



The Sycamore Islander

DECEMBER 2009 | VOLUME 88 NUMBER 12

For the 124th time since the Club was founded in 1885, it can be reported that the Club had another successful year. I want to comment on a few highlights from the past month and discuss what needs to be done to start off 2010 on the right foot. Here's the rundown:

Annual Meeting and Holiday Gathering

December 9, 2009 (Wednesday) at 8:00 P.M.
Home of Meg & Charlie Jones
6006 Wynwood Road, Bethesda, MD 20816
(Off Massachusetts Avenue between Goldsboro Road and the Glen Echo Fire Department)

The December meeting is the time when the Club elects officers and supervisors and votes on the dues and budget for the following year. But more importantly, it is a time when we get together to celebrate the holiday season and honor long-time members who have made substantial contributions to the Club. This year, I believe the Club should honor Joe Hage for living through the construction with his sense of humor intact (mostly) and his dedication to the Club. Likewise, the Club continues to owe a debt of gratitude to Tryon Wells, Captain and Webmaster, for the extraordinary commitment of time and energy that he put into the construction phase of the caretaker's quarters and clubhouse renovation project. I don't know where we would have been without Tryon's knowledge and dedication.

Like we do for the workfest, I encourage everyone who comes to the meeting to bring hors d'oeuvres, light cocktail food, or a dessert. We also could use a few people to help Meg and Charlie set up before the meeting and to clean up afterwards. Please contact David Winer or me by email (davidwiner@verizon.net or jkomarow@covad.net) if you can help with the arrangements.

Fall Workfest. The Club had a very successful Fall Workfest on Sunday, November 15. It was warm and sunny—more like September than November—and the workfest itself was well-organized and very productive. I want to thank everyone who came to help out. Special thanks go to the members who participated in planning for and carrying out the workfest.

Clubhouse Dedication Postponed. We had planned to dedicate the clubhouse with a champagne toast during the workfest. AnnMarie Cunningham, past president, sponsored a resolution to suspend the no alcohol rule for the day, which passed at the November meeting. AnnMarie, however, was unable to attend the workfest, and it didn't seem right to open up the champagne without the driving force behind the resolution. The Club will be celebrating its 125th anniversary in April which seems like a good time for a celebration and dedication. The rumor is that a dance will be held in the clubhouse. Stay tuned.

2010 Budget and Dues. *The Islander* contains the proposed 2010 operating budget. No increase from 2009 is proposed.

Slate of Officers and Directors. *The Islander* contains the slate of Officers and Supervisors developed by the Club. There are two open, unfilled positions: Co-Recording Secretary and Archivist.

After four years, I am stepping down as President. Our current Vice President, David Winer, has agreed to become President and I could not think of a better choice. My only concern is that David won't have the time to bake those great scones. Jim Drew, presently Canoe Supervisor, has agreed to become Vice-President in 2010 with a view to succeeding David in 2011 or 2012. John Membrino has agreed to fill Jim's shoes.

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As I mentioned last month, Jennifer Glaudemans, currently one of the Recording Secretaries, is about to embark on an around-the-world voyage with her husband Jon in a 44-foot catamaran. The Club wishes Jennifer and Jon a good journey and looks forward to their return in two years. Holly Syrrakos, our long-time archivist, has decided that it is time to pass on the position to someone new. For many years, we have enjoyed Holly's selections of minutes from prior years that were right on target to current issues. The Club thanks Holly for her service. I hope that there are members, especially newer members, who are willing to get involved in running the Club.

Host for the January Meeting. The Club needs a member to host the January 2010 meeting. Please email me about volunteering.



I want to thank everyone for the support I've received over the last four years, especially in finally bringing the renovation of the caretaker's quarters and our clubhouse to completion.

