



The Sycamore Islander

OCTOBER 2011 | VOLUME 90 NUMBER 10

President's Letter

The next club meeting is Wednesday, October 12 at 8:00 p.m. at the home of Tryon Wells, 6216 Winston Drive, Bethesda. This meeting is important.

The ad hoc membership committee anticipates making its final proposal for a new member selection process at this October meeting. Amendments can be made at this meeting. If the meeting votes to approve the proposal, as amended, it will then appear in the November *Islander* as a change in the standing rules and will be formally adopted (or rejected) at the November meeting.

Directions to Tryon Wells home: out Massachusetts Avenue, to its end at Goldsboro Road; right on Goldsboro to River Road; left (north) on River Road one-tenth of a mile to Winston Drive; go left one long block to 6216 Winston Drive.

Work on the Sycamore Island Bridge over the canal is slow and recent rains have not helped. To get to the ferry, walk down the hill and when you reach the bridge under repair, go to the right 75 feet on a somewhat level but rough path to Joe's homemade bridge to the towpath. Or, park and walk from Lock 6 or 7.

Islanders are very happy that Sherry Fizedale has volunteered to be the new Relief Caretaker Coordinator. Please give Sherry your willing cooperation and support. Relief caretakers are crucial to the club's smooth functioning. All Islanders need to regularly take your turn as the relief caretaker.

At our December 14 holiday party meeting we will elect officers for next year.

David Winer has volunteered to coordinate nominations. If you wish to be on the nominations committee, or if you can serve as an officer or supervisor in 2012, please email David at: davidwiner@verizon.net.

Thank you Alison Burns for your long hard work serving as Relief Caretaker Coordinator for the past several years.

Mark your calendar. The fall work session is November 13.

Jim DREW
President



Rose of Sharon hibiscus

DAVID WINER

Minutes for the September 8 Meeting

The meeting was called to order by President Jim Drew at the home of Jane and Dave Winer, who graciously hosted as the bridge is under repair, making the trek to and from the Island a bit challenging in the dark.

Attendees: Judy and John Lentz, Trisha Hartge, Jody and Bobby Benjamin, Drew Walsh, Sherry Fizdale, Jim Drew, Alan Gelb, Tryon Wells, Jeff Komarow, Jane and Dave Winer, and Ann Marie Cunningham.

The minutes, as printed in the *Islander*, were approved.

Communications: Jenny Shubert Boawn said her parents were lifelong members who spent lots of time on the Island. Her mother, Miriam Shubert, died in April. She would like to have a picnic on November 6 in her memory. It was approved, providing there are no large parties or other conflicts on that day.

Treasurer's Report: Alan Gelb reported that we continue to spend on routine items, as budgeted. There have been no unusual expenses.

Captain/Caretaker Report: The bridge is being repaired. A pontoon bridge has been built as a temporary means of crossing the canal. There is a path down to the pontoon bridge from the side of the old bridge, but that may be challenging for some people. The stated finish date is the end of September, but those at the meeting were less than encouraged that it would be completed by that time.

The current concept for the winter toilet is to isolate one toilet in the mens' room, but an Oriental-type of screen around the sink and one toilet up to the ceiling using a flexible membrane. This will keep the heat in. Keeping the pipes warm is a little more complex. Another jocular concept includes the possibility of a heated toilet seat. There are tentative plans to complete this before the workfest which is scheduled for November 13.

There were no problems associated with the rains brought by tropical storm Lee.

The refrigerator doesn't keep things cold. Drew Walsh will look into prices for a basic model and delivery.

Special Membership Committee: The draft proposal for the process for accepting new members is available on the web at

<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/syMemApp.htm>. Please review and comment. The proposal will be discussed at the October meeting, and voted on at the November meeting. The well-considered proposal is designed to:

- Prevent a long waiting period as in the past, instead keeping it to approximately four years
- Encourage the admission of younger members, as the demographics of the current membership are skewed upward.

New Business: Allison Burns has resigned as supervisor of relief caretaking, due to the difficulties of the role. Sherry Fizdale agreed to take on the role with Trisha Hartge as understudy. Sherry will develop ways of encouraging members to volunteer, which will include more effective email communications, and may include sanctions against those who do not serve, as the club is dependent on the contributions of the members.

Drew Walsh reported that honorary member and former captain, John Matthews is home from the hospital. We are all grateful to John for the many years of service that he provided to the Club, and we hope that he fully recovers.

The meeting adjourned to tasty treats offered by our hosts, Dave and Jane Winer.

Respectfully submitted,
ANNE MARIE CUNNINGHAM
Recording Secretary

A huge thank you to Sycamore Island for allowing us to have a pre-wedding celebration on the Island. It was an incredible place to reconnect with old friends and was a really important part of our wedding celebration.

*Thank you!
Maya Kosok & Max Romano*

Modification of Standing Rule 12 Application for Membership Final Report of the Ad Hoc Membership Committee

The Ad Hoc Membership Committee respectfully submits its recommendation, attached here, for new rules for seeking Membership into the Club. The rules are spelled out in a new Standing Rule 12. Application for Membership, which must be approved under Club rules for modifying a Standing Rule. The Committee will present the proposed Rules at the October Club meeting and be prepared to answer questions.

The Committee very much appreciates the thoughtful and helpful comments that members have posted to the Draft Report web page these past two months. The Committee considered all the comments at its meeting on October 5, and made some changes to its original proposal as a result.

Montgomery Sycamore Island Club Standing Rules

(Proposed Amendment in form of Substitution)

12. Application for Membership

a. Application forms for Club membership will only be received during the first quarter of each even-numbered calendar year, commencing on January 1 and ending March 31.

b. An applicant shall fill out and sign an application form, for which there is no initial fee. The applicant's year of birth must be listed for both spouses (or partners) as appropriate, and applicants must be at least 18 years old on January 1 of the year of application. The applicant is asked to provide the names of two existing Club members as application sponsors. On the application form the applicant shall agree to conform to the Bylaws and Standing Rules, certify willingness to assist in the operation and maintenance of the Club, and acknowledge the dangers inherent in swimming and boating in the river. Applicants will be selected by lot, and those applicants selected will be required to pay an Application Fee prior to placement on the Waiting List.

c. At the end of the application collection period, applications will be divided into two groups determined by

their age on January 1 of the year of application. The first group will consist of applicants 40 years old or older ("Older Group"). The second group will consist of applicants 39 years old or younger ("Younger Group"). If the application is from a couple with ages that straddle the age divide, the couple's application will be determined to be in the Younger Group. Applications from each group will be selected and ranked by lot within their group. An equal number of applicants from both groups will be accepted.

d. It is the intent of the Club to maintain a Waiting List that will result in a wait of no more than four years. A Waiting List of 60 applicants is deemed appropriate to that goal. Therefore the number of applications to be accepted is determined by the number necessary to bring the Waiting List back up to sixty (60) Waiting List applicants. After the applicants have been ordered by lot within each group, they will be selected for addition to the Waiting List in a process that alternates between each group, starting with the applicant in the first position in the Younger Group; the next position will be filled with the first applicant from the Older Group, and so on. This procedure will be supervised by the Membership Secretary and under the direction of Club Officers. If either group has fewer applicants than half the required number of vacancies for that year, applications from the other group will be used to attain 60 waiting list applicants. After the selection process is completed, successful candidates will be notified they are on the Waiting List and where they stand in the Waiting List. At this point an Application Fee will be due within 30 days of notification of the selection. Applicants who do not pay the Application Fee will be removed from the Waiting List and the next applicant, as determined earlier by lot, will be added.

e. Prior to Club admission, Waiting List applicants must become "Qualified Applicants" by completing the following: (1) attend a supervised Orientation sponsored by the Club; and (2) procure two letters of recommendation from existing members. (These letters are separate from, and in addition to, the two sponsoring member names on the initial application.) In the event that the time interval between a Waiting List applicant's placement on the Waiting List, and being offered membership is less than one (1) year, the Waiting List applicant may be granted ninety (90) days

to fulfill the requirements to become a Qualified Applicant, otherwise, Waiting List applicants who do not become Qualified Applicants by the time they are offered membership, will be removed from the Waiting List. A Qualified Applicant who is offered Club membership and declines the offer will be removed from the Waiting List. A Qualified Applicant who is out of the area at the time membership is offered, may begin Club membership as an Inactive Member pursuant to Bylaw 17, otherwise, will be removed from the Waiting List. New members will pay an Initiation Fee and pro-rata dues for the year of admission. Waiting List applicants shall receive The Sycamore Islander.

f. Applications not accepted for the Waiting List that year will be discarded. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified and reminded that they may reapply in the future.

g. If an applicant on the Waiting List is a couple who become separated or divorced, each partner may remain a Waiting List candidate upon written request to the Membership Secretary, so long as a second non-refundable application fee is paid and so long as other requirements for Waiting List candidates are fulfilled. In the absence of agreement by applicants, the Membership Secretary shall flip a coin to determine the order of the partners on the Waiting List.

h. Applicants are expected to participate in Club events, such as workfests, relief caretaking and Club meetings. Applicants may purchase a Waiting List Pass for use of the Club as provided in Standing Rule 7.

i. A two-thirds vote of the members present and eligible to vote shall be required for approval for Club membership.

j. Under the Membership Rules prior to 2012, "Waiting List Members" and applicants on the old waiting list will have priority for Club Membership over any new applicant.

Notes from the Island

Friday, September 2, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.80 Water Temperature: 78
Big news. They are going to permanently close the bridge over the canal until they are completely finished with the painting. That means that, starting on Tuesday morning, September 6, you will not be able to cross the canal here at the Island. If you want to use the Club you will have to cross the canal at lock 6 or at lock 7. Lock seven is closer, about half a mile. Lock 6 is further away, over a mile. I'm going to think about the possibility of building a temporary bridge. I'll keep you posted.

Saturday, September 3, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.80 Water Temperature: 78
Today is the big day, Regatta day! I know that the weather people want to scare everyone away, but don't listen to them. Come on down and join us for a day of big fun and good food! The party starts at 1:00.

Good fishing reports from yesterday, finally the river is clearing up enough for the bass to see the lures.

Wednesday, September 7, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.57 Water Temperature: 70
Another named storm is passing through this week. Tropical storm Lee is dumping on us pretty good but it does not look like it will be the major flooding that they were expecting. Right now they are calling for 10.2 feet, back on Monday they were calling for an astonishing 17 feet. Thankfully that is not going to happen.

I've been doing some preliminary flood preparations and I took all of the chairs and grills away from the river's edge. I also spent some time trying to get the phone line that crosses the river up a little higher. The line was hanging pretty low and I was afraid that a tree might get stuck in it during the flood. It wasn't easy trying to reach the limbs that were preventing the cable from going higher but I managed to cut the limbs from a canoe with a pole saw, takes skill. Then I climbed the utility pole to raise the line. It was really hard work but I'm happy with the success I had and the phone line is about three feet higher than it was, yea!

The good news is that since it has been raining all week they have not closed the bridge to start the painting. My guess is that it will be shut down on Monday morning.

It is now 5:00 and it looks like most of the rain has passed us. I have a new rain gage in the field and we got



JOE HAGE

Canoe contest

3.25 inches of rain since Monday morning. Ilene brought us 3 inches last weekend, according to my gage.

Thursday, September 8, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.0 Water Temperature: 70

It's still raining! I've never seen anything like it. We've had four more inches of rain since I did my last post, yesterday at 5:00!

It does not look like we will have any serious flooding though, the river will stay below 8 feet on the Little Falls gage. 8 feet is not too serious but it does mean that the ferry will be closed. We are just about to hit the magic number of five feet so as of noon today, the ferry will be closed until further notice. So the ferry will be closed for the weekend and may open again on Monday afternoon, we'll see.

Monday, September 12, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.0 Water Temperature: 70

The waters have receded and the ferry is open!

The river went past the predicted 8 feet and on

Thursday night I had to scramble to get the Island prepared for the ten feet of water that we eventually got. I was out by the zip line at about ten o'clock when there was a meeting of the waters. The rising river on the Maryland side came pouring over the ridge of the Island and met with the water that had inundated most of the Virginia side of the Island. Thankfully, it crested later that night and by morning the river was back down to 8 feet.

The ferry was closed on Saturday and I was gone all day. When I returned I found that the canoe I had locked at the stairs was capsized and was floating upside down at the landing. There was another club canoe there and I was perplexed about how my boat got capsized and a club boat made it to this shore. I was not too happy, especially since I was wearing my suit. I was not dressed for unswamping a canoe and I was mad that someone would just leave it like that. I flipped the canoe and found that the two paddles and a towel had floated away. The two pfd's were still there, sloshing around in the swamped canoe. I guess I should have been happy that at least I had a canoe there that I could

get back home in, but this boat was really muddy and had a little water in it too. There were also three kayak paddles in it, curiouser and curiouser. Maybe people don't realize that this is the only way I have to get home.

Tuesday, September 13, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.3 Water Temperature: 73

There was a major sewage spill in the canal on last Thursday night, right here next to our ferry landing! It must have been a big backup, with thousands of gallons of sewage spewing into the canal. The top of the sewer was blown completely away and the buckets of deodorizers that they installed were left dangling from chains on the outside. The area is now littered with toilet paper and other debris, and the soil around the sewer structure is completely eroded away. The force of all that water also left a huge gash in the bank leading into the canal. I immediately called the park service

and the WSSC on Friday but no one has come to put the cover back on. I hope they come soon, the smell is pretty bad at night. I alerted some friends that live downstream, near lock six. They said that they noticed an unusual amount of suds in the water on the downstream side of the lock and that there was a strong odor of laundry detergent permeating the air. I took some pictures and sent them to The Potomac Riverkeepers; maybe they can get to the bottom of why a sewer top gets blown off and tons of sewage is allowed to spill into the canal. I suppose you could blame it on the rain but the 72-inch sewer line running along here is not a combined sewer and storm drain so I don't know why it would get overwhelmed.

Friday, September 16, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.9 Water Temperature: 70

The river temperature has dropped below 70 degrees



Great Blue Heron

JOE HAGE

but that is quite a bit warmer than the air, which went down below 50 degrees last night.

They finally came and put the cover back on the manhole. It took six of them to do it but thankfully it is done.

The bridge work is progressing slowly and I don't think it will be possible for them to finish by the end of September. My guess at the completion date would be more like the end of October.

I built a rinky-dink bridge across the muddy canal, but the hard part about getting up the hill is traversing the woods on the other side.

The lights on the trail quit working. I took the big ladder over there yesterday and I think I found the problem, which is usually the hard part. There are a lot of things that can go wrong when trying to wire the lights on the trail and I guess you just have to accept that eventually a branch will cut a wire or that water will get into a connection or that the wires will simply wear out. Today I'll go up and splice out the bad cable and rewire the box. Hopefully that will do the trick.

Friday, September 23, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.0 Water Temperature: 70

Well, they have taken a couple of the steps off of the bridge, so unlike last weekend, we absolutely cannot use it. Sadly, with all of this bad weather, the painters haven't worked on the bridge since Wednesday. I'm using my lame bridge, which works, but it is not an easy trail from the bridge to the path up the hill. I cleared most of the way but there is one very large tree across the trail which requires some scrambling.

I see that there is no one scheduled to be relief caretaker tomorrow morning. I guess I don't care, if no one else does, I just hope that everyone knows that its my day off and I'm not expected to be here.

Monday, September 26, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.5 Water Temperature: 70

It was a slow weekend. We had a birthday party here yesterday afternoon but otherwise, dead. I'm not surprised, of course, no bridge, lots of rain, and the river is muddy brown.

Tuesday, September 27, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.4 Water Temperature: 72

Club member Mac Thornton was on Fox News talking about the sewer that runs along the canal, the same sewer that overflowed right here at Sycamore Island

landing during the heavy rains. Check it out.

<http://www.potomacriverkeeper.org/updates/mac-thornton-whats-stinking-potomac>

There is also a lot of other information at the Potomac Riverkeeper website, including serious river access issues. Please check it out and get involved.

Speaking of Riverkeepers, I'll be speaking at the REI in College Park on October 5. I'll be there with Potomac Riverkeepers, Ted and Whit and we'll be talking about my Island to Island fund-raising kayak trip. If you can't make it out for that one, we will probably be speaking at the stores in Bailey's Crossroads and in Rockville sometime in November.

Well, I have not seen the mountain lion yet but very early this morning, I did hear the yelpings of coyotes.

Thursday, September 29, 2011

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.3 Water Temperature: 72

I just pulled this from Councilmember Roger Berliner's email. "It hardly seems like three years have passed since Hurricane Hanna caused a 125-foot breach in the C&O Canal near Old Anglers Inn. I am very pleased to report that \$1.1M from the state has now been allocated to the Canal for this purpose."

This is great news! Now we can look forward to a rewatering of the canal someday! Maybe soon! Thanks to everyone who worked so hard on this, including C&O Canal Trust!

Speaking of the canal, it has become my nemesis lately. Now that the workers have removed all of the steps from the metal bridge, the only way across the canal is by my tiny bridge. I suppose I should feel fortunate that there isn't any water in the canal right now. That would require a more substantial bridge.

The jewel weed is so spectacular now. I always gave the "flower award" to the bluebells, but these yellow, jewel weed flowers are so abundant and bright that they are really giving the bluebells a run for their money. It might just be because of the fact that the jewel weed are closer to eye level but I've never seen the bees work on the bluebells the way that these native bees are getting busy with these flowers. Dozens of bees hovering from flower to flower, non stop activity. On another interesting note, no cardinal flowers on the Island this year?!

JOE HAGE

The Sycamore Islander

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ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

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JOE HAGE

Large Parties Scheduled



Saturday, October 15
George Loeb
35 Cub Scouts from Pack 1320
3-7 p.m.

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 and in advance of the monthly meeting. 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 November issue is November 1.