



The Sycamore Islander

DECEMBER 2014 | VOLUME 93 NUMBER 12

President's Letter

As I sit down to write my last President's Letter for *The Islander*, I have a swirl of feelings. I am proud, honored, and grateful to have served as President for the past two years. As we all know, Sycamore Island is a special place—a very special place. The President is rewarded and challenged to feel the specialness more intensely. The wonderful strengths of the club spring out as never before. But the fragility of our improbable anachronism is also exposed.

Gaining membership is, paradoxically, the most difficult of any club in Washington, without a trace of class barrier or conventional fraternity-style selectivity. Then there is the too-good-to-be-true location—a sylvan sanctuary, 10 minutes from the White House, in the middle of the Potomac River, accessible only over a steep and rocky path to a hand-drawn ferry from the 19th century. Ownership of the Island itself is held by the club, in grandfathered fee simple deed in the middle of national park. Can all this be real?

The dedication and loyalty of zealot members make it real. The excellence of the lone caretaker, who loves the Island and the river, and who, improbably, actually lives on the Island, makes it real. The shared delight in the chaotic individualistic traditions make it real and precious. But fragile. The regular threat of flooding. The realistic fear of fire. A precarious financial structure. And the lurking demon of some other calamity that forces the real world to look at our club and say—hey, you are too different and too special to be allowed to survive.

I cherish my two years as president just as I will cherish my continuing active membership. And I am happy to say the club is in good hands going into 2015—financially sound and led by outstanding officers and supervisors.

I hope to see all at the Holiday party and December meeting on Wednesday, December 10, at 8 p.m. at the home of John and Diane Noble, 7024 Arandale Road, Bethesda. Bring drinks or tasty dish to share.

BILL MARMON
President

Minutes for the November 12 Meeting

Attendees: Ned Goddard, John Noble, Gerry Barton, Rodolf Castro, Jim Drew, Dave Winer, Geoff Holdridge, Tryon Wells, Karen Possner, Drew Walsh, Sherry Fizdale, Lucky Marmon

Webmaster Tryon Wells, standing in for club President Bill Marmon, called the meeting to order. Attendees introduced themselves.

Minutes: The October Minutes were approved unanimously.

Communications: Tryon reports that the monthly *Islander* will henceforth be distributed only by email.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Nick Goddard presented the 2015 draft budget to be distributed at the club's December meeting. Ned reported that projected expenditures through the end of December 2014 are expected to exceed the budgeted amount of \$85,086 by 14%, for a total of \$96,589. The club's reserve of \$84,000 allowed for some leeway in spending on additional safety equipment, Officers and Directors insurance, painting, roof and gutter repairs, and various member-requested capital expense items. An expected credit of \$3,400 from Montgomery County for solid waste removal as well as a "bump" from the every-other-year membership lottery is estimated to close the gap between budget and actual expenditure.

The club's 2015 draft budget, which is adjusted to inflation (taken from Consumer Price Index of 1.6% as of October 2014), reflects increases in fixed operational costs similar to past years with greater increases in the variable categories, such as facilities and social budget. The total amount budgeted for 2015 is \$89,409, an increase of 5% over 2014. The club will continue to have the same pressures to maintain facilities, replace equipment, and fund new projects. In light of a projected budget shortfall, Ned is recommending an increase in member dues of 5 percent.

The 2015 budget is submitted and voted upon by the membership at the December meeting

Captain's Report: Captain Drew Walsh presented a proposal for facilities maintenance, new projects, and additional equipment for 2015 in the amount of \$17,305. This proposal is several thousand dollars over

what had been allotted in these categories in the Treasurer's budget. Drew recommended that club dues be increased by 10% instead of 5%. He also suggested that money could be raised through the purchase of wait list passes.

Members recommended that new projects and equipment purchases be prioritized. Some can be postponed to 2016; others can be addressed on an individual basis next year. Emergencies can be covered by the club's Reserve Fund.

A straw vote was taken favoring a 5% increase in membership dues.

Drew reminded everyone to attend the Fall Work Fest on Sunday, Nov. 16th and asked for volunteers to head up various projects.

Relief Caretakers' Report: Jodi and Bobby Benjamin reported that the following members and wait list members served as relief caretakers over the past month: Robin Richter, Norman and Nancy Metzger, John Cunningham, Garret Rasmussen, Nancy Shute and Roman Kulbashny, Meredith Griggs, Robert Braunchler, John Lord, and Madeleine Carter (Graham). Jodi and Bobby thanked all of them for keeping the ferry running.

The Holiday party and December meeting will be held at the home of John and Diane Noble, 7024 Arandale Road, Bethesda, MD 20815. Important: Please bring food and drink to share. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
LUCKY MARMON
Co-Recording Secretary

Come to the
SYCAMORE ISLAND
Holiday Party

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10TH
8:00 P.M.

at the home of
JOHM and DIANE NOBLE
7024 ARANDALE, BETHESDA

Notes from the Island

I just wanted to thank the club and all of its members for yet another great year on Sycamore Island. Being the caretaker of such an awesome club is a joy and a privilege and I really appreciate my position as the one to take care of the Island.

