



The Sycamore Islander

OCTOBER 2013 | VOLUME 92 NUMBER 10

President's Letter

The regular club meeting will be held Wednesday, October 9th, on the Island.

As I write this letter, my hands still smell from the lingering effects of the large catfish and medium-size bass I helped extract from the fishing gear of member Elizabeth Thomas at the Island Fishing Derby held recently under the expert auspices of George Malusky, ably assisted by Shelly Malusky. I did not catch anything myself (except a couple of tree branches) but had a great time at one of the Island's great traditions. Winners were announced in several categories, including "no fish caught" (so Sycamore Island), and received fishing lures in wonderful cigar boxes. Wow! Thank you George and Shelley!

We are proud to announce that our caretaker Joe Hage and his band have published a CD of classic country music, called "Crowd of Millions." Joe is the drummer in the four person group, "Colonel Josh and the Honky Tonk Heroes." In an exclusive interview in *The Islander* Joe explained, "We play happy songs about sad things." The band rehearses Tuesday nights on the Island with the increasingly sophisticated equipment displayed in the clubhouse. Joe has known lead guitarist and vocalist Josh Arnson since middle school and says the group is very tight. "A sort of band of brothers," says Joe. The album is available from the Apple iTunes store and can be purchased at discount from Joe.

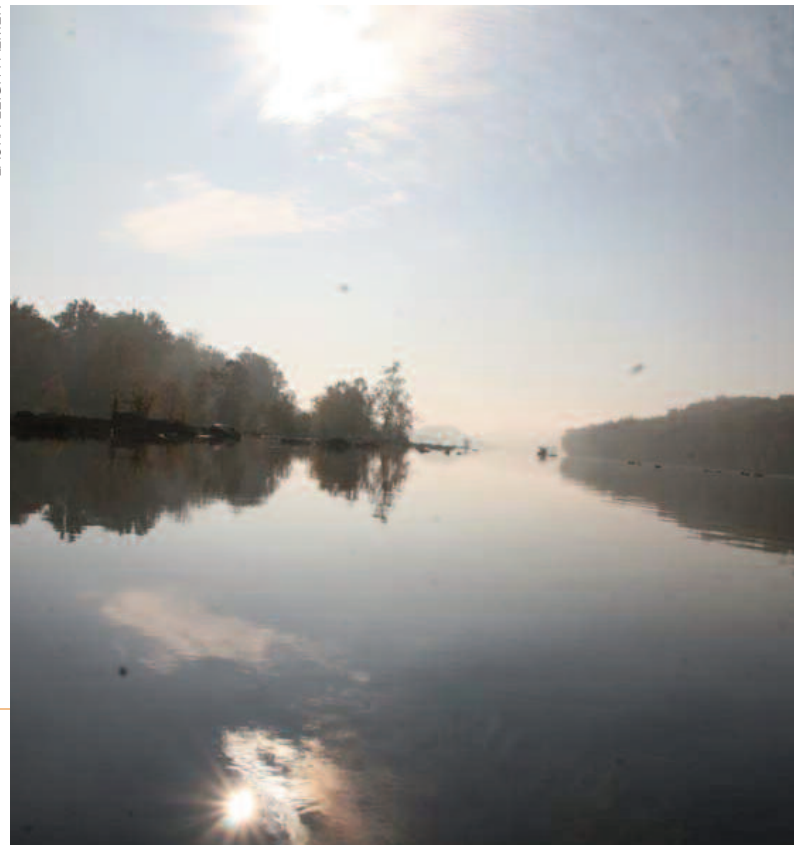
Kudos also to long time member John Lenz who is about to publish a book, "Tales from the Paddle" which

will highlight John's 21 canoe trips in wilderness Canada and two in Siberia. The book will be published in association with the Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough, Ontario. John will give a book talk to the club at the November 13th regular meeting, which will be on the Island, weather permitting.

On the subject of weather, we need volunteers to host the December 11th meeting (and party) as well as January and February meetings on the second Wednesday. Thanks in advance.

BILL MARMON
President

LAURA LEIGH PALMER



Minutes for the September 11th Meeting

Attendees: Sherry Pettie Fizdale, Jody Benjamin, Roger Herst, Jane Winer, Dave Winer, Ann Lucy, Karen Possner, Ned Goddard, Bill Marmon, Ann Marie Cunningham, Drew Walsh, Lucky Marmon, Joe Hage, Richard Bertaut

President Bill Marmon called the meeting to order. Bill welcomed the Club's new officers: Swimming Supervisor Roger Herst and Ned Goddard, who will take over for Alan Gelb as Treasurer in January. There was great enthusiasm for Ned Goddard's lead photo in the September issue of *The Islander*.

Minutes: The minutes of the August meeting were approved as published in *The Islander*.

Communications: Bill Marmon showered "bravos" on Cindy Bertaut and her trusty helper, husband Richard, for producing a spectacular Regatta. The array of races and games was impressive enough, but Cindy's incredible can-do and relaxed manner was amazing.

Caretaker Joe Hage reported that eight persons from the U.S. Geological Service recently came to the Island. They borrowed boats to take readings of the river as part of their search for the best future site for their equipment. Ann Marie Cunningham will try to schedule a presentation by the USGS at a monthly meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Captain Drew Walsh thanked Karen Possner and Stan Wiggins for donating bricks that enabled the completion of the tool shed landing. Karl Kosok will try to procure plastic-frame screen doors for the club house. Drew Walsh reported that there are plans to paint the club house. Joe Hage is beginning the prep work and Jodi Benjamin will lead a volunteer painting group. Members shouldn't fear that they will have to climb dangerous ladders.

Joe and Drew reported that the club house roof also needs some repairs, particularly the areas over Joe's kitchen and the club house kitchen. Joe and Drew are awaiting the availability of their preferred contractor. Members gave approval for this work to go forward.

Drew has procured a new ping-pong table for the club.

The Fall Workfest is scheduled for Sunday, November 10th. Rain date: Sunday, November 17th. Time: 9:00 am. As usual, there will be a potluck lunch.

Membership Report: The Membership Chairman was not in attendance. Bill Marmon reported that the application process will be open from January 1, 2014 until March 31, 2014. The lottery will be held in April 2014.

Persons on the original (old) waiting list will be the first asked to fill vacant slots. This time round, they must either join when called or drop off the waiting list.

Relief Caretaker's Report: Chairman Jody Benjamin thanked those who had performed as relief caretakers from mid-August to early September. They are the following: Lynda and Gary Slayen (they served twice), Sandra Young and Raj Purohit, Phoebe Hamill, Ned Goddard, Geoff Holdridge and Bonnie Roberts, Julia and Peter Smith.

There was a discussion about the importance of having all persons visiting the Island sign the sheet on the ferry. Adults members must sign in for children and their guests. Each person's name must be written. The sign-in sheet is a waiver of liability. Some suggestions:

1. The person operating the ferry should announce the sign-in policy as people board the ferry and not push off until everyone has signed.
2. There should be a sign on the ferry explaining this policy.
3. All members should be asked to sign a waiver assuming responsibility for their family members and their guests when they send in their annual membership dues.

Swimming Supervisor's Report: Roger Herst said that he takes a two-fold approach to his new responsibility: that people enjoy the water and that swimming on the Island is safe. He noted that whistles, which should be on the docks and float, are not yet part of the safety equipment. A number of people have witnessed dangerous swimming practices at the Island. In one case, a child who could not swim was taken by his mother into the middle of the river with only a noodle to support him. At the Regatta, there were 8 children swimming off the float and no parent was at the dock or in the water. One member's instructions to swimmers that diving was not allowed was overturned by a parent who said, "A shallow dive is okay." It was agreed that supervision at the swim dock is mandatory. If a child is swimming, his parent must be there. There was a discussion of how this can be enforced. Suggestions: swim rules be posted on the ferry and every member in the family be required to attend an orientation on swimming safety. During events such as the Regatta, mem-

ber volunteers would take shifts at the swim dock alongside parents. Joe suggested tying permission to swim to river levels. Roger has already removed some of the “noodles” from the swim area. The issue of swim safety will be readdressed in the spring before warm weather once again lures us into the water.

