



# *The Sycamore Islander*

*April 2009*

*Volume 88 No 4*

## **President's Letter**

Spring has finally arrived. April is the time to get the Island ready for the season and plan for Sycamore events.

**April Meeting Changed to April 15.** Normally, the Club's meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month. This year, the second Wednesday of April (April 8) marks the beginning at sundown of the Jewish holiday of Passover. Consequently, we are moving the April meeting back one week to April 15. So, file for an extension of your federal and state income taxes and come to the April meeting. The April meeting will be held at a club member's home, **not** on the Island.

**Construction Update:** Construction was delayed in March by some issues with Montgomery County over our final heating/HVAC permit. These issues have been resolved, and we now have the permit in hand. While we are cautiously optimistic that the work will be complete by mid-April, we have decided to hold the April meeting off the Island out of an abundance of caution (and our poor ability to predict when we will be finished).

**Upcoming Events.** We have several upcoming events that are worth mentioning:

**Spring Workfest:** The Spring workfest is scheduled for **Saturday, April 18, 2009** from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM with a rain date the following **Sunday, April 25**. There will be a barbeque lunch. It is traditional for people to bring a side dish or a dessert. One of the projects we hope to start at the workfest is to build new storage lockers for the clubhouse. This project likely will not be finished during the workfest. If you miss the workfest, there should be other opportunities to help out.

**Spring Wildflower Walk:** The wildflower walk is scheduled for **Sunday, April 19, 2009** at 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Meet on the C&O Canal towpath at Old Anglers Inn. While edible plants will be pointed out, you may want to bring your own lunch and water.

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

**The deadline for the May issue is Wednesday, April 29th.**

**Canoe Class:** The annual canoe instructional class taught by Frank Daspit is scheduled for **Saturday, May 16, 2009** at 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

**Potomac Downriver Race:** The Canoe Cruisers Association (CCA) will be holding their annual downriver race on Saturday, May 23, 2009. Sycamore Island is the finish line. Further information and entry forms are on the CCA website. They also are looking for volunteers to help out with the race.

**Kayak Class:** For the first time in recent memory, the Club will be offering a kayak instruction class taught by Starr Mitchell on **Saturday, June 20, 2009** at 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

**Clubhouse Warming Party:** Coming soon. Stay tuned.

**Insurance Review:** We are still looking more a club member with some expertise to assist the Treasurer and other officers in reviewing the Club's insurance. Please contact me ([jkomarow@covad.net](mailto:jkomarow@covad.net) or 202.492.2003).

**Unpaid Dues:** If you haven't paid your dues, please pay up now. It's easy for that bill to get lost in the shuffle. Lisa Kleifoth, our Financial Secretary, will send out email reminders. If you are not sure whether you received an invoice and paid your dues, please contact Lisa or me.

**April Meeting:** The April meeting will be held on **Wednesday, April 15, 2009 at 8:00 PM** at the home of Lauren Brandt and Jean-Louis Sarbib, 3322 Stuyvesant Place, Washington, DC 20015. As noted, this is a change from the regular meeting date.

Directions to 3322 Stuyvesant Place: From Chevy Chase Circle, go northeast on Western Avenue until you cross Broad Branch Road. Stuyvesant Place is the first right turn after Broad Branch. 3322 is on the cul de sac at the end of the street.

See you at the April meeting (one week later than usual).

**Jeff Komarow**  
**President**

## Saturday Relief Caretakers- April 2009

Please sign up as soon as possible

| Date  | Hours  | Caretaker                         | Number       |
|-------|--------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| April |        |                                   |              |
| 4     | 10-3   | Meg and Charlie Jones             | 301-229-1917 |
|       | 3-dark | Andrew Umhau                      | 202-362-4467 |
| 11    | 10-3   | Andrew Umhau                      | 202-362-4467 |
|       | 3-dark | Peter&Mary Ellen<br>Levine        | 301-229-2986 |
| 18    | 10-3   | Margaret Barry                    | 301-229-5351 |
|       | 3-dark | Diana & Harold<br>Furchtgott-Roth | 301-229-3593 |
| 25    | 10-3   | Sue and Greg Super                | 703-892-1846 |
|       | 3-dark | Steven Newman                     | 703-528-4352 |
|       |        |                                   |              |
|       |        |                                   |              |
|       |        |                                   |              |
|       |        |                                   |              |

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

To volunteer, contact Alison Burns at

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

202-362-6654

## Meeting Minutes: March 11, 2009

The meeting was held in the home of Diane and John Noble. A lovely spread of good food and drink was provided for pre and post meeting.

Present at the meeting were: Peter Winkler, David Holdridge, Trip Reid, Jim Drew, John Noble, Star Mitchell, David Winer, Bill and Lucky Marmon, Jerry Martin, Bill Eichbaum and Jeff Komarow. A quorum was present.

