



The Sycamore Islander

JUNE 2011 | VOLUME 90 NUMBER 6

President's Letter

The next Sycamore Island Club meeting is Wednesday, June 8. We will meet on the island at 8:00 p.m. Come early to join the picnic.

At 7:00 Joe Hage will fire up the BBQ. Bring something for the grill. And, if you wish, bring a side dish, salad or desert to share. Summer meetings on the Island are delightful when combined with a picnic.

The really big happening on the Island in June is the "Summer Solstice After Hours Dance Party" on Saturday, June 25, starting at 7:00 p.m. Live music will be provided by BG and the Mojo Hands. See the dance announcement in this issue with all the details. Come early and swim, picnic, or take out a canoe.

The "Summer Solstice After Hours Dance Party" promises to be a great fun time for club members, families, and guests. Years ago dances were a regular part of life on Sycamore Island. This tradition was revived last year at the anniversary gathering and is now continuing. Congratulations to the dance committee: Jane Winer, Caroline Gelb, and Joe Hage. I'll see you all at the dance party on June 25!!!

Thank you to Sycamore Island member and CCA Potomac Down River Race chairperson Star Mitchell and to all Islanders who participated. Several club members paddled in the race, a number were on the river in safety boats, and others provided staffing on the Island during last month's successful race.

Want to improve your paddling skills? On June 11

long time Islander Frank Daspit will again teach a canoeing class. Be on the island by 11:00 a.m. If you have a question, call canoe supervisor John Membrino, 301.229.1154. As a past canoeing supervisor, I can tell you Frank's class makes for a very enjoyable morning—and you will learn a lot about canoeing.

JIM DREW
President



May Apples

CAROL BEEHLER

Minutes for the May 11 Meeting

The meeting was called to order by President Jim Drew after a well-deserved round of applause for Jane Winer's excellent cookies.

Attendees: Bill and Lucky Marmon, Jane and Dave Winer, Sherry Fitzdale, Gerald Stanley Barton, Jody and Robert Benjamin, Larry Heilman, Drew Walsh, Maria Stenzel, Ann Marie Cunningham, John Membrino, Jim Drew, Jeff Komarow, Abigail Wiebenson, Tryon Wells, Joe Hage

Communications: None

Membership Committee: Jim Drew announced that Peter Winkler was resigning as head of the Special Membership Committee. He will continue his regular duties as membership chair. Bill Marmon will take over the chair of the Special Membership Committee. Bill stated that he will hold a meeting of the committee within the next week or two. The committee is eager to come up with a plan for accepting new members in order to allow the club membership to join in the discussion and so that we can answer inquiries from persons seeking to apply for membership. Hopefully, the Special Membership Committee will come up with several models to share with club members. Tryon Wells noted that there are 48 persons on the waiting list. 17 are waiting list members, and 31 are on the non-member wait list. Some are children of members; some are not yet 18. The current membership is 150 households, out of an authorized 160, so ten of the 17 waiting list members could easily be made new members. The Club accepts an average of 10 new members each year.

Larry Heilman raised two other membership issues.

1: Do we want to change the number of members?

2: Eligibility for senior membership.

Membership numbers. It is difficult to assess whether or not the Island can sustain more members. Some members never come to the Island. Some bring guests. We don't know the composition of the 150 member households. It was suggested that looking at the sign-in sheets and getting Caretaker Joe Hage's reaction to Island usage are probably the best ways to assess visitor impact on the Island. Another indicator would be members' complaints of crowding. No such complaints have been voiced so far.

Senior Membership. Presently, a person who has been

a member for 20 years is eligible for senior membership and is required to pay only half the amount of annual dues. Senior members are not counted in the membership, so that when a members shift to "senior" status, it opens a spot for a new member. Jane Winer pointed out that some people who are eligible for senior membership have declined, not wanting to open a spot for additional members in the club. There was a discussion about whether these issues should be handled by the Special Membership Committee or the regular Membership Committee. It was decided that the Special Membership Committee would focus initially on the narrower task of the member selection process.

A proposal was passed that made John Heideman and Bob Sinclair honorary members. Both men were among the small band of CIA employees who commuted to work from the Island via canoe. They participated vigorously in club activities. John's involvement in canoe safety was noted. Bob made a generous loan to the club at a time when it was needed.

Tryon Wells suggested that the club extend honorary membership to individuals who have been club members for thirty years and who have actively participated in club affairs. Such individuals may now be infirm, but they still have a passion and connection to the club.

Work Fest: Some 40–45 persons turned out for the "best work fest ever" on May 8. The work team built ramps on the river side to the floats. That remains to be done on the other side. Other worker bees rehabilitated the horseshoe pits, and scrubbed the kitchen. The weather was glorious and enthusiasm was high.



Swimming Committee: There was a lengthy discussion about increasing safety precautions on the Island. Swim Chair Larry Heilman proposed that throw rings, long poles and other safety equipment be available on the docks, float, and ferry. This was approved, and Larry will arrange for the placement of this equipment.

Old Business: None

New Business: Dave Winer proposed that we invite the Upper Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the Wooden Canoe Heritage Association to come to the Island as club guests. Motion approved.

Spring Dance: Saturday, June 26. This is going to be a wonderful event with excellent food, a great band, and the fun embarrassment of karaoke. Organizing said that publicity for the event has been negligible. Jim Drew will make sure that a full-page notice is included in the June *Islander*. An email reminder was suggested as another way of making sure that members do not miss out on this event.

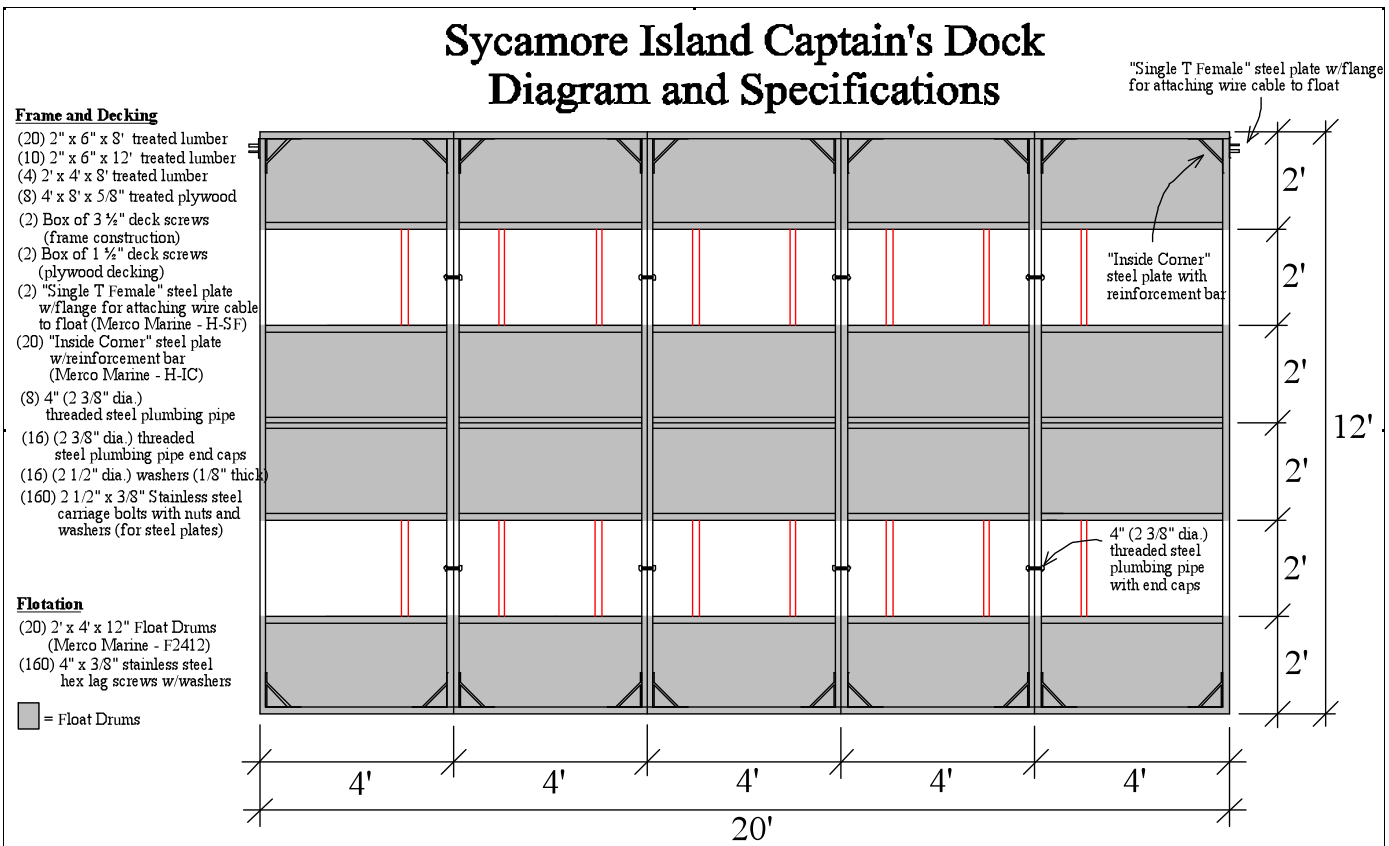
The Islander: There was a discussion of *The Islander*. People were complimentary about the newsletter's appearance. Members expressed interest in having more pages, copy, and extended coverage of Island issues.

The River Race: Saturday, May 13. Jim Drew asked for more volunteers.

Sycamore Island Canal Steward Program: The kick-off for this program will be Sunday, June 5 at 9:00 a.m.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is Wednesday, June 8. And come early for dinner. Joe plans to fire up the grill.

Respectfully Submitted,
 LUCKY MARMON
 Co-recording secretary





JOE HAGE

Potomac Downriver Canoe Race



VICTORIA A. JUDSON

Islanders who helped or participated in the Potomac Downriver Race on Saturday, May 7.

Canoeing Class

The Club will offer canoeing instruction again this spring for members and wait listers thanks to Frank Daspit, who once again has generously volunteered to lead the class. Mark your calendars now—the class will be held at the Island June 11 starting at 11:00 A.M. Paddlers with all levels of experience are welcome, and club canoes will be available. Frank will go over basic paddling techniques, how to enter a canoe properly, hazards of canoeing at the Island and, time permitting, other topics such as rescue techniques and equipment. This is a great opportunity to learn how to make your river excursions safe and enjoyable. For more information, contact Canoe Supervisor John Membrino at 301.229.1154.

Notes from the Island

Tuesday, May 3, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.6 Water Temperature: 60

This is getting ridiculous. Here it is May 3, and the river is still swollen, and the ferry is still closed.

I can't remember a longer stint where the ferry was inoperable because of high water. I think it will be three weeks come tomorrow.

Wednesday, May 4, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.3 Water Temperature: 60

The ferry is closed today and will be closed Thursday, Friday, and Saturday because of expected high river levels on those days, but the workfest will go ahead on Sunday even if the river is slightly above 5 feet.

Monday, May 9, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.7 Water Temperature: 62

The ferry is open! Finally the river has gone down enough to open the ferry again.

We had a very successful workfest yesterday and it looks like another pretty day today.

Wednesday, May 11, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.3 Water Temperature: 66

There is a club meeting tonight on the Island at 8:00. Come early and have a picnic. It promises to be a beautiful night.

Big canoe race here on Saturday. The Canoe Cruisers Association will be hosting their annual race that ends on the Island. For 56 years the pull rope for the ferry has been the finish line for this race, the oldest canoe race in the country!

Thursday, May 12, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.2 Water Temperature: 66

I heard that they are catching bass on surface lures now, so finally the bass fishing season can begin. I've got my license and I'm ready to go.

Tuesday, May 17, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.5 Water Temperature: 68

Well I hate to break it to you but the river is on its way up and it looks like the ferry will be closed tomorrow and will remain closed all weekend. Bummer.

I'm not sure why all you club members have not caught on but the annual Down River Race is an event

that should not be missed. The race ends here on the Island and it is such a treat to have all those hardcore paddlers here. There was so much canoeing history right here on the island, all at once. Championship canoeist, Davey Hearn, ran the race, as did his son and his dad. That's three generations of paddlers! We also had eighty-eight year old Frank Havens here, the winner of the 1956 race!

Well I could describe to you how we watched a bald eagle hover near the dock trying to catch a wood duck. Or I could relate how Gerry Barton and I watched as two broad-headed skinks wrestled by the boardwalk. I could also tell you about the twenty gold finches I watched feeding on the ripe catkins of a river birch tree, or you could just come down and experience all of this amazing drama for yourself. Well, once the river goes back down that is.

It really has been a bird watchers paradise here lately, simply incredible.

Wednesday, May 18, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.3 Water Temperature: 68
Ferry Closed!

The gauge at Paw Paw, West Virginia, is reading 25 feet right now, so I'm on my way out to pull all the canoes from the bottom rack of the canoe shed. This will be the third time this year that I've had to empty the canoe shed! I'm glad we didn't put the swimming float out in the river yet and I guess we'll find out how Tryon's new ramps do in a flood.



JOE HAGE

Potomac Downriver Canoe Race

Wednesday, May 25, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.2 Water Temperature: 68

Ferry is closed.

The ferry will be open tomorrow.

Well, we survived our third flood of the year and we got by without any damage to the docks or boats. I can't believe that the river was up to 11.4 last Friday morning!

This has been a very wet spring. The river has not been below four feet since the ice melted in February and besides the floods, we've had three high water events over eight feet and two high water events over six feet. This is amazing considering that the median level for the last twelve years has been below five feet.

I returned from my cousin's wedding in Greensboro yesterday to find the Island in decent shape. I had to shovel the drying mud from the docks and boardwalk and I had a bit of a struggle getting the semi-beached docks back into the river, but things again are slowly returning to normal. The canoes from the bottom rack of the canoe shed are still in the field and I will need some help to get them all back into their assigned places. Some of the canoes have a bit of rain water in them but all good otherwise.

It looks like the river will be down tomorrow so we will have the ferry working again then. Hope to see you down here.

Friday, May 27, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.6 Water Temperature: 68

The ferry is open!!! Yeah!!

Things are getting back to normal again. We have not gotten the swimming float out into the middle of the river yet but I did paint the ladder for the dock and I painted the deck of the swimming dock as well. It was looking pretty bad and was starting to splinter. I'll attach the ladder today and maybe people will be swimming by tomorrow.

You'd better get your swimming in fast though, because they are expecting the river to go up again, and there is no telling if the ferry will be open on Sunday or Monday.

I mentioned earlier that there wasn't any damage to the Island in the last flood but I was mistaken. Our newly redug and resanded horseshoe pits were destroyed and will have to be completely redone. The front of the Island has also taken a beating from all of these recurring floods. It looks like the remains of a

huge logging operation up there. Huge tree trunks strewn everywhere and piled high with tons of smaller logs and branches. Big fallen trees, that I presumed were immovable, have been lifted by the river and then lowered into new locations, mercilessly crushing everything in their path. Years ago there were actually nice trails around the head of the Island but with this repeated flooding it's been impossible to keep the trails clear.

Saturday, May 28, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.8 Water Temperature: 73

Bad news, the river is going up again. At this rate the ferry will be closed by the end of business today. I can't remember when we had a flooded out Memorial Day! Crazy!

I've begun work on the towpath through our Canal Steward Program. We trimmed branches, swept the metal truss bridge and even removed some graffiti from the signs. We will be having a Canal Steward Volunteer Day on Sunday, June 4, from 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. if you're interested in volunteering for this program. It's fun! See you there!

JOE HAGE
Caretaker

Large Parties Scheduled



Sunday, June 5, 12–4 p.m., Kathy Carroll, High School get-together, 15 guests

June 5, 3:30–dusk, Gordon Phillips, Cub Scouts, 12 guests

Friday, June 10, 12–5 p.m., Joe Hage, Musicale, 20 guests

Thursday, June 16, 1–4 p.m., Cecily Abram, Birthday Party, 21 guests

Sunday, June 19, 5–7 p.m., Lisa Kliefoth, Picnic Dinner, 15–20 guests

Summer Solstice After Hours Dance Party



Sycamore Island
Saturday June 25, 2011
7:00–10:00

Come join us for a fun-filled night of partying and dancing on Sycamore Island. Enjoy the summer's night air and festive lights as we come together to celebrate the summer season. The party will start at 7:00 with kid-friendly karaoke fun. Then, to get the dancing started, we will have the great blues and swing band BG and the Mojo Hands (www.bgmojo.com/BGMojoHands.htm) to entertain us with some rock-and-roll, blues, and swing music.

The Sycamore Island Club will provide all the ice and beverages but we are asking party-goers to please bring hor d'oeuvres or snacks. Guests are encouraged to come down early and bring their own picnic dinner to enjoy on the Island before the dance. No need to RSVP but if you know that you are coming please send Joe an email at joebage@verizon.net.

We are also hoping to recruit some volunteers to help set up so let Joe know if you want to pitch in.

The Sycamore Islander

6613 80th Place
Cabin John, MD 20818

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OCEAN-GOING KAYAK
IN EXCELLENT CONDITION
WILDERNESS EXPLORER, MANTEO MODEL,
ONE-SEATER
\$600.00 OR BEST OFFER

The kayak is on a rack on the Island.
If you wish to try it out, please let me know.

Tamar Lieberman
tamar.lieberman@gmail.com
301 656 5454

The Sycamore Islander is the monthly newsletter of the Montgomery Sycamore Island Club. Every attempt is made to publish *The Islander* before the second Wednesday of the month in advance of the monthly meeting. Text and graphics may be sent as email attachments to: Carol Beehler, cbeehler@comcast.net. The deadline for inclusion in the July issue is July 1.

Masthead photo of water level on May 19 by Joe Hage



Fiddleheads

CAROL BEEHLER