



The Sycamore Islander

NOVEMBER 2015 | VOLUME 94 NUMBER 11

Minutes for the October 14th Meeting

Attendees: Ned Goddard, Drew Walsh, Tryon Wells, Joe Hage, David Winer, Robin Richter, Jerry Barton, Sherrie Fizdale, Vicky Judson, and Ann Marie Cunningham.

Despite lacking a quorum and being unable to conduct any formal business, the members who gathered on the Island had a lively discussion on several matters of interest.

The club is in need of a Deputy Captain. Drew Walsh said that Rodolfo Castro has been very active in helping with many projects and is willing to be the deputy, but he is on the waiting list. Rodolfo is likely to become a member soon after vacancies arise in the

coming year. There was a discussion about whether he should be admitted as a service member in order to fulfill the role of Deputy Captain. Drew will discuss the matter with Rodolfo again and they will decide whether to pursue the service membership idea.

Drew Walsh described a conversation he had with the daughter of our former captain and honorary member, John Matthews, in which she asked if her mother Barbara could become an honorary member so that she could visit the place that was so special and important to them. It was felt that Barbara became an honorary member at the same time as John did, but that she certainly is eligible to become one in her own right due to her long-term membership in the club.

Ned Goddard served as caretaker during Joe Hage's

recent vacation. During that time, Ned performed a variety of safety (motion sensor lights), clean up (sweep and mop clubhouse floors, toilet hard water stain removal), and maintenance (new fan, LED light-bulb replacement, outdoor lighting) items, in addