

The Sycamore Islander

June 2009

Volume 88 No 6

President's letter:

The May meeting was held on the Island around a campfire since the clubhouse was not available due to the construction. For a few minutes, I felt like a kid at camp. Then reality set in. There are several "grown up" issues that were discussed.

Camping Rules: Some members may not be aware of the Club's policy on overnight camping. The Club's Standing Rules state that "overnight camping shall be coordinated in advance with the supervisor of camping (or in his absence, another officer) and the caretaker." Also, "no ferry service to or from the lower island shall be provided between dark and 9:00 am, except by special arrangement with the Caretaker." These rules mean that members must obtain advance approval to camp overnight from the camping supervisor and, most importantly, the Caretaker. The Club encourages members to camp and permission will not be withheld without good reason, but please make advance arrangements.

Caretaker's Hours: At several meetings, the question has been raised as to how did it come about that the caretaker has a part-time job that takes him off the Island weekdays until 1:00 PM? Hopefully, the following will put the question to rest.

The caretaker's salary is fairly minimal. Historically, our caretakers have been single men without dependents or have had spouses who worked off the Island in order to provide additional income. Our current caretaker, however, has two children who have lived with him on the Island for long periods. A number of years ago, Joe asked the Club to allow him to take on a part-time job. The Club's management was happy with Joe's performance and wanted him keep him. Therefore, the decision was made by the officers involved to permit Joe to hold down a part-time job during the week in the mornings when the Club is lightly used. In retrospect, it would have been better if the decision had been put to a vote, but at this point, there is no reason why the Club's current arrangement with Joe should not continue. Joe is a tremendous asset to the Club, and the inconvenience is minor.

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 July issue is Wednesday, June 24th.

Members need to be aware that ferry service will not be available weekdays until 1:00 P.M. This does not mean that the Island is closed. Members can operate the ferry themselves when Joe is gone. (Call Joe, if you don't know the combination for the lock on the ferry.) The rule is that a clubmember who uses the Island when the caretaker is not there becomes the *de facto* relief caretaker and is responsible for the ferry. The responsibility then shifts to each subsequent member who comes across on the ferry. A member alone on the Island can relieve himself or herself of responsibility for the ferry by bringing it back to the canal side and locking it up. The member can tie a canoe to the ferry and paddle back to the Island or, for the hardy, swim across the channel.

Construction Update: I am looking forward to writing my last construction update. The construction is nearly complete. Joe will soon shortly be in a position to prepare a punch list of items that need correcting. The total cost should come in within the Club's authorization of \$150,000.

In Pace Requiescat (R.I.P.): I am sad to report that the swim float that was so lovingly built last year did not survive the flooding caused by the rain in early May. (The float may have survived, but the cable connection did not hold.) This is the second time that the Club has lost its swim float due to May rains. In future years, the Club may wait until June to put the swim float in the river rather than including that task as part of the Spring Workfest.

June Meeting: The June meeting will be held on the Island at 8:00 PM on Wednesday, June 13. If you would like to picnic before the meeting, bring some food. The barbeque grills will be fired up as long as the weather is good.

Jeff Komarow
President

Sycamore Island Meeting Minutes **May 13, 2009**

The May meeting was held around a campfire on the island. Enough members were present to constitute a quorum. President Jeff Komarow convened the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Present: Gerry Barton, Michael Colon, Jim Drew, Alan Gelb, Jennifer Glaudemans, Joe Hage, Phoebe Hamill, Jeff Komarow, Star Mitchell, John Noble, Gordon Philips, Mike Tilchin, David and Jane Winer, and Peter Winkler.

Minutes: The March 2009 minutes were approved unanimously, without any corrections or amendments.

Membership: It was reported that the waiting list is slowly being whittled down. There are currently five openings, with four applicant families having finished their paper work and one family will be in next month. The four applicants were unanimously approved, and include: Vicki Judson and Michael Esch, Dana Boyd and David DePorter, Andy and Stacey Malmgren, and Christopher Weals and Amy Hancock.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Alan Gelb reported that the club's IRS filings, for forms 990 and 990-T, are due in May and are publicly available.