Environment Committee: Greens Committee member Ann Lucy reported that previous plantings are doing well. Drew Walsh has some projects scheduled that are part of the Master Plan.

Archivist Report: Bill Marmon asked Karen Possner to maintain hard copies of by-laws and standing rules after they have been revised and updated on the website so that the club will have a record of the old rules.

Camping on the Island: The club’s by-law regarding camping states that persons wishing to camp must coordinate with the camping supervisor and the caretaker. There have been several occasions recently where persons just showed up to camp without checking with camping supervisor Jay Zimmerman. It was suggested that those wishing to camp check with Jay a week in advance so that Joe is not caught off guard. It was also suggested that Jay email a “camping permit” to a prospective camper who has received the green light to camp. The camper can present it to Joe when he or his group arrives on the island.

Ann Marie suggested that *The Islander* have a monthly highlight box where a topic of interest, such as camping or the Workfest, is discussed in detail.

Calendar Items: Old Timers/New Timers/Good Timers Luncheon Potluck—Tuesday, October 1st 11:30–2:30.

Bill Marmon is seeking hosts for winter meetings, beginning in December (2nd Wednesdays at 8:00), when it is too cold to meet on the Island.

Also needed: A host for the Holiday Party the evening of December 11th.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
LUCKY MARMON
Co-Recording Secretary

Swimming at Sycamore Island

Uggg! You swim in the Potomac! It’s filthy and you could get hepatitis. . . or worse.

Moral of the story: Don’t drink the water, but not drinking doesn’t mean not swimming.

Let me introduce myself as the new Swimming Supervisor, Roger Herst. I wouldn’t have taken the job if I thought the river too dirty for safe swimming. I asked the local water foul if they thought the Potomac polluted. ‘As you know there are plenty of healthy cormorants, and (think about it) they wouldn’t choose to honor our river if abundant fish were not available for their diet. Unlike the geese and ducks, they can’t live on water greens. They eat only fish for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. So that

tells us the fishery is healthy. And fish don’t inhabit polluted water. If you don’t trust cormorants, eagles and ospreys, consult our club fishermen.

They’re hiding a secret that we have one of the best small-mouth bass fisheries on the East Coast!

Why did our river get a bad reputation? Because in George Washington’s day many of the manors and farms located their outhouses near the water to take advantage of the natural current to eliminate waste. But today, the Potomac sewer no loner exists. True, we have silt and some agricultural run-off, but no sewage. When the wind blows while swimming I have inadvertently swallowed many a mouthful of river water but have never gotten Giardia, sick, or experienced a belly-ache. I won’t argue untreated river water is good for you, but it doesn’t appear to be bad, at least in small quantities.

Enjoy! But please remember to begin your swim by swimming UPSTREAM. In the event you get tired or don’t feel good, just let the current bring you back home to the club float. Current is your friend on the downstream homeward journey.

You know the expression, “if God meant for us to swim underwater He would have provided us with gills.” Well, that’s true about fins too. Artificial floats,

THE ISLAND IS OPEN

during the U.S. government shutdown. The “pedestrian pass-through” exception mentioned in The Washington Post provides legal basis for crossing the towpath to get to the Island, which is not part of the U.S. government.

such as noodles, can be dangerous. If we depend on them to keep us afloat, what happens if they slip from our grasp? And that occasionally happens.

A good swimmer is the safest swimmer. See you in the water.

ROGER HERST
Swimming Supervisor

Old Timers, Good Timers Undeterred by the Shutdown

October 1st... a sunny, beautiful morning. The foliage displayed early tinges of orange and red. A cool breeze sent ripples across the Potomac. But what was that dark cloud overhead? Eeeek! THE SHUTDOWN, closing the government and ALL NATIONAL PARKS. Undeterred, 17 valiant Goodtimers defied the yellow plastic ribbons stretched across parking areas and paths leading to the C&O Canal. Toting their potluck offerings down the rocky verboten trail, these Sycamore Island “fun-timers” determined that the show would go on. And it was a great picnic.

Ignorant of the barriers being erected on higher ground, Gerry Barton got to the Island early and started making coffee and tea. The potluckers arrived. Platters of veggies and dips, slaw, tabouli, hummus, freshly marinated tomatoes, warm cheesy grits, barbequed chicken, and oysters... yes, folks, oysters shucked on the premises made for an inviting spread. And that's leaving out

dessert—cakes, brownies, Jim Drew's delicious pumpkin pie, and David Winer's sugar cookies.

Encouraged to bring stories, poems, jokes, and songs to the party, participants rose to the occasion. David Winer kicked off the day's entertainment with a joke, claiming it is the only one he knows. So we won't repeat it here. Olympic kayaker Davey Hearn recounted his trip down the Potomac during the flood of January 1996. Despite the police blasting instructions from the shore and helicopters ordering him to exit the river, Hearn continued his “training” until he was finally caught, handcuffed, and charged. A Maryland judge later found no reason for the charges and sent him merrily on his way to the Olympics. Star Mitchell astounded us with her tale of being pulled across the frozen Potomac on ice skates by her dog more than 30 years ago. After Marianne Ross' romantic story of a rooster who found love near the Canal, we settled into singing a medley of river songs. Joe Hage accompanied us on the guitar, while Davey and Jennifer Hearn joined in on the harmonica and ukulele. We warbled “Cruising Down the River.” We twanged “Red River Valley.” We harmonized “Michael, Row the Boat Ashore.” Joe closed down the singing with a tune of his own, singing “glad to be a part of this club and dig my toes into the Sycamore Island mud.” And so are we all.

LUCKY MARMON

Fishing Derby

Record crowds were recorded at this year's fishing derby. Unfortunately record numbers of fish did not follow. But more on that later.

This year, the record crowd coincided with a nationally recognized event. It was National Hunting and Fishing Day! The President issued a proclamation encouraging all Americans to connect to the great outdoors through hunting and fishing. Certainly the Sycamore Islanders did their part to celebrate such an auspicious day. As usual, George and Shelly Malusky did a fantastic job of organizing, providing morning donuts and a scrumptious cookout. George's awards are legendary and one winner was heard to exclaim, “I get all of that!”

If only the fish had cooperated. The water was low and was fairly clear. It hadn't rained in a while. But



JANE WINER



JOHN BUTLER

Fishing Derby Day



DAVID WINER

Smallest Fish Award winners



BILL MARMON

Ann Lucy, George and Shelley Maluskey

from all accounts, there was a record (lack of) haul recorded by everyone. The cooler temperatures are likely the culprit and certainly may warrant putting up the gear sooner rather than later.

Winners in the categories were: Ben Werchowsky for the Biggest Fish; and Jack, Julia, and Clara Dean, and Oscar McGervy received The Smallest Fish award.

Given the conditions, a new award was deemed appropriate. The Walleye Award was changed to the No Fish Award. This award went to Jeffrey Pappins and Olivia Smith.

The final award for Most Fish went to Bill Marmon and Elizabeth Thomas. The figure was deemed to be measureable on one hand (minus a few digits).



DAVID WINER

Biggest Fish Award winner

Thanks again to George and Shelly for organizing the event. If you haven't participated, conditions like this year can mean no skill needed to participate! The beautiful weather corresponded to the company. What a way to celebrate National Hunting and Fishing Day.

JOHN BUTLER



Notes from the Island

Sunday, September 1, 2013

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.1 Water Temperature: 83

Well, it happened again. A club member decides on a Saturday afternoon that they want to camp on Sycamore Island that night. They shoot off an email to me and to the camping supervisor asking permission. The camping supervisor replies that it's fine with him but talk to Joe first. Of course, Saturday is my day off so I am miles away from my computer and email and I am clueless about the camping idea. The member couldn't get a hold of me, so they assumed that it was OK to camp. Bad idea. My first clue that there were campers here last night was when I walked out this morning and saw a tent pitched by the fire pit. Let me just tell everyone right now, I don't like surprises. If you want to camp, and I do encourage overnights, please make a plan and give me a couple days advance notice. Otherwise, camp somewhere else.

