



The Sycamore Islander

March 2009

Volume 88 No 3

President's Letter

Winter is almost over, and it cannot happen soon enough for me. I am looking forward to moving our meetings back to the Island and holding them in our renovated Clubhouse. I am enthusiastic about the possibility of bringing back some older events and creating new ones. Let's get down to specifics:

Construction Update: The February minutes summarize the construction report given by Tryon Wells. We have been slowed by bad weather and by the need to get the county down to the Island for inspections. I don't think the County's inspectors get many requests for inspections of construction on an island. Our contractor is anxious to finish, and we are satisfied with the work thus far. I continue to believe we will be on budget.

Spring Workfest and other projects: The Spring workfest is now scheduled for **Saturday, April 18, 2009** with a rain date the following **Sunday, April 25**. This is the time that we get the canoe and swim floats back into the river, undertake all sorts of maintenance and repairs, check the structural integrity of club canoes and kayaks, make improvements, such as additional canoe storage, and generally spruce up the place. However (there is always a however), there are a number of projects that should be done at other times, for example, staining the clubhouse decks. We hope to put together a list of projects that people can work on over the summer. We'd like to see members identify new projects or maintenance items and work on them in coordination with Joe and Tryon.

Sycamore Events: If you are like me, you look forward to going to the Island to get away from crowds, take out a canoe, do some bird-watching, or perhaps have a small picnic with family and friends. However, I also look forward to club events like the workfest where there is a real communal spirit. I continue to hear from members who feel that we could do more to come together as a community. There are several longstanding events that have not been held in recent years or are in danger of not being held. The regatta, the fishing derby and the old timers' picnic come to mind.

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 April issue is Wednesday, April 1 st

(If you want to know about the regatta, there are two articles from past years on the website under “Newsletter Articles”) I would also like to see at least one weekend picnic event outside of the Workfest or other new event, such as a bird-watching or bicycle excursion. But this requires volunteers, volunteers and volunteers. I continue to get emails from people asking me “how can I get into the Club? What can I do to volunteer?” The people on the shore know how special the Island is and want to help out. I am asking you as members to help out. So contact me (jkomarow@covad.net or 202.492.2003) about helping to organize these events and activities.

Spring Wildflower Walk: As I mentioned last month, the wildflower walk is scheduled for **Sunday, April 19, 2009**. Details are in this month’s *Islander*.

Insurance Review: Our insurance requirements are more complex than you might think because we need to carry commercial liability and property insurance as well as flood insurance. As noted in the February minutes, our treasurer, Alan Gelb, would appreciate it if a club member with insurance expertise would volunteer to review our insurance with him. Again, contact me, and I’ll put you in touch with Alan.

March Meeting: The March meeting will be held on **Wednesday, March 11, 2009 at 8:00 PM** at the home of Diane and John Noble, 7024 Arandale Road, Bethesda, MD. 20817. Here are John’s directions (so don’t blame me if you get lost): From the Sycamore Store go west on MacArthur Blvd. to Wilson Lane; Right on Wilson Lane one block; Left on Broxburn Dr. one block; Right on Arandale Rd. 7024 is the first house on the left.

See you at the March meeting.

**Jeff Komarow
President**



<u>MARC</u> <u>H 2009</u>		
	MORNING 10 A.M – 2 P.M	AFTERNOON 2 P.M. – DARK
MARCH 7 TH	Sally & Steve Kern 301 270-5376 skern@enginepictures.com ; sallybond@starpower.net	Susan Elfstrom 703 533-5537 Elfstrom2@verizon.net
MARCH 14 TH	Tom & Elizabeth Gibbons 703 243-9620 tgibbons@bellboyd.com	Norman & Nancy Metzger 202 544-6027 normanmetzger@verizon.net
MARCH 21 ST	Karen Possner & Sam Wiggins 301 320-7688 spwiggins@verizon.net karenposner@gmail.com	WC Banta 301 718-4217 wcbanta@comcast.net
MARCH 28 TH	Patricia Roth 202 686-0270 patriciaroth@gmail.com	Brian & Anne Waidmann 703 536-3168 Birgit.a.waidmann@us.pwc.com
<u>APRIL</u> <u>2009</u>		

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

Minutes: February 11, 2009 Meeting

The February meeting was held at the Stapko family home in McLean, Virginia. Enough members were present to constitute a quorum. President Jeff Komarow convened the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Present: Jim Drew, Alan Gelb, Jennifer Glaudemans, Joe Hage, Jeff and Sandi Komarow, Alison Levine, Stan Mitchell, John Noble, Marianne Ross, John Stapko, David and Jane Winer, and Tryon Wells.

Minutes: The December 2008 minutes were approved unanimously, without any corrections or amendments.

Construction Report: Tryon Wells reported that all the framing, plumbing and electrical work was completed. Most of the ductwork for the HVAC is also finished, but the HVAC unit itself has not yet been delivered or installed. WSSC approval is expected in the next few days. Tryon said that he hoped to have the electrical and mechanical inspectors present at the same time that the final building inspection occurs. Once the final inspection is approved, the walls can be enclosed and the finishing work should take another 3-4 weeks.

Jeff thanked Tryon on behalf of the entire board and membership for his tireless work on the renovation, noting that the project could not be completed without all his trips to Montgomery County offices, and meetings with inspectors and contractors.

Joe mentioned that once the construction project is finished, he would contact the well service company to install a new filtration system on the club's water well.

Membership: Jeff reported that membership data should be up to date and reflect the recent turn-over by the next meeting in March.

Contributions to the *Islander*: Jeff noted that contributions to the newsletter should be delivered to the editor in a more timely fashion. The deadline is always published at the bottom of the front page of the *Islander*.

Treasurer's Report: The 2008 Treasurer's report was published in the February *Islander*. Jeff highlighted the fact that the club ended the year in the black and that the renovation project will be on (and perhaps even under) budget.

Alan Gelb raised issue of insurance, noting that after the renovation is completed, we should re-examine the amount of coverage. He said he would welcome any assistance from members with experience in commercial property insurance in the evaluation of the club's policies and options.

Spring Work Fest: The 2009 spring work fest will be Saturday, April 18th. The rain date will be the following Sunday, April 26th.

Other Business: Jim Drew reported that Sycamore and Ruppert's Islands have not had the beaver damage this year as it has in years past. He suggested that the placement of wire around the tree trunks have helped.

It was also suggested that club events be scheduled and assigned to a coordinating volunteer for the Regatta, Old timers lunch and Fishing Derby. David Winer also suggested organizing a club bike ride and a bird/canoe tour in early fall.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Glaudemans, Co-Recording Secretary



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

Monday-- February 16, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.9 Water Temperature: 42

This week the river has been free of ice so I have no ice stories to tell you but I did see a chicken. I was coming down the trail above the canal when I saw a big white chicken standing in the path. I immediately froze and the chicken ran into the brush. I put down my load and went after it. I guess it was an instinctive impulse to chase the bird, I don't know what I would have done with it if I caught it. I climbed the hill after the chicken but it wouldn't let me get close. I decided I needed a net and some gloves so I ran down to the Island and fashioned a chicken net out of a fish net. By now it was getting dark and I climbed the hill up to the park-way where I last saw my quarry. I spied something white in the bushes but I couldn't be sure that it wasn't just a piece of trash. I snuck in close and sure enough, the hen was roosting in the vines. I maneuvered through the branches and raised my net. I thought I had a clear shot but when I lunged, the chicken took off over the steep ravine and vanished below. I stumbled down the hill after it but after looking along the bank of the canal for half an hour I couldn't find it. It was now very dark and I followed the light from my headlamp back up to the trail. I've seen a lot of birds here but this is the first time I've seen a chicken passing through and I wonder where it came from. It reminded me of the time that we had a carrier pigeon staying here for a couple days.

It looks like the construction has resumed. It has been a solid month since any progress has been made. I wish we had a more experienced contractor to help guide us through this inspection process. The blind leading the blind.

Saturday-- February 7, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.5 Water Temperature: 33

Sometimes a strong steady wind in the middle of a cold winter is a good thing. I was afraid that the river would freeze up on me on Wednesday night as temperatures sunk back into the teens but the wind swept river was too choppy and wavy for ice to form. I had no trouble coming and going on Thursday as the wind kept the channel open. Then the wind died. I came home from the Banff Mountain Film Fest on Thursday night to find that I had to chop through a thin layer of ice. Just six hours before the channel was ice-free! I was able to get across without too much trouble but I knew that it meant I'd be doing some serious ice breaking in the morning.

Carlos and his crew decided to show up on Friday morning and after ringing the bell they had to watch me as I slowly hacked my way through the half inch-thick ice. I was glad to see them and glad to know that at least some progress was being made on the house this week. We passed two electrical inspections and it looks like we have a new plumber on the job; hope he's better than the last.

I wish that I could describe better what its like to take a winter paddle around the Island. I can name for you the birds I see and I can try to describe the hues of a winter sunset or the way the moonlight is captured by the patches of ice and snow but words can't capture the deep and primal satisfaction of being a part of this landscape. The scene at sunset with the moon high over the river is something most of you will never see. It is amazing how far away the cars and traffic lights seem when I'm navigating through chunks of floating ice with flocks of ducks flying overhead. Gone are the green leaves and great blue herons. There are no flowers and there are no songbirds to listen to. But the shadows of the trees in the moonlight and the sound of a flock of mergansers taking flight makes me not miss those summer things.

-Joe Hage



Annual Spring Wildflower Walk for Sycamore Islanders

Sunday, April 19th, 2009 – Rain or Shine!

