



The Sycamore Islander

JULY 2012 | VOLUME 91 NUMBER 7

President's Letter

The next club meeting is Wednesday, July 11, at 8:00 p.m. on the Island. Joe will fire up the BBQ at 7:00 for those who come early and join in a pre-meeting picnic. Bring something to grill and a dish to share if you like.

A quorum at our July 11 meeting is very important. Please attend. We will vote on a proposal by John Noble, membership secretary, to allow wait list pass holders to bring up to four guests when they visit the Island. The current standing rule prohibits wait list pass holders from bringing any guests. About 40 wait list pass holders await our vote at the July 11 meeting.

The 127th Anniversary Dance Party last month was a magical evening. Colonel Josh and the Honky Tonk Heros (with Joe Hage on drums) led the way. Kids doing karaoke at the intermission were a delight. The clubhouse looked festive and we had lots to eat and drink—several tables of food, delicious barbeque, punch, homemade root beer and a special cake—a replica of Sycamore Island complete with ferry. Thank you to the committee and all who worked to put on the Dance Party: Cecily Abram, Jody Benjamin, Cindy Bertaut, Caroline Gelb, Joe Hage, Bonnie Holdridge, Hester Ohbi, Lucky Marmon, Louise Meyer, Karen Possner, Tryon Wells, Jane Winer, and others.

There are no organized events on the Island in July. Just come down and swim, fish, paddle, picnic, do some birding, read a book, or in your favorite way relax and refresh during this hot summer.

Speaking of fishing—one of my favorite things to do—during the past month bass and bluegills have been very active around Sycamore Island. The water has been low and clear and fishing has been exceptional. Don't let lack of equipment keep you from wetting a line. The rods, reels, artificial lures and minnow nets in the screened in porch are available for all to use. See you on the river.

JIM DREW
President



DAVOD WOWER

Minutes for the June 13 Meeting

Attendees: Jane Winer, Karen Possner, Jeffrey Komarow, Caroline Gelb, Alan Gelb, Drew Walsh, Bill Marmon, Lucky Marmon, John Noble, Jim Drew, Wayne Limberg, Larry Heilman, Joe Hage, Ann Lucy, Susan Dunham, Dan Schember, Peter Dean, Julia Dean, Richard Bertaut, Louise Meyers

Wayne Limberg: He's got an ax to grind: If you'd asked me if I wanted to spend an evening learning about axes and saws, I'd have thought you were joking. However, before the June meeting got underway, club member Wayne Limberg mesmerized Sycamore Islanders with a lively and illuminating talk on just that. Limberg's fascination with saws and axes began about twelve years ago. He now owns fifty. More recently Wayne and Island caretaker Joe Hage unearthed old axes and saws in the Island's shed. And there they were Wednesday evening: a Bucking saw, a one-man crosscut saw, and a two-man felling saw. . . all three mounted artistically on the rear wall of the clubhouse. Limberg sprinkled his lively talk with historical info, noting that the "great age" of saws was 1840 to 1940. Most of the steel for these saws came from Sheffield, England, and only later from the U.S. After the war, the old saws yielded to the chain saw, without which the post-war housing boom could not have been powered. Wayne gave us an good look at a huge Buck Saw, demonstrating how the teeth were cut and sharpened and measured by "the spider," and how their makers marked their work with medallions on the handle and etching on the steel. It was a fun and engaging intro. Who would have known that "getting the hang of it" refers to the even balance of the axe when held vertically by the blade. Thank you, Wayne.

The Meeting: President Jim Drew called the meeting to order. The May minutes were approved.

Communications: None.

Treasurer's Report: Alan and Caroline Gelb reported that all was well and that revenues coming from new Waiting List members would be a useful cushion.

Financial Report: Lisa Kliefoth has been extremely busy keeping track of wait list fees.



Wayne Limbert, doing his presentation on the old saws in the clubhouse.

JOE HAGE

Captain's report: Drew Walsh reported that throw rings are now installed on the ferry, the dock and the Captain's dock. The pump on the well has been replaced

Environmental Report: Drew also reported that Parker Moore, a new Wait List member, recruited Scott Petrey of Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc., to do an environmental walkabout of the Island. Drew will submit a report of his finding to the Islander.

Caretaker: Joe Hage reported that kitchen tap water is safe to drink and there is no need to bring bottled water to the Island. All the water on the Island comes from an underground source, not the river. The company that fixed the well took water samples, and its report will be made available.

Membership Committee: Membership Secretary John Noble reported that the membership now totals 160, with 16 new members being admitted this spring. We also have 66 Seniors, 15 inactive, 17 honorary, and 76 (14 old and 62 new) on the Waiting List. Thirty-five of the Waiting List Members pay \$179 for Waiting List Passes. Forty-nine of the 62 new members attended the May 6 Orientation. A second orientation will be held in July. It was suggested that a new membership roster be distributed in July.

Questions from a new Wait List Member prompted a proposal to liberalize the Wait List Pass restrictions to enable a family to bring four guests to the Island on

weekdays. Guests are always the responsibility of their hosts, whether they are members or Wait List members, so there are no new liability issues raised by the proposal. Wait List members would be asked to sign a statement acknowledging their responsibility for guests' safety. After some discussion, it was decided that John Noble will write up a proposal that will allow Wait List Members to bring four guests to the Island during the week. It will be voted on at the July meeting.

Swim Committee: Larry Heilman reported that all water safety equipment is now in place. He recommends that it be observed and noted by visitors to the Island so that they will be familiar with it in the event it must be used. He suggests trying out the long red float that can be flung over the shoulder and carried to a swimmer in distress. Anyone who sees that equipment is not in place or serviceable should report it to Joe. Larry noted that we still need whistles on the docks and swim deck and safety rings in the row boat and canoe. The rings on the ferry should be put on opposite ends. Larry recommends purchasing another long red float.

The Club will sponsor a Swim and Water Safety Workshop on Saturday, June 30, 11 a.m.–1 p.m. Members and Wait List members who have purchased passes to use the club are encouraged to attend. There will be demonstrations of how to use the water safety equipment. Participants will also be encouraged to use the equipment while being supervised. Swimmers who want to try swimming out to the raft will be monitored. The club is particularly hopeful that children will attend this workshop.

Sycamore Island Dance: The dance will be held from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. on June 23. Jane Winer reviewed the list of volunteers and their duties. She and husband Dave will head up the clean-up committee and need others to help. We were reminded to bring appetizers.

Calling all families with small children!
Are any members or wait-listers looking for week-day play dates on the Island? If so, please email Meghan Mullan, mother of Nico (4) and Leandro (2), and she'll circulate a list to all interested parties: meghanmullan@hotmail.com.

Old Business: None

New Business: Lucky Marmon, who held a large party on the Island on June 8, complimented Joe Hage for the appearance of the Island. "The lawn was mowed. The club house, upstairs and down, was clean. The ping pong table was up. Obviously a huge effort had been made. The place just sparkled." Thank you, Joe.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
LUCKY MARMON
Co-Recording Secretary

For New Waitlisters: The Secret to Enjoying the Island on Summer Weekends

I'm sure all new Waitlisters know you are encouraged to come to monthly meetings, join in the spring and fall workfests, and attend other Club-sponsored events. But do you wish you could visit the Island on a quieter weekend with your family?

Well, you can! Simply volunteer as Relief Caretaker some Saturday, where your duties consist mainly of running the ferry for half a day on Joe's day off. It's completely acceptable to arrive before your shift, or stay on afterward, to swim or picnic when you're off-duty.

To volunteer, just visit the "Relief Caretaker" section on the club website (www.sycamoreisland.org), find an open shift that you want, and contact me right away to reserve it. My contact information and "Instructions for Relief Caretakers" can be found there, too.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

SHERRY FIZDALE
Supervisor of Relief Caretakers

Sycamore Island 127th Anniversary Dance



PHOTOS BY DAVID WINER



Notes from the Island

Monday, June 4, 2012

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.4 Water Temperature: 70

The river is the color of red Virginia clay. I think we'll be noticing the effects of Friday's storm for a few more days yet. It's too bad that the river looks so muddy; it's supposed to be a perfect week weather-wise.

I think the Canada geese knew that I was away over the weekend. I came back yesterday morning and found the canoe dock completely littered with goose poop. I shooed them all away last night and I put my solar trail lights on the dock in the hope that they would keep them away over night. I was happy to see this morning that there wasn't any poop to shovel away. I hate getting in and out of my boat with goose poop everywhere.

Thursday, June 7, 2012

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.7 Water Temperature: 70

Yesterday I put up a fancy new volleyball net in the field. It had been sitting around here for a long time and I finally decided to put it up. I also set up the ping pong table, and I bought new darts for the dart board and new chalk and a chalk holder for the pool table. It's good to have games to play; maybe we should get one of those newly popular corn-hole games where you toss the bags full of dried corn. Should be easy enough to build.

It's been quite festive here on these weekday evenings lately. Last Tuesday someone brought a bunch of crabs and someone else was sharing hand-painted chocolates from California! Not bad for a Tuesday.

I won't be here this coming Sunday. I will be volunteering at the Potomac Riverkeeper Gala at the Swedish embassy on the Georgetown waterfront. It's a great event for a great cause and it is held at the most beautifully located embassy in the city. I encourage everyone to attend!

Tuesday, June 12, 2012

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.2 Water Temperature: 78

Bummer, just when the river finally cleared up, we get more rain to muddy the waters. I guess I should have gone fishing yesterday when I had the chance.

I attended the 10th annual Potomac Riverkeeper Gala on Sunday. It was a great event, held at the House of Sweden, right on the Georgetown waterfront. There

were a few Sycamore Islanders there but I hope more of you will consider going next year and supporting this very important organization.

Speaking of The Riverkeepers, I'll be doing my kayak trip to support a clean and safe Potomac, starting on August 18. I hope you all follow my trip at potomacriverkeepers.org/island

Maybe I shouldn't be surprised, but I think I saw an American mink at dusk last night. I had my suspicions that there was a mink denning under my bedroom but when I saw this small catlike figure cruise down the brick walk near my front door I became pretty well convinced. It turns out that they usually have several dens so that might explain why I haven't seen it before. It makes sense to have them here; the Island is the perfect habitat for small carnivore like mink. And there is plenty of prey here with all the mice, frogs, snakes, and small fish we have. So our amazing list of mammals seen on the Island includes: mink, grey squirrels, flying squirrels, deer, raccoon, ground hogs, beaver, otter, white footed mice, muskrats, meadow voles, and star-nosed moles. I've never seen a chipmunk or a Virginia opossum here though.

Monday, June 18, 2012

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.1 Water Temperature: 78

What a great Father's Day weekend we had down here. The weather was perfect, the river was clear and warm and the fishing and swimming were superb. I even caught a three-pound bass on Saturday evening!

On Friday I hosted a friend's birthday party and the club members that were here were thrilled at the wonderful live music being played on the deck. We had a complete acoustic band with guitars, banjo, accordion, stand-up bass, ukuleles and a fiddle! At one point, the fiddle player was playing out on the river in a row boat and the sound was magical!

We also had a whole bunch of fun playing badminton with the new net I installed, but sadly one of the members let their kids use the new net as a hammock and it broke.

Well, the weather was so perfect and the humidity was so low that I decided that I just had to go camping on Saturday night. So, after finally getting everything packed into the canoe we set out from the canoe dock and headed upstream. Our plan was to follow in the paddle strokes of the old-time club members and take our canoe all the way up, past the beltway bridge, past



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Joe Hage and Whit Overstreet return for a second epic kayak adventure trek down the tidal Potomac this summer. The route this year is Sycamore Island all the way to the Chesapeake Bay. That's 150 miles of river! Check their page for exciting live updates, and read their tales about how a clean (or not-so-clean) Potomac impacts all of us.



Stubblefield Falls, past Carderock and camp on a small island called Perry Island, just below Offutt Island. My guess is that we paddled about seven miles upstream and we gained about 23 feet in elevation! A similar trip along the canal would have required going through locks 7-14! It was tough going but it was worth it. The scenery was spectacular and we saw an abundance of wildlife. We even saw peregrine falcons under the beltway bridge! After five hours of paddling upstream we were pretty tired and hungry but we found a nice place to pitch the tent and then, like I said, I caught a huge bass. Then we cooked it and ate it.

Monday, June 25, 2012

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.1 Water Temperature: 83

Another pretty weekend. I hosted my mother's 80th birthday party here on the Island on Friday. It was perfect. The storm didn't hit until dinner and the cake were all done! What a storm too. In a very short time we got close to half an inch of rain. Thankfully it didn't muddy up the river too much and the water is clear again today.

We also had the 127th Island Anniversary Party on Saturday night. It was a big success and I'm positive that everyone had a great time. The food, the decorations, and the band were excellent and the island-

shaped cake, complete with canoe and ferry, was truly a work of art. It was fun to see everyone dancing, but the highlight of the party was when the little girls were singing along with the karaoke, very sweet.

Last week, on Sunday, the wind was blowing pretty good from down river and it inspired us to try and get a sailing-canoe in the water. I'd always dreamed of resurrecting some of the antique canoe-sailing equipment that's been sitting here and on Sunday, we got around to doing it. In order to sail a canoe you need; lee boards, a mast, a sail, and a canoe that can hold a mast. The lee boards I salvaged from the old lockers before the renovation (finding the lee boards is actually what inspired me to try the canoe sailing). There were also some old mast-holders in the old lockers but thankfully there is an aluminum canoe on the Island that has a built-in mast-holder(thanks Gerry). All that we needed

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Carol Beehler, cbeehler@comcast.net.

The deadline for inclusion in the August issue is July 30.

now was a mast and a sail! I had found a good, sturdy, curtain rod sitting out on trash-day a few days earlier and the sail we fashioned from an old blue tarp, hemmed with duct tape of course. We rigged some ropes and pulleys so that we could keep the sail trim and before we knew it we were sailing around the Island! We'll need to do some sail modifications, but we were able to tack into the wind until we reached the end of the Island and then we were off to the races! I ruddered with my canoe paddle and Mary trimmed the sail; it was awesome!

I want to thank club member Kent Halstead. Yesterday he gave me a signed copy of his latest book, *Novel Guide*. This is a great book, full of pictures, passages, and useful information about 575 award-winning novels. You should get one of your own, published by Compass Books.

Monday, July 2, 2012

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.8 Water Temperature: 90

Death and destruction. Thankfully, the only casualties were trees, but we did have a lot of casualties. It seems that we got hit by the full frontal force of the derecho! It was similar to the micro-burst that hit us about three years ago when we lost three black walnut trees. Sadly this storm took out the last of the two black walnuts that were up-island from the swim dock. That old grove of walnuts is on a map of the Island that was drawn way back in 1932. There is some hope for one tree however, it is broken in half but there are some living branches still attached to it.

Of course, when the big walnuts came down they took a few other trees down with them. The old box elder by the swim dock was destroyed, as were some other smaller trees. The wind also ripped our big linden tree in two, half still standing. I counted close to twenty trees, sycamores and silver maples, that lost their tops, as it were. I think we are going to plan an emergency work day this weekend so check your e-mails from the club.

The other down side of the storm was that as soon as it hit my power was knocked out. I finally got it back today but not before the freezers and refrigerators were completely hot (maybe the club should buy a generator). Plus, all weekend we had to flush the toilets with buckets of river water. It was really bad timing too, since I was sick with a fever the entire weekend. By the way, I want to send a thank-you out to the caretakers,



Sailing the Sycamore Island way.

Dan Schemer, Susan Dunham, and Norm Metzger who were here Saturday right after the storm. They really picked up the slack for me.

Seeing all of these trees down got me to thinking about the large trees on the Island. There are two trees that are particularly tall: the sycamore by the canoe shed and the tulip tree just up-river from the clubhouse. I used an old loggers method to measure the tulip tree and I'm guessing that it is from 100–120 feet tall! The club house is 50 feet long to give you an idea of how huge this tree is. If it fell toward Virginia it could easily reach the waters edge near the swim dock!

The river is super low right now. I checked and it hasn't been this low in close to a year, since last August.

Happy Fourth!

JOE HAGE
Caretaker



Large Parties Scheduled



Saturday, July 21, 4 pm– dusk,
Alison and Richard Burns, 20 people

The Sycamore Islander

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Masthead photo by David Winer

DAVID WINER