



The Sycamore Islander

January 2008

Volume 87 No 1

President's Letter

Happy New Year! The New Year is, of course, a time for making resolutions. Four resolutions I hope you'll make for 2008:

1. Take advantage of what the Club has to offer.
2. Pay your dues promptly (please). You will be receiving your dues notices early in January. Be on the lookout for them.
3. Get involved in Club operations.
4. Take a turn at relief caretaking during the winter. Being on the Island on a wintry day has its own rewards.

Last January, I suggested that the Club's resolution for 2007 should be "to reach a decision on the renovation of the caretaker's quarters/clubhouse and complete the project if the members vote to go forward with the project." We are part way there. The Club has voted to go forward; we have commitments from members for a \$75,000 loan, and, I continue to believe that we are on schedule to begin construction at the end of February. Stay tuned.

The January 2008 meeting will be held at the **Irish Channel Restaurant & Pub, at 5th and H Streets, Northwest**, in the District of Columbia, at the east end of Chinatown, near the Gallery Place Metro stop, courtesy of members Nell Hennessy and Frank Daspit. Nell and Frank have hosted a winter Club meeting at the Irish Channel for the last several years. The food, drinks and atmosphere are great. It is well worth the trip to be there. The date is **January 9th at 8:00 PM**. I promise to keep the business portion of the meeting short.

See you at the January 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, Amanda Cannell, 5901 Cranston Rd, Bethesda, Md. 20816. 301-229-8658. Text and graphics may be sent as email attachments to acannell@norwoodschool.org.

The deadline for the February issue is Wednesday, January 30th.

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting: December 12, 2007

The December meeting was held at Peggy Thomson's home in conjunction with the annual holiday party. President Jeff Komarow convened the meeting at 8:10 p.m. with 30 members present.

Present: Gerald Barton, Bob Beauchamp, Brad Coolidge, Jim Drew, Renee Dunham, Sarah Duggin, Alan Gelb, Jennifer Glaudemans, Joe Hage, Lawrence Heilman, Peter Jones, Rich Lodish, John and Judy Lentz, Bill and Lucky Marmon, Louise Meyer, Star Mitchell, John Noble, Hester Ohbi, Sherry Pettie, Trip Reid, Kirk Renaud, Harvey Resnik, Marianne Ross, Cora Shaw, Holly Syrakos, Peggy Thomson, Bernard Veuthey, and Tryon Wells.

Minutes: Tryon Wells commented that he felt the November minutes did not accurately reflect his view that the caretaker's quarters should be enlarged. With that amendment, the November Minutes were approved unanimously.

November Workfest: Jeff Komarow reported that the workfest was a big success. Gerald Barton reported that the new steps from the canal to the ferry are now finished. In addition, the ferry dock on the island has been expanded to improve access. John Noble commented that there should be no more comments in the President's Letter about a "lack of muscles" among the over fifty set.

Construction Project: Jeff reported that, based on initial expressions of interest, the Club will be oversubscribed on its offering of notes to finance the construction. He also noted that the Heating/Air Conditioning plan is being finalized; one bid has come in high and they will be getting others. The building committee hopes that the Club can finalize and sign a contract toward the end of January with construction starting the end of February if the weather is good. A question was raised about the possibility of incorporating solar energy into the renovation, but it was noted that as long as the Clubhouse is covered by tree shade, that it is not a viable option.

Budget and Dues: The December *Islander* provided the approved 2007 budget, the proposed 2008 budget, a discussion of 2007 financial operations, and the proposed dues accompanied by an explanation why dues needed to be increased. Alan Gelb, Treasurer, reported that the proposed 2008 budget was a transitional operating budget because of the construction project. He discussed expected increases in insurance, property taxes and the caretaker's compensation. Alan also noted that insurance rates might increase after the construction is completed. He added that after the project is finished, it might be good to review the insurance coverage to ensure that the club is getting the best deal and asked that if any member has particular expertise in this area, please contact him.

Regarding the proposed dues, Jeff reported that the one time construction fee and the 10-year annual construction dues were already approved by the vote and are not part of this meeting's agenda. These monies will go to repay the construction loan and to replenish the cash reserves. Alan reported that there was a 4% across-the-board increase for the annual dues. In the past, the dues have not been sufficient to cover the budget, but the deficit was made up using the interest earned on the reserves. He noted that the club can no longer rely on this method because 1) reserves are being drawn down for the construction project, and 2) interest rates are going down, so there will be less interest earned in the coming years on which to draw.

The 2008 proposed budget and dues were approved unanimously. The Club approved a bonus for the caretaker and an increase in salary. The caretaker continues to do an excellent job and is appreciated by the Club.

