

**Fishing Derby, August 18 (p. 4)**

**Sycamore Regatta, September 3 (p. 5)**

**Fall Work Fest, November 4**

# *The Sycamore Islander*

*August 2007*

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## **President's Letter**

Historically, August has been a slow month in terms of business issues. After several years in which the Club did not get a quorum for the August meeting, I cancelled last year's August meeting after consulting with the Club's officers since there were no pressing issues. This year, however, I believe that an August meeting will be useful.

We are finally to the point where the Building Committee has (or shortly will have) a complete bid package for the expansion of the Caretaker's quarters and renovation of the Clubhouse. They will be meeting with potential contractors during the first two weeks of August. By the September meeting, the Club could have some hard facts on the feasibility and cost of the project; and the Club will have to decide whether to go forward and how to finance and pay for the project costs. I have repeatedly expressed my belief that the decision whether to go forward is important enough that taking a vote by show of hands at a regular Wednesday night meeting is not enough. Members should have a greater opportunity to vote, but they should be sufficiently motivated that they are willing to come to the Island to participate in pre-voting discussions and the actual vote. I have taken a rough cut at a new Standing Rule, which would establish special voting procedures for significant decisions. This proposal is being published in this *Islander* for discussion at the August meeting. After it is discussed and critiqued at the August meeting, a revised proposal will be published in the September *Islander* and put to a vote in September.

The draft special voting procedures contemplate having one or more days when a member could come to the Island and cast a vote in addition to the opportunity to vote at the regular monthly meeting. The proposal would allow the President to designate the day of the Fall Workfest as a day on which votes could be cast with respect to the building project in order to maximize participation. Please review the proposal and come to the August meeting with your comments.

The August meeting will also discuss whether the Club should take some action on swimming in light

*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 September issue is Wednesday, August 29.**

of the article that appeared on the front page of the July 14<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Washington Post*, with the headline “On the Potomac, Swimming in Risk. In Debating the River’s Cleanliness, Confusion Wins.” The article questions whether it is safe to swim in the Potomac, especially after a rainstorm due to bacteria from untreated sewage and waste from livestock. It includes tips for swimming in the Potomac including, do not enter the water if you have open cuts or sores; wash thoroughly after swimming in the Potomac; do not get in the water for several days after a significant rainstorm; and, people with immunosuppressive diseases should avoid the Potomac. Reading the article raises the question whether the Club needs to post additional warning signs, whether we should be testing the water, and whether there are times when the Club should ban swimming.

The August meeting is scheduled on the Island on August 8<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 PM. I am sure that it will be lively and interesting. You don’t want to miss it.

I hope you have been able to take advantage of the spectacular weekend weather we’ve had in June and July and that you are enjoying your summer.

-- Jeff Komarow

## **Agenda Item for August Meeting**

### **DRAFT OF NEW STANDING RULE 20. (Existing Rule 20 would be renumbered as Rule 21)**

#### **20. Special Voting Procedures**

These special voting procedures shall be used where a proposed action of the Club involves (a) a commitment of \$20,000 or more for capital projects on the Island, (b) entering into a loan agreement, whether with a commercial lending institution or with members or other individuals; (c) the imposition of a building fund assessment or other special assessment over and above the annual dues, or (4) an increase in dues other than an increase approved at the December meeting.

Voting on the proposed action shall take place at the regular meeting **and** on one or more additional dates and times prior to the next regular meeting, which dates and time shall be established by the President with a view to providing members with a convenient opportunity to vote. If possible, the Island shall be the place at which additional voting will be held. The dates, times and places of additional voting opportunities shall be published in the *Islander*. Voting shall be conducted by paper ballot with appropriate procedures to ensure that members do not vote more than once. The ballots shall remain sealed and shall not be counted until the voting has been completed.

## From Holly Syrrakos, Archivist

### 76 Years Ago (and more) At Sycamore Island From the July 1931 *Sycamore Islander*

August on Sycamore brought talk of regattas—one that had occurred and another to come in September. But the most interesting story in the 1931 *Islander* was editor Rodger Gessford's historical view titled, "Sycamore Island—Ten Years." The article runs longer than two pages, so I'll excerpt some paragraphs here.