Weatherwise, it's been superb, and I can't remember a year with so many mild days.

All of this nice weather and low water have made for a rather busy year. It has been fun seeing all of the old regular members and getting to know some of the new members, not to mention all the cute little kids.

The river has been nice and low as well, for the most part anyway. We did have one big flood back in May and I rushed back to the Island from my vacation in time to witness my second highest flood since moving here over 12 years ago. Actually, it was the second highest flood since 1996.

We are continuing to improve the club and this year's workfests were very productive. We even have a new, state-of-the-art rope swing!

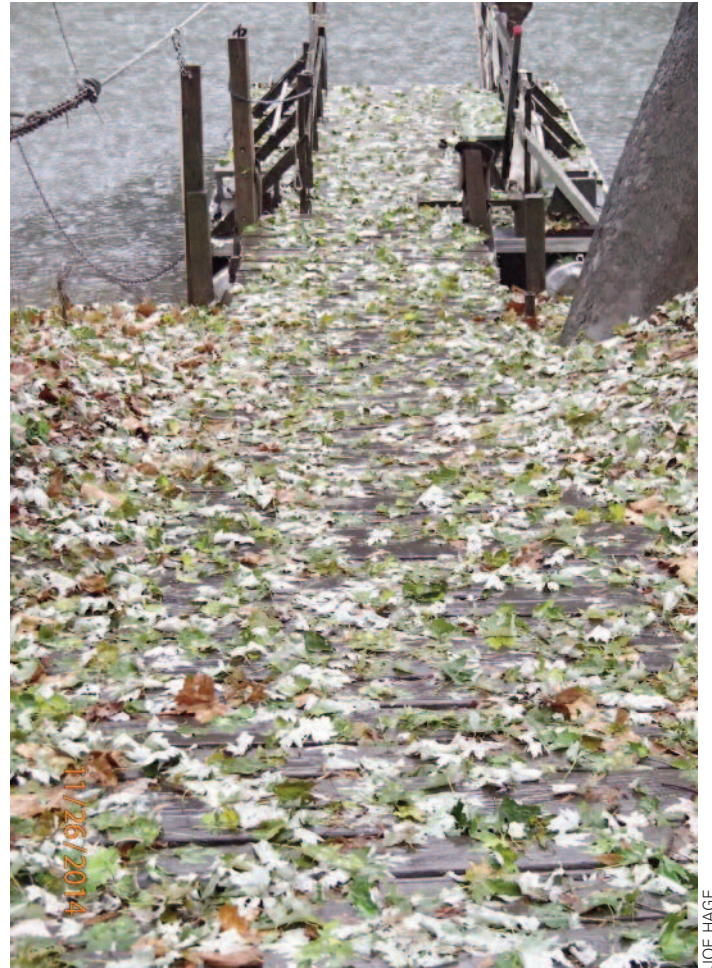
The annual dance was a big hit and I think it was a great way to get the Islanders together.

One of the best things about being here on the Island is that it has allowed me to become an advocate for the river and this past year was the best yet. Since moving here to the Island one of my missions has been to raise awareness about the Potomac River.

Over the past few years I have worked with various conservation groups and embarked on long river journeys in an attempt to make people realize what a great resource the river is and also to show that it is constantly under threat.

This past year was no exception and we had our most successful river sojourn yet. Mary Kearney (best girlfriend ever) and I reached out to the C&O Canal Trust and they were thrilled to have us blog about our trip and to promote the C&O Canal National Historic Park (canalbycanoe.com). I think that our float trip from Cumberland to Georgetown was a great way to get people to start thinking and talking about the river.

The most exciting event to happen this year was the filming of a new documentary about my work here as caretaker and my work as a river advocate. *Towpath Joe*, coming soon to a theater near you. <http://vimeo.com/93913162>



Thank you again for this opportunity, Mary and I plan to do many more river trips and we hope you will all join us in our attempt to preserve the Potomac River. I feel proud to be the personification of the mission of The Sycamore Island Canoe Club: *dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of the Potomac River.*

JOE HAGE
Caretaker

The Sycamore Islander is the monthly newsletter of the Montgomery Sycamore Island Club. *The Islander* is published before the second Wednesday of the month in advance of the monthly meeting. 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 January issue is December 29.



DAVID WINER

Tove Elfstrom and Tryon Wells working on the shop windows.



BILL MARMON

Crew hauling the boat deck on to dry land



JANE WINER

Working on the firewood shed are (L to R) Rodolfo Castro, Steve Newman, and Dave Winer

workfest

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

Saturday Relief Caretakers December 2014/January 2015			
DECEMBER	11 A.M.–SUNSET	JANUARY	11 A.M.–SUNSET
DECEMBER 6	Penelope Mitchell	JANUARY 3	Please Volunteer
DECEMBER 13	Richard and Jan Pappalardo	JANUARY 10	Please Volunteer
DECEMBER 20	Witt and Annie Farquhar	JANUARY 17	Please Volunteer
DECEMBER 27	Meredith Griggs	JANUARY 24	Please Volunteer
		JANUARY 31	Please Volunteer