



The Sycamore Islander

July 2009

Volume 88 No 7

President's Letter:

At long last, the construction project is finished (well, not really) and we have passed final inspection (yes, really). It has been a long, bumpy road – longer for our excellent (and long-suffering) caretaker, Joe Hage, who had to live in a construction site for six months and for our captain Tryon Wells, who also lived the project. The Club owes them a big debt of gratitude.

While the final figures are not in, I believe that when the dust settles, we will have been right on budget. This was not your typical construction project because all of the materials and equipment had to be hauled by truck down the towpath and over on the ferry. We got a lot of work for our \$150,000. I am convinced that the project easily could have cost the club twice that amount with other contractors.

Why do I say that we aren't finished? There are a number of items that the club excluded from the construction project – particularly, painting, laying a brick floor on the lower level where the women's and men's bathrooms are now located, and building or installing lockers. The club needs to decide how to get these jobs down. We may need to schedule a club work day in July to tackle some of these tasks. There also may be modifications that the club will want to consider in the near future. These are agenda items for the July meeting. Plan on coming to the meeting if you want to have your voice heard.

July Meeting: We did not have a quorum for the June meeting, probably because of the bad weather. The July meeting falls early in the calendar – July 8. Since getting a quorum for August is nearly impossible, it would be useful to get a quorum in July to transact club business. The bar-beque grills will be fired up and available for a picnic dinner before the meeting as long as the weather is good.

Jeff Komarow
President

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-Boone, as email attachments to ahcannell@gmail.com

The deadline for the August issue is Wednesday, August 5th.

CCA DOWNRIVER RACE 2009 HOSTED BY SYCAMORE ISLAND

By
V. Star Mitchell, Race Chair

The 54th running of the CCA Downriver Race occurred Saturday, May 23, 2009. Fifty-three racers ran the race in 45 boats with a water level of 4 feet. A total of approximately 98 people were involved with the race in some capacity. This does not count friends and family who came over to the Island. All racers and volunteers received the neatest T-shirt that Adam Van-Grack (BCE Vice-Chair) had designed by an artist in California.

When the exhausted racers arrived at the take-out, Sycamore Island's faithful George Malusky greeted them with cookies and water. Our beloved Island Caretaker and CCA Social Chair, Joe Hage had previously repainted and put up directional arrows on the river, hung the finish line banner, and many other tasks that helped make the race a success. Saturday Caretakers Renee and Stephen Marcus took racers' bibs and gave out T-shirts. And last but not least, Jerry Barton, Carl Linden, and John Stapko arrived at the Island to give needed assistance.

After the race, racers and volunteers devoured 30 buckets of chicken, 15 lbs. of Greek salad, 6 lbs. of potato salad, 10 half gallons of ice cream, gallons of soda, and topped-off the meal with delicious homemade cookies made by Sycamore Island member Jane Winer and delivered by husband David Winer. After the feeding frenzy, awards were presented.

The race results can be seen on the chart. The beautiful cups donated by the Bethesda Center of Excellence went to: Fastest Overall, Peter Lutter (age 16) paddling a wildwater boat (0:53:51); Fastest Kayak, Adam VanGrack (0:57:50); Fastest Solo Canoe, Tom Brubach (1:15:36); Fastest Female (K1), Sandrine Deglin (1:08:59); Fastest Tandem, Bob Davis and Larry Lubbers (1:01:52).

A bit of history rolled down the river as our Bill Marmon and Wade Wallace paid a tribute to John S. Thomson and paddled John's faithful old Grumman canoe in the race. (John was one of the beloved "Father's of the CCA" and the long-time Island newsletter editor.) I would surmise that 54 years ago the Grumman was the boat of choice in which to run the race (only without any additional floatation, a horse collar life jacket, and no helmet).



Bill and Wade portaged the heavy metal boat up the “Level IV carryout” from Sycamore Island in order to enter the race.

I hope John S. Thomson was watching from above as his faithful old boat relived history and ran the race with a respectful time for a Grumman of 1:38:02. Most of you do not know, but in a solemn ceremony, John’s ashes were quietly sprinkled down the Potomac so when we paddle, he is always with us.

Paddling a 17-foot tandem Old Town canoe in the OC2 Mixed Category, Island members Paul Stanton and his wife Kathleen Hooke ran the race with a time of 1:18:54.

No race could happen without the dedicated volunteers who are the backbone of the race. Without skilled timers, the race could not be run. Head timers, Kathy and Frank Collins appeared with their laptop to acquire fast and accurate times. Michael Baummer (and his canopy), Ben Collins, Alf Cooley, and Peter Mueller gave skillful timing assistance.

Susan Sherrod was the official photographer. Land workers who arrived at Great Falls at **8:00 a.m.** for set-up, check-in, directions, shuttling racers, carrying heavy loads, and toting and fetching at Sycamore Island were: Steve Delanoy, Jim Finucane, Joan Goodbody, Mitchell Helbrecht, Mike Marstaller (our Parking Lot Marshall), Dan Moorad, Dave Newson, Tim Tilson, and Jan Wolf. Lee Prouty came over to my house prior to the race and spent two hours with me folding T-shirts. Don Besom (former Co-Race Chair) came by my house, picked up the Sign-In forms and Liability Wavers and ran them off on colored paper.

Without Safety Boats on the river the race could not be run. Mike Blackburn headed up the Safety Crew that consisted of: Laura Breeden, Kevin Campbell, Jane Collins, Jeff Fox, Ed Grove, Pat Kinney, Miki Komlosh, Jim Long, Jim Mallard, Hector Picart, Jen Sass, Helene Scalliet, and Kathleen Sengstock.

To aid racers in the flat, heavily-vegetated, and confusing end of the race, Sycamore Island Safety Boats were strategically stationed by Jim Drew and his crew of: Cindy Bertaut, Richard Burns, Vicky Judson, Lucky Marmon, Jeff and Sondra Komarow.



This race is such a wonderful 54-year-old tradition that began 54 years ago at Sycamore Island. People seem to enjoy volunteering and making it all happen again. My thanks go out to all of these dedicated volunteers. Many thanks to the 53 racers who turned out and ran the race. If I have forgotten the name of anyone who came and helped, I am so sorry.

If you missed our annual Downriver Race and big social event, I hope you will join us next year. If you would like to improve your canoeing and kayaking skills, consider joining the Canoe Cruisers Association (CCA) www.ccadc.org. You will find a membership form on the web site. There is **no** 10-12 year waiting period!



Saturday Relief Caretakers- July 2009

<u>JULY</u> <u>2009</u>		
SATURDAY	MORNING 9 A.M – 3 P.M	AFTERNOON 3 P.M. – DARK
JULY 4th	Jeff Jay 301.229.2933 jeffjayphd@aol.com	Alison Levine & Bob Palermo 310.320.4353 As_levine@yahoo.com
JULY 11 th	Gretchen Sinclair & Joe Stanton 202.256.5244 jstanton@erols.com	Richard Boltuck 301.320.0349 rboltuck@verizon.net
JULY 18th	Mark Carlin & Meryl Silverman 301.263.9596 Silver.car@verizon.net	Sue & Greg Super 703.892.1846 thesupers@comcast.net
JULY 25th	Anne & Brian Waidmann 703.536.3168 Birgit.a.waidmann@us.pwc.com	Stanley and Virginia Fowler 301.299.3734 Stan.fowler@wap.org fowlerva@yahoo.com

Please sign up as soon as possible

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

The Clubhouse Renovation Is Almost Over And Our Work Has Just Begun:

The electrical and final inspections are all that are left of the renovation project begun last winter. Hopefully, those too will be history by the time you read this. Already the new club kitchen is operational and the caretaker's quarters are larger by 50%.

The construction has been a trial for all involved: for the general contractor who had to wait, and thus be idle, for interminable county permits to be issued (electrical and HVAC), for the club captain who seemed to always be putting out another fire in the process to move things along, and most of all the caretaker, who had to live in the construction zone for the past 6 months. Please be good to Joe. It will probably take a little while for Joe to consistently regain his characteristic good humor.

In the aftermath of the construction, the club needs to tackle some tasks that were not contracted:

- Pave the new locker room space with brick pavers (the bricks are just outside the clubhouse door)
- Build or mount new lockers in the locker room space
- Paint the newly constructed walls, both upstairs and downstairs
- Decide and implement where things go in the upstairs main clubroom

I recommend that the July 8 meeting take up decisions on lockers and the eventual placement of the pool table and other furniture. Assuming the membership makes those decisions, it seems logical to put things right ASAP with a call for some mid-summer workdays to implement the meeting's decisions.

