



The Sycamore Islander

JULY 2015 | VOLUME 94 NUMBER 7

Topics for the July Meeting

June's monthly meeting opened up several topics around membership and club rules (see membership description essay inside). Members interested in these issues should come to the next meeting on July 8th where we will decide if any changes are in order.

July meeting Agenda

1. Discuss membership issues and club rules
2. Discuss allowing a local magazine to include Sycamore Island Club in a story about islands in the Potomac River.

Minutes for the June 10th Meeting

Attendees: Lucky Marmon, Jared Farber, John Noble, Vicki Judson, Drew Walsh, Alison Levine, Fred Pinkney, Sherry Pettie Fizedale, Donna Messersmith Jones, Jane Winer, Jody Benjamin, Marianne Ross, Jim Drew, Tryon Wells, Dave Winer, Bill Marmon, Ned Goddard, Star Mitchell, Gerry Barton

It was a glorious, sunny evening. Several members came early to completely the arduous task of hauling wood from the old dock up to the canal and loading into Drew Walsh's truck. Others picnicked leisurely. Larry Heilman, attached to the red safety tube, swam across the river and back.

President Tryon Wells called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m.

Minutes: The April Minutes were approved unanimously.

Communications: None

Captain's Report: Captain Drew Walsh reported via Tryon Wells that the new canoe dock is up and operating. The famed "Geezer Pole"—so dearly loved by all—is installed, but still a bit wobbly. "It will be stabilized," said Geezer Pole Officianado David Winer. The swim dock and float are ready also except for painting. John Noble saluted Drew Walsh for his hard work on all projects.

Membership Report: Membership Chairman John Noble reported that all dues have been collected with the exception of those from three new members. The waiting list will be reduced from 60 to 45. The next lottery for spots on that waiting list will be April, 2016. Application for the lottery will be available online in January.

The club currently has 162 regular members, 76 senior members, 20 inactive members, 16 honorary members, and 45 on the waiting list. None of those on the waiting list are from the old waiting list.

President Tryon Wells noted that in the event that the number of person that move from the waiting list to membership each year is below what we originally predicted, we can make an adjustment of the number of persons added to the waiting list through the lottery.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Ned Goddard reported that the club's financial situation was similar to the way it was last year at this time. It is "on track." As he pointed out at the last meeting, the \$13,000 allotted for variable expenses, such as repairs and refurbishing, is close to being spent. Hopefully, we will not have any catastrophic problems that would require additional funding. Next year, when the club adds new members, there will be additional revenues. Like our former Treasurer Alan Gelb, Ned wants to keep a full year's budget in the club reserve account.

Relief Caretaker's Report: Thanks to the following members who served recently as relief caretakers: Lisa Hemmer, Linda Greer, Susan Dunham, Dan Schember, Peter and Debra Friedmann, Lynda and Gary Slayen,

Kathy Kelley, Vicki Judson, Sue and Greg Super, Avi Garbow (Anderson), Meryl Silverman, Mark Carlin, Leslie and Casey Johnson, Abigail Wiebenson, Sherry Pettie Fizdale

Relief Caretaker Supervisor Jody Benjamin said that there was a problem with adult children of club member using the club, bringing guests to the club and having parties. Some of them do not realize that once they leave home, usually after college, that they are no longer members.

Caretaker Joe Hage said that it wasn't uncommon for adult children of members to visit the Island, since many of them have memories of great times there in their youth. He deals with the issue by letting them stay that one time, but reminds them that they are no longer members. They can come only as guests of their parent or of another member. They should be encouraged to enter the membership lottery in April.

Most members at the meeting felt that the real problem was members' failure to acquaint themselves and their children with the basic rules, tenets, and privileges of club membership.

It was suggested that President Tryon Wells draft a "summary" of must-know rules around membership for next month's *Islander* and also post it on the club website for quick and easy reference. The first "must-know" item are the club's rules, which are contained in full, in the Bylaws and Standing Rules, which have been on the website for years.

It was suggested that a list of members be kept on the ferry. The ferry operator should introduce herself to passengers and ask for their names.

Another suggestion was to have a set age cut-off at, say 22, rather than two different ones—currently 18 for adult children who have moved out, and none for adult children still living at home.

It is members' responsibility to know the rules and make sure their children know the rules.

Old Business: David Winer, who presented his wonderful Sycamore Island Club coffee mugs at the last meeting, announced that the price of the mugs would be \$6.00/each. Persons who took home mugs at the last meeting should send checks to Ned Goddard, 6717 79th Street, Cabin John, MD 20818. No profit will be made on the sale of the mugs. Members will be able to buy them at meetings, parties, the Regatta, and clean-ups.

Star Mitchell reported that the Down River Race



went well. Vicki Judson and John Stapko volunteered as “Safeties.”