JEFF KOMAROW
President

Please mark your calendars for the Club's **Winter Bird Walk** for members and friends on Saturday February 20, 2010. Winter is a great time for birding along the Potomac River and Sycamore Island often hosts a terrific mix of winter residents such as Pileated and Hairy Woodpeckers, Bald Eagles, Nuthatches, and Carolina Wrens. The river in the vicinity of the Island also draws a variety of visiting waterfowl, including Red Head Ducks, Buffleheads, Grebes, and Mergansers. The outing will begin at 9:30 a.m. at the clubhouse. We will walk the Island and part of the towpath and conclude at 11:30 with coffee, pastries and an accounting of the morning's sightings. For more information or to sign up, contact Paul Hagen, phagen@bdlaw.com.

Thoughts about 2010

As the only nominee for President in the upcoming election, it seems likely that my position in the Club is about to be set for next year. Should the honor be bestowed on me, I see this as an opportunity to re-invigorate our schedule of planned club activities.

I hope that we might increase our fellowship by doing more things together in our 125th anniversary year. Have you noticed how those who participate in our functions usually come away with new friends and enhanced feelings about the Club? The Workfests are prime examples of getting to know each other better from shared experiences. Also, our social functions are enjoyable opportunities for bonding as club members. I think we could and should have more of these play-time activities, and have them on an annual basis so we can anticipate and depend on these aspects of club life.

Here's the concept: Seek designated coordinators/leaders from the membership who will organize and carry out a variety of activities that are likely to be of interest to many of our members. There is nothing new about this—we have had club activities all along—but the idea is to sponsor more of them. Our past successful events can be the models for others: the Fishing Derby, Regatta, Bird Paddle, Flower Walk, and Summer Solstice Sleep-over come to mind.

Here are suggestions to consider for the coming year's schedule: Hike. Bicycle Ride. Canoe Trip from the Island. Canoe Trip away from the Island. Square Dance. Bridge Tourney. Winter Bird Walk. I'm pleased to report that enthusiastic members have already volunteered for a few of these events.

What would you like? What ideas do you have for outdoor or indoor activities that members may participate in? Please let me know. Also, and this is *crucial*, each activity requires someone to organize it. Step up to the plate and volunteer yourself or at least identify a member who is willing and able. This will be rewarding and fun for us all.

DAVID WINER
davidwiner@verizon.net
301.229.8963

My thoroughly enjoyable, ordinary, extraordinary afternoon of caretaking

I packed my kit for three hours of caretaking on the Saturday afternoon after Thanksgiving. My kit: a funny and informative book about weather, some readings about developing perceptual awareness, a soprano recorder with music for beginners, a peanut butter and cranberry sauce sandwich, work gloves, and a down vest. I must have been thinking three days.

This was the first sunny day after much rain and drear. Three folks were lunching on the directors' dock in a chilling wind and two were chatting at the picnic table near the tree houses. The light was bright on the river. It was good to be outdoors again.

A fire in the Clubhouse wood stove had been started that morning. Couch and chairs were pulled around the stove in conversational mode. The room looked homey and tidy. I thought of settling in, but my work gloves had hold of me. The invasive English ivy is up to no good when it is growing up our trees. There was work for me. The peanut butter sandwich tasted good.

The early afternoon visitors left the Island. There was just me. Very nice. The whoosh of auto traffic from Maryland and Virginia is no longer muffled by leafy trees. The wind had subsided. Dry leaves scratching each other on the ground was the only natural sound.



Self-portrait looking in the river

RENEE DUNHAM

RENEE DUNHAM



Sycamore leaf

The late afternoon crowd arrived—six young people, reunited by the holidays, I think. They exercised the ping pong balls and hung out around the toasty wood stove. Marianne Ross arrived with her recorder. We propped up the music book on the picnic table and played duets for beginners until the chill got to our fingers and the light waned. The crowd upstairs offered us hot coffee. They enjoyed the music!

We all left together in the dusk. The sun spilled a little pink on the water. The cool moon was above. Thanksgiving.

