



The Sycamore Islander

OCTOBER 2014 | VOLUME 93 NUMBER 10

President's Letter

The next regular meeting of the club will be at 8:00 p.m., Wednesday, October 8, on the Island

September has been a busy month on the Island, starting with the Regatta on September 1, mentioned in last month's letter. The Good Timers (formerly "old timers") pot luck lunch was held September 24. This lunch is open to anyone who can get away for a week-day lunch and is turning into a great Island event. This year, participants were encouraged to bring favorite poems or stories. Jane Winer movingly read "The Cremation of Sam McGee" and Lucky Marmon rendered ditties with ukulele accompaniment among other offerings. David Winer did not perform this year, but provided valuable service by fine tuning our magnificent tree swing and testing it.

And then the DANCE PARTY! Saturday, September 27, the Island was uncharacteristically ROCKING. Thanks to Jane Winer, Robin Richter, and a host of other volunteers, we had a real live rocking party with pizza supplied by the club and wonderful side dishes brought by members. A seriously good live band that had members and guests prancing and dancing under tasteful fall decorations with all the lemonade and non-alcoholic punch you could drink. And you should have seen caretaker Joe Hage wearing a dark sharkskin-looking jacket that made him almost unrecognizable.

One of the great bits of Island lore is the story of the group of members who used to commute to their jobs at CIA Langley headquarters in Sycamore Island canoes. The CIA is across the river at a slight upstream

angle, and in the 1980s it was apparently a quicker and nicer way to get to work than by car. Honorary member Bob Sinclair wrote about this "canoe pool" in 1984 for the CIA newsletter which was promptly classified. (The story was also told in *The Islander*.) Other Islanders involved were Larry Heilman, Penny Doolittle, and the late John Thompson. Via the Freedom of Information Act, the Sinclair "document" was recently declassified, making news all over the internet. See a good story in "Canoe & Kayak" magazine, available at canoekayak.com/canoe/declassified-cias-canoe-pool/. Slate Magazine also ran the story. See slate.com/blogs/the_vault/2014/09/19/history_of_the_cia_essay_on_the_agency_s_canoe_commute_club.html

Penny Doolittle recently told me about the time she and Sinclair crossed the frozen river on foot, dragging a canoe behind them just in case. The trail up to Langley has grown over and new security makes visiting the CIA via canoe less viable today.

BILL MARMON
President



BILL MARMON

Minutes for the September 10th Meeting

Attendees: Meghan Mullan, Lucky Marmon, Star Mitchel, Robin Richter, Bill Marmon, Jim Drew, David Winer, Sherry Fizdale, Ned Goddard, Gerry Barton, Jane Winer, Drew Walsh, Bill Eichbaum

President Bill Marmon called the meeting on the Island to order. The August, 2014 Minutes were approved unanimously.

Communications: None

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Ned Goddard said that there were no new issues. Club bills were paid up to date. Expenditures are slightly over budget. He requested that heads of committees advise him of any upcoming expenses.

Captain's Report: Captain Drew Walsh reported that he picked up two maps that were left by the speaker from the U.S. Geological Survey. He plans to frame and hang them. USGS has delayed the installation of the measuring devices proposed earlier to the club because of budget considerations. To access these devices on Rupert's, the GS staff also requires a rowboat. Drew plans to replace the safety stations on the dock.

The Work Fest is Sunday, November 16.

Substitute Caretaker's Report: Jody and Bobby Benjamin sent a report acknowledging the following for their substitute caretaking: Debby and Bob Cooper, Topaz Terry and Melanie Clark, Jody and Bobby Benjamin, Meredith Griggs and Madeleine Carter (Graham), Avi Garbow and Jack Sanders.

Membership Committee Report: None

Nominating Committee Report: Bill Marmon reported that the committee is well along in putting together a slate of officers to serve next year. He hopes to have all slots filled by the next meeting.

Old Business: Lucky Marmon reminded everyone of the up-and-coming Old Timers/Good Timers Potluck to be held Wednesday, September. 24.

New Business: Wait list member Meghan Mullan came to the meeting to request permission for a camping

party on the Island for two nights, October 3–4. Attendees passed a motion granting her request. She was urged to contact Jonathan Zimmerman to familiarize herself with the dos and don'ts for camping parties on the Island.

The Sycamore Island Fall Dance is scheduled for September 27 at 6:00 pm. Jane Winer, who is heading up this event, requested volunteers to help with the planning. Wait list member Robin Richter volunteered to decorate the club. Lucky Marmon agreed to order and pick up the pizzas and to go with Jane to Costco to purchase cutlery and paper plates and napkins. Ned Goddard, Tryon Wells, and Joe Hage are scheduled to coordinate logistics with the band. B.G and The Mojos Band, who play at Sala Thai and Glen Echo, will keep us on our feet dancing. Everyone was encouraged to bring ice, appetizers, desserts, or salad. Drew Walsh volunteered to man the ferry.