New Business: Joe Hage informed us that the second toilet in the ladies rest room was not broken, but simply turned off. The two toilets will be functional when there are larger groups of people on the Island. Members approved a large party request made by Vickie Judson for Sunday, August 9th. A large party request made by Donna Messersmith Jones for July 19th for 25 people was also approved.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 8th, on the Island. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
LUCKY MARMON
Co-Recording Secretary

Sycamore Membership

At the club’s monthly meeting in June, several members spoke about adult children of members and their (mis)use of the Island, and in a few cases, abuse of the Island. In one instance, a 30-year-old child of a member hosted a party without permission, for 20 friends.

Members at the meeting took pains to hold harmless these incidents and felt that lack of solid education on the basic rules, tenets and privileges of club membership was the real culprit. It was felt that membership should be better described and be published in this month’s *Islander*.

Definition of a Member, From By Law 13

“A member may be a single person, a couple, or a family living under the same roof.

Each club member so defined is entitled to one vote.”

This is the closest effort in the By Laws to define a member but this definition is mostly about which members are able to vote and which ones may not. A (1) single person” is allowed a single vote, (2) a couple is allowed a single vote [if they cannot agree they will cancel each other out], and (3) a family is allowed a single vote [but only those who live under the same roof”]. The implication being that those adult children of members who have MOVED OUT of the family home are no longer members, and must seek membership by their own rights.

I actually remember this debate since the “under one roof” language was adopted in the 1970s when similar events were happening to an earlier generation of Islanders. If I remember correctly the “under one roof” description was intended as a compromise to those families who had children in college, and whose children would return each summer and would visit the Island. But, it was assumed, when they finished college, they would begin their own separate lives, and get their own separate memberships.

In that time, most college students were striving to leave “the nest” as soon as they could, so no one in the club considered that the “under one roof” definition didn’t neatly solve the “adult children of members using the Island” problem. Until now.

Two things have changed. (1) The negative social stigma attached to living with one’s parents after legal adulthood, has moderated, and (2) the club has adopted a lottery system to admit new members.

Perversely, Sycamore’s new club admission policies incentivize adult children of members to stay at home and continue to use the club indefinitely.

It may be time to revisit the definition of club membership.

TRYON WELLS
President

Notes from the Island

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.6 Water Temperature: 80
That was some pretty hard rain yesterday and, not surprisingly, the river is going up. It’s predicted to shoot up real fast today and reach 4 feet on Thursday. Most of the water we’re getting is coming from the Monacacy River, the biggest Potomac tributary in Maryland, so it will pass by quickly and our river will start to go down on Friday. I guess that they got a lot more rain in the upper county yesterday because Seneca Creek and Bennett Creek were also flooded today.

Friday, June 5, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.7 Water Temperature: 68
Lots of rain and no sunshine has made the river temperature plummet to below 70 degrees.

It’s baby season on the Island, baby geese, baby songbirds and now two new baby squirrels on the Island. I know that these are new squirrels because they definitely don’t have the super-shy characteristics that my other secret squirrels have.

I’m not expecting a lot of business today. It’s too cold for swimming and the river is too muddy for bass fishing. Lets hope that the weather improves for the busy weekend ahead.

Wednesday, June 10, 2015



Zebra Swallowtail on blue balloons

JOE HAGE



JOE HAGE

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.5 Water Temperature: 76

It was a fun surprise to see my picture in this Sunday's paper (Page E22). Actually, it was a picture of my whole band promoting the documentary, *Towpath Joe*, very cool.

Wednesday, June 24, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.3 Water Temperature: 82

It's nice and cool this morning with low humidity. What a nice change from the muggy summer weather that we had to endure yesterday. They say that this has been one of the wettest Junes on record, and the muddy brown river seems to concur.

The muddy water hasn't stopped the swimmers from seeking out a way to beat the heat but the high water makes it like swimming on a treadmill. The fishermen can still catch catfish in this muddy river, but the bass fishing has been seriously affected by these daily rains. The heavy rains are causing some damaging erosion on the Island too but the cool thing about that is, as the dirt washes away I'm finding more and more native Indian artifacts. No full arrowheads or anything but lots of stone flakes, remnants of a lost culture and a lost craft.

The rope swing broke. Thankfully no one was seriously hurt when it snapped. Apparently Scott Bertaut was standing on it when it went, and he only suffered some rope burns on his hands. You can bet that Dave Winer will find the flaws and get that rope swing back in operation before you know it.

Our marvelous mulberry tree is such a joy in early

summer as it bears its tasty treats. The berries on this tree seem exceptionally sweet and this year we even made a mulberry pie. The other great thing about this tree is that it attracts wildlife and brings it in close where we can see it. It's especially nice when an oriole comes down from the treetops to have a snack. I'm pretty sure that not one berry was wasted. If the berries fall to the ground, the geese with their offspring are there to quickly pluck them up. The berries are so tempting that even my secret squirrels will risk being seen in order to steal a berry or two.

