



The Sycamore Islander

JANUARY 2013 | VOLUME 92 NUMBER 1

President's Letter

I am honored and proud to succeed Jim Drew as your president. I learned about Sycamore Island from Larry Heilman soon after moving to the D.C. area in the 1980s and almost immediately fell in love with its serenity, beauty, and anachronistic funkiness, all just minutes from the White House. Lucky and I had an interminable wait to become a regular members, but that pain is now forgotten and since the late 1990s, the Island and the river have become important parts of our lives.

Jim Drew has left the club in excellent shape. We have an experienced and wonderful caretaker in Joe Hage, who has completed ten years on the Island and received a special club award for his service. Finances and facilities are in good shape, and we have a new membership system that should re-energize the club with some younger families at the same time as it perpetuates the egalitarian traditions that make the club so special. I am thrilled with the qualities of my fellow officers, who bring experience, love of Island and good judgment. Our young Captain, Drew Walsh, will play an especially important role in the Island, and I look forward to working with him.

In the immediate future, we will need to insure that safety issues are addressed, particularly in view of the raft of young children that have appeared with the wait list corps. A bad accident could be a disaster for the club. At the same time, we want to maintain the anti-

bureaucratic spirit of individual freedom and personal responsibility that have been hallmarks.

I look forward to suggestions to make the club even more wonderful. The club will be only as good as its members make it. I know that serving in this new role will be interesting and rewarding for me.

The January meeting on Wednesday, January 9, will be held at the home of John and Judy Lentz, 5424 Mohican Road in Bethesda.

Also, remember the Winter Bird Outing on the Island is on Saturday, February 9, 8:30–10:00 a.m.

BILL MARMON
President



Bill Marmon



American Goldfinch

BACKYARD BIRDCAPES

Minutes for the December 12th Meeting

The meeting was called to order by President Jim Drew at the home of Karen Possner and Stan Wiggins, who welcomed us into their home for a festive holiday party following the meeting.

Attendees: Karen Possner; Stan Wiggins; John Noble; David Winer; Drew Walsh; Tryon Wells; Ann Lucy; David, Jennifer, and Jesse Hearn; John Membrino; Susanna Membrino; Jane Winer; Jeff Komarow; Karl Kosok; Alice Bullard; Lucky Marmon; Bill Marmon; Jody Benjamin; Gerald Stanley Barton; Caroline Gelb; Star Mitchell; Sherry Fizdale; Judy Lentz; John Lentz; L.C. Heilman; Jim Drew; and Ann Marie Cunningham.

Minutes: The minutes as they appeared in *The Islander* were approved.

Treasurer's Report: Caroline Gelb reported on the 2012 budget and expenditures in Alan's absence. The total expenditures as of the end of October were close to what was expected. Unexpected expenses of repairs to a leaky roof and a new water pump were somewhat offset by savings on distribution of *The Islander*, grounds, and careful spending on entertainment and supplies. Salary and insurance remain the biggest expenses. With the expected expenses for the rest of the year, including the caretaker's bonus plus a special 10-year service award, the total spending for the year is likely to exceed the budget by about \$4,000. However, our income was higher this year primarily due to the entry fees of the new waiting list applicants. This will result in a reserve of about \$75,000, an increase of about \$5,000.

For the 2013 budget, the Gelbs are proposing an increase of 2.1%, to a total of \$83,828 in the operating budget. Adding in the funds necessary to service the notes on the building loans, the total budget will be \$93,111. No change in dues or fees was proposed. A motion to adopt the budget was passed.

Membership Report: John Noble reported that there will be two new families proposed for membership next month. The roster of members that usually is distributed with the January *Islander* will instead be sent out in April after the dues payments are made so that it will be more accurate.

Relief Caretaking: Sherry Fizdale presented a list of all members who served as relief caretaker during the year

(shown in this issue). She recommends that they be reported each month in the future, so that there will be an official record of members who serve.

Captain: Drew Walsh reported that the steps to the shed have been finished. Dave Winer is building a workshelf on wheels. The bathroom is being winterized. And the Environmental committee is strategizing.

Nominations Committee: The slate of candidates was presented, and the following members were elected as officers and supervisors of the Sycamore Island Club:

President: Bill Marmon

Vice-President: Sherry Pettie Fizdale

Co-Recording Secretaries: Ann Marie Cunningham and Lucky Marmon

Treasurer: Alan Gelb and Caroline Gelb

Financial Secretary: Lisa Kliefoth

Membership Secretary: John Noble

Editor: Carol Beehler

Archivist: Karen Possner

Captain: Drew Walsh

Deputy Captain: Gerry Barton

Supervisors:

Finance: Bill Eichbaum

Law: Maurice Tobin

Clubhouse: Marianne Ross

Grounds: Ann Lucy

Painting/Captentry: Karl Kosok

Website: Tryon Wells

Entertainment: George and Shelley Malusky

Camping/Parties: John Zimmerman

Canoeing: John Membrino

Swimming: Larry Heilman

Relief Caretaking Scheduling: Jodi Benjamin

John Noble thanked Jim Drew for his service as president. Jim commented that he enjoyed his tenure, appreciated those who volunteered to serve the club, and that he feels good about the future of the club.

The next meeting will be at the home of John and Judy Lentz, 5424 Mohican Road, Bethesda on January 9.

The meeting was adjourned. Thanks for the hospitality of Karen Possner and Stan Wiggins, and the refreshments that they and many of the guests provided.

Respectfully submitted,
ANN MARIE CUNNINGHAM
Co-Recording Secretary

Sycamore Island 2012 Budget: Summary Report

Our operating budget for 2012 was \$82,104. Our spending ended up close to this at \$82,682, which represents an overrun of 0.7%. This was mainly due to a number of large expenditures, including fixing the roof, a new water pump, fire extinguishers, and safety equipment, substantially more than we budgeted. Insurance costs were also slightly higher than projected. We saved on *The Islander* and on routine spending for maintenance and Island supplies.

Because of the exceptionally high level of income in 2012, we ended the year with a balance of \$78,182 in the Treasurer's account. This is the highest carryover we have had since at least the late 1990s, excepting the unusual level in 2008 to fund new construction, but it is still below our goal of one year's operational spending. We do of course still owe the balance of our construction notes. Originally \$65,000, this has come down to \$49,875.

2012 Relief Caretakers

Penelope Mitchell, Gerry Barton, Joe Cecil, Wayne Limberg, Stephen and Sally Kern, Miguel Browne and Silvija Strikis, Joe McBride, Renee Dunham, Jerome Cramer, Gordon Phillips, David Winer, Madeleine

Carter and Alec Graham, Jeff and Sandi Komarow, Steve Newman and Mary Tisdale, Mark Friedrichs and Julie Saulnier, Marc Bergeron, Edward Tilghman, Barbara Fisher, Patricia Roth, Patricia Benton, Kathy Carroll, Cindy and Richard Bertaut, Sally Strain, Francis Latapie, Toby Smith, Christopher Weals, Tom Dyson, Jody and Bobby Benjamin, John Butler, Joan Barron, Stan Wiggins and Karen Possner, Russell Sturm, Peter Winkler, Mike Savage, Paul Stanton, David Holdridge, Susan Dunham and Dan Schember, Norm and Nancy Metzger, Linda Slayen, Louise Meyer, Ben Robinson, Drew Walsh, Nat Reid and Rachel Rudy, Tamara Zemlo and Chris White, Mark Carlin and Meryl Silverman, Tove and Susan Elfstrom, Joe McBride, Mary Ann Stein, Jay Zimmerman, Joe Palmore, Toby Smith, Alan and Miriam Pemberton, Anne & Brian Waidman, Page Dekker, Phoebe Hamill, Karen Brandt, Thomas Lott, Geoff Holdridge, Peter Gillon, Greg Hitz, Cora Shaw, Fred Wright and Catherine Seibert, Barbara Fisher and Chuck Pill, Eric Smith and Mimi Tam, David and Patty Whitnah, Christy and Garth Ross, Judy and John Lentz, Robert Braunohler, Fred and Tina Ohly, Lisa and Chris Kliefoth, Hester Ohbi and Robert Beauchamp, John and Susan Membrino, Richard and Alison Burns, Bill and Lucky Marmon, Peter Levine, Kevin Haley, Trip Reid, Ned Goddard, Joe Cecil, Patricia Hartge, Alison Levine, Jennifer Urquhart ❄️ THANK YOU!



WINTER BIRD WALK

Please join us for the Fourth Annual Sycamore Island Winter Bird Outing scheduled for Saturday, February 9th, 2013. As in past years, we will begin the outing at 8:00 AM with bagels and coffee at the clubhouse. Our plan is to walk the Island and the towpath in the vicinity of the Island from 8:30–10:30 a.m. looking for visiting winter waterfowl and other winter resident and migratory birds. Following the walk, we will compare notes on the day's sightings over coffee around the wood stove in the clubhouse. Both beginners and experienced birders are encouraged to join us.

Last year, participants walked the Island and were rewarded with good looks at numerous resident and migratory birds, including: Wood Duck, Ring-neck Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, grebes and various woodpeckers. Our resident Bald Eagles usually start to nest this time of year just down river from the Island in a Sycamore tree that is also easily seen from the Island. If you would like to attend this year's event, please contact our trip leader Paul Hagen at phagen@bdlaw.com or 202.789.6022 by February 7th.

Bring binoculars if you have them and dress for the weather.

Notes from the Island

Tuesday, December 18, 2012

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.2 Water Temperature: 45

I feel I should apologize to all of my regular readers for having such a sparse log this month. I guess I haven't been too inspired to write and honestly, things have been really quiet around here lately. I'm still following the mystery of the secret squirrel, but rather than the members, it's the beaver that have been the most regular visitors. The seagulls have arrived and the last of the weeping willow leaves have fallen. It's time to brace for the cold and ice.

Speaking of cold, I installed the modular insulation walls in the men's bathroom over the weekend. Once I turn off the water this will be the men's and women's winter bath. We also worked on the tool shed some more. Drew Walsh and Gerry Barton came down on Sunday to frame out and install the windows in the shed.

There was a great Sycamore Island Christmas party last Wednesday. Thanks so much to Karen and Stan for hosting and thanks to everyone that brought a treat, especially Dave Winer with his eggnog. It was fun to be

with all of you enthusiastic members and to know that this club is as vibrant as it ever was. The other thing I need to mention is my deep sense of gratitude toward the club and it's members. For the tenth year now, I have received a raise and a generous bonus, but this year I also received a ten-year service award! Thank you, thank you, thank you. I look forward to at least ten more years of service. Also, my daughters, Kelsey and Kaylen, want to thank the club for the gift cards they received. They are very appreciative, and shocked that the club still thinks of them at Christmas after all these years.

Tuesday, December 22, 2012

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.2 Water Temperature: 42

It's cold and the wind is blowing fierce, must be the first day of winter! It won't be long now before I have to shut off the water to the clubhouse.

I got the lights on the trail working again, and just in time for the longest night of the year too! Most of you only see the light after a club meeting or after a party, but it's really nice having them back working, especially since it gets dark so early. The lights quit working back in September when the tree fell on the bridge. It turns



JOE HAGE



JOE HAGE

out that one of our lights was on that tree and when it fell it disconnected all the wires. It was a real pain reinstalling the light and making sure that all of the connections were right, but finally, I prevailed.

I cleaned the gutters for the final time and I cleared all of the leaves from the roof and porches. I also got around to doing some of the unfinished work from the workfest, like sweep the leaves from the canoe shed roof and clear the leaves and flood debris from inside the canoe shed. I also cleaned the wood stove and restocked the firewood bin. By the way, if you come down to make a fire please make an effort to restock the wood you use, thanks.

I have an exciting fish story. I had some friends over on 12/12/12 and my friend Brandon caught a 40 pound catfish! I was really surprised, the water was so clear and cold, and the fish was so huge. It has to have been the latest catch of the year, ever!

Tuesday, December 24, 2012

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.2 Water Temperature: 42

I have a tragedy to report. Jack Bauer, one of our newest waitlist members, died of a heart attack on Friday morning. He was only 37 years old. I did not know Jack that well but I gained a lot of respect and admiration for the man in just the few occasions that we spent time together. He was a great outdoorsman and he impressed me with his knowledge of hunting and fishing as well as paddling. He seemed to be a true lover-of-life and a devoted father who would often bike up from Brookmont after work with his very young son on the back of his bike. My heart goes out to his wife, Lauren, and the rest of his family. This is a huge loss to them and to all of us in and around Brookmont.

We'll miss you Jack. (Jack and Lauren loved the Island and if Lauren wants to use the club and the Island for any type of memorial service I say we allow her to do that, regardless of waitlist status.)