Islander Publication Costs: There was a discussion about the \$6,500.00 cost of publishing and distributing the *Islander* newsletter, and whether there should be greater effort to increase the use of the newsletter online and reduce the hard copy distribution. Tryon Wells noted that he has an email address for about 80% of the membership and already sends out an email notice and link when the *Islander* is available. There was a discussion about the merits of charging an additional \$20 per year to receive the *Islander* in the mail in order to encourage greater use of the electronic format, but this was not ultimately put to a vote. Instead, it was decided that a notice would be included in the next several newsletters, notifying members of the availability of the *Islander* online and asking that if members wanted to continue to receive a hard copy by mail, they notify the Club.

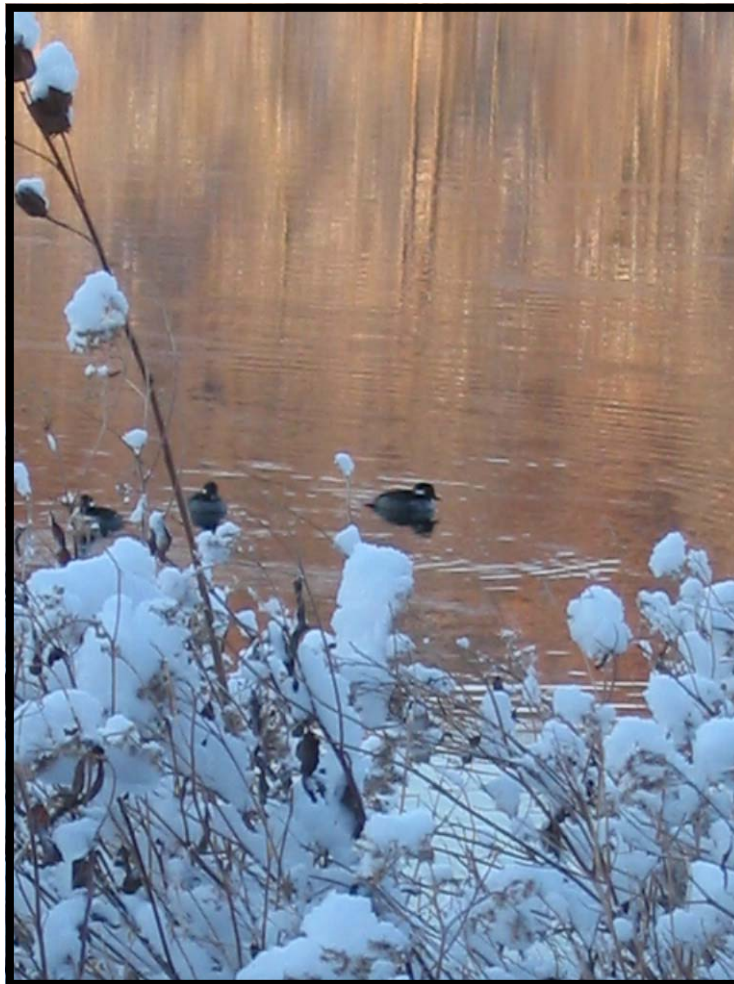
Jeff also noted that the Club does not currently have a mechanism for getting the *Islander* to former members who, though no longer active members, would like to continue to read about the Club's comings and goings. He recommended that some thought be given to setting up subscriptions for former members.

Election of Officers: Jeff reported that Sherry Pettie was stepping down as Recording Secretary and Norm Metzger would be leaving his post as editor of the *Islander*. He thanked both for jobs well done. Jeff then noted that Amanda Cannell has agreed to take on the job of editor and that the job of Reporting Secretary would be shared by Jennifer Glaudemans and Bill Marmon. The other officers would remain the same as last year. The proposed slate of officers was approved unanimously (although the President voted against himself).

Honorary Members: Jeff proposed to bestow honorary memberships on two long time members, John Matthews and Peggy Thomson. He noted that Peggy has been a member since 1961 and John since 1974, both representing the heart and soul of Sycamore Island. He discussed their contributions to the Club, noting that John Matthews was the Captain for at least 17 years and was responsible for many of the improvements on the Island. The motion was enthusiastically and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m. after which there was much partaking of good food, good drink and good cheer.

-- Jennifer Glaudemans, Co-Recording Secretary



Female Buffleheads— Photo by Joe Hage

From Holly Syrrakos, Island Archivist

76 Years Ago

From the January 1932 Sycamore Islander

In these times, we think of the Island as being uninhabitable or infrequently used in January. Of course, we also know that isn't true. In 1932 however, the Club regularly scheduled events and parties in January. One of these was the annual Buffet Supper and Oyster Roast. In 1932, it was to be held on the 16th, a Saturday.