Substitute care taking is the best,
RENEE DUNHAM

Minutes for the November 11 Meeting

Rain and chill did not prevent a quorum for the November meeting—the last meeting on the Island until Spring. A roaring fire in the wood stove prepared by Joe made the increasingly spiffy clubhouse warm and toasty. Jerry Barton provided hot tea.

Members present were: David and Jan Winer, Larry Heilman, John Membrino, Jerry Barton, Jim Drew, Jeff Komarow, Ann Marie Cunningham, Tryon Wells, Drew Walsh, and Bill Marmon. Caretaker Joe Hage was also in attendance.

President Komarow called the meet to order at 8:10 P.M. There were no minutes to approve from the October meeting because the meeting did not attain a quota.

There was no formal treasurers report although Jeff said estimates of revenue requirements for 2010 could likely be raised without any dues increase. Dues for 2010 will likely be \$400, which includes a \$75 construction surcharge. Formal budget for 2010 will be presented at the December meeting.

Jeff indicated that the only capital expense on the horizon for next year at this time will be lockers, which will likely cost about \$5,000 or less. Members are encouraged to send Tryon information about whether they want a locker and if so what size. This will help Tryon decide how to configure the locker purchase which he hopes to install over the winter.

Jeff also reported on membership. The club has ten vacancies in the Regular Membership category, which

Budget Notes By the end of October 2009, we have spent some \$63,000 on regular operational items which puts us ready to come out approximately on budget or a little under by the end of the year. To this we must of course add projected spending. The operations budget for next year will be the same as for 2009, as the inflation index we use shows zero overall price change; we use the October–October year increase to adjust our budget. Certain items look likely to increase however, in particular, insurance, where costs have risen steadily over the years. We have saved money in other areas, such as the electronic distribution of *The Islander*. Some spending items will therefore rise and others fall. We will also include provision for the first installment of payments on member loans made to fund the project. —ALAN GELB

will result in ten Waiting List Members being moved up. Jeff indicated that the waiting list is likely to be close to depletion by the end of next year and that it will be important to start discussions on membership policies going forward. Peter Winkler, membership chair, will head a committee consisting of Jeff Komarow, David Winer, Bill Marmon, Jerry Barton, Drew Walsh, and Tryon Wells. A note will be included in the January *Islander* inviting other members to participate. The committee will explore and recommend options for membership policy going forward.

The committee will also try to gauge the impact on the island of the larger usage of the Island over the past two summers as a result of admitting the entire waiting list, with an eye to recommending whether the current limit of 160 regular members should be increased.

Jim Drew reported that John Membrino has agreed to be the new Canoe Supervisor for next year.

Jane Winer indicated that plans were proceeding for celebration of the 125th Anniversary of the Club next year with the likely possibility of a dance at the clubhouse in the spring.

Tryon Wells said he would try to reattach and render operable the Clubhouse phone.

In New Business, President Jeff called for a confirming vote on appointment of Carol Beehler as new editor of *The Islander*, and thanked her for the great job she did on November issue. The motion was passed unanimously.

Jeff called for a motion to suspend the Bylaw provision prohibiting alcohol on the island to enable a champagne toast to dedicate the renovated Club House, scheduled to occur at time of the November workfest. After some discussion the motion was passed with one dissenting vote.

Larry Heilman suggested that the Club consider a more environmentally sensitive way of dealing with leaves on the Island. There was discussion on the merits of mulching the leaves and also of establishing compost piles that could be used for fertilizing plants. No decision was taken.