During the entire meeting, attendees devoured fabulous cookies baked by Jane Winer.

The next meeting will be held on the Island on Wednesday, October 8.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
LUCKY MARMON
Co-Recording Secretary

Paddling through the Grand Canyon

In August, we fulfilled a dream of many years by doing a raft trip through the Grand Canyon. We had been to the Canyon before, but this time we wanted to experience "the cathedral without a roof" on its ground floor, the Colorado River.

We chose an outfitter that offered a "row/paddle" trip. Our fleet consisted of six rafts. Five were "row rigs," loaded with gear, food and up to five passengers. The guide sat up top and propelled the raft with long oars. The sixth raft was the "paddle raft." It was much smaller and carried eight people plus a guide in the back, all using canoe paddles.

We signed up for this trip because we wanted the opportunity to paddle from time to time. Being a passenger in a "row rig" was fine, but it was a passive experience. The paddle raft offered a more intense and



Our first campsite

active experience because, while the guide steered the raft and chose the best path through the rapids, the raft could get safely through the rapids only if the paddlers did their job.

As it turned out, we were in the paddle raft for nearly the entire time. Not only that, but we were usually up front in the bow, because our guide saw that we were good at setting a strong and steady paddling tempo for the other paddlers and that we stayed “on task” in the big rapids. So, we got more of an intense experience than we had anticipated!

Like all raft trips, we began at Lee’s Ferry, which is the last place to gain access to the river before the Canyon walls rise up. We were committed to the entire trip, which was eleven days and 187 river miles. But it’s possible to do a partial trip. At Phantom Ranch, seven of our party left us and hiked up to the South Rim, and seven more, including our son David, hiked down from the Rim. David quickly joined us in the paddle raft and ended up as one of the primary bow paddlers.

Our guides steered us through many rapids, small and large, with the only mishap being that the guide-in-training flipped the gear raft (with no passengers) in Crystal Rapid, the second biggest rapid of our trip, losing only a few of our chairs.

Not only were our guides skilled boatmen, but great cooks and entertainers. They entertained us with stories of the John Wesley Powell’s exploration of the Canyon, the native American cultures, descriptions of the geologic forces that created the Canyon and its beautiful colors, and fed us very well. And after a tasty

dinner, we fell asleep watching for shooting stars.

This was a truly transcendent experience, everything we had hoped for. We were enveloped by the Canyon walls, rising up in layers with some of the oldest exposed rock on the face of the earth. The Colorado River in the Canyon is the most powerful and thrilling whitewater trip in North America. And we had several hikes up side canyons, where we found creeks of clear water jetting out of the cliff walls and creating natural swimming pools.

You should go! You really should.

ANN MARIE AND JOHN CUNNINGHAM

Dance Party a Success

50 + Islanders and guests attended the “Fall Colors” Dance/Concert on Saturday, September 27, in the restored Great Hall of the clubhouse and danced to the music of BG and the Mojo Hands. Food and drink was provided by Islanders and guests, with an assist from Vace’s, all of it delicious. The late summer night glowed, the river turned to silver, and the sky turned red against the silhouette of Virginia palisades. We harkened to the blues/jazz beat, danced, took breaks, mixed it up—and went back for more.

Flowers were arranged by Star Mitchell in jugs decorated by Rodolfo Castro and daughter Portia Castro-Catalone. Special thanks to those pressed into service, above and beyond ferry duties, Kevin Haley, and Madeleine Carter. To others who helped—a lot: Gerry Barton, Drew Walsh, Jim Drew, John Butler, Ned Goddard, Lucky and Bill Marmon, Joe Hage, Sherry Fizdale, Dave Winer, Tryon Wells, and others who know who you are—thank you! To the angels of the evening who kept the ball rolling because they wanted to and knew how: Linda Phillips and Cecily Abram, we, Robin Richter and Jane Winer—co-conspirators—send hugs as well!

Ned Goddard reminds: . . . if you all have expenditures to be reimbursed, please send me a note with the amount requested, receipt of expenditure, and address to send the check to, and I’ll process ASAP.

JANE WINER

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 2014					
OCTOBER	10 A.M.–2 P.M	2 P.M.–DUSK	NOVEMBER	10 A.M.–2 P.M.	2 P.M.–DUSK
OCTOBER 4	Gordon and Linda Phillips	Mike Petrilli	NOVEMBER 1	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
OCTOBER 11	Robin Richter	Norman and Nancy Metzger	NOVEMBER 8	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
OCTOBER 18	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer	NOVEMBER 15	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
OCTOBER 25	Please Volunteer	Nancy Shute and Roman Kulbashny	NOVEMBER 22	Please Volunteer	Please Volunteer
			NOVEMBER 29	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 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.

Masthead: filming of the documentary "Towpath Joe." Photo by Robin Richter