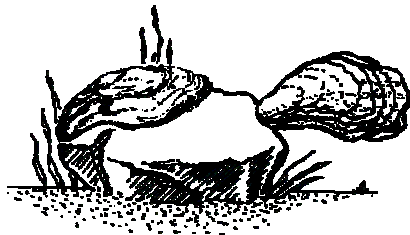
In 1932, the editor writes,

“ These affairs have generally been called ‘oyster roasts’ but so many folks have gotten the idea that the occasion is only for persons who love the little oysters and maintain that they’ll do them no harm, that we want to emphasize that it is a ‘buffet supper and oyster roast.’ Yes, indeed, among other things we serve rye bread, sweitzer cheese that is really imported—none of this synthetic stuff—very nice cream cheese, a bologna so fine that it’s a shame to call it by that unesthetic name, really fresh and crisp potato chips, real cream, coffee and some Atlantic City buns or perhaps slabs of Reeve’s pie. [Remember Reeve’s?] ... And, as has been stated above, there’ll also be oysters—oysters from Lynnhaven Bay, oysters from the York River, all new oysters, oysters that have never before been to Sycamore Island—surely you’ll come up and welcome them and help them out of their heavy overcoats.”

“The charge for all this will be somewhere’s between seventy-five cents and a dollar, but probably the lower figure. We hope to make a little profit for the Club and we can do this very easily and yet give you plenty for your money if you’ll only be thoughtful enough to use the enclosed post-card to tell us whether you’re coming and how many guests you’ll bring.”

“And by the way—very important—we’ll have some music so that those who will may dance. It will probably be a radio, but if we can’t ooze a radio from someone we’ll get a pianist and charge the dancers extra.”

With a teensy bit of research, I discovered that “sweitzer” cheese is swiss cheese. It sounds like fun but I still have trouble imagining a large party in the middle of January!



In Touch with Joe....Notes from his Island Journal

Monday – December 3, 2007

Today I put the finishing touches on our new ferry-landing project, a matter of installing the new bolts that were needed. I'm also very happy about finally fixing the wobbly and dangerous metal railing at the ferry landing. Some of you, I hope, will appreciate this. I used a hacksaw to cut off the old bolt and replaced it with a new, shorter bolt that allowed me to make the railing more sturdy and secure. I don't know why it took me five years to realize that I could fix the problem, but I finally did it.

The wind was blowing madly as I tried to return to the Island today and I found that holding the chain to the ferry was like trying to hold a bucking bronco. Once I was on the ferry it was like *riding* a bucking bronco as I held on to the rope in the fierce 30 MPH plus winds. This is a great time to visit the Island, no snakes!

Tuesday -- December 4, 2007

Never underestimate the power of the wind. Not only did the ferocious winds tear the ramp from the Captain's float, but they were also washing away the Island! The constant wave action of the last couple of days had removed at least two feet of shoreline on the Virginia side. The poor plants growing there were left with bare, white roots dangling in the river.

Friday -- December 7, 2007

I was going to tell you about all the leaves that I raked up, but then we had this wonderful snow. I didn't expect the snow to keep falling like it did Wednesday night, we actually got four inches of snow on the Island. I came home at about 3:30 and shoveled all the walks and the ferry and *both* bridges. I finished around five, at eight I couldn't tell that I'd shoveled at all. I shoveled everything again and headed back to the Island. I wanted to get back so I would have time to look for animal tracks in the snow.

It was strangely bright out with the lights from the CIA compound reflecting off of the snow and the low-lying clouds. I didn't even need a flashlight as I went looking for tracks and it didn't take long to find some fresh prints. They were deer tracks less than an hour old, probably a large male. I followed the tracks backwards to their origin and that led me toward the head of the Island (upstream). Weaving between the snow-covered paw-paw trees and climbing over fallen logs, the tracks led me to an obviously disturbed spot in the snow where the roving buck had emerged from the river and struggled to the shore. With this new information I turned around and followed the prints in the direction that they were headed, toward the bottom of the Island. Next, I walked with one eye on the trail and one eye looking for the deer that could still be on the island. The fresh tracks kept going, past the clubhouse, across the field, and all the way to the end of the Island. I saw an obvious trail cut through the snow-covered weeds and right back into the frigid river. Incredible! The snow gave me a rare chance to record the travels of the deer. I wondered how many deer traveled through here every week.

Monday -- December 10, 2007

It looked like there was some water headed our way with all this rain. I noticed that a few of the streams in the watershed were high enough to paddle. That meant that a river level prediction of 4 feet here on the Island by Thursday, the highest river level since May 5, 2007. That was seven months ago!

