



Super Quorum

Photo by David Winer

# *The Sycamore Islander*

*February 2007*

*Volume 86 No. 2*

## **President's Letter**

It's February and the gods of winter have finally taken hold. Although it is below freezing as I write this letter and the forecast is for snow and freezing rain, I also know that Spring is just around the corner. The Spring Workfest is scheduled for Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup> and there will be much to do. Since the Club implemented a phone tree, the turnouts have been excellent. Save the date and plan on coming down to the Island.

It is somewhat sobering to go back and read my letter from the February 2006 *Islander* where I envisioned that we would be in a position that Spring to vote on a construction plan, budget and financing plan for the renovation of the caretaker's quarters and clubhouse. Obviously, I was overly optimistic. Nonetheless, my goal remains to bring a complete package to the members for decision sooner rather than later. The hold-up right now is the need to have a licensed professional engineer draw mechanical and electrical plans to submit to the County for the building permit. The price quote from the engineer who normally works with our architect seems unreasonably high and we are looking for an alternative. Please contact me (202/492-2003) if you are a professional engineer or know of one who could assist us at reasonable cost.

We are still organizing an environmental committee to examine the Island's maintenance practices and other actions of the Club that impact the Island. Let me know if you are interested in chairing or serving on this committee.

As a welcome change of pace, the February meeting will be held February 14<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 P.M. at the Irish Channel Restaurant & Pub, at 5<sup>th</sup> and H Streets, Northwest, in the District of Columbia, near the Gallery Place Metro stop, courtesy of members Frank Daspit and Nell Hennessy. I hope the weather will be good enough in March to allow us to begin meeting again on the Island.

-- 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 March issue is Wednesday, February 28**

## 2007 Island Calendar

Event	Date/Time	Contact	Rain Date
Spring Workfest	Sunday, April 1 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	Joe Hage, Tryon Wells	Sunday, April 8
18 <sup>th</sup> Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup	Saturday, April 7 9 a.m. to noon.	Renée Dunham	
Annual Orientation	Sunday, April 22 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.	Tamara and Joe Belden	Sunday, April 29
Canoeing Class at Sycamore Island.	Saturday, May 5, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.	Frank Daspit and Jim Drew	
Annual Wild Flower Walk	Sunday, May 6 10 a.m. to noon.	Jane Winer	
Downriver Canoe Race	Sunday, May 20	Star Mitchell	
Long-Timers' Reunion	Tuesday, May 29th	Charlotte Brewer	Tuesday, June 5
Summer Solstice BBQ, River Song Party and Sleepover	Saturday to Sunday, June 23 to 24	Joe Hage, Whitney Pinger	
Fishing Derby	Saturday, August 18	George and Shelley Malusky	
Sycamore Regatta	Monday, Sept. 3, 1:30 p.m. till dusk.	Sherry Pettie, Vicki Judson, Anne Waidmann	
Fall Workfest	Sunday, Nov. 4, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	Joe Hage, Tryon Wells	Sunday, Nov. 11

## Minutes: January 10, 2007

The January meeting was held in the spectacular home of Whitney Pinger and Roger Pollak. The meeting was called to order at 8:05 p.m. by our president, Jeff Komarow.

**Present:** Charlotte Brewer, Carol Cavanaugh, Ann Marie Cunningham, Jim Drew, Bill Eichbaum, Alan Gelb, Lee Gravatte, Jeff Komarow, Norm Metzger, Star Mitchell, John Noble, Sherry Pettie, Trip Reid, Paul Stanton, Andrew Umhau, Tryon Wells, Dave Winer, Jane Winer, and Peter Winkler.

**Minutes:** The December minutes were approved without changes.

**Membership:** Jeff Komarow reported that Tryon Wells successfully organized a mailing of the annual dues notice to the Club's 158 members. **A motion carried** to allow Alan Gelb's niece to be married on the Island.

**New Committee:** Jeff said that Larry Heilman had suggested that the Club needed an Environmental Committee, and that he (Jeff) would like to form one. Many members spoke enthusiastically about what this Committee could focus on and accomplish, and Jeff asked for volunteers to send him their names.

**Rule of Law or Rule of Man:** Dave Winer said that he was surprised to discover at the December meeting that the Club is not governed by *Roberts Rules*, especially since they were cited in the past in overturning previously passed motions, and proposed that Roberts be adopted at the next Club meeting. Jeff suggested that the Club consider adopting the American Bar Association's *Model Rules of Order*, which are simpler and more flexible than the rather arcane Roberts, which require *inter alia* a Parliamentarian. He promised to circulate copies for the Club's consideration.

**Minute-taker needed:** As your Secretary will be contra dancing in St. Croix instead of attending the February 14 meeting, a request was made for a substitute secretary. Peter Winkler volunteered.