Vice president David Weiner called the meeting to order at 8:15, and turned the (imaginary) gavel over to President Jeff Komarow who arrived late because he could not follow directions.

A Club-sponsored canoe class will be held on Saturday May 16, 10:00 AM-Noon. Frank Daspit once again has agreed to teach the class. Several members noted that Frank does a great job. Even experienced paddlers can pick up some tips. For the first time, the Club will offer a kayak class, which is scheduled for June 20, also starting at 10:00 a.m. The class will be taught by veteran kayaker and club member Star Mitchell.

There was no official construction report although those who as visited the Island recently reported significant project: most walls were in and siding was going up. A key building inspection had been completed and the project appears on schedule for completion in April, weather permitting. [**Ed. Note:** The hold up was caused by problems with the mechanical/HVAC permit and scheduling final inspections for framing, electrical and HVAC. The construction must pass these inspections before the close up can begin.]

Membership Chair Peter Winkler reported three resignations by regular membership and two additional resignations from inactive and senior members. Two applicant families were proposed for membership, James Hess and Betsy Cody (and children Nate, 11 and Rachel,9)) of Arlington, VA and Ann Lucy of Cabin John. (See Peter's detailed write-ups attached.) Both were unanimously accepted.

Jeff Komarow moved that Carl Linden, a past Club President and long-time advocate for protection of the C&O National Park, be elected an Honorary Member. The motion passed unanimously.

There was discussion of membership issues and suggestion that a survey be sent to members for opinion on whether the impact on the Club--or lack thereof--of the enlarged membership (due to the admission of Waiting List Members)

Jeff Komarow requested and received permission for a large party on May 17, which was approved.

Trip Reid noted that the latest newsletter from the Potomac Conservancy described an opportunity to purchase 4-5 foot trees at \$28 per tree from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' Forest Service and proposed that the Club buy 12 Sycamore Trees for planting on the Island. President Komarow authorized Trip to go forward and purchase the trees since there were funds available in the budget for the grounds. (Trip subsequently learned that the Club was not eligible because we are not open to the public.)

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted, Bill Marmon, Co-Recording Secretary**



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

**Monday-- March 2, 2009**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.3    Water Temperature: 39**

It's sort of ironic. I drove all the way to the mountains of West Virginia to do some X-country skiing and there was no snow. I come home to the lowlands and we get six inches. I think this means that I have to ski to my job at NIH.

I got home yesterday to find Paul Hagen here again. I've mentioned his skill and enthusiasm for fishing and birding before, he's one of the few people that can show me things on the island that I've missed. Yesterday he pointed out the 14 redheaded ducks feeding near the island. He has generously left a copy of Sibley's birding guide in the clubhouse. He also had the great idea to have an ongoing bird list and fishing report posted on the website.

It is now March and our eagles should have laid their eggs by now so Paul and I were concerned when we didn't see any eagles near the nest. Then, just before dark, Paul spotted our resident eagles at the nest. Let's hope that that means we have an active nest.

**Wednesday-- March 4, 2009**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.3    Water Temperature: 39**

That incessant wind has finally stopped blowing but now there is a layer of ice on the river. These near record low temperatures have also kept me on my toes trying to keep my uninsulated pipes from freezing.

The bird songs a bit muffled this morning. Earlier this week, when the weather was warmer, I could hear the male cardinals trumpeting, but today is quiet.

**Friday-- March 6, 2009**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.3    Water Temperature: 39**

It looks like we're in for a spring-like weekend. I even saw the first signs of the blue bells poking through the mud.

**Saturday-- March 7, 2009**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.2    Water Temperature: 43**

Isn't it exciting when the seasons change, and this change has been dramatic. Last weekend we had snow and today I saw my first sure sign of spring, wood ducks in the trees!

Remember, it may be a warm day but the river is still deadly cold. Be careful out there.

**Tuesday-- March 10, 2009**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.2    Water Temperature: 51**

The weekend wasn't as busy as I thought it would be, but it was fun to see the members that did come out. It was nice to have that warm spell; I didn't have to worry about the pipes freezing and I didn't have to worry about overloading the circuits with the space heaters. There was a down side though. Since mine is the only bathroom I had to share it with the entire club. Just one big happy family I guess.

Carlos said he saw a dead beaver down by the dam. Judging by all the trees that were gnawed down it is possible that the beaver died from over eating. Either that or someone got very determined to save the last of the trees down there.

The blue bells are growing very fast but the invasive lesser celandine is also out in force.

**Wednesday-- March 25, 2009**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.1    Water Temperature: 53**

Still no progress on the renovation but I've been promised that work will resume next week. In the meantime there is no bathroom available for patrons.

We had great views of the eagles on Sunday. It looks like the eggs are about to hatch.

**Monday-- March 30, 2009**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.8    Water Temperature: 56**

The river is at 3.8 now but it is predicted to go up to 4.3 by Wednesday.

I wish I could talk to you about the progress of the renovation but my mother once told me that if you don't have anything nice to say don't say anything at all.

**Tuesday-- March 31, 2009**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 4.1    Water Temperature: 56**

Once the construction project gets completed (I haven't given up hope yet), we have some big-ticket maintenance projects that need to be addressed. First of all, and most importantly, we need to install a new water-purification system; right now we have untreated water coming from the tap. Next, we need to get rid of the mountain of construction debris that has taken over the center of the Island. There will also be a lot of painting to be done, inside and out. We still have some major tree work to be done as well.

The weather has not been very spring-like lately and if it weren't for the bluebells blooming all over the Island, I would swear that it was still winter.



From the Archives compiled by Holly Syrrakos  
76 Years Ago at Sycamore Island  
From the April 1933 *Sycamore Islander*

Despite the chilly weather of late, Spring is here and Summer is on its way. In 1933, the *Islander* reflects the same excitement about warm temperatures that we feel today.

*“Spring came to Sycamore for the forty-ninth occasion [this year, the 125<sup>th</sup>] since 1884, when that group of hardy pioneers, on their way to Glen Echo, rolled down the hill from Conduit Road and discovered Sycamore Island.”*

*“Our fellow-member, John Moffett, who until now has just been a better than ordinary fellow-member, won undying fame by being the first to plunge into the Potomac at Sycamore this Spring. We were there and we liked the way he did it. There was no pause for the sound-picture men; in fact before plunging in, he didn’t even look behind him to make certain that the crowd of four of us was looking. He simply went down to the water and boldly plunged in. then he simply, and quite quickly, plunged out. But history was made, then and there, on April 2<sup>nd</sup>!”*

The regular Spring updates abound: the water system turned on; the last plea for dues; another call for new members, and; the ferry put into operation. “One may now reach the Island without the necessity of wading across in the rowboat.”

In the 1930s, the Club didn’t bother much about native plants. Thus the following discussion about gardening:

*“The climbing roses were beginning to sprout and perhaps each one will produce a few blooms this season. The Club seems to be getting flora conscious. Of late there has been much talk of formal gardens and perennials and even our caretaker has taken to raising seeds in boxes alongside the stove and intends to beautify the Island with nasturtiums, sweet alyssum and lilies. There’s quite a bevy of hollyhocks planted just below the ferry landing on the Island.*

*“Going still further in this gardening matter, you’ll be delighted to learn that there’ll also be another flowery bower just above the tool-house. As we understand it, several of our suddenly flower-loving members are laying out a vale of gladioli, spinach, tiger lilies, tomato plants, helianthus—sunflower, to you—cosmos, corn, peas, and perhaps salsify.*

*“In case you don’t understand the reason for mixing all the mundane vegetables with the gorgeous flowers, we explain that it seems that some of the younger visitors at the Island have never seen a potato plant produce young potatoes. This summer all will be made plain, assuming that Ceres, the Goddess of Agriculture, does her stuff and the tennis players don’t break past the shot-gun armed farm-bloc and trample the tender sprouts while seeking lost tennis balls.”*

Here’s to 125 Springs, and counting.



## Sycamore Bulletin Board:

### **April Meeting: April 15th at 8PM– This is a change of date**

At the home of Lauren Brandt and Jean-Louis Sarbib, 3322 Stuyvesant Place, Wash DC 20015

### **Canoeing Class:**

Islander Frank Daspit will again teach his very popular canoeing class this year. The class will be held at Sycamore Island on Saturday, May 16, 2009 from 9:30 to 11:30 am. All members and wait listers from beginners to more advanced paddlers can attend. Teenagers welcome. There are plenty of club canoes available. No need to RSVP; just come to the Island. For more information, contact canoe supervisor Jim Drew at 202/462-3836.

### **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 May and June.

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

### **Large Parties:**

**April 24th 9-11 Lisa Kliefoth will host 30 people for coffee**

**May 17th Jeff Kamarow will host 30 people.**

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@mac.com](mailto:johnnoble@mac.com) phone: 301-448-8562

**This is a new email address for John**



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

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### ***Sycamore Events***

**April Meeting: Change of date**

April 15th at 8:00 PM

At the home of Lauren Brandt and  
Jean-Louis Sarbib, 3322 Stuyvesant  
Place, Wash DC 20015

**Spring WorkFest: April 18, 9-4**

**Spring Wildflower Walk: April 19  
10-2**

**May Meeting: May 13th, 8 PM on  
the island**



Photo by Joe Hage