He reported that the finances are quite healthy. He said that construction costs would run about \$50,000 this year and club expenses would be about \$27,000. He said that cash, income from this year's dues, and loans, left the club with a positive balance of approximately \$150,000.

Jeff added that we would begin paying off our loans this year as well.

As he had done in February, 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.

Canoes: Jim Drew reported that a canoeing class would be held on Saturday, May 16th from 10 am to 12 pm. The Down River Race will be on May 23rd. Star Mitchell added that she still was looking for helpers to help guide racers. He added that the club received a from a waiting list member, Mark Friedrichs; a red 9 foot single seat kayak and paddle, both in excellent condition.

Parties: John Noble reported that six large parties are requested or scheduled over the next two months. One request, to be hosted by Michael Colon on May 31st, was seeking an exemption because it was not requested in time to be published in the *Islander*. Mr. Colon offered to substitute for the caretaker on May 31st in order to host a birthday party for his 8 year old. The board unanimously approved his request.

Caretaker's Report: Joe Hage reported that the swim float was lost during flooding the previous week. The chain was still tied to the tree, so the attachment failure occurred somewhere else. Noting that one was lost last year as well, he suggested we might consider better ways to secure the float.

He also asked that members be reminded of the rules pertaining to overnight camping. Jeff said that after dusk, the island is under the authority and discretion of the caretaker. All plans to camp overnight must be approved by the caretaker in advance, and no one should expect to show up planning to camp overnight on the island without first coordinating with the caretaker.

David Winer inquired about the quality of the drinking water on the island. Jeff reported the current well water is OK, but that once all the construction was completed, he would like to upgrade our well's current filtration system and get a maintenance contract so that it could be regularly serviced.

Other Business: Pheobe Hamill raised the question of surveying the members before the board changes policies. She sited the board's decision to change the caretaker position from full to part-time as an example of an issue that she would have liked put to the members. Jeff explained that all members are welcome to come to the monthly meetings and participate in any discussions, but noted that the purpose of the board is to make a number of decisions in an efficient manner that would not be possible if they were put out for a full-membership survey.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Glaudemans, Co-Recording Secretary

<u>JUNE</u> <u>2009</u>		
	MORNING 9 A.M – 3 P.M	AFTERNOON 3 P.M. – DARK
June 6th	Louisa and Joseph McBride 301.564.0235 louisamcbride@yahoo.com	Steven Newman and Mary Tisdale 703.5284352 Snewman3623@comcast.net mtisdale@comcast.net
June 13th	Kathy Sessions 301.657.4345 sessionskg@gmail.com	Abigail Wiebenson 202.332.6857 abigailwiebenson@gmail.com
June 20th	Nancy and Ev Ehrlich 301.229.7698 nehrllich@cathedral.org	Phoebe Hamill 571.259.7640 Phoebek1@cox.net
June 27th	George and Shelley Mulusky 301.871.1707 shelleymulusky@verizon.net	Madeleine Carter and Alec Graham 301.320.7720 macarter@ngs.org

Saturday Relief Caretakers- May 2009

Please sign up as soon as possible

**** Caretaker Volunteers ****

**To volunteer, contact Alison Burns at
riburns@att.net**

202-362-6654

In Touch with Joe:

I wish that I could tell you, after seven months of living in a construction site, that everything is shaping up and I have a wonderful new living space. Alas that is not the case. Right now I have a kitchen without a stove or dishwasher. I have no television because they moved my satellite dish. I have an apartment strewn with extension cords. The electrical work and the heating and A/C are only half done. I have doors that don't close properly and every day there is another mess that is left for me to clean up.

Beyond the agony of the construction it has been an eventful month down here. Club member Drew Walsh brought a crew down here to remove all the construction trash and debris. It is such a relief to see most of that gigantic pile gone from the island. We also had the 54th annual Potomac Down River Race, which was a huge success. It is amazing to think that some of those racers have done this race every year for fifty years! Thanks to long-time club member, Star Mitchell, for pulling it all together. We also had a pretty major high-water event. On May 6th the river was at ten feet and all the steps at the ferry landing were submerged. The last time we had that much water was a year ago on May the 14th. The tragic thing is that, despite our efforts to prevent it, the river took our swim float, just like last year. The other tragedy is that we lost another huge tree, this one an ancient silver maple that fell down at the bottom of the Island, near the new tree house, next to the dragon tree.