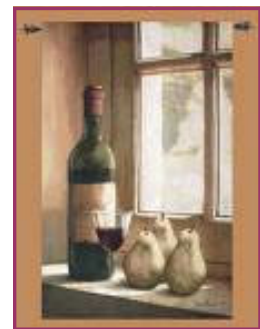
The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

--Sherry Pettie, Recording Secretary

### A Perfect Pears Pairing

A lot of people asked me for the recipe for pears poached in wine that I contributed to the dessert table at the Workfest, so...

I started with about 5 lb of big yellow-brown pears that I washed, quartered and cored. I put them in a pan, covered them with (cheap) red wine, added about 2 tbs of lemon juice, about 3/4 cup of sugar and a stick of cinnamon. I simmered it all until the pears were soft, then removed the pears, and cooked the liquid down to about 1/2 volume. I put the pears back into the liquid. When the work fest was cancelled for the first time, I slipped the whole preparation into a big plastic bag and put it into the freezer. I took the bag out of the freezer the night before the actual work fest 3 weeks later and put it into the frig. The pears were thawed nicely when we got to Sycamore. Incidentally, by the time everything was cooked, all that was left of the wine was the flavor and color - the alcohol had vaporized into the air of my kitchen.



This recipe can be adapted to any variety of fruit (though I have never tried bananas) and any kind of wine, even combined leftover wines from your last party. You can even leave out the sugar for a tarter flavor. In the Mediterranean, this sort of desert is known as fruit compote, and is very popular, especially in Greece.

— Marcia Loeb

## From Holly Syrrakos, Archivist

From the Archives

71 Years Ago at Sycamore Island

From the April 1936 *Sycamore Islander*

It may have been more than 70 years ago, but 1936 marked the beginning of Sycamore Island as we know it today. Early in 1936, a flood of record proportion wiped out all the buildings, let canoes loose, and rearranged the landscape. Member Corrine Norment Custis wrote this poem about the events:

### IN MEMORIAM

Oh Sycamore, can it be true  
That storm and flood have leveled you,  
When yesterday you stood secure  
And gave us welcome warm and sure?

For fifty years and more, set round  
By ancient trees and rolling ground,  
Your rustic house a safe retreat  
Where those who loved outdoors could meet.

The boat-house, too, where tightly packed  
Canoes, like sardines in their rack,  
Laid silently, while on the slide  
In sunshine basked your sons, outside.

I watched the water as it crept—  
Like eyes, half-shut, your windows peeped—  
Above the yellow tumbling flood  
Your gallant roof withstanding mud.

And then like dreams that melt away  
Or like a single golden day  
Spent on your shore, so quickly sped,—  
When next I looked—the tale was said.

And yet the trees and Island stand  
The mud and muck will leave the land.  
Her sons who loved her, shall not they  
Arise and build again some day?

*Even the nation's capital was not spared by the floods. The Potomac rose rapidly on 17 March, and the next day crested at Cumberland at 47.6 feet before moving down toward Washington. Thousands of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) personnel worked frantically building sandbag levees around the Lincoln and Washington monuments and the Navy's administration building.*

From Chapter V of *The Evolution of the 1936 Flood Control Act*, by Joseph L. Arnold. Office of History, United States Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, 1988.



Washington, D.C., March 19, 1936;  
WPA workmen erecting emergency  
flood levee

## In Touch With Joe....

I finally got around to cleaning the much-neglected ladies locker room. The room has been especially filthy ever since the roof was replaced when large amounts of dirt fell onto everything in there. I swept out the spider webs and cleaned the tops of all the lockers. When I mopped the floor it turned six shades lighter. I also removed two old metal lockers.

The "warm room" was my next project and I cleaned and moved furniture around in there. I've also been doing some painting in my place and it's great to have freshly painted doors in my kitchen. Painted plywood looks so much better than bare plywood.

There have been occasional eagle sightings but I'm worried that we might not get a breeding pair this year. The eagles should be close to laying their eggs now, but unfortunately the nest is still quiet. There are two red-shouldered hawks that remain very active on the Island. One time I found them perched together right outside my window.

One Monday night I hiked in the moonlight. It's not often that conditions are just right and it's possible to hike at night. That's why when everything lined up that night, I had to drop what I was doing and go for it. One convenient thing I've noticed about the moon is that when it's at its fullest, it rises right at sunset giving optimum hours of full-moon light. Later in the month, as the moon wanes, it rises later and later in the evening. On this night the moon was high in the sky by 7:30. Perfect. I could take a nice hike and be in bed at a reasonable hour.