10:00 am-2:00 pm

For this year's Spring Wildflower Walk, we will explore the botanical diversity on Bear Island, down river from Great Falls. Park in the parking area across the street from Angler's Inn (on MacArthur Blvd). Walk down to the bottom parking lot, where the Kayakers park, and cross the bridge over the canal. We will gather on the tow path, right where the bridge and the tow path meet. From there, we will walk north on the tow path, and head into the woods across from the Wide Water section of the canal (The Billy Goat Trail). Here's a sample of some of the wildflowers we can expect to see – Golden Ragwort, Bluebells, Wild Blue Phlox, Spring Beauty, Toothworts, Trillium, Violets, Dutchman Breeches, Early Saxifrage, and maybe even Twinleaf, and the very flexible Leatherwood shrub. Bring a lunch or snack to enjoy in a scenic spot along the way.

For more information, contact RG Steinman or John Parrish: Tel: (301) 565-2025; email, lifoonurth@gmail.com

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR THE 20TH ANNUAL POTOMAC WATERSHED CLEANUP APRIL 4, 2009, 9AM - NOON*

Every year since 1989, the Alice Ferguson Foundation has organized the Potomac Watershed Cleanup. Last year, more than 40,000 volunteers teamed with 300 partner organizations to tug over 1,500 tons of trash from the watershed's streams, rivers and bays. Last year's haul of over 291 tons included more than 18 tons of recyclables, 2,625 tires, 13,000 balls, 25 bicycles, 26 shopping carts, 100lbs. of metal piping, 6 TVs and 2 bathtubs! The massive amount of litter is clogging our waterways and harming wildlife. And when you consider that the Potomac River and its tributaries provide usable water for approximately 80% of the metropolitan DC population, you may be personally moved to get that stuff out of your water! (Credit for this information to Alice Ferguson Foundation)

We on Sycamore Island have traditionally cleaned up our own site and invited helpers from outside the Club. We provide trash bags and gloves. You might get a little dirty and maybe a little wet. You may work on land or from canoes. You may find a treasure.

Bring a bag lunch and we will provide drinks and dessert. For several years now, this event has been an "approved" Sycamore event, useful to those garnering credits to host a large party. For more information, visit www.PotomacCleanup.org. Our Sycamore Island coordinator is Renee Dunham whom you may call at (202) 686-6451 or e-mail at rgdunham@erols.com.

From the Archives by Holly Syrrakos
76 Years Ago at Sycamore Island
From the March 1933 Sycamore Islander

Comparisons between the 1930s and present day have become commonplace. In 1933, the *Islander* reflected on the tough economy and discussed adjustments that had to be made.

One accommodation the Club made for members was in the membership fees and dues payment schedule.

“The February meeting adopted a plan of permitting persons who desire to join the Club to pay their twenty dollar membership fee in installments. Under the new plan, applicants for membership will be required to pay the usual \$5 at the time of filing their application. The balance of \$15, plus the \$2 Government tax, will be payable in equal installments with their quarterly dues. We hope this arrangement will make it possible to obtain more members during the coming Summer...”

On the subject of dues: *“All members who are delinquent in their dues were advised, by bills mailed March 1st, that they should make payment before the Club meeting of March 13th. The banking situation has, of course, interfered to some extent with such action but as soon as conditions improve, all delinquents will be expected to bring their accounts up to date.”*

One final reminder of the times: *“We’ve just thumbed back through our file of Islanders to March, 1922, to ascertain whether we generally make any announcement as to Spring in the March issue. We find that even in those happy days of eleven years ago, when bank holidays and scrip were unthought of, we nevertheless lacked sufficient enthusiasm to talk of Spring in March.”*

“Perhaps in these days it would be a good idea to bear in mind that Spring and Summer are certain to come. No matter what our temporary worldly difficulties may be, Winter always becomes Spring and Spring, in turn, becomes Summer. And each week, beginning some time not so far ahead, the Island becomes greener and the river more pleasant.”

Even though there may be a kind of bleakness in our world today, it is nice to know that we can stop and welcome Spring once again. As the editor wrote in 1933, *“We may be wrong but we’re still laughing up our thread-bare but neatly mended and spotlessly clean cuff.”*



Sycamore Bulletin Board:

March Meeting: March 11th at 8PM

At the home of Diane and John Noble, 7024 Arandale Rd. Bethesda, 20817

20th Annual Potomac Watershed Cleanup: April 4th, 9-12

Spring Workfest: Saturday April 18th, raindate is April 25th

Spring Wildflower Walk: Sunday April 19th

Old Timer's Potluck Picnic: June 2nd, 12-3

Raindate June 9th, contact Charlotte Brewer with questions. 301-656-0467

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
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<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/boondoggle/islander.htm>

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Sycamore Events

**March Meeting: March 11th at
8PM home of Diane and John No-
ble, 7024 Arandale Rd, Bethesda**

April Meeting:
April 8th at 8:00 PM
Location—on the island