Joe has offered to organize and run volunteer workdays on Sundays in July, on the 12th and the 19th, and if a third is needed, on July 26.

On each day, the plan is to work in the cool morning from 9 a.m. until early afternoon, and then have a grand lunch.

Most of the work involves painting so bring appropriate clothes and eye protection. Joe will provide the dust masks and gloves. There is a lot to clean up and we need to put the Club kitchen together, so don't worry if you don't want to paint, there will be plenty to do.

Volunteers are also needed to bring coffee and donuts in the morning and help cook in the afternoon. Please let Joe know if you are coming and on which day, in order that materials and food will be available when you arrive. You can call him at 301-229-4921 or send him e-mail at joe-hage@verizon.net.

We may even put in another swim float so that we may have one for the rest of the summer.

-- Tryon Wells, Captain

In Touch with Joe:

Tuesday-- June 9, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.0 Water Temperature: 68

The river is still a little high but we are going to open the ferry anyway. The Old timers picnic is today and we didn't want to have to turn those youngsters away. The picnic starts around noon, hopefully the sun will break through by then.

Wednesday-- June 17, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.8 Water Temperature: 75

Our big brown river is below four feet for the first time in weeks. The ferry is running, of course, but there aren't many visitors to the Island. If you come down now you have to like the cold and the mud, not to mention the rain and the wind. It's becoming really hard to believe that this is June in D.C.

With all this rain we're having there is the danger that the river will rise again. I'll keep you posted about this weekend. Keep your fingers crossed that we can still have the kayaking class on Saturday. 10-12 AM

Thursday-- June 18, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.8 Water Temperature: 72

We're experiencing some extreme downpours here. We must have had an inch and a half of rain already today! The slough has become a muddy conveyor of all the trash and debris that has washed down from the streets upriver.

It is not looking good for this weekends activities. The Paw Paw gauge is already at 13 feet and it's rising.

Saturday-- June 20, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.5 Water Temperature: 72

Woke up this morning to find the river at 5.5 feet and rising, so **the ferry is closed**. The relief caretakers showed up right at 9:00 and I sent them home.

The contractors are here. They had to come down because we failed inspection yesterday. The reason we failed would be funny if it weren't so pitifully stupid. The inspector is making us build a handicap ramp into the mens bathroom?! I mean, I fully support the ADA but this is ridiculous.

Monday-- June 22, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.6 Water Temperature: 72

It looks like it is going to be a nice week and happily it looks like the river is going to go down and clear up. We may be able to do some fishing and swimming this summer after all.

Happy summer solstice!

Tuesday-- June 23, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.4 Water Temperature: 72

I like my new eat-in kitchen. Being on the second floor puts me up in the forest canopy where the birds are and the large windows allow for great views. Its great to have my breakfast while watching a king bird catch her breakfast on the wing.

Wednesday-- June 24, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.3 Water Temperature: 77

The river has been above four feet for all but seven of the last sixty days.

I saw the young eagles taking wing yesterday. They seem big enough to be on their own now, but you can still hear them screeching for their parents to feed them.

We are still waiting to get our final inspections approved, unfortunately our contractor is in Guatemala for the next two weeks.

I moved the paddles out of the outdoor shower but then realized that it' not working. Carlos didn't bother reconnecting it.

Thursday-- June 25, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.0 Water Temperature: 77

I just notice that something has been trying to dig in under the house. My guess is that it was a ground hog and it looks like the varmint couldn't get under the house because of the new concrete panels that were installed around the perimeter. I'm happy that the ground hogs might not be able to live under my house anymore. Considering all the adventures that I've had with those ground hogs I'm surprised that we didn't find a labyrinth of tunnels under the house when we excavated it last fall. The workers didn't find any tunnels but I heard that they did find a complete and intact skeleton of a large black snake.

One of the pulleys for the safety chains on the ferry has worn out and the chain kept getting hung up on the cable. In order to replace the pulley I had to disconnect the chains an pull them all the way over to the Island side of the river. I then had the scary job of leaning a ladder against a young sycamore and climbing up to reach the overhead cable. The worst part was that I needed two hands to get the old pulley off and get the new one on. It's times like these that make me miss having John Matthews around to stand at the bottom of the ladder and coach me along.