Speaking of squirrels, it's cool to think that there are a bunch of flying squirrels on the Island. I've only seen one once but in the evening I can hear them squeaking up in the canopy.

I scrubbed the boardwalk leading from the ferry. The boards were covered in slim and were getting very slippery when they got wet. I hit them with some bleach cleaner and they are a lot safer now. The cleaner worked so well that I decided to use it on the brick walkways as well.

I had to add a new bumper to the mainland ferry landing and I'll have to add some padding to the ferry to keep it from chewing up the wood over there. I also repaired the kayak rack and put new thwart on a couple of canoes. And I cut grass, a lot of grass. Wet weather means that everything is growing like mad and I spend my time beating back the jungle.

I repaired one of the old canoe carts. Not the old John Matthews one but the other one with the fat tires. It has been a couple of years since we had a working cart and I was holding out, hoping that one of the members would tackle this project, but I found I needed a cart and could wait no more. Plus, without a cart some members just can't move their boats.

Thursday, June 25, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.0 Water Temperature: 82

First, I need to tell you that dear our friend and fellow club member, Marianne Ross, has broken her back and is at home in a soft body cast. I don't have all the details, but her spirits seem to be up. Poor Marianne, she loves coming to the Island so much and now she is stuck at home. We wish you a speedy recovery Marianne!

Yesterday, I told you that the rope swing had broken but I forgot to mention that the blue hammock has also given up the ghost. It had a nice long run; my sis-



ter gave me that hammock for my 41st birthday, 12 years ago! I didn't realize just how much this hammock was appreciated until someone came down yesterday, just to rest in the hammock. Sorry Mark.

I want to thank Mary Kearney for fixing the screens in the screen porch. Isn't it nice to have someone as awesome as Mary helping out around the Island?

I finally put up the River Water Slide today, all it took was for one cute little girl to ask me if we were going to put up the slide this year. I'm such a softy, I put the slide up that minute, and then cleaned and waxed it. The wax was Dave Winer's idea, and the kids loved it!

The Park Service cut the grass along the canal yester-

day. That's a good thing I guess, but the sad and funny part was that they went crazy with the weed whacker and totally demolished the spice bush that we were cultivating there. We had planted it on the river bank by the steps to help prevent erosion, but it's gone now.

We got the power for the trail lights working. Once the GFI breaker was reinstalled the correct way, the lights went right on. Now we can safely operate the lights up the hill, knowing that they are on a safe GFI breaker.

Friday, June 26, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.0 Water Temperature: 82

They must be expecting a heck of a lot of rain for tomorrow. They predict the river to shoot up to 7.5 feet on Monday! I suppose the Island will not be too busy tomorrow with that kind of rain. When will all this crazy rain stop?

Sunday, June 28, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 5.5 Water Temperature: 72

Well the rain and the downpours were just as bad as they had predicted and the river is cranking up. The muddy brown water is creeping onto the Island and it looks like the ferry will be closed for the rest of the month. Judging by the predictions, we'll be lucky if we can open the ferry for the Fourth of July. I put the ferry into flood mode and I pulled the docks in best that I could. It's incredible just how much debris gets collected at the ferry when it's broadside to the current.

One of the new geese is suffering a broken leg. The poor thing can't walk and when it tries to, it falls flat on it's face. She's slowly learning to hop but I hope she learns to fly soon or she could be in trouble. I thought of making a pet out of the young goose but that thought did not last long.

Monday, June 29, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 6.5 Water Temperature: 72

If you were ever wondering if I pay attention to what the river is doing, you can be sure that I'm paying attention. I'm so in tune with the local hydrology that I even drove out to Frederick County yesterday to see the Monocacy reach its crest of 15.5 feet. While out there we scouted Bennett and Seneca Creeks to watch them fall back into their respective banks. Before I moved out here to the river's edge, I was barely aware of even the most major floods, but now the Potomac river watershed is always in the back of my mind.

JOE HAGE
Caretaker



Large Parties Scheduled



July 10, afternoon, Alissa Stern, 30 guests

July 11, noon-4, Bettina Stern, 12 guests

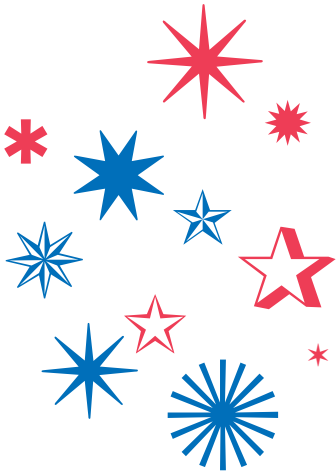
July 19, 1-6, Donna Messermith Jones, 20 guests

The Sycamore Islander

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BRUCE BEEHLER

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. Text and graphics may be sent as email attachments to: Carol Beehler, cbeehler@comcast.net. The deadline for inclusion in the August issue is July 31.