Monday, September 2, 2013

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.4 Water Temperature: 84

Happy Labor Day!

There is no one here yet but I think we're going to have a good turnout for the big regatta today. I've got everything ready: the grass on the playing field is cut, there's plenty of toilet paper in the bathrooms, and I made sure that all of the club canoes are in good working order for the race around the Island. I tightened all of the thwarts and I replaced a couple of them as well.

I had to bury a raccoon first thing on yesterday. It was floating by the swim dock. Strangely, there were two monarch butterflies sitting on it.

Last night we counted four great egrets in the tree instead of the usual three. Also, they have moved and they are now gathering in a tree on Ruppert's, across from the cormorant tree.

It looks like the rotting screen doors to the deck are going to get fixed. Those doors have been bothering me for a while and I'm glad that it was decided to replace most of them. There are also plans to do a bunch of painting around the deck as well.

Holy cow! I just added up all of the visitors for August: 400, give or take a few.



LAURA LEIGH PALMER

Monday, September 9, 2013

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.9 Water Temperature: 84

Well, it happened again. Someone decided to camp on the Island on Saturday night without permission. This time they didn't even attempt to get permission. This is a serious problem and I think we need to spell out the rules for camping a lot better and reprimand those who ignore the rules.

Sunday, September 29, 2013

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.79 Water Temperature: 67

The river is the lowest that it's been since last September, except for last week of course, when it was only 2.74 feet at the Little Falls gauge. This is a good time of year, when the river is low, for us open-boaters to run the class 3 rapids at Little Falls.

April is for bluebells and September, it seems, is for jewel weed. I really wasn't expecting our jewel weed to continue blossoming this late, but it is in full bloom now. The tall plants are covered with yellow flowers, like yellow polka-dots on a green background.

We had the Fishing Derby here yesterday. I'm not sure how many fish were caught but I'm sure everyone had a good time. I haven't been fishing near enough

lately myself, but I did catch a nice smallmouth last week. That was before the water got cold. I was totally skunked when I went out earlier this week and I think the season might be coming to an end.

The new ping-pong table has been delivered and is now set up and ready for use in the clubhouse. The cool thing is, it's made of aluminum and can be used outdoors too! Drew also delivered 16 new plastic lawn chairs. Those old plastic chairs didn't hold up so well but it looks like we have some quality, long lasting, ones now, thanks to Drew.

The zip line is getting closer to being functional. Dave Winer and Steve Newman built an awesome platform to stand on, and Dave also brought the new, hefty, cable down and he has already purchased the new trolley. Now we have to figure out how to cut the thick cable and get it fastened to the trees.

JOE HAGE
Caretaker

The Sycamore Islander

6613 80th Place
Cabin John, MD 20818

ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS MAIL



To volunteer as a substitute caretaker, please email your choice of day and shift to Jody Benjamin, benjafamily@gmail.com.

Saturday Relief Caretakers October/November 2013					
OCTOBER	9 A.M.–2 P.M.	2 P.M.–DUSK	NOVEMBER	10 A.M.–2 P.M.	2 P.M.–DUSK
OCTOBER 5	Julie Saulnier and Mark Friedrichs	Kevin Haley	NOVEMBER 2	Penelope Mitchell	Pam Sommers and Fred Pinkney
OCTOBER 12	Debbie and Peter Friedman	Maureen Jeffreys and Michael Bergsman	NOVEMBER 9	Ned Goddard	Robert Braunohler
OCTOBER 19	Christy and Garth Ross	Michael Petrilli	NOVEMBER 16	David Lyles	Please Volunteer
OCTOBER 26	Ben Robinson	Gordon and Linda Phillips	NOVEMBER 23	Meg Beuchert Jones	Please Volunteer
			NOVEMBER 30	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer

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, photographs, drawings—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.