For me, most hikes start with a canoe ride and that night I decided to paddle over to the Virginia shore so I could hike up to the Beltway on the Potomac Heritage Trail. The moon was so bright as I crossed the river that I swear I could have read the newspaper. The air was calm and warm and the moonlight made it feel like a new adventure even though I've done this hike many times during the day. The moon shone from behind me and seemed to follow the river so I had little trouble hiking the rocky trail and never had to use my headlamp. The only problem I had was when a large tree blocked the light and cast a deep black shadow on the trail. I was hoping that this nocturnal hike would produce a coyote sighting, but unfortunately that didn't happen. I did hear an owl. I wasn't positive that it was our Common Barred Owl; the call might have been from a Great Horned Owl.

I decided not to hike all the way to the Beltway and I turned south up the steep hill to the ridge above the river. I walked back along the ridge through Turkey Run Park and had an excellent view of the lights of Glen Echo Heights, including the bright new neon red lights at the arcade in Glen Echo Park. Very cool. As I found my way back to the canoe in the silence of the night, the loud splash of a beaver tail on the water made me jump nearly out of my skin. I don't think the beavers are used to having company at this time of night, and two of them circled and smacked their tails on the surface nearby until I finished my drink of water and headed down river.

I started a second job working part time at The Children's Inn. My hours are Monday-Thursday in the mornings. If you don't know how to get onto the Island, please call me if you plan to come down during those times when I'm not here. I will be on the Island for all scheduled large parties and events.



Photos by Joe Hage



## An Island Visit

Sally Strain writes....

On November 1 -- one of the warmest and prettiest days of the Fall -- Dick Walker and I sponsored a field trip to the Island for students from Deal Middle School, in Washington, DC. The students were from 24 different countries and enrolled in the Deal School English Language Learner program. The leader of the field trip, Mark Winn-Ritzenberg, a neighbor of ours in the Palisades, is an accomplished teacher, naturalist, biker and canoeist who has conducted field trips for his school programs for many years. During the field trip to the Island, Joe Hage was on hand to answer questions and to generously assist students with their activities. Joe was especially helpful to a few students who were interested in learning to fish. Mark was so grateful to Joe, and to the Club in general, that he volunteered to work with us during the fall clean-up on December 3, during which he lent a hand with many of the tough jobs, and stayed until the last project was completed. Here is a picture of Joe Hage showing students how to use a fishing line. And below is a report about the field trip written by Mark and another teacher.



Photo by Sally Strain

### COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF THE STUDENTS

Philippines	Sierra Leone
Guatemala	Mexico
Hungary	Cambodia
Côte d'Ivoire	Cuba
Bulgaria	Russia
Peru	Brazil
Bolivia	St. Lucia
Honduras	Haiti
El Salvador	Kosovo
Vietnam	Egypt
China	Ethiopia (via Israel)
Puerto Rico	Nigeria

*Thirty-one students of the English Language Learner Department, now called "Team United Nations," went on November 1 to Sycamore Island for a day of adventure and learning. For many students, it was their first time to see the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal and the Potomac River. Blessed with one of the best autumn days of the year, students took a one-mile hike along the canal. They were very excited to see an abundance of wildlife such as turtles, blue herons, frogs, and minnows. Then they took a hand-operated cable ferry to reach the island, where they spent the afternoon doing various activities: volleyball, soccer, badminton, football, zip-line, pool, games, and fishing.*

*But for everyone, the most exciting adventure was canoeing on the Potomac River. Some became skilled canoeists by the end of the day. To many students, this was the best field trip they had ever taken. After the trip, students reflected upon their experiences related to English, science, social studies, math, art, and physical education as a good lesson in interdisciplinary studies.*

— Mrs. Jihong Wang & Mr. Mark Winn-Ritzenberg, ELL teachers, Deal Middle School, Washington, DC

**Saturday Relief Caretakers February — March**

<b>February</b>		
3	11-dark	
10	11-dark	Jody & Bobby Benjamin
17	11-dark	Star Mitchell
24	11-dark	Mark Friedrichs (waitlister)
<b>March</b>		
3	10-2	Richard & Penelope Doolittle
	2-dark	David & Lynda Martin-McCormick
10	10-2	Paul Lang/Joan Barron
	2-dark	
17	10-2	
	2-dark	Gavin & Claire Bloch
24	10-2	
	2-dark	
31	10-2	
	2-dark	

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

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

**Large Parties**

Feb. 17 from 11-dark

Star Mitchell is hosting a potluck play pool party with an estimated 35 guests

May 25 (rain date 26<sup>th</sup>) from 12 to 3

Alan and Caroline Gelb will be hosting a wedding ceremony for between 50 and 70 persons

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](mailto:johnnoble@comcast.net), phone: 301-448-8562



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

FIRST CLASS MAIL

### Upcoming Sycamore Events

February Meeting — Wednesday, February 14, 8:00 p.m. At the Irish Channel Restaurant & Pub, 500 H St. NW, Washington DC, 202-216-0046.

March Meeting — March 14th, 8 p.m. Site tbd

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



Photo by Joe Hage