Thank you to Gerry Barton. He came down today and installed much needed, new planks at the ferry landing on the Island side.

Thursday -- December 13, 2007

Banshees on the towpath! It's always a little unsettling to hear strange howls and screeches that you can't identify. It's worse still when you're alone in the dark. The sound I heard was like a strange mix of a squawking bird and a catfight. It then morphed into a rapid howl that started to fade as I walked toward it. I heard soft yelping that seemed very close, right on the other side of the canal! Then it was quiet. I shined my headlamp toward the sound of rustling leaves on the other side, but I saw nothing. Was it a fox? Was it mating foxes? Maybe it was just some raccoons. Or maybe it was COYOTES!

Sunday – December 23, 2007

I have another thrilling animal sighting to report. You've heard me talk of circumstantial evidence of river otters living near the Island, but now I have an eyewitness account. I was boarding the ferry from the Island after dark, maybe 8:00 p.m. when I noticed something different on the water. I thought at first that it must be a small log bobbing in the river, about 2 ½ inches in diameter. Then, these two little logs began to swim toward me! I was standing on the ferry next to the Island and in the dim light I saw these crazy, curious otters swim right up alongside the ferry. Then, to my shock, they started making cute little chirping sounds, that's how close they were! They were not logs at all, but two charismatic otters coming to greet me in the moonlight.

-Joe Hage



Photos by Joe Hage

Saturday Relief Caretakers January — February
Please sign up as soon as possible

JANUARY			
5	11-dark		
12	11-dark		
19	11-dark		
26	11-dark		
FEBRUARY			
2	11-dark		
9	11-dark		
16	11-dark		
23	11-dark		

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

Large Parties

There are no large parties planned for the month of January.

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

Provisional Sycamore Island Calendar for 2008

Event	Date/Time	Contact	Rain Date
Spring Workfest	Sunday, April 6 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	Joe Hage, Tryon Wells	Sunday, April 13
18 th Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup	Saturday, April 12 9 a.m. to noon.	Renée Dunham	
Annual Orientation	Sunday, April 13 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.	Tamara and Joe Belden	Sunday, April 20
Canoeing Class at Sycamore Island.	Saturday, May 3, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m	Frank Daspit and Jim Drew	
Annual Wild Flower Walk	Sunday, May 4 10 a.m. to noon.	Jane Winer	
Downriver Canoe Race	Sunday, May 18	Star Mitchell	
Summer Solstice BBQ, River Song Party and Sleepover	Saturday to Sun- day, June 21 to 22	Joe Hage, Whit- ney Pinger	
Fishing Derby	Saturday, August 16 tbd	George and Shel- ley Malusky	
Sycamore Regatta	Monday, Sept. 1, 1:30 p.m. till dusk.	Sherry Pettie, Vicki Judson, Anne Waidmann	
Fall Workfest	Sunday, Nov. 9, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	Joe Hage, Tryon Wells	Sunday, Nov. 16



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

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Sycamore Events

January Meeting : Wednesday, January 9th at 8:00 PM, at the Irish Channel Restaurant and Pub, 5th and H streets NW, Wash. DC

February Meeting : Wednesday February 13th at 8:00 PM. Site TBD

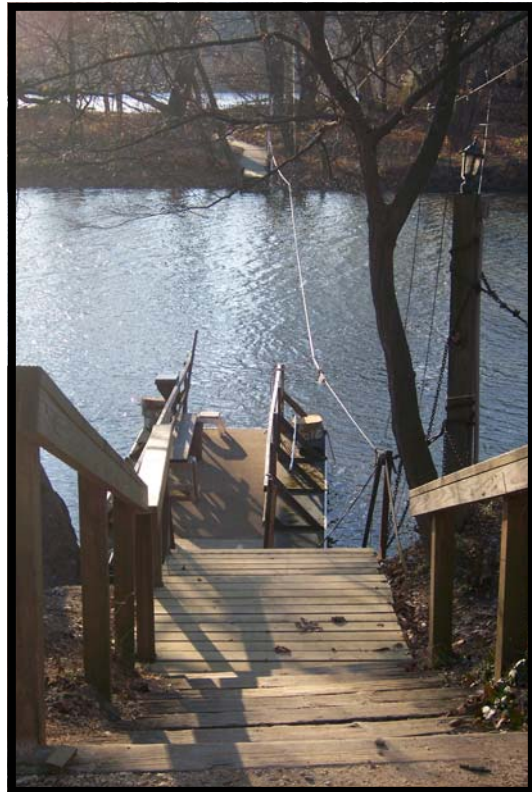


Photo by Amanda Cannell