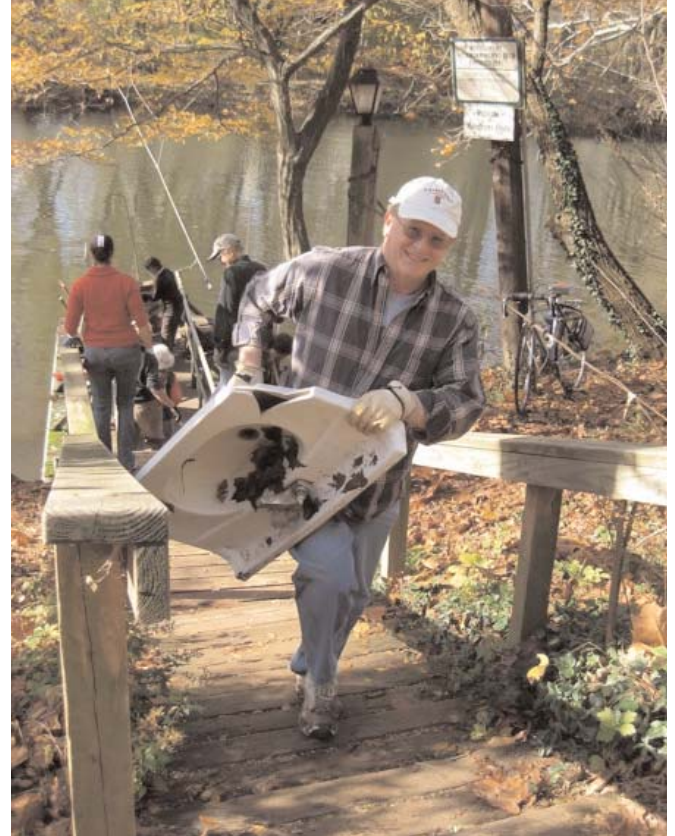
The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 P.M. and Members made the wet and soggy trudge up the hill, grateful for the lighting system.

Respectfully submitted,

BILL MARMON
Co-Recording Secretary

WORKFEST

SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 15



Workfest photos
by Sue Super

Notes from the Island

Thursday, November 5, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.3

Water Temperature: 54

Usually after daylight-savings time is over, the use of the Island goes down to almost nothing, but not this week. We've had many visitors and since Monday was a holiday, a large group of school kids came down to celebrate a birthday. They told me, after I arrived, that they had seen a big deer on the Island—the Mystery Monster Buck from Rupperts Island! They were amazed at its huge size and were pleased to have witnessed it swimming across the river to Virginia. They could not believe that the deer could actually swim that far, especially with its giant rack of antlers weighing it down.

The seagulls are back, the ever-changing cycle continues. Soon we'll have the mergansers here to entertain us during the cold months.

Monday, November 9, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.1

Water Temperature: 51

It was a warm day today and all my regulars were here.

I have been taking a few Sundays off lately in an attempt to use up some of my unused vacation time. Thankfully I have found a great and reliable substitute to cover my shift.

This past weekend Elaine and I took the bikes up to Brunswick Md. and biked to Shepherdstown from there. The weather was perfect for the twenty-mile ride along the towpath and the town of Shepherdstown is a wonderful place to visit. There also happened to be a Conservation Film Festival going on while we were there.

Thursday, November 12, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.13

Water Temperature: 51

I forgot to mention that while I was up in Shepherdstown I saw another one of those electric eye, counter things on the towpath. Maybe they are doing a survey of visitors to see where to invest their limited funds for the park.

More rain than we expected but it has stayed mainly to our south and east. This means that the Potomac should not be affected by flooding. This is good news



JOE HAGE

This is a very young white-footed mouse, still too naive to know when to run away. Fall is the time of year when mice try to find their way into my quarters for the winter.

because, as you know, the workfest is this Sunday. The weather looks good for Sunday too so I'm anticipating a good turnout and a productive day.

Wednesday, November 17, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.5

Water Temperature: 50

Wow! What an awesome workfest we had. That had to be the best and most productive workfest in my 7+ years of leading workfests. It ranks right up there with the year that Dave Winer and crew stained the decks and porches. I counted an astonishing 76 names on the sign-in sheet. That means that we had over eighty volunteers here working! Good job everybody! The Club thanks you for all your hard work. I would like to single out Drew Walsh for being so generous as to let the club fill his truck with trash and for hauling all that trash to the dump. Thanks Drew!

