

*High  
Water !*



# *The Sycamore Islander*

*January 2009*

*Volume 88 No 1*

## **President's Letter, January 2009**

**New Year's Resolutions (Oldies but Goodies):** I hope everyone had a good holiday season and a happy new year. It's usually fun (but sometimes scary) to look back at my earlier letters. Last year, I asked members to make four resolutions. In the spirit of recycling, I think those resolutions are worth repeating in 2009:

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, especially during the winter. Being on the Island on a wintry day has its own rewards.

**Construction Update:** The construction is continuing at a good pace and is on target for completion in late January. It's hard to believe that we're almost there. Approximately \$75,000 has been paid out thus far and we continue to be on budget. By the time you receive this newsletter, the Sycamore Island notes will have been issued. I remain guardedly optimistic that we'll be able to make an early partial repayment of the bonds in 2009 or restore the reserve more quickly than planned.

**Vacation Relief Caretaker:** Joe Hage is planning a vacation for a week late in January around the time of the inauguration. (Maybe we should rent out the Island) Last time I checked, we did not have a relief caretaker to stay on the Island for the week. If the caretaker's quarters are still under construction, we may keep the Island closed that week. But it may be possible to keep the Island open. If you want to try living on the Island for a week or know someone responsible who would be

***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 February issue is Wednesday, January 28th.**

interested, please get in touch with Joe.

**January Meeting – January 14<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 PM at 5332 Westpath Way, Bethesda, MD 20826 (Home of Karen Possner and Stan Wiggins)**

The January 2009 meeting will be held at the home of Karen Possner and Stan Wiggins, 5332 Westpath Way, Bethesda, MD 20816. Westpath Way is in the Mohican Hills and can be reached from Sangamore Road. If you are like me and don't have a GPS, but refuse to ask for directions, you should use Mapquest or Google rather than relying on your tracking skills. If you are utterly lost, call 301-320-7688 for directions. The date is **January 14<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 PM**. The business part of the meeting should be short.

See you at the January meeting.

**Jeff Komarow  
President**



**The new construction**

**Photo by Joe Hage**

## Saturday Relief Caretakers- January 2009

**Please sign up as soon as possible**

Date	Hours	Caretaker	Number
January			
3	10-2	Richard and Janis Pappalardo	301-229-8360
	2-dark	John Cunningham	703-876-9165
10	10-2	Jamie and Catherine Resor	301-320-4336
	2-dark	Gordon and Linda Phillips	301-358-5137
17	10-2	Tom and Elizabeth Gibbons	703-243-9620
	2-dark	Steven Newman and Mary Tisdale	703-528-4352
24	10-2	Susan Elfstrom	703-533-5537
	2-dark	Stephen and Renee Marcus	202-363-3849
31	10-2	Brian and Brigit Anne Waidmann	703-536-3168
	2-dark	Joe Cecil and Judith Friedman	202-244-7036
	10-2		
	2-dark		

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

To volunteer, contact Alison Burns at

[riburns@att.net](mailto:riburns@att.net)

**202-362-6654**

## December Sycamore Island Meeting Minutes: Condensed

Due to circumstances beyond our control, the full minutes of the December 2008 meeting were not available for publication at the time we went to press. The full minutes will be published in the February 2009 Islander.

In short, we had a quorum. The budget and dues were approved as proposed in the December Islander. The slate of officers and supervisors was approved unanimously. The Club appreciates the hospitality of Vicki Judson and Mike Esch who opened their home for the meeting and the holiday party, which followed.

**-Jeff Komarow**

# Proposed OFFICERS and SUPERVISORS 2009

## OFFICERS

President -- Jeff Komarow  
Vice-President -- David Winer  
Recording Secretary - Bill Marmon/Jennifer Glaudemans  
Treasurer -- Alan & Caroline Gelb  
Financial Secretary -- Lisa Kliefoth  
Membership Secretary - Peter Winkler  
Editor - Amanda Cannell  
Archivist -- Holly Syrrakos  
Captain -- Tryon Wells  
Deputy Captain -- John Stapko/Larry Heilman

## SUPERVISORS

Finance -- Bill Eichbaum\*  
Law -- Maurice Tobin  
Clubhouse -- Karl Kosok\*  
Grounds - Carol Kavanaugh  
Carpentry/Painting -- Charles Pill  
Website -- Tryon Wells  
Entertainment -- George and Shelley Malusky  
Camping/Parties -- John Noble  
Canoeing -- Jim Drew  
Swimming -- Larry Heilman  
Relief Caretaking - Alison Burns

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

**Tuesday-- December 2, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.2    Water Temperature: 42**

Things are getting really primitive here now. The water was turned off and I was forced to take a sponge bath. I managed to drain some warm water out of the hot water heater and I happily cleaned up and even washed my hair. I'm so glad that the temperatures climbed out of the twenties for this week. I've had many offers to stay with friends or family during the construction and I just might have to take them up on it if things get worse, but for now I like being here watching over things.

**Monday-- December 8, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 2.9    Water Temperature: 36.5**

The dropping temperatures have me worried about my uninsulated pipes. I have the space heaters running and so far the half-built rooms have stayed above freezing. The "bathroom" is above freezing as well but not by much. Stepping out of the shower can be very invigorating, but at least I have a shower.

These rooms without walls have posed another unexpected problem. I can no longer keep the raccoons away and I caught one outside my door last night. I think it was trying to take up residence near the space heaters. The raccoons have also been after the cans of pepsi that I left out. I thought that an unopened can of soda would be safe against the raccoons, but apparently not. I found four cans with tooth punctures.

Eagle News! Jack Caldwell, from up the hill, left me a message. He's been watching the eagles and he thinks they have built a new nest. I didn't realize that it was nest-building season for bald eagles, but Jack said they lay their eggs in early February. The new nest is in a sycamore tree, a little further downstream from the first nest. That means that it's further away from Sycamore Island but we'll keep you posted.

I've been learning a lot about our water purification system. There aren't many well-system suppliers in this area but I've ordered us a new UV bulb for the purifier and now I'm trying to figure out why the new pressure tank isn't working.

**Tuesday-- December 9, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 2.9    Water Temperature: 36.5**

Everyone should try to make it down here to see the new construction, and I'm not talking about the club house. I'm talking about the new tree house. This new tree house is very well built and makes the old tree house look second rate. The resourceful, Garth Ross, organized his kids and friends and used the lumber torn out of the locker rooms to build

this nice addition to the Island. Thanks Garth.

**Friday-- December 12, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 4.9    Water Temperature: 39**

The river is rising! It isn't supposed to get to flood stage but it looks like it will reach 6.5 feet. The high water is a little hard to adjust to. It's been seven happy months since the river has been above five feet. The Ferry will be closed tomorrow and I've told the relief caretakers that they do not need to come down.

**Sunday-- December 14, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 6.0    Water Temperature: 39**

Ferry is closed again today.

**Monday-- December 15, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 4.9    Water Temperature: 39**

Things were back to normal this morning. The river went down below five feet and the ferry is now operating again. It was lucky that our little high-water event landed right on the weekend and did not interrupt construction. There's more rain expected this week, lets hope our luck holds up.

I left my "door" open this morning. I went to pick up the work crew on the ferry and when I got back, there was a Carolina Wren fluttering around in my living room. I instantly went after it. I expected it to start smashing itself against the windows, trying to escape. I was surprised when this little guy made a quick dash for the door and was gone. It was like he had been in my room before.

**Friday -- December 19, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 4.6    Water Temperature: 39**

The river is starting to creep up as I write this and I've decided to close ferry operations for the weekend. I hate to make such a sweeping, authoritarian decision but the river is predicted to reach 6.2 feet by Sunday afternoon. Considering the weather I don't expect that anyone would WANT to come down anyway. So I've raise the pull rope and the rope for the bell, and I've secured the ferry to the Island. It looks like I'll get some late-season canoeing in this weekend.

When I came home yesterday, at around 2:30, I found Carlos and his crew carrying 3/4 inch pieces of plywood and heavy bags of concrete on their backs as they walked down the hill to the Island. I didn't have to ask why they weren't parked on the towpath as Carlos immediately told me what happened. Our poor contractor got a lesson in the difficulties of working on the Island. He was driving up the towpath from lock five, like he has been doing on a regular basis since the construction started, no problem. The problem yesterday was that overnight a beaver had felled a tree down by the dam and this large tree was now across the road, blocking the route to the Island .

Since Carlos didn't have a chain saw with him, he was forced to turn around. Turning around on the towpath is not an easy thing to do and his van almost got stuck in the mud. Luckily, the van was weighted in the back with building materials and they were able to turn around in the mud. I loaned Carlos a chain saw to take with him, just in case the tree is still there on Monday.

**Monday -- December 29, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 4.2    Water Temperature: 39**

The river went up close to six feet but luckily it is back down in time for the workers to resume their labor on the Island.

I thought that the water main break might have affected the river levels but no, it only turned the river a funny orange-brown color. It did leave some sediment on the steps. It that was of a different hue than I usually find there, tiny samples of that eroded road bed.

**Tuesday -- December 30, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 4.1    Water Temperature: 41**

Construction is progressing nicely despite some minor set-backs. What weather we've had! I think we're ready to close in many of the walls, we're just waiting for the inspector to give us the go-ahead.

The well-water purification system is functioning but it seems our system is outdated and we may want to consider an upgrade.

The nice weather has brought out the visitors to the island and the contractors have been very nice about answering the ferry when I'm not here in the morning.

We met one of the past caretakers on Sunday. There was a man in his late forties sitting on the steps as I dropped a member on the mainland. We asked if he had ever been on the Island and he said that he was the caretaker here for a year in 1979! I don't remember his last name but his first name was Brett. He had a great story about being swamped on the ferry during a flood after a big snowfall in that winter. Hopefully we'll hear from him, I encouraged him to write.

**Wednesday -- December 31, 2008**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.9    Water Temperature: 41**

The wind is howling! It just knocked a canoe off the rack in the first canoe shed.

I went for a paddle last evening. It was a fun little paddle; the sky was alive with color, I saw a bald eagle, and I found a sign that must have washed down from Minnies Island, just up river. I also startled a pair of mallards as I coasted past the head of Ruppert's Island. Seeing mallards is very ordinary around here but the female in this pair was different. This poor duck couldn't fly. When it tried to escape the threat of my canoe it could only muster a few feeble hops. It resorted to simply swimming away as its mate disappeared across the river.

The Club will be 124 years old this year.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

**-Joe Hage**



## From Holly Syrrakos, Island Archivist

76 Years Ago

### From the December 1932 Sycamore Islander and club notes

Despite winter closing in on the Island, meetings and events went on unabated in December and January of 1932-33. Canoeing and swimming were replaced by indoor activities and maintenance chores.

The Islander points out: *“We still have the ping-pong table in commission and it is just as popular as ever. However, the Islander refuses to concede that this is an athletic sport until our entire staff becomes proficient at the game.”* Nonetheless, the Club was committed to the game. The minutes record that the Director of Athletics should *“purchase four ping-pong paddles at a cost not to exceed \$5.”* And, that director should *“appoint a team to represent the Club in a ping-pong tournament with other Clubs.”*

The Annual Oyster Roast went on and was reported as successful *“by everyone but the oysters.”* The Islander reported, *“The oysters put up a game battle, but with Sycamore’s plans carefully laid—a squad of Islanders on the side porch, another squad in the kitchen, one at the Club room fireplace and another at the clubroom stove—the oysters stood no chance whatever though the tide of battle swayed back and forth. There was one short period when the oysters seemed to be gaining but just at the crucial moment Woody and Marie rushed in with a new way of overwhelming oysters by roasting them in the half-shell with bacon and butter. From then on the battle was won and every oyster was vanquished.”*





Trees have always been a source of concern on the Island—either preserving or cutting them is often a task at hand. The Secretary was directed to “*write a letter to the Washington Botanical Society, asking them to determine which ones should be taken out and what species should be used to replace those which have fallen or which may be removed; also to advise the club as to what, if anything, can be done to preserve the trees at Sycamore.*” Even though the Botanical Society offered their help, in one case it was too late as the minutes record that “*a certain tree be cut down, the tree being in a dangerous condition.*” Of course, that helped to provide wood for the fireplace in the clubhouse.

Another year has closed and a new one is upon us. In the 1930s, dues assessments were sent out, and members were resigning and moving on. In 2009, your dues notices are in the mail—don’t forget to pay them as we look forward to another year.



## Sycamore Bulletin Board:

### **January Meeting:**

January 14th at 8:00 PM

At the home of Karen Possner and Stan Wiggins  
5332 Westpath Way, Bethesda

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

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.

### **Relief Caretakers wanted:**

We are currently looking for relief caretakers for February 14th, 21st and 28th from 11Am until Dark.

**Call Alison Burns to volunteer- 202-362-6654**

### **Large Parties: No Large parties reported**

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*  
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## ***Sycamore Events***

### **January Meeting:**

January 14th at 8:00 PM  
5332 Westpath Way, Bethesda  
At the home of Karen Possner and  
Stan Wiggins.

### **February Meeting:**

February 11th at 8:00 PM  
Location to be announced

