



# The Sycamore Islander

NOVEMBER 2009 | VOLUME 88 NUMBER 11

**The Islander gets a new editor.** Amanda Cannell-Boone, editor of the *Islander* for the last two years, announced last month that she was stepping down. Amanda has done a terrific job, and the Club thanks her for her dedicated service. We owe Amanda double thanks because she also found a well-qualified and enthusiastic replacement—Carol Beehler. Carol is a well-known graphic designer who has designed many books for the Smithsonian Institution. We are lucky to have her and would like to formally vote her in as Editor at the November meeting. Carol can be reached at cbeehler@comcast.net. Welcome Carol!

**Volunteers needed to serve as officers and supervisors.** Over the next several weeks, we will be putting together a slate of officers and supervisors for 2009 to be voted on at the December meeting. The Club cannot survive and thrive unless the next generation starts to get involved now. Don't be shy. Contact me at jkomarow@gmail.com or 202.492.2003. Among the Club's needs is a co-Recording Secretary to replace Jennifer Glaudemans who will be departing with her husband on a two-year, round-the-world sailing expedition in a 44-foot catamaran.

**Fall Workfest and Dedication.** The cold weather will be here before we know it, so it's time to get the Island ready for winter. **The Fall Workfest is scheduled for Sunday, November 15 with a rain date of November 22.** As I mentioned last month, there will be a long list of tasks to be completed, so bring your tools (hand tools, power tools, paint brushes, rakes, etc.) and your gusto. We will start around 9:00 A.M. and go until 4:00 P.M. or so. The Workfest includes a barbecue lunch with the Club providing chicken, burgers (including veggie burgers) franks, and chips. If you can, bring a side dish or dessert to add to our usual feast. We will also take a few minutes to dedicate the renovated clubhouse.

I'd also like to thank the members who came out to the special workday on October 4 and who have come down on other days to take on some of the post-construction tasks. Everyone should take a look at the floor on the first level. The dirt floor has been fully bricked over and looks great.

**Lockers.** This month's *Islander* includes an article by Tryon Wells on the Club's options for new lockers and includes a request for members to provide feedback on what size lockers they want. In addition to mailing the information to Tryon, we will collect the surveys at the Fall Workfest.

**November meeting.** The November 2009 meeting will be held on the Island on Wednesday, November 11 at 8:00 P.M. This will be the last meeting on the Island until March 2010. We were one member short of a quorum for October, so there are no meeting minutes. I was impressed at the number of people who showed up for the October meeting since it was a cold and rainy night.

**December meeting and holiday gathering.** The December meeting and holiday party will be held on Wednesday, December 9, 2009 at the home of Meg and Charlie Jones, 6006 Wynnwood Road, Bethesda, MD 20816. This is an important meeting because the membership votes on the 2010 budget and dues level and elects officers for 2010.

**Hosts needed for January and February 2010 meetings.** The club is looking for hosts for the January and February meetings. Please contact me about hosting these meetings.

See you at the November meeting (November 11, on the Island).

JEFF KOMAROW  
President

## Joe Hage Selected as the Conservancy's Volunteer of the Year

Joe first volunteered with the Conservancy more than 5 years ago during the restoration of Lockhouse 8 in Cabin John, Maryland. He enjoyed the beautiful building and picturesque location so much that he decided to stay on once the lockhouse was transformed into the [Conservancy's] River Center.

Joe has been such a help to the Conservancy. He has put his skills and knowledge to good use at the River Center as a docent educating visitors about the history of the canal. Joe also supports the Conservancy by helping keep the physical lockhouse building up and running, doing everything from cleaning the gutters to pumping the flooded basement.

In addition to volunteering with the Conservancy, Joe is caretaker for the Sycamore Island Club, where he has lived for 7 years. Joe has dedicated so much of his time to preserving the beauty and integrity of the Potomac. We are grateful for all he has done for the Conservancy and the River.



## Celebration of the Renovation of the Clubhouse

It has taken more than ten years to initiate and finally complete the renovation of the Clubhouse. In order to appropriately celebrate the completion of the renovation of the Clubhouse, those who made it all happen should be appropriately recognized. To this end, I am proposing that we temporarily suspend one clause in the Standing Rules in order to raise our glasses in a toast.

At the November meeting of the Sycamore Island Club, I am proposing that we approve a suspension to one clause of the Standing Rules. My motion is: "Paragraph 1.a of the Standing Rules is suspended on November 15, 2009."

That paragraph prohibits bringing, serving, possessing, and drinking alcoholic beverages. On that day, which is the fall work day and celebration of the completion of the renovation of the Clubhouse, I would like to provide some sparkling with which to toast those who made the renovation possible. It has taken a long time to reach this point, and I think it is important that those who made it possible receive a special (by Club standards) recognition for their efforts. Come to the next meeting on Wednesday, November 11, if you would like to know more.

ANN MARIE CUNNINGHAM



Workfest 2008

DAVID WINER



## Sycamore Island Lockers— Do You Need One?

Now that the clubhouse renovation is over, some restoration of club lockers has been brought up at several club meetings. On this topic some initial decisions have already been made.

First, lockers should be installed by early next spring, in time for the warm weather.

Second, commercial metal lockers are not prohibitively more expensive than home-made wooden lockers, and the cost differential between the two gets even smaller when locker hardware, delivery of materials, and assembly are factored in. So, unless someone is really interested in all the work of building custom wood lockers, the club is looking at purchasing and installing metal lockers.

The question before the club then becomes: What size lockers do we want, and how do we want them configured? We have about 40 linear feet of wall space on the clubhouse lower level on which to mount them.

Since I have done some preliminary shopping research, I am happy to share some locker market observations:

- There are several common locker sizes. Probably the most common height of lockers sold is 72 inches (6 feet). The most common width per locker is 12 inches. One foot wide by 6 feet high is not a very large locker so I have considered that a depth of 18 inches to be optimal (12 inches deep is too little and 24 inches deep is difficult to get in and out of if the width is only 12 inches). Any lockers with larger or smaller dimensions are generally priced higher.



- Locker prices drop significantly when lockers are sold three at a time instead of stand-alone, described in catalogs as “3-wide.”
- Tiers. A locker doesn’t have to be full height. In the vertical space of the locker there can be several compartments. These are known as “tiers.” For example, a 3-wide, 3-tiered locker would take up just three feet of wall space but contain nine distinct locker

compartments. Tier combinations for a typical 6-foot locker include one (6 feet), two (3 feet each), and three (2 feet each).

Lockers with multiple tiers are important to consider. Multiple tiered lockers offer the club more lockers per linear foot of wall space. Many members have no need for a full height locker as they may store only clothes, knick-knacks or a bag of charcoal in their lockers. For example, seven 3-wide, 3-tiered locker units could cover one wall and provide sixty-three 2-foot high lockers. The opposite wall could contain fifteen full-height lockers for a grand total of seventy-eight lockers. Not too far from the club’s past locker total of 101.

Individual members need to give the club some feedback on what kind of locker they need, if indeed they need any.

To that end, please fill out the form below and send it to:

Sycamore Island  
c/o Tryon Wells  
6216 Winston Drive  
Bethesda, MD 20817



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Dimensions are given in inches, width × depth × height.  
I would like:

- no locker
- 12 × 18 × 24 locker
- 12 × 18 × 36 locker
- 12 × 18 × 72 locker

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS \_\_\_\_\_

## Notes from the Island

The changing of the seasons is always a special time but I think the transition from summer to autumn is the most exciting and dramatic of them all. I've decided that October is the most spectacular month to spend along the river. I know, the fishing and the swimming are over but the magnificent colors and the brisk air make up for any perceived loss at summer's end. The last two weeks have been amazing. Imagine, the air is still and the river is a giant mirror. The sun is bright and the sky is a cloudless blue. The reflection on the water is so clear and true that the eye is fooled and has trouble finding the river's surface. The trees are ablaze with color and shine like stained glass. To step onto the ferry is to step into a kaleidoscope

One afternoon, as I stood looking out my front door, I noticed a belted kingfisher perched in the sun at the center of the pull rope. This in itself is not uncommon but what made me run to get my binoculars was that this bird was holding a big fish in its beak. Once I raised my glasses I could tell that the bird was having trouble handling a sunfish that was bigger than its head and beak combined. I watched for several minutes as the kingfisher tried to maneuver the fish so that it might be eaten. The trick was to get the fish pointed headfirst into the throat without dropping it into the river below. I was losing hope that the bird would ever accomplish such a feat but then, suddenly, the fish was gone.

This has been a great time to be outdoors but Island life is not all idle nature watching. October has also been a time of remarkable production too. The cool weather is the perfect time to tackle those big projects and now that the bell is ringing less, I have had more time to focus on maintenance. First of all, Jim Drew, Trip Reid, Phil and Marianne Ross, and myself finished the brick floor in the lower locker room. John and Judy Lentz painted the ladies room, and Paul Hagen primed the men's room. Christie and Garth Ross did a nice job arranging the clubhouse



DAVID WINER

Sycamore leaf at the dock.

furniture and hanging the maps and old pictures.

I built a new storage area under my living room. I was able to use all the leftover supplies from the renovation project to build a nice platform. Now we have a place to store all the usable lumber and other materials out of the rain. I'm happy to finally get all that lumber



JOE HAGE

Daria in kayak



off of the lawn. I put a primer coat of paint on all the new exterior siding. It's important to get that bare wood protected. I also cut the grass for the last time this year.