All the rain we had last week allowed me to do something that very few people get to do. I canoed down Seneca Creek. I don't mean Great Seneca(which is a nice paddle),but rather, Little Seneca, a small creek that dumps into Great Seneca right at the bridge for Rt. 28 near German-town. This creek flows from Clopper Lake at Black Hills Regional Park. As it leaves Boyds, this tiny stream, (no wider than my canoe is long), passes through a boulder field producing some unexpected class III rapids. The rest of this 4.5 mile run is fast-moving water passing through farmland and woods. It has many sharp turns past beautiful, hemlock covered rock outcroppings. I did have to get out and carry my boat four times because of giant trees across creek but for the most part I was pleased with the run. It was fun when four deer forded the stream just ahead of me. I had to wait for a late afternoon thunderstorm to pass so I wasn't able to get on the "river" until almost 7:00PM. This meant that I would have to give up on doing the upper section for fear of getting caught out in the dark. I locked my bike up at the parking lot at the Rt. 28 bridge and headed to the put-in. On the way I passed two of the Heritage Montgomery historical sites. On White Ground Road I passed the Boyds Negro School 1896-1936 and on Shaeffer Rd. I passed the model airplane airport in Little Seneca State Park. I unloaded my boat at a nice little parking area on Shaeffer Rd. and did the 1.9 creek miles down to the mouth at Great Seneca. This larger creek was very swollen and I surfed a tiny ledge under the bridge before taking out on the opposite bank. I stashed my canoe in the bushes and biked the four miles back to my van. Later, I found myself loading my canoe in the pink glow of a warm sunset and feeling very happy that I made the effort. My only regret was that I couldn't do the entire run from Boyds. Maybe next time.

Joe Hage-



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

Proving the old adage, “the more things change...,” the *July Islander* reported on the weather (cloudbursts) and that the well water had been tested and was fine.

There was also a small report that the “building notes” were being paid off.

“We think that the regular payment of these Building Fund notes, exactly as agreed, is an excellent criterion of the sound business sense and financial acumen of those who planned and have carried out the handling of these notes. The plan for selling and repaying these notes was developed in the halcyon days of 1929 when the Club membership and the Club receipts were much larger than they are today, and, in the world at large, promises were easily made.”

The *Islander* opened with the story of a “4th of July parade.”

“Most people nowadays overlook the historic significance of the Glorious Fourth. We often wonder how the heroes of old would feel to see that the anniversary of their great deeds has merely become the excuse for a holiday trip. On the other hand, we wonder where they line up all these people who watch the holiday band contests and the fireman’s parades.

“With these thoughts in mind and in particular deference to Captain John Smith, the first white man to visit Sycamore Island—as a result of Pocahontas’ extremely casual request to come see her some time—our gallant Captain of the Island, Harry Lowenstein, made well-laid plans to properly celebrate the historical event by a parade—a big parade.

“First in the line of march was former Captain of the Island Cole, who, because of a last minute misunderstanding, wore his bathing suit. Next was Vice President Henley. Thirdly, came your secretary. Immediately behind your secretary came the log-saw, towed by a long rope which was being pulled, albeit lackadaisically, by the three preceding prominent gentlemen. The rear end of the log-saw was mounted on a newly invented combined log saw carrier and mattress stuffer conceived especially for this occasion by our Captain of the Island, which carrier was guided and supported by our newer member, Mr. Elwood Street, who has not been a member long enough to distrust the Captain of the Island’s inventions. Treasurer Jack Stodder and Harry Lowenstein brought up the rear, although they were occasionally at the front, just in case any sound movies should be taken.

“The log saw was gaily comparisioned with a faded piece of old tent and many in the parade muttered angrily to themselves because Harry had failed to have President Custis review the procession, which, in any event, took quite a long time to pass a given point. In fact, it looked as though the procession positively would not pass the sassafras stump behind the canoehouse, this stump becoming entangled with one off wheel and Mr. Street’s shin.

“And that was how we got the log saw put away for the summer.”

Sycamore Bulletin Board:

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 August and September.

Call Alison Burns to volunteer- 202-362-6654

Large Parties:

July 5th 3-9, hosted by Marianne Ross

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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Internet, go to:
<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/boondoggle/islander.htm>

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Sycamore Events

July Meeting:

July 8th at 8:00 PM

On the island

August Meeting: August 12th, 8 PM
on the island