This pleasant weather has kept a steady stream of afternoon visitors coming to the island but by five o'clock the sun goes down and it's all over.

You're all invited to the CCA December party. The gathering will take place at nearby Clara Barton

Community Center on December 4th at 6:00 P.M. and will feature a new documentary film about the history of whitewater paddling. The movie has had great reviews and features some local heroes too. I also plan to have some local musicians there to entertain us. It will be a great time and we would love it if you came out and became members of this important canoeing organization—The Canoe Cruisers Association. John Thomson would be proud.

Monday, November 30, 2009

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.6

Water Temperature: 46

The workfest is over but the great volunteer work continues. We put the men's room sink back on its pedestal and the stacks of firewood are slowly getting split. Jody Benjamin finished painting the clubhouse and Star Mitchell hung some cool old river photos. Ned Goddard donated an old kitchen cabinet that will soon hang in the club kitchen.

This morning I walked down the boardwalk to the ferry and realized I was at the scene of a crime. The perpetrator left a trail of wet footsteps and there were

leaves and trigs scattered about. I followed the trail from the rivers edge to the spot of the violation, another spicebush stolen by a beaver. I'm not surprised. This is always the time of year when the beaver get busy on the Island. They seem to want to gather as many saplings as possible and then pile them up at the mouth of their lodge under the towpath. I assumed that they just wanted a supply of food close to home for the winter but there may be another reason why they pile all those sticks around their front door. The sticks may actually help keep the river from freezing thereby preventing the beavers from becoming trapped under the ice.

I was also lucky enough to see an eagle perched high above Island this morning. The eagles don't nest until January/February so I was surprised to see this one here on the Island and another by the nest yesterday.

The first of our winter residents are now being seen on the river. So far I've seen pied-billed grebes, common mergansers, and the brilliant black and white buffle heads (diving ducks).

JOE HAGE

Saturday Relief Caretakers **December 2009**

| | MORNING 11 A.M.-DARK |
|-------------|---|
| DECEMBER 5 | Richard and Virginia Dianich 301.229.4138 dianich@aol.com |
| DECEMBER 12 | Joe Cecil 202.244.7036 jcecil@fjc.gov |
| DECEMBER 19 | Stephan & Sally Herman 301.229.9172 steve@ssherman.com |
| DECEMBER 26 | No relief caretaker on duty. |

We have been unable to find a volunteer for December 26th. Accordingly, unless someone is able to volunteer for that date, the ferry will not be operating that day. Under the general club rules, any member who takes the ferry over to the island is duty-bound to act as the temporary caretaker for purposes of the ferry operation. Any subsequent member-visitors during the day will then assume that duty.

If there is any person who can act as the relief caretaker for December 26th, please contact Alison Burns at 202.362.6654 or write to her at riburns@att.net.

The Sycamore Islander

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Cabin John, MD 20818

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Happy Holidays!

Proposed Officers and Supervisors 2010

Officers

PRESIDENT David Winer
VICE-PRESIDENT Jim Drew
RECORDING SECRETARY Bill Marmon
CO-RECORDING SECRETARY vacant
TREASURER Alan & Caroline Gelb
FINANCIAL SECRETARY Lisa Kliefoth
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Peter Winkler
EDITOR Carol Beehler
ARCHIVIST vacant
CAPTAIN Tryon Wells
DEPUTY CAPTAIN John Stapko/Drew Walsh

Supervisors

FINANCE Bill Eichbaum
LAW Maurice Tobin
CLUBHOUSE Karl Kosok
GROUNDS Carol Kavanaugh
CARPENTRY/PAINTING Charles Pill
WEBSITE Tryon Wells
ENTERTAINMENT George and Shelley Malusky
CAMPING/PARTIES John Noble
CANOEING John Membrino
SWIMMING Larry Heilman
RELIEF CARETAKING Alison Burns



RENEE DUNHAM

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 at cbeehler@comcast.net. The deadline for inclusion in the January issue is December 23.