



# *The Sycamore Islander*

*November 2008*

*Volume 87 No 11*

## **President's Letter, November 2008**

There's lots to talk about this month!! So fasten your seatbelts.

**WOW!! CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN AROUND NOVEMBER 10.** There are times I thought that the day would never come when the Club would get its building permit, but we finally have it. We've gotten revised pricing from the contractor, including replacing the roof above the existing kitchen in the caretaker's quarters. We're happy with the revised prices, and the contract should be signed by the time this letter arrives in the mail. The contractor is planning to begin on November 10. The project will probably run through the end of January. I expect the costs to be within budget. Fortunately, the construction will take place during a period when the Island is not heavily used. Access to the Clubhouse may be restricted for some periods during the construction.

**Time to clean out those lockers.** If you have gear stored in one of the lockers on the Island, you need to remove your stuff as soon as possible due to the construction. There is no telling what will happen to items that are not removed. A notice of this effect has been emailed to everyone.

**Volunteers needed to serve as officers and supervisors.** Over the next several weeks, we will be putting together a slate of officers and supervisors for 2009 to be voted on at the December meeting. The Club cannot survive and thrive unless the next generation starts to get involved now.

On a personal note, I have been President for three years and would like to turn the reins over to someone else. I am willing to stay on as President for one more year to see the construction project through to the end and to make sure that the Club's finances are set. This would be a good time to mentor a member who is interested in becoming President in the future. Please contact me if you are interested in getting involved in any capacity. (202.492.2003; [jkomarow@covad.net](mailto:jkomarow@covad.net))

***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](mailto:ahcannell@gmail.com)

**The deadline for the December issue is Wednesday, November 26th.**

**Fall Workfest scheduled for Sunday, November 23.** We will start around 9:00 AM and go until 4:00PM or so. The workfest includes a barbecue lunch with the Club providing chicken, burgers and franks. Plan on bringing a side dish or dessert.

**Canews.** Thanks to the efforts of David Winer, the Club is adding two “new” canoes to the fleet. The Club was able to purchase two gently used canoes from the Pocomoke River Canoe Company, an eastern shore outfitter that sells off their rental canoes every year. We bought our other club canoes from them. The owner says that he’s put aside the two best ones for us.

While I’m on the subject of **canoes**, the Club voted at the October meeting to retain the **Standing Rule 6(c)**, which provides that club canoes cannot be taken out when the water temperature is below 55 degrees Fahrenheit or the water level is 5 feet or higher. The Club uses the measurements at Little Falls Dam. The link to the information is on the Club’s website. Please keep this rule in mind when you use the Island in the winter.

**The November meeting will be held on the Island on November 12 at 8:00 P.M.** The November meeting will be the last one on the Island until March or April. With the wood stove stoked up, we should be warm and comfortable. Bring your flashlight for the walk to and from the Island.

**Hosts Needed for December meeting (and beyond).** We are still looking for members willing to host one of the off-Island meetings. For many years, Peggy Thompson hosted the December meeting/holiday party, but time moves on and we need a new venue. Please contact me (202.492-2003; jkomarow@gmail.com) if you are willing to host the December, January or February meetings.

**Other items.** I want to thank Professor Bob Beauchamp, Director of Environmental Management and Energy Research Programs at University of Maryland, University College for his excellent presentation on global climate change at the October meeting.

See you at the November meeting (Nov. 12, on the Island).

**Jeff Komarow**



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

**Friday-- October 31, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.0    Water Temperature: 53**

I finished painting the screen porch. I'm so glad that I did it. It really is a well constructed porch and it would be a shame to let it deteriorate. I also like the idea of fixing up the old parts of the clubhouse as we get ready to redo other parts.

Apparently there was some perceived negativity in my log last month. I just want to assure everyone that I'm still very happy here. I think what bothers me the most is when I have to be the enforcer of club rules. I'm not a stickler for rules but this is your club and in my opinion you all should know the code of conduct and stick to it.

**Tuesday-- October 28, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.0    Water Temperature: 53**

It feels like winter today with a strong wind blowing in from the northwest. There is a low pressure system moving into New York and it's forcing all their cold air down here. Maybe it will force some migrating birds down as well. Alas, we're losing all our leaves and all the jewel weed are collapsing.

It's too windy today, but I've seen the red-shouldered hawk here almost everyday recently. I love coming home to the screech of a hawk, but I'm afraid I gave an unfair advantage to the predator when I mowed all the grass. Now that the grass is cut and the sheltering leaves are gone, the poor voles don't have a chance.

The flocks of robins also took advantage of the freshly cut grass and one day there were dozens of them scouring the fields for prey. Speaking of birds, it was like a chicken coop inside the screen porch one morning. I walked out of my front door to find two morning doves trapped and frantically bashing themselves into the screens trying to get out. I opened the doors and was able to shoo one dazed bird out with a badminton racket. The other bird couldn't find the door but finally became too tired to fly and I was able to just reach down and pick it up. I'm always surprised at how light and delicate birds are and it was a joy to hold it's lighter-than-air fluffiness. I held it up and looked into its expressionless eye, I carried it outside and laid it on the ground. It quickly dashed for safety leaving me with a handful of downy feathers. I admit, I did wonder if it was dove season and for a second I wondered what it would be like to eat a morning dove or three.

Thanks to Marianne Ross and Joe Membrino for filling in for me on short notice on the 19th. I decided to take a vacation day and go on an exotic weekend trip. We went canoeing on the Potomac. It sounds funny but it really was an amazing trip. We simply drove for two hours to Little Orleans in the Green Ridge State Forest and once we got on the river we felt like we could have been anywhere. We saw no one, the water was crystal clear and the autumn scenery was magnificent as we floated lazily through one bend in the river after another. We paddled past nine bends in all, in just twenty-one miles.

Our timing was great too and Town Hill Mountain was ablaze with color as it rose up from the valley, sometimes at our back but other times an impenetrable wall at our bow. This trip is great because it's close and the river is never too low to get past the many little rock ledges. We put in at Paw Paw, mile 157 on the towpath, and we took out at Little Orleans, about mile 141. That's 16 miles on the towpath but 21 miles on the river since we didn't use the tunnel. It was strange because we started near the tunnel entrance but after eight miles on the river we were only a mile down stream from the downstream end of the tunnel. The camping was no problem either since there are campsites every five miles on the towpath. Many of you know this trip but for those who want to try it (it's perfect for kids) I recommend it. I went to "Bill's Place", the only place in Little Orleans and paid Bonnie, Bill's daughter, to shuttle us and our boats up to Paw Paw. It was really nice to have the van waiting for us and all we had to do was pack up and go.

**Wednesday-- October 22, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 2.68    Water Temperature: 57**

I think the swimming season is now officially over, brrrr.

They have installed an electric eye on the steel bridge over the canal. My guess is that they are counting the number of people using the bridge. I'm not sure if this is a good sign or a bad sign for our bridge, but at least we know that they're thinking about it.

I've been busy cutting grass, I want to cut it all once more before all the leaves fall. This could be the last time I cut it until May, after the bluebells fade. While I was cutting yesterday I noticed that some of the trees have been nibbled on by deer. I guess it's not that unusual but I'm still surprised about how the deer come and go so easily, just like the squirrels.

**Tuesday-- October 14, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 2.7    Water Temperature: 67**

I was just waiting for the ferry when something fell out of the tree and splashed into the river. My first thought was that a branch had broken and fallen into the river but then the "branch" started to swim toward the Island. It was a squirrel! The cute little bugger swam right past the ferry as member Garth Ross was pulling it towards me, incredible.

**Monday-- October 13, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 2.8    Water Temperature: 66**

It's been another wonderful weekend on the Island. Sunny, and warm enough to swim in the river, on October 12th? The fishing hasn't dropped off yet either and yesterday's glassy river was perfect for canoeing.

Big News! The county has granted us our permit! We now have to plan and get ready for the construction. For starters, if you have a locker, you need be ready to clear it out when the time comes.

I've been working on painting the screen porch. It's a big job but it's very gratifying to see it finally getting done.



# Goodbye to the Lockers, Kitchen and ladies Locker Room



## Sycamore Island Monthly Meeting October 15, 2008

Meeting Minutes

Location—Sycamore Island Club House

The meeting was called to order by President Jeff Komarow at approximately 8:15 p.m. following a barbecue dinner and a very informative, but sobering presentation on global climate change by one of the Club's members, Bob Beachamp, Director of Environmental Management and Energy Research Programs at University of Maryland, University College. Bob had some eye opening statistics on the increases in the concentration of carbon dioxide and various pollutants in recent years.

**Members Present:** The following members were present, constituting a quorum AnnMarie and John Cunningham; Penny and Dick Doolittle; Jim Drew; Jeff Komarow; Alison Levine; John Noble; Hester Ohbi and Bob Beauchamp; Carol and Dick Schleicher; Paul Stanton, Jane and David Winer. Because member units get one vote even if two or more members are present, we had the minimum number for a quorum – 10 member units.

In the absence of a recording secretary, Jeff Komarow took the minutes, which are somewhat truncated because he managed to delete (or failed to save) the file the first time around.

**Minutes of Prior Meetings:** The Club did not obtain a quorum for the September meeting, so there were no minutes to approve.

**Finances:** The Treasurer could not be present. Jeff Komarow reported that, unlike Wall Street, the Club's financial condition was sound.

**Construction Update:** Jeff Komarow reported that the County finally had issued a building permit to the Club for the caretaker's quarters and clubhouse. (See the November President's letter for more details). Jeff Komarow also noted the caretaker's complaints about the leaky roof and promised to get with Tryon Wells, the Captain, to get the leaks fixed.

**Canoe/Swimming Supervisor's Report:** At a prior meeting, the Club had decided to purchase two additional canoes for use by club members. Thanks to David Winer, the Club is purchasing two canoes with paddles and life jackets (or personal flotation devices as they are now known) from the Pocomoke River Canoe Company, an eastern shore outfitter that sells off their rental canoes every year.



**Use of Club Canoes when the water temperature is below 55 degrees Fahrenheit or the water level is above 5 feet (measured at Little Falls):** The background on this issue is in the October 2008 *Islander*. The members present unanimously voted against the proposed change to Rule 6(c) of the Standing Rules, which would have permitted members to use club canoes during low-water-temperature or high-water-level conditions on the Potomac River. (Guests could not use club canoes under those conditions, except they could accompany a member in a canoe.) The arguments of those who spoke against the resolution – that such conditions are potentially dangerous, the member may not be an experienced paddler, and the club should not be exposed to the risk inherent in the use of the club’s canoes in hazardous conditions – carried the day.

As a result of the vote, the rule remains that members and their guests cannot take out club canoes when the water temperature is below 55 degrees Fahrenheit or the water level is above 5 feet. This rule does not apply to a members’ use of private canoes kept on the Island.

**Other Business:** The Club approved Alison Levine’s request to hold a large party on the Island. Alison was not sure there would be 35 guests, which is the point at which prior approval is required, but sought the Club’s approval as a precaution.

On a sad note, Jeff noted the deaths of longtime active members, Blair and Betty Bower, a few weeks apart from each other. On a positive note, the Club voted to make Phil Thorson an honorary member. Phil has been a member of the Club for over 60 years. In recent years, he’s waged a never ending battle against the spread of kudzu on the Island and long the C&O canal towpath.

**Reminders:** Jeff reminded the members that the **Fall Workfest** is **November 23**, and the next meeting is November 12.

Meeting was adjourned around 9:30 P.M.

Submitted by **Jeff Komarow**

## From Holly Syrrakos, Island Archivist

76 Years Ago

### From the November 1932 Sycamore Islander

“The recent cold rain reminds us that winter returns. The seasons seem to repeat themselves annually, but sometimes history also seems to repeat itself.

It is the report of the Hallowe’en Party that sounds so familiar.

[Three years into the Great Depression in 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was running in his first Presidential election, against the incumbent Herbert Hoover.]

*“Strangely enough, no witches or hobgoblins honored us with their presence at the Hallowe’en Dance and it’s probably just as well, since they would certainly have gotten into some warm arguments about the merits of the respective Democratic and Republican candidates for President of these glorious United States.”*

*“There were four big subjects of conversation at the party; First, what clever costumes were being worn; second, how good the music was; third, what a good time everyone was having, and fourth, Politics.”*

Politics, interrupted with a report on costumes. The editor wrote, *“Claire was a lovely bride with a blond wig and a big blue-eyed false-face with a lovely smile. Her bridal bouquet was a beautiful arrangement of carrots and other vegetables.”* As far a man’s costume, *“Tom Edwards came as a straggly blond-haired Ghandi, with a great many teeth, large eyes and a bed-spread which covered him fairly adequately but left him with a cold the following day.”*

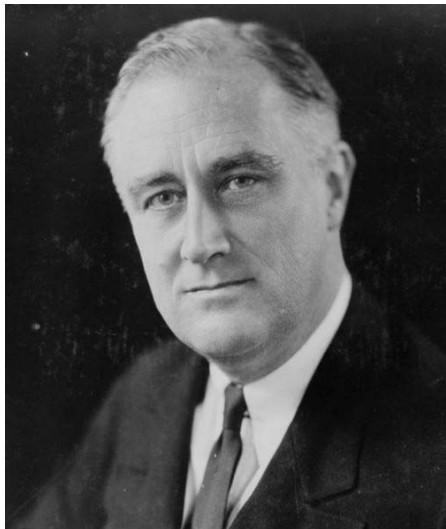
*“The political arguments got under way early in the evening when Frank Hall discovered that our Cole was for Hoover while he, Hall, was for Roosevelt. During intermission, a straw vote was carried out by having the combatants align themselves on opposite sides of the room. When it was found that there were fifty-three Hooverites and twenty-one Rooseveltians, things looked bad but quickly-served rations of coffee, ice cream and cake soon convinced all that better times were coming.’*

*“Since the national elections of November 8th, there has been much talk of abolishing either the Literary Digest poll or the national election, since both give the same results and one or the other is just an unnecessary expense. The Islander now comes forward with a plan whereby both can be abolished. In brief, our plan is to have a straw vote at our Hallowe’en Party preceding the date which otherwise would be set for the present-day national elections. We would certainly have saved the Literary Digest and millions of voters in the real election a tremendous amount of time and money for by simply multiplying the Sycamore Hoover vote of 53 by one-and one-ninth, a number approximating the electoral vote for Hoover would have been obtained. And then by multiplying the Sycamore Roosevelt vote of 21 by 22-1/2, a vote approximating the electoral vote for Roosevelt would have been obtained. All very simple and it doesn’t cost a cent.”*





**Hoover**  
**53 Votes**



**Roosevelt**  
**21 votes**

**Volunteers needed For Relief Caretaking:**

FINDING VOLUNTEERS CAN BE A DIFFICULT JOB, ESPECIALLY DURING THE UP-COMING HOLIDAY SEASON.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER FOR ANY SATURDAY IN DECEMBER (OR AT ANY TIME THEREAFTER) PLEASE GIVE **ALISON BURNS** A CALL AT **202.362.6654**. YOUR CALL WOULD BE MOST APPRECIATED.

THANKS TO ALL THE FOLLOWING VOLUNTEERS:

## Saturday Relief Caretakers- November 2008

**Please sign up as soon as possible**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Caretaker</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>November</b>			
<b>1</b>	10-2	James and Molly Mathews	<b>703-401-8742</b>
	2-dark	Michelle McNally Russell Sturm	<b>202-986-1887</b>
<b>8</b>	10-2	Mark Ambre	<b>301-587-9115</b>
	2-dark	Patricia and Bruce Benton	301-229-1359
<b>15</b>	10-2	Christine Henny	301-229-7113
	2-dark	Sara Fox William Eichbaum	301-229-1713
<b>22</b>	10-2	Robert and Vivian Braunchler	202-291-3717
	2-dark	David and Jane Winer	301-229-8963
<b>29</b>	10-2	Joseph and Tamara Benden	202-882-2224
	2-dark	Gavin and Claire Bloch	301-320-0060

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

**To volunteer, contact Alison Burns at  
riburns@att.net  
202-362-6654**

## Sycamore Bulletin Board:

### **Hosts For December-April Meetings needed:**

The October meeting will be the last one on the Island until March or April 2009. We need members who are willing to host one of the off-island meetings. Please contact Jeff Komarow at 202-492-2003 or [jkomarow@gmail.com](mailto:jkomarow@gmail.com) if you are willing to host a meeting.

### **Fall Workfest, Sunday, November 23rd , 9-4**

This year's focus will be on ridding the Island of invasive plants, so we are hoping some knowledgeable plant people will come forward to help lead us.

### **Clean Out your Lockers:**

After a long wait, the county has approved the Sycamore Island clubhouse renovation plans and granted a permit. The contractor has indicated that he is ready to go, and November 10, 2008 is the tentative start date.

One of the first tasks in the renovation will be the demolition of the downstairs locker room (and soon after, the upstairs locker room as well).

Members must retrieve all of their belongings from both locker rooms in the next week or two.

The contents of lockers that haven't been emptied when the demolition starts, will be temporarily stored in black plastic contractor bags. Obviously, looking through a bunch of black bags on the floor will be far more tedious than just getting your stuff now. All members are encouraged to retrieve their gear ASAP.

If you know your locker number but can't retrieve your gear in time, please inform Joe and your bag will be tagged.

### **Large Parties:**

One large Party– November 9th at 1PM

50 people

Alison Levine and Bob Palermo

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



*The Sycamore Islander*  
6613 80th Place  
Cabin John, MD 20818  
ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

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

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

FIRST CLASS MAIL

FIRST CLASS MAIL

### ***Sycamore Events***

November Meeting : Wednesday,  
November 12th at 8:00 PM on Sycamore Island.

December Meeting : Wednesday,  
December 10th, location TBA

Fall Workfest: Sunday Nov. 23rd  
9AM-4PM