Two other projects that got done this past month were the removal of a couple of trees and the redoing of the new ductwork. I'm happy with the tree work. I feel better now that the giant limbs that were hanging over the clubhouse are gone and that the box elder that was crushing into my living room is also gone. The new ductwork is a big improvement as well and I think everyone will agree that it was worth hiring someone to redo it. Of course, once the old ducts were moved, I was left with two large holes into my living room. I don't consider myself a carpenter but I was proud of the patching job I did on the siding.

I rarely talk about the airplane traffic. (Usually, I try to pretend that its just not there) But sometimes you just can't ignore it. I went down to the Captain's float to watch the sunset one evening and a pink glow hovered above as the orange sun dropped behind the hills of Virginia. It was a perfect setting, but what I noticed was the number of planes in the air. There were five planes over the river, all queued up for the runway at National Airport, like cars in rush hour waiting on an exit ramp. Just when one plane disappeared over the eastern horizon the sound of another came rushing overhead. Every two minutes another plane would pass. From 6:30 to 6:45, I counted twelve planes passing over Sycamore Island.

I've mentioned before about the electric eye that was on the bridge over the canal. That one is now disconnected but there is a new, more sophisticated, camera-looking thing bolted to a tree further up the trail. I'm not sure why it is there. My only guess is that it may have to do with monitoring traffic on the canal bridge to see if the bridge is worthy of repair. It's good thing that I don't suffer from paranoia.



Joe and Elaine

JOE HAGE

We drove Captain John Matthews (of whom the captain's float is named) down the towpath so he could have a look at the new construction. It was fun to have him, along with his wife Barbara and two sons John and Robert, back on the Island. It's been four years already since he last paddled here.

JOE HAGE



Captain John Matthews, his wife Barbara, and sons John and Robert

JOE HAGE

## Saturday Relief Caretakers **November 2009**

|             | MORNING 10 A.M.–2 P.M                                       | AFTERNOON 2 P.M.–DARK   |
|-------------|---|---|
| NOVEMBER 7  | David Lyles<br>703.536.8692<br>david_lyles@levin.senate.gov | Robert & Jody Benjamin<br>301.652.0834<br>benjafamily@comcast.net |
| NOVEMBER 14 | Mac Thornton<br>301.814.4155<br>potomacgorge@aol.com        | Mary Ann Stein<br>301.229.8657<br>mstein@moriahfund.org           |
| NOVEMBER 21 | Tina & Fred Ohly<br>703.356.9525<br>OhlyFC@aol.com          | Drew Walsh<br>240.463.3210<br>Andrew.h.walsh@gmail.com            |
| NOVEMBER 28 | Patricia Hartge<br>301.907.6657<br>hartgep@gmail.com        | Renee Dunham<br>202.686.6451<br>rgdunham@erols.com                |

### **We need a volunteer to do relief caretaking on Saturday, December 26.**

We know this is a very difficult date, however, if anyone can take a turn on that date (from 11:00–dark), please contact Alison Burns at: 202.362.6654 or riburns@att.net.

Also, if you can do relief caretaking in January or February, please feel free to let Alison know.



Workfest 2008

DAVID WINER

# MOONRISE OVER WASHINGTON

—November 11, 2008

For half my life  
I've walked by this river  
late in the afternoon,

evening coming on  
like a dream of home

or a mirror  
in which failure, already dark,  
keeps darkening.

Today, sycamores blaze  
behind half-bare oaks, box elders,

and the water's silver surface  
runs orange, then rose,  
then twilight blue.

Twigs snap high on the hillside.  
I turn to see a stag

turning to see me,  
and overhead—more astonishing—  
the full moon caught in branches.

It's five o'clock.  
Leaves sway and flare,

gathering on the towpath—  
each shape distinct, each color—  
November's moon lifting, now,

above the treetops, the city,  
the reclaimable world.

🌿 JODY BOLZ, a longtime resident of Brookmont, is the author of *A Lesson in Narrative Time*. Her poems have appeared widely in literary magazines (*The American Scholar*, *Indiana Review*, and *Ploughshares* among them) and anthologies. She edits *Poet Lore*, America's oldest poetry journal, founded in 1889. 'Moonrise Over Washington' first appeared in *Moment Magazine*.



# *The Sycamore Islander*

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*The Sycamore Islander* is a monthly newsletter of the Montgomery Sycamore Island Club. Articles, photographic essays, drawings, announcements, letters to the editors—any materials of interest to the membership and waiting list—are welcome. Text and graphics may be sent as email attachments to Carol Beehler @cbeehler@comcast.net. The deadline for inclusion in the December issue is November 24.