



The Sycamore Islander

February 2009

Volume 88 No 2

President's Letter

We may still be in the depths of winter, but it is not too early to start thinking about Spring activities. The **Spring Wildflower Walk** has been scheduled for Sunday, **April 19th**, the week after Easter Sunday. The **Potomac Downriver Race**, run by the Canoe Cruisers Association, will be held on Saturday, **May 23rd**. The Island is the finish line, and the CCA is looking for volunteers to help out at the Island. Volunteers receive a T-shirt and lunch. Contact Star Mitchell (301) 530-3252). Given this event, May 23rd is not a good day to schedule a large party.

Construction Update: We had hoped that the construction project would be substantially complete by January 31. While there has been substantial progress, we have been delayed by bad weather (where the contractor could not get to the Island) and getting county inspections. I think we have a good shot of completing the project by the end of February. In terms of construction costs, \$73,099 has been expended through December 31, 2008. A progress payment of \$25,000 was made to the contractor in January. I continue to believe that we will complete the project within the authorized budget of \$150,000.

2008 Budget and Spending:

This month's *Islander* includes the Treasurer's Report on 2008 expenditures for regular Club operations (excluding construction). This is a good report. If we can perform as well in 2009, we should be able to avoid an increase in dues for 2010.

February Meeting – February 11th at 8:00 PM at the Stapko' family home, 1001 Saville Lane, McLean VA, 22101

We have a real treat for the February meeting. We will be holding the meeting at the Stapko family home in McLean. Gregory Stapko, father of long-time member, John Stapko), was a well-known artist and craftsman, who was described by the Washington Post as the nation's foremost copyist of famous art works. His paintings hang in the White House, Blair House,

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, as email attachments to ahcannell@gmail.com

The deadline for the March issue is Wednesday, February 25th.

West Point, and many government agencies and embassies. In the mid-1950s, Mr. Stapko designed and mostly built himself a unique house and studio above the Potomac River. He also made the furniture, and a number of his paintings are displayed in the house. Mr. Stapko passed away in March 2006 and his family is preparing to put the house on the market. This probably will be the last opportunity for club members to see the house and furnishings. This should be an inducement for the Club's Maryland members to cross the Potomac Ocean and come to the February meeting. At the meeting, we'll be choosing a date for the Spring Work-fest and perhaps voting on new members.

Directions to the Stapko's house. Address: 1001 Saville Lane, McLean VA, 22101.

From D.C. or MD: Cross Chain Bridge, turn right on 123 South toward McLean, cross over G.W. Parkway. After crossing Parkway turn right at second light and go to end of road and turn right up gravel driveway.

From the North via 495: Cross Potomac River on Cabin John Bridge. (I believe it is now called American Legion Bridge) and take the G.W. Parkway to the Rt.123 South (McLean) exit. Follow directions above.

From the South via Rt.123: Take 123 toward Washington D.C. Turn left at the first light AFTER the CIA (George Bush Center for Intelligence). Follow directions above.

See you at the February meeting.

Jeff Komarow
President

Saturday Relief Caretakers- February 2009

Please sign up as soon as possible

Date	Hours	Caretaker	Number
February			
7	11-dark	Penny Mitchell	301-229-4606
14	11-dark	Star Mitchell	301-530-3252
21	11-dark	John and Judy Lentz	301-229-4968
28	11-dark	Andrew Walsh	240-463-3210

****** Caretaker Volunteers ******

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

Meeting Minutes: December 2008

The Club did not have a quorum for the January 2009 meeting. Full minutes from the December 10, 2008, Meeting, prepared by John Noble, are set forth below:

In attendance: Jeff Komarow, John Membrino, Sandi Komarow, Sherry (Pettie) Fizedale, John and Judy Luntz, Ann Marie and John Cunningham, Karen Possner, Stan Wiggins, Maurice B. Tobin, Marianne Ross, Lawrence C. Caseman, Catherine Gelb, John Noble, Tryon Wells, Bill and Lucky Marmon, Gerry Barton, George and Marcia Loeb, Vicki Judson, Mike Esch