"About 10 years ago, the late Mr. I. Walter Sharp wrote a personal narrative giving a very brief story of the Club from the early eighties [1880s that is] to that time. Now that my terms as secretary and editor of the *Islander* are finally drawing to a close it seems an excellent excuse for bringing Sycamore's story, as I know it, up to 1929.

"In 1919, when I joined the Club, there was no camping space on Sycamore Island, the tennis court was well under grass, base-ball was not played and only a very few members were interested either in regattas or in going up through the rapids. The C. and O. Canal was operating then and members occasionally went on canal canoe trips. The younger element of the day—"courtin' couples," Mr. Johnston, the caretaker, called us—spent our time on the water between Sycamore and the dam or cooked meals at the Club's camping sites along the river side of Upper Sycamore Island [Rupperts?] where there were tables and seats built and where a few members camped over weekends. The floor of the sleeping porch over the front of the canoe-house was being built that summer by the working members and they used to try and inveigle Cole and I and others to join them when we'd rush by with loads of pots, pans, pillows and paddles to be placed in our canoes and taken down to the dam where we'd cook lunch.

"Of course a few of the younger members were interested in the running of the Club, and as is generally true in such instances, they didn't approve of the process in general and, in particular, they disapproved of the idea of having women members. So all of us younger members were rallied together and were brought to the Club meetings fired with the ambition of voting down women applicants for membership so that eventually there would be no women members. We voted down a few women applicants who would undoubtedly have made excellent members and in October, 1921 we elected our own slate of officers...Just a few months later the big anti-woman crusade went on the rocks when Doctor Custis made a speech for the election of a woman applicant. That speech was the only truly dramatic speech I've heard at Sycamore in my ten years at meetings and when it was over and the vote was taken most of us hard-boiled crusaders had quit the ranks and we voted in three ladies right then and there."

And, as Bob Dylan would say, "The times they are a-changing."

## Annual Sycamore Fishing Derby Saturday 18 August, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Please come down for Sycamore's fishing derby and have some fun! There are plenty of fish to be caught and this year the smallmouth bass are the largest I've seen in years. Lots of bass between 14 and 21 inches, tons of small bluegill and a few walleye are biting. The fishing is so good that we have been catching two fish at a time with one lure! On a recent fishing trip I caught a 13" smallmouth bass and while attempting to reel the fish to the canoe, a large catfish (maybe 30 lbs.) attacked the bass numerous times before I landed and saved the bass from the jaws of Mr. Catfish (I think I need bigger fishing lures).



The river has been extremely clear and low due to no runoff from any rain, and with sunny skies and clear water the fishing has been best only in the evenings (low light) or over-cast days. So, during the fishing derby you might have to fish the shady areas of the Island or river to catch Mr. Big. If you don't catch any fish, not to worry; you can catch "lunch" at noontime. Prizes will be given for the biggest fish, the most fish and the (yet to be claimed) wall-eye award!

All club members, waitlisters, and their guests are welcome! If you have any questions, please call me on my cell phone anytime, 240-506-0937. Thanks, George.

Photo by George Malusky II

### Minutes: July 11, 2007

The July meeting was held on the Island, and called to order at 8:10 p.m. Our chair, Club president Jeff Komarow, expressed his surprise and delight to have a quorum in July.

**Present:** Gerald Barton, Charlotte Brewer, Ann Marie Cunningham, Jim Drew, Jeff Komarow, Star Mitchell, Steve Newman, Sherry Pettie, Sally Strain, Greg Super, Dick Walker, Jane Winer.

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

**Building and Finance:** The meeting was primarily focused on a discussion of the progress of the building project, and how to get members' attention on this matter in order to achieve a widely representative vote on funding.

**No Club business was conducted.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

--Sherry Pettie, Recording Secretary



Please Join Us For the

**Sycamore Island Regatta  
and Barbecue Dinner  
Monday, September 3, 2007  
2:00 p.m. till dark**

September just wouldn't be the same without the umpteenth annual Sycamore Island Regatta! 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. There will be cheering and prizes! Even if you opt not to join in the games, come join us for dinner, and hold on to that summer spirit on the river for one more weekend.