I was going to write about how the recent flood took away the "dragon tree". The dragon tree was an old silver maple that had fallen years ago yet had managed to continue to grow, causing it to resemble a giant serpent. This was a favorite place for the kids to climb and I thought it news worthy that the flood had knocked it over. Now it seems clear that all the silver maples are destined for the same fate as the dragon tree; to grow so big that the soft soil cannot support them and they slowly arc toward the river. We were very lucky that this recent fall did not demolish the new tree house.

This recent flood was also the first flood that we've had since all the walnut trees were blown down last summer. This is noteworthy because those huge fallen trees act as strainers, catching everything that washes past us. Now the trails at the head of the island are buried under logs and drift wood ten feet deep.

June will be a big month down here with lots of activities and large parties and maybe, June will mark the end of the renovation project.

Joe Hage

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

The June *Islander* welcomed the arrival of summer as usual, opening with “*the trees are green, the sky blue, and the river green and clear like liquid sunshine.*” The editor also noted that beer was still prohibited, as were dogs. He also pointed out that “*the Depression*” has limited the *Islander* to three pages.

Because of heavy Island use during the summer, there was a long piece addressing rules of behavior. We can most likely guess at what the discussion entails, but one section reflects a different time and experience at Sycamore.

“There has been some complaint about the use of the sleeping porch by members who place their bedding on beds and leave it there so that they’ll always have a bed reserved. This again, is taboo, if the bed is a Club bed. If you come to the Island on a Saturday, it’s alright for you to place your bedding on a cot to reserve it for Saturday night. But you’re expected to remove the bedding at least by eleven on Sunday morning. If you intend to stay up Sunday night, you can again place your bedding on the cot that evening. We suppose that if a member is spending two weeks at the Island, he could keep his bedding in place throughout his stay but members who expect to spend a good part of the summer at the Island or who expect to spend a great many evenings at the Island throughout the Summer are emphatically advised to put up a tent where they can have their own beds and bedding without tying up the general facilities.”

The consensus of opinion seems to be that the fact that a member purchases his own bed for use on the sleeping porch does not help the situation to any degree if he intends to spend a great many nights at the Island. Even though the bed is his, it continuously occupies space which is intended for the use of more transient members and their guests. Some of the officers even feel that a member who owns a cot should not continuously reserve it for his chance use. Probably the best thing to do would be to keep your bed or cot off the sleeping porch except when it is actually intended to be used on some particular occasion.”

After even more discussion about the limited kitchen facilities and being quiet in the mornings, the editor ends with the very valid question, “*Is it clear, or do we need more rules?*”

Sycamore Bulletin Board:

Old Timer's Potluck Lunch has been rescheduled to **June 9** (noon to 3 p.m.) in anticipation of bad weather on June 2.

All members and waiting list applicants are invited to attend. Follow this link for more details:

<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/events/se090609.htm>

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 July and August.

Call Alison Burns to volunteer- 202-362-6654

Large Parties:

Weekend Large Parties in June:

June 7, Lisa Kliefoth, 1-2_30, Children's birthday party, 15 persons

June 21, Whitney Pinger/Roger Pollok, 4-8, Father's Day solstice BBQ, 30 persons

June 27, Norman and Nancy Metzger, 3-dusk, Playreaders, 10-12 persons

Other Large Parties in June

June 12, Cecily Abraham, noon-4, birthday celebration, 10-20

June 16, Michael Colon, afternoon, daughter's 7th birthday party, 21-35 persons

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 phone: 301-448-8562

This is a new email address for John



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

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Sycamore Events

June Meeting:

June 10th at 8:00 PM
On the island

June 9- Old Timers Potluck

July Meeting: July 8th, 8 PM on the
island