I'm not sure what to write after that; I'm getting teary-eyed just writing about poor Jack, but it is Christmas Eve and I want to send out some tidings of good cheer. It's funny, I don't have a lot of Christmas memories on the Island. I always go somewhere else, usually my folks', for Christmas dinner. I do have some fun stories of when my kids were younger and we had to bring the Christmas tree over in a canoe because the river was too high for the ferry. Eventually I got smarter and I bought down a fake tree that only had to be carried down the hill and across the river once. Sadly, the mice nested in that one over the summer, so no tree at all this year. I did hang up some Christmas lights around the windows, and with a few Christmas cards on the sills the place looks a little festive. Tonight I will join my parents and my many brothers and sisters for a meal of our traditional fare, Norwegian Lefse. It's like a giant potato tortilla that you can roll anything into. In Norway they roll cinnamon and sugar inside, but my grandfather started a new tradition and now we roll it up with bacon. MMMMMM, bacon.

Merry Christmas everyone!!

Friday, December 28, 2012

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.8 Water Temperature: 42

The river shot up to over 4.8 feet yesterday morning and it's holding steady. Usually the river will rise and then drop right away, but not this time. Looks like we'll have to deal with this relatively high river level for the rest of the day and into Saturday.



JOE HAGE

We had our heat pump serviced yesterday. The unit was acting up on Wednesday night and I could hear it running non-stop all night. I went up on the roof in the morning and discovered a thick layer of ice covering the top of our heat pump. I chipped all of the ice away and it began to work better but I decided to have a professional look at it anyway. This was the first time that I had a technician down here since the heat pump was installed. He confirmed that the unit was working fine and that all was in good order. Apparently the snow we had the other day had accumulated over the fan and prevented it from working properly. I guess in the future I have to keep an eye out and keep that fan free of obstruction.

The ping pong table broke again. I'm not sure when that table first made it down here but it's been here for all of my ten years and it has always been in need of constant repair. This time I decided that it was dangerously malfunctioning and I was about to toss it out to prevent anyone from getting their fingers smashed trying to set it up. I removed the legs and other hardware and suddenly realized that without the legs the table part fit nicely on top of the pool table. This is great, once I fashion a new net, we can keep our ping pong table after all. Plus, with this new table-top cover, the pool table can be used for food and drinks during workfests and parties.

There is still some flood clean up to be finished and I've been busy freeing picnic tables and clearing trails.

Monday, December 31, 2012

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.1, Water Temperature: 37 Well, it's the end of another year and despite some minor hardships (the dereche storm, the bridge was out for months, I got sick from a tick bite), I think it was a great one. I'm looking forward to more adventures in 2013!

One of the things I'll remember about 2012 is that it was the year that they cut down the giant spruce that was growing in front of the Sycamore Store. The tree was sick and needed to be cut down but it towered high over Macarthur Blvd. for a long time and was close to 100 years old. Its cool to think about how much history that tree must have witnessed over that time. There is a picture of the Sycamore Store during the fifties on our website, sycamoreisland.org/articles/sa199910. In that picture the tree looks like a Christmas tree and is already close to twenty feet tall.



Brandon and his 40-pound catfish

According to the National Weather Service, the low temperatures for Tuesday night will be in the mid-twenties. If that is true then I'd better cut off the water tomorrow. The problem is, Intellicast, the self-proclaimed weather experts, are saying that the lows for the D.C. area will be in the thirties, which means I could leave the water on for a few more days. I guess it's better to be safe than sorry but once I fill the system with anti freeze, it's hard to go back and we'll have to wait for spring to have water in the club kitchen again.

JOE HAGE
Caretaker



JOE HAGE

The Sycamore Islander

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Cabin John, MD 20818

ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Happy New Year

Directions to Lentz home

From Massachusetts Avenue coming from DC: turn left at the fire station and Sangamore Road light, make an immediate right on Walhonding Road, turn right up a hill on the short Scioto Road, turn left onto Mohican Road to 3rd home on right (parking alcove below it).

From MacArthur Boulevard in either direction: coming from DC turn right on Mohican Road; from Glen Echo turn left on Mohican Road, proceed up hill, bear right at stop sign, then left. 5424 is on left.

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. 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 February issue is February 1.