Events

The famous canoe dash around Sycamore Island  
Lance-a-lot jousting tournament  
Balloon stomp  
Egg toss  
Swamped canoe race  
Canoe tug of war  
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](mailto:JudsonVA@aol.com), 301-320-5787, or Anne Waidmann, [waidmannba2@hotmail.com](mailto:waidmannba2@hotmail.com), 703-536-3168.





## In Touch With Joe....

I'm celebrating my fifth-year anniversary of living on the Island, and, just like five years ago, it looks like we're headed into another drought. The five years of living here has taught me to appreciate droughts and enjoy them while they last; things can change very fast. But, in the meantime, it's fun to sit in the screened porch and feel as though I'm looking down on the river, as if it were some glacier-carved lake in the Adirondacks. That's the creepy thing about being down here during high water; it feels like the river is at eye level. Thankfully, there is no flooding predicted in the near future and the swimming and fishing continue to be superb, which might explain why this is by far the busiest year I've experienced since moving here. Every weekend we're filling up four sign-in sheets! But once the crowds are gone, my favorite activity is to stroll down to the swim dock after dinner with my favorite beverage and watch the sun go down. It's been so beautiful it's hard not to walk down there and sit. I especially like it when the wind causes the light to dance on the water.

Maybe it's the lack of rain, but I haven't seen any snakes that I can talk about this month. The highlight this month is the great egrets that seem to be hanging around. One day I watched as five of them coasted past me, their large white forms contrasting perfectly with a cloudy, grey background as they flew up to Rupperts. I think the egrets may have been drawn here by other recent arrivals. Pink flamingos have been living here since early July. In other bird news, it seems that our nesting spring warblers are gone and have been replaced by nesting kingbirds and pewees. I find it fascinating that in order to reduce competition different birds hatch at different times of the year. The ospreys are another example, choosing to rear their young now, long after the eagles have left their nests. So for now it is not the Carolina wren that I hear in the trees all day, but the calls of the young pewee -- "pewee, pewee". The summer night, of course, is dominated by the comforting sound of tens of thousands of insects.



Joe took this picture at "at the mouth of the Cacapon, between Sidling Hill and Cacapon Mountain."

On the maintenance front, I have managed to get a few projects done even though the Island has been very busy and I haven't had John Matthews down here to bug me to get some work done (just kidding, John; you know we love you). Actually, I could have used John the other day. I had to replace one of the pulleys for the safety-chain on the ferry and it's nice to have someone there when you're climbing ladders leaned against small trees. I also hung a new bell by the ferry landing and I put new rubber bumpers on the ferry. I'm also proud of the new carpet-covered ferry protectors that I designed and installed on the ferry-landing steps. A friend of mine, Anaya, painted the horseshoes red and yellow. She also painted one of our tables red; it looks great. I didn't have to cut the "grass" all month but we worked on some picnic tables and fixed the railings on the ferry.

I want to say that even though it has been very active down here, everyone is doing a good job of putting things away and cleaning up when they leave (with a few exceptions, of course). Thanks everyone.

**Saturday Relief Caretakers August — September**

<b>August</b>		
4	9-3	Andre Umhau
	3-dark	
11	9-3	
	3-dark	
18	9-3	
	3-dark	
25	9-3	
	3-dark	
<b>September</b>		
1	9-3	
	3-dark	
8	9-3	
	3-dark	Jack Sanders
15	9-3	
	3-dark	
22	9-3	
25	9-3	
	3-dark	

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

**Large Parties**

Aug. 11, 1-6: Trish Hartge will host 22 guests.

**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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Internet, go to:  
<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/gladsome/islander.htm>

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### Sycamore Events

August Meeting — Wednesday, August 8, 8 p.m. At the Island.

September Meeting — Wednesday, September 12, 8 p.m. At the Island.

August 18 — Fishing Derby, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

September 3, Regatta, 1:30 p.m. till dark.

November 4, Fall Workfest, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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



Find your own spot, buddy!  
Photo by George Malusky II