



The Sycamore Islander

September 2008

Volume 87 No 9

President's Letter, September 2008

It is hard to believe that the summer is nearly over. It seems like I turned over the calendar to June just yesterday. Of course, I say that every September One of the joys of September is that, in most years, the Potomac River usually clears. It's a great time for fishing and being out on the river.

September Meeting Issues: At the September meeting, we'll be looking at the calendar and charting our course for the Fall. We need to select a date for the Fall workfest and may need to organize one or two smaller work sessions to take care of some pressing repair problems. We also need to find a tree expert to evaluate some of our trees and perhaps take down some limbs or, unfortunately, whole trees. Read Joe's caretaker's log for more details. Contact Joe, Tryon Wells or me (jkomarow@covad.net) if you know of a good tree expert company.

October meeting changed to October 15: As I mentioned last month, we are moving back the October meeting date by one week to October 15th in order to avoid a conflict with the Yom Kippur holiday. The October meeting will be the last meeting on the Island until next Spring.

Presentation on Global Climate Change: Professor Bob Beauchamp, Director of Environmental Management and Energy Research Programs at University of Maryland, University College will be giving a talk on global climate change, probably before the October meeting. Stay tuned.

Construction Update: We thought we had given the County all of the engineering drawings they needed, but apparently not. The County wants an additional electrical drawing. Maybe we will actually get the building permit if I don't make any more predictions about when we'll be finished. It's a good thing that Noah did not pick Montgomery County to build the Ark.

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 ahcannell@gmail.com

The deadline for the October issue is Wednesday, October 1st.

September Meeting Date: The next regular meeting will be held on September 10, 2008 at 8:00 P.M. on the Island. The days are getting shorter, so bring a flashlight for the climb up to the parking lots.

Jeff Komarow

P.S. The answer to last month's golden oldies question: The Tempos recorded "See You In September" in 1959. Their recording was used in the soundtrack for "American Graffiti." Shelley Fabares also recorded the song on an album in 1962.



Photo by Joe Hage

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

Sunday-- August 17, 2008

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.7 Water Temperature: 78

Autumn in August, that's what it feels like. I feel like I woke up in a different state, like maybe Vermont or Maine.

I'm not complaining though, I'll take this weather over a typical D.C. August any day. The one problem I do have is that the fish don't seem to be biting like they were. Last month the water temperature reached a high of 91 degrees, today it's only 78. I guess the fish don't like cold water either.

The river level is also very low, making it a struggle to get the ferry close to the landing dock. There just isn't enough water to get near the dock. My idea for today is to install a temporary flight of stairs at the end of the dock. This will extend the dock into deeper water and make it easier to climb up off the ferry. Luckily we still have the stairs that Jim Drew salvaged from the river. I'll use those pre-made steps and hope they fit. This is a job that I'll need some help with and I'm hoping I'll be able to recruit some members to help me.

Speaking of helpful members, one or two people can really make a difference. Trip Reid was here and we made leaps of progress in our new trail building project. After learning that our trail to the head of the island was destroyed by huge fallen trees, Trip took it upon himself to make a new path. Trip manned the weed whacker and blazed a new trail. Later, I pushed the power mower to further clear the trail. Trip also brought down and planted several more joe-pie weeds (a native herbaceous plant with big puffy white flowers). Another enthusiastic club member, Patty Whitnah, helped out by raking up all the sticks, leaves and fallen Sycamore bark from around the canoe racks. Thanks Patty and Trip! On the down side, I found many lights on when I returned last night and someone left a bag of trash by the ferry.

Our club canoes are starting to show their age. I got a complaint that one of the green Old Town canoes was taking on water. I was a little surprised; I didn't think it was possible to punch a hole through that hard plastic. Upon investigation I found the outer layer of plastic completely worn off. The foam center layer was mashed and there was a crack on the inside. I used some marine tech epoxy to patch the holes. We may want to consider investing in fiberglass guards to protect the noses of our aging club canoes.

I bought some new hangers for the life vests, no excuse not to hang your life vests. And another thing, if the lifejacket is dripping wet, please hang it outside on the clothesline so it can dry out for the next paddler.

Friday-- August 22, 2008

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.6 Water Temperature: 81

My idea to extend the dock didn't work out very well. We managed to get the steps into place but then they sank into the soft mud of the river bottom. Paul Hagen and I then drove long stakes into the mud to stabilize it but the resulting structure looked crooked and unsafe. I ripped it all out yesterday. I also took the bench off of the ferry and today I realized just how much I need and use that bench, not so much for sitting on but for putting things on while I'm pulling the ferry. It's so much better than putting my groceries on the deck of the ferry. I guess I'll replace the bench today.

We have a serious structural problem with the porch at the main entrance of the clubhouse. I was sweeping off the deck above my front door when I found some rotted wood at the base of the railing. I pushed on it with my foot and my foot went right through. Upon further investigation I found that one of the support posts is rotten and so is one of the cross supports. I wedged a fresh 2X4 under the porch to support it but we need a big jack to hold the porch while we fix it. I have already gotten the materials that we need.

Speaking of big jobs on the island, we still need to replace/repair the roof above the club kitchen. It's been leaking for over a year now.

The other project that needs immediate attention is the tree next to my living room/addition. The tree has grown too big and is pinching against the house. I'm afraid the tree needs to be cut down, despite the fact that it is holding one end of the ever popular zip line.

The late summer flowers are coming out and we have a nice wild flower garden growing by the captain's float, including Trip Reid's joe-pie weed, which is now starting to bloom. My favorite flower of the year is also in bloom now. There is a deep red cardinal flower growing near the swim float.

One more thing. There is nothing that aggravates a caretaker more than making avoidable trips across the river. Those of you that have had to work the ferry on a busy day know what I mean. A party of four should not mean four individual trips across the river. I know it isn't always possible but PLEASE,PLEASE,PLEASE, meet your guests in the parking lot or at the ferry landing before you ring the bell. Believe it or not I have better things to do that make wasteful trips across the river, really. Also, if you're getting ready to go and you hear the bell, ask the caretaker to wait and save a trip. Lets work together!

Monday-- August 25, 2008

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.6 Water Temperature: 83

I downloaded some plans for a new bench for the ferry. I followed the plans to the letter but I'm not happy. The bench is too low! It looks like it was made for a child to use. I'm throwing out the plans and I'm going to build a proper bench.

I took some pictures of the wildflowers today. Red cardinal flowers flanked on all sides by bright yellow woodland sunflowers, beautiful.

Wednesday-- August 27, 2008

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.6 Water Temperature: 83

I finished my bench building project. I'm happy to report that we now have a kiddie-sized bench on the ferry as well as an adult-sized bench on the ferry.

Tryon was down today and the two of us fixed the rotten post on the front porch. I was impressed at how efficiently we got the job done.(not your typical Sycamore headscratcher) The two of us seem to make a pretty good team and I think the club is lucky to have us, if I do say so myself.

There was a dead beaver by the canoe dock yesterday. It looked like a full-grown one; I guess it died of natural causes.

The fishing continues to be excellent and I've had two separate reports of walleyes being landed near the Island!

-Joe Hage



Photo by Joe Hage



Sycamore Store in Transition Again

In the February *Islander* we learned about new events at the “store.” The new owners, Dean Brenneman and Peter Pagenstecher had finally secured County approval and were well underway with extensive restoration efforts. They hoped to move their architectural and construction service firm into the building by this fall. Recently, any passer-by would have noticed the new exterior paint job and the nicely restored sign. It looked as if they were readying for their move. But then a puzzling real estate sign appeared at the corner. The property was for sale.

I inquired for the *Islander* about the change in plans in a note to Dean Brenneman. He explained, “In the 4-1/2 years it has taken to gain approvals for our office to occupy the store, we have outgrown the space. We have been fortunate in that our business is thriving and expanding, but the sad effect is that we can no longer meet the restrictions that were imposed during the approval process. Rather than fight to amend the restrictions, we have decided to sell and find another home for our business.”

Our club had supported their efforts in securing permission to use it as a professional office. Will the restrictions still apply? Brenneman understood that we would be concerned about what might happen now to the store. He wrote, “My partners and I are proud that we have been able to achieve historic designation for the property, and put in place a framework for its restoration and re-use. And we are hopeful that a new owner will be found who can comply with the restrictions and use the store for professional offices, much as we intended.”

Now we are listening for another shoe to drop ...

-- **David Winer**

From Holly Syrrakos, Island Archivist

76 Years Ago

From the August 1932 Sycamore Islander

Regatta season was in full swing by August of 1932. Members were paddling in races up and down the river as well as preparing for their own Sycamore Regatta in September, where all the events would be *“canvas boat, single blade.”*

Club members laid roofing paper on the *“side porch of the Clubhouse.”* And, Eunice Arnold *“made and installed new curtains in the ladies’ room.”*

Members of the tent colony must have had an industrious summer—one tent dweller erected a *“Welcome”* sign with the word *“spelled out in twigs.”* Another family put up *“a magnificent screened and roofed half-what is it.”*

The members were taking up another important issue—that of *“proper attire in the Club room and kitchen.”*-

“Some of the members feel that newcomers would be more favorably impressed with the Island and its citizens if said citizens would not congregate about the club-room and cook meals in the kitchen in their bathing suits. A week or so ago a sign was made stating that no persons in bathing suits would be permitted in these rooms but the sign was immediately taken down because it did not properly express the idea. No one has any objection to anyone going though the kitchen or club-room attired in bathing suits. The objection is to members or guests spending all their time in these rooms in this attire. It might be added that no members have been noticed doing this; it seems to be a fad of guests. Anyway, the questions of whether a sign requesting everyone to refrain from this custom should be installed will be debated.

“Perhaps we should add that the idea of such a sign did not originate with the Editor of the Islander. Whenever anyone suggests that clean shirts and somewhat clean trousers should be worn, many of our favorite readers immediately jump up and down in a rage, claiming that the good old Sycamore Islander is in favor of a tuxedo and silk hat as the proper uniform at Sycamore. Others know better. However, your editor is willing to admit, just to give you someone to throw at, that I’m in favor of the proposed sign. For one reason, most of you, like myself, look lots better in your clothes than you do in your bathing suit!”

Summer brought crowds to Sycamore that year—despite fears that the Island might “lose out to the automobile and the more or less open road.” The editor notes, *“You’ll find it lots more restful than trying to edge past a line of machines out for a Sunday drive.”* Still true today.



I was curious to see what these bathing suits mentioned in the archives looked like. So I found this picture of bathers from 1932.

Saturday Relief Caretakers- September
Please sign up as soon as possible

Date	Hours	Caretaker	Phone Number
September			
6	9-3	Geoff Holdridge Bonnie Roberts	301-464-5046
	3-dark	Linda Greer Mike Tilchin	301-229-0705
13	9-3	David Powell	703-533-3881
	3-dark	Julie Saulnier	301-320-9030
20	9-3	Kevin and Carol Hearle	301-229-8230
	3-dark	Jennifer Urquhart Michael Edwards	202-244-0446
27	9-3	Maxine Hattery Sarah Clark	202-362-1361 202-686-2814
	3-dark	Constance Miner Greg Lalley	

****** Caretaker Volunteers ******
To volunteer, contact Alison Burns at
or riburns@att.net
Tell: 202-362-6654

Sycamore Bulletin Board:

Large Parties:

September 14th: Esther Delaplaine with a group of up to 30 people from 12-4pm.

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

Volunteers Needed:

Reading Joe's journal this month it is evident how much repair and maintenance work needs to be done on the island. If you can help at all with these sorts of jobs, **please contact Joe and offer to give him a hand.** joebage@verizon.net



The Sycamore Islander
6613 80th Place
Cabin John, MD 20818
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To view this month's Sycamore Islander in color on the
Internet, go to:
<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/boondoggle/islander.htm>

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Sycamore Events

September Meeting: Sept. 10th
at 8:00 PM on the island

Reminder:

**October Meeting is October
15th.**



Photo by Joe Hage