1. Minutes: The minutes from the November meeting were approved.
 2. Construction Report: Tryon Wells reported that we are pleased with the progress to date. Carlos, the contractor, is efficient and fast. Approval for a 4" deficit on height in the ground floor room is being requested.
 3. Construction Financing: Jeff reported that he expects to secure all the member loans needed to support the project.
 4. Relief Caretaker: The problems related to running an effective relief caretaker program were covered in the islander and Jeff asked members to renew their efforts to participate in this activity.
 5. Budget: Jeff referred to the budget, which was presented on pg. 11 of the November Islander. We are on target or slightly higher for spending for the year. The 2009 budget reflects the construction costs and an addition of \$500 for professional services to anticipate additional costs such as the issue of 1099's for interest paid on member loans.
 6. Budget 2009 Dues and Fees: The 2009 dues will reflect a \$75 annual construction fee and a \$325 membership fee. Large party fees will increase \$5 in each party size category with a special fee of \$50 for specially approved parties of over 35 persons.
 7. Caretaker Compensation: The Club approved the recommendation of the Compensation Committee regarding the 2009 salary and 2008 bonus for the caretaker.
 8. Election of Officers and Supervisors: The slate of nominees in large part reflects the current leadership of the club with significant anticipation for 2010. Jeff said the Club owes a special debt of gratitude to David Winer, Ann Marie Cunningham and Tryon Wells.
 9. New Business: a) Thanks to the Beldens for performing Membership Secretary duties; b) FYI, Senior membership status is acquired by age and at least 20 years with the Club. Senior and Honorary Members are not included in the membership ceiling; c) The Club T shirt supply has been renewed with 60 green and 60 white shirts; d) An article about the Sycamore Store is being written by a member's daughter and we expect to publish it in the Islander; e) Peggy Thompson, who hosted last years holiday party, could not attend but she welcomes visitors to her home.
 10. Thanks to Hosts: Jeff thanked Mike and Vicki for hosting the 2008 holiday party.
 11. Thanks to the President: The membership present expressed their appreciation for the dedicated and effective leadership of President Jeff Komarow.
- Adjournment.

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

Monday-- January 5, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.5 Water Temperature: 38

There isn't much news to report. We had a warm weekend and there were some visitors here on Saturday but pretty slow yesterday.

On Saturday, my girlfriend, Elaine, and I went to Chincoteague to see the flocks of snow geese. We saw lots of geese and other birds and we were also lucky enough to see the rare Delmarva Fox Squirrels and the miniature Seka Deer. We also saw the ponies, of course.

Friday-- January 9, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.0 Water Temperature: 38

Sorry folks, the river is up and I have to report that the ferry will be closed again tomorrow. This may seem like bad timing but it's actually better that the high water is on the weekend and doesn't interfere with construction.

Friday-- January 16, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.1 Water Temperature: 32

This cold snap is having its effect on the river and we are forced to close the ferry due to ice. Another weekend without ferry service.

The cold front has also brought us an assortment of wintering ducks. Before I moved here I had to travel to area lakes to see these divers, now, I see hooded and common mergansers, pied-billed and red-necked grebes and buffleheads swimming right past my window. I was also surprised to see two squirrels early one morning on the Island. One was an easily identifiable black color. we'll have to see if they stick around.

We had the meeting on Wednesday. Most of you were not there, we couldn't even get the ten people we needed for a quorum. We had a good time and I think you should all try to make it a New Years Resolution to come to some meetings every year. It was nice of Stan and Karen to open their house to us and serve us cider and treats. We talked about the new construction and some other interesting matters but we forgot to recognize Tryon Wells for all his work with this major construction job. Without Tryon's devotion this project would not be happening. He's had to do a lot of leg work, from getting permits to picking out sinks and cabinets. This is on top of all the work he does with the web site and membership. I think we should remember to give Tryon a call and ask him if he ever needs any help.

Monday-- January 12, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.5 Water Temperature: 37

Critters, critters, critters, a raccoon got into the club house last night. I didn't think that would be a big problem but I forgot about all the food that I emptied out of one of the members lockers. Someone had filled their locker with a weeks worth of provisions and nonperishable food and when construction started I piled it all up in the clubhouse. The raccoon must have had a field day eating cookies chips and sugar packs. The coon also went through all my dry goods that were up there and there was oatmeal, pasta and flour all over the floor. I cleaned up the extensive mess and moved all edibles down into my apartment. My worry now is that, like the squirrels, these racoons will stop at nothing to look for more treats in the clubhouse.

Speaking of squirrels, we have none. During the fall a few of the squirrels that I hadn't trapped were living happily on the Island and they were joined by at least one that I watched swim over here from the mainland but now there are none. I'm certain of this because they never visit my bird feeder, which is overflowing with sunflower seeds. I guess they ran out of black walnuts to eat and decided to swim for the mainland.

There was a Carolina wren flying around in my room when I woke up Sunday morning. I'm not sure how it got in but I'm sure it was no accident. I tried to ignore the curious little bugger and go back to sleep but then I heard the sound of bird droppings landing on my bed stand.

Tuesday-- January 27, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.4 Water Temperature: 34

Hard times for caretakers.

It isn't like I'm really suffering out here but there has been so much unpredictability lately. Between the construction and the cold weather, things have gotten very interesting. The cold snap that we had last week caused all of the pipes to my bathroom to freeze leaving me with no running water, luckily I was on my way out the door to start my vacation. My hope was that Carlos would be able to fix my plumbing problems before I got back. Unfortunately, the river decided to freeze as well and Carlos and his crew have not been able to do any work here since I left. The river froze so much in fact that I think you could have safely walked over to the Island. I learned after the fact that Carlos *did* get to the Island on Thursday of last week. He and his men chopped through the ice to get the ferry over to the Island. That must have been an heroic effort, it looked like the ice was about four inches thick that day.

Happily I was able to get over to the Island when I got home from the airport but by Sunday morning the ferry was frozen into the river again. I spent Sunday rerouting my frozen pipes and I was able to get the shower working again. I also rigged up a new rope and used it to pull a canoe over the river ice.

Yesterday the river warmed up a little and a small channel of open water began to form near the Maryland shore. This was my cue to get out and free the ferry and get things back to normal. After a couple of hours of ice breaking the ferry was free and I called the contractor and his Sub-contractors and told them that we were ready to start working again.

Wednesday-- January 28, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.4 Water Temperature: 34

The ferry is ready to roll but with the snow yesterday and the ice today our construction project remains in limbo.

I saw a flying squirrel on Saturday. It wasn't here on the Island but it was so strange and these animals are so rarely spotted that I think it is worth mentioning. I was walking from Friendship Heights down Military Road and right after we crossed Reno Road something flew across the road and landed on the willow oak between the sidewalk and the road. I was so surprised to see that it wasn't a bird and I watched astonished as the furry guy disappeared up the trunk of that tree.

January 29, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.4 Water Temperature: 34

I was surprised to find a thin layer of ice in the channel this morning. The ice was like a plate glass window covering the river. The ice is thin but still too tough to pull the ferry through. I had to break all the "glass" just to get off the Island.

When I came home in the afternoon the channel was clear and there were hooded mergansers and buffleheads feeding in the sunlight.

Saturday-- January 31, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.4 Water Temperature: 34

This morning the river was really frozen. Instead of a thin glass-like layer of ice I found ice that was a quarter inch thick. I felt like I was breaking through a huge sheet of ceramic tile.

The work here is at a standstill. Nothing has been done here since the 16th of January and it looks like it will be another week or more before we get our approvals in order to continue closing in the walls.

The eagles are very active now and I've seen some impressive aerial displays.

-Joe Hage

Treasurer’s Report -- 2008 Budget Report.

Our authorized operating budget for the year was \$73,000. Our operational spending totaled \$62,982, a very good performance. We contained non-construction capital improvements (only canoes), saved a great deal on the electronic newsletter (a real achievement, Tryon) and spent modestly in most other areas. Our real estate taxes were lighter than expected, and I hope this holds for future years as well. We will have some payments early in 2009 that we sometimes pay in 2008, but this is really a good outcome.– **Alan Gelb**

Sycamore **Non Construction** Spending:

Sycamore Island Budget and Spending 2008	2008	Exp as of End December 2008	Percent of 2008 budget
Variable Costs			
Capital Improvements	3,000	1,268	42
Entertainment	800	539.26	67
Islander	6,500	2,657	41
Membership	400	153.75	38
Grounds	350	0	0
Misc. Professional Services	800	579.4	72
Repairs and Supplies	4,000	4,575	114
Sub-total	15,850	9,772	62
Fixed Costs			
Employee Expenses:	33,750	32,171	95
Insurance	13,000	12,528	96
Tax (Property, 990)	3,600	1,801	50
Utilities:	6,500	6,320	97
Bank Charges	300	300	100
Sub-total	57,150	53,120	93
Total Operating Budget	73,000	62,892	86
CONSTRUCTION		73,099	

Notes From The Construction

Despite ice on the river, frozen plumbing pipes and inspection delays, there is every reason to believe that club members should look forward to enjoying their renovated clubhouse this coming spring. As of this writing, most, if not all, of the framing, plumbing, electrical and ductwork has been completed. The sub-contractors are calling for their inspections as they complete their work. What remains is insulating and closing in the walls, installing plumbing fixtures, cabinets and countertops, and the flooring.

As we head toward the finish details part of the project, I find myself in the position of making lots of day-to-day decisions about building materials and finishes, without the time or ability to consult with the membership about almost any of it. Doing this against the backdrop of some 8 years of squabbling amongst the members about the look and feel of this renovation, I am nervously trying to make decisions I hope will be broadly acceptable. At the time of planning the overall renovation, these details were considered to be generally less important, so many of these decisions were never made.

For the record then, I've chosen to use the caretaker's old cabinets and countertops for the club's new kitchen while buying new cabinets and countertops for the caretaker's new kitchen. New windows have been installed in both kitchens and both kitchens will be insulated and will have wood-looking vinyl flooring, as will the two downstairs club bathrooms. In them, our old toilet fixtures will be recycled but the sinks will be new. Both bathrooms will also have two double-hung windows each, with frosted glass for privacy. A club-member project this spring will be to build new lockers, both long and short.

It turned out that the original oak floor of the upstairs clubroom ended at the ladies locker room. I've decided to complete, and try to match, the oak floor for the remaining 10 feet to the upstream end of the building. (Does John Matthews have any old motor oil he would like to contribute?)

Finally, a last-minute county requirement that was not foreseen in the previous clubhouse deliberations was thrust on us in order to grant our permit. For reasons of occupancy control and (fire?) safety, the county required that our main large clubroom could not be longer than 36 feet. This meant that we would have to move the wall at least a couple of feet, and make our main clubroom even a bit smaller than it was before.

When we went to implement this though, it occurred to me that if we moved the pool table into the new upstream room, and made the dividing wall porous with openings, we could retake the vision of a large airy upstairs clubroom, while giving the pool players the less satisfying upstream tool shed view (which won't matter to anyone focused on the game anyway).

As the one who led the charge to return the pool table to its current position after the club's flirtation with the "circle of warmth" in the 1980s, I am aware this may seem radical to some, but I think it will be a generally satisfying solution for the future.

-- Tryon Wells

The Potomac Downriver Race: Saturday May 23rd

Dear Friends,

The CCA Potomac Downriver Race will be held on Saturday, May 23, 2009. Large parties on this date would be unadvisable due to the PARKING problems. However, it is hoped that Islanders will come and run the race or help out as a volunteer on the Island.

All volunteers will receive a T-shirt, lunch, and my love. If I have left anyone off of the above list who should know now about this date, will you please forward this e-mail to them.

Star Mitchell
301-530-3252



54TH RUNNING OF CCA POTOMAC DOWNRIVER RACE SATURDAY, MAY 23, 2009

By V. Star Mitchell, CCA Downriver Race Chair
& Adam VanGrack, BCE Vice-Chair



What race do you know of that has lasted consecutively for 54 years? The 54th running of the CCA Potomac Downriver Race hosted by Sycamore Island and co-sponsored by BCE will be Saturday, May 23rd. COME AND BE A PART OF ONE OF THE GREATEST AND LONGEST RUNNING WHITEWATER RACES IN THE NATION! JOIN THE FUN!

The pre-registration fee is only \$20 if received by May 17th! Obtain a registration form from www.sycamoreisland.org or www.canoeclub.org. Follow the instructions for mailing. On race day the entrance fee will increase to \$25. Tandem teams pay as two individuals *unless* they are a parent and child (under age 18) who are permitted to pay as one individual. Liability forms must be signed on race day.

The race begins at Rocky Island on the Potomac River just above Wet Bottom Rapid and continues for 7.5 miles to Sycamore Island. At the end of the race, a free T-shirt and a free lunch will be given to all workers and racers, and there will be a ceremony with awards and prizes for the winners. (If you do not attend the ceremony, do not expect to receive the above! No awards will be mailed!)

Sign-in begins at 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at Great Falls Inn (Maryland) followed by a mandatory meeting for all racers. If the river is over 5 feet, the race may start at Old Anglers Inn. And if the river is over 6 feet, the race may be postponed.

This is a race for any whitewater paddler from the pros to parent/child tandem teams, but this is NOT A NOVICE RACE. All participants should have experience in and be comfortable with up to Class III rapids. Participants may enter with any type of a boat provided it is properly outfitted with adequate floatation (air bags) and all occupants of the boat are wearing a helmet and a PFD (life jacket).

If you plan to paddle the race, PLEASE PRE-REGISTER to help with registration and planning. Please do not bring two cars to the race -- parking will be difficult and a shuttle will be provided.

VOLUNTEER helpers are needed for safety boats and for helping at the registration at Great Falls and at the finish at Sycamore Island. Volunteers will receive the gratitude of the racers, a sense of participating in an important annual river event, a race T-shirt, and lunch.

Anyone interested in helping out with this year's race should contact Star Mitchell at 301-530-3252 or e-mail starmitchell@verizon.net. **DO JOIN THE FUN!!**

For use by Race Committee Only

BIB NUMBER: _____

CLASS: BC ___ AC ___



**54th CCA POTOMAC DOWNRIVER RACE
MAY 23, 2009 - RACER REGISTRATION FORM**



Please fill out a form for EACH RACER. Make sure to COMPLETE and PRINT all fields.

Racer's Name: _____ Male/Female: _____ Age on Race Day: _____

Address, City, State & Zip: _____ E-Mail: _____

Phone: _____ Emergency Contact (Name/Phone): _____

Parent's Name & Signature (if Entrant is under 18): _____

Please CHECK your Boat Class AND Age Class (there will also be separate male/female classes):

- ___ Boat Class #1: Wildwater Kayak (WWK1) (e.g., Zastera K1s, NoLimits, Savage, Match II)
- ___ Boat Class #2: Wildwater Canoe (WWC1) (e.g., Zastera C1s, Bala)
- ___ Boat Class #3: Long Kayak (K1) over 9 feet (e.g., Slalom, Speeder, Isere, Dancer, Green Boat, RPM Max)
- ___ Boat Class #4: Short Kayak (K1) under 9 feet (e.g., Fun, All-Star, Godzilla, X, RPM, Fly, Solo, Nomad)
- ___ Boat Class #5: Closed/Decked Canoe Solo (C1)
- ___ Boat Class #6: Open Canoe Solo (OC1)
- ___ Boat Class #7: Canoe Tandem* (OC2 / C2 / Raft) Name of Partner: _____
- ___ Boat Class #8: Mixed Canoe Tandem* (OC2 / C2 / Raft) Name of Partner: _____
- ___ Boat Class #9: Any Kayak Tandem* (K2 / Inflatable) Name of Partner: _____
- ___ Boat Class #10: Parent & Child ** (any boat & child under 18) Partner: _____

Make, Model, & Length of boat: _____

- ___ Age Class #1: Junior → 17 and under
- ___ Age Class #2: Open → 18 - 35
- ___ Age Class #3: Senior → 36 - 54
- ___ Age Class #4: Master → 55 - 69
- ___ Age Class #5: Legend → 70 and over

BCE Overall Winner Awards

- Fastest Overall
- Fastest Kayak (not wildwater)
- Fastest Canoe (not wildwater)
- Fastest Female
- Fastest Tandem

*Tandem Boats must use oldest paddler for Age Class.

** Parent & Child Class does not need to mark an Age Class and may pay as one individual.

→ All paddlers must wear helmets and life vests. Each boat must have proper flotation.

→ Race Officials at the mandatory check-in (9-10:30am) will confirm boat class and safety equipment.

→ Race Officials reserve the right to combine classes when numbers registered for a class are under 3.

Entry Fee for Pre-Registration: \$20 (must be received by May 17) Enclosed \$ _____ Check No. _____
Entry Fee for Race Day Registration: \$25 (9am - 10:30am only) Attached \$ _____
Voluntary Contribution for the CCA Potomac Downriver Race Enclosed \$ _____ Check No. _____

Please enclose your check payable to the "CCA" and mail to:
Star Mitchell, Race Chair, 8705 Hempstead Ave., Bethesda, MD 20817

Sycamore Bulletin Board:

February Meeting: February 11th at 8PM

At the Stapko's house, 1001 Saville Lane, McLean, Va. (see the president's letter for directions).

Hosts For March- 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 if you are willing to host a meeting.

Relief Caretakers wanted:

Thanks goes out to the many people who volunteered for relief caretaking. We are currently looking for relief caretakers for weekends in April and May.

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, phone: 301-448-8562



The Sycamore Islander

6613 80th Place
Cabin John, MD 20818
ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS MAIL

<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>

Sycamore Events

**February Meeting: February 11th
at 8PM Stapko's house, 1001
Saville Lane, McLean, Va.**

March Meeting:
March 11th at 8:00 PM
Location to be announced