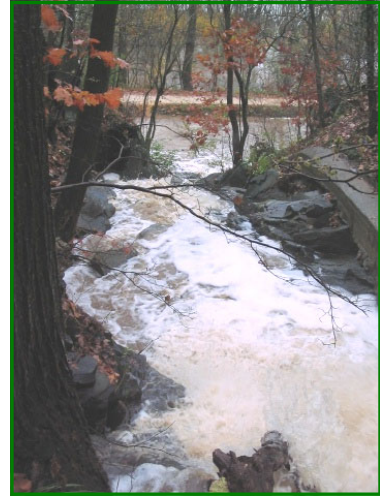
Ruppert

*—Created by
Johnna Robinson*

In Touch With Joe....

Greetings from the Gorge! I haven't seen many (practically none) of you in the past month but it has been yet another month of fine weather and slow flowing river.

We did have one high water event: The river rose to 7.9 feet after the watershed received one to three inches of rain. The day it rained our local roads and streets were turned into small rivers and low-lying intersections became instant lakes. I was driving home down Seven Locks Rd. during the downpour and it was as if entire neighborhoods were on the deck of a sinking ship. Orange water gushed from the manicured lawns out onto the street, trying to find its ancient course to the river. Storm drains and culverts were no match for the volume and power of this torrent. Our own little Walhonding Creek looked like Great Falls as it dumped into the nearly overflowing canal. The high water forced us to close the ferry and we had to come and go in a canoe for a few days. We had to postpone the Workfest, too; but with temperatures in the high sixties in late November we really can't complain about the weather.



Walhonding Creek cascading into the Canal after the storm. Photo by Joe Hage.

It has really been smooth sailing since our first rain-drenched autumn here five years ago. Looking back at that year, what I remember is a big, brown muddy river and a cold, waterlogged hike up the trail. Happily, it was our first year here and we didn't know any better. I certainly pay more attention to the weather now than I did five years ago. I guess that's what happens when you live a ferry ride and one thousand paces from your car.

I've been reading about the predecessor to our beloved C&O Canal, George Washington's Potowmack Canal. We all know that Washington built skirting canals to get around the major rapids on the River, one at Little Falls and another at Great Falls; but how did they get large boats past all the other obstacles on the river? Anyone who's tried to paddle up to the Beltway knows that it isn't easy. If the river is low you can't get past all the rocks and if the river is high it's impossible to fight the current. My theory is that the Potowmack Company did many improvements to make the river more navigable besides the famous skirting canals. Betty Burchell once pointed out to me that there might be a diverter or wing dam just below Minnie's Island. I thought that these piled stones might have been an ancient fish trap; but then I learned that Washington ordered all such traps to be destroyed to help with river navigation. This dam would have watered what look like man-made channels that hug the Maryland shore between locks seven and eight. It's cool to think that those old cargo boats used to pass right by our Island on their long journey up river.



Fiddler on the Roof. Photo by Kaylen Hage.

Happy Holidays from your Island Caretaker!

The Fall 2006 Workfest



Photos by Norman Metzger

Saturday Relief Caretakers December — February

December		
2	11—Dark	Carole Trippe & Kit Bigler
9	11—Dark	
16	11—Dark	David & Kathleen Holdridge
23	11—Dark	
30	11—Dark	
January		
6	11—Dark	
13	11—Dark	
20	11—Dark	
28	11—Dark	
February		
3	11—Dark	
10	11—Dark	
17	11—Dark	Star Mitchell
24	11 — Dark	

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

Large Parties

None Scheduled

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: johnnoble@comcast.net, phone: 301-448-8562



The Sycamore Islander

6613 80th Place
Cabin John, MD 20818
ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

FIRST-CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BETHESDA, MD 20817
PERMIT NO. 1172

FIRST CLASS MAIL

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

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Upcoming Sycamore Events

December Meeting—Wednesday, December 13, 8:00 p.m. at the home of Larry and Anne Heilman, 46 Grafton Street, Chevy Chase, MD 301-657-3953. Grafton Street is one of the spokes radiating off the western side of Chevy Chase Circle, between Magnolia Parkway and Western Avenue. The Heilmans' house is about midway between the Circle and Cedar Parkway, and across the street from Peggy Thomson's. [N.B. Please arrive after 7:45.]

January Meeting—Wednesday, January 10, 8:00 p.m. Location tbd.

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

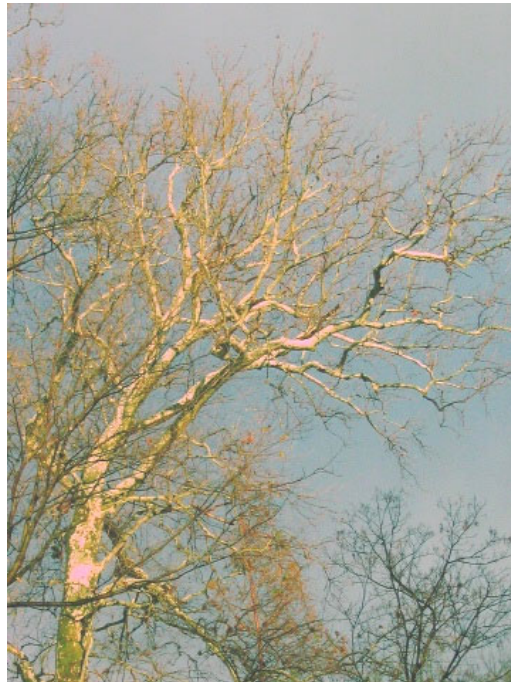


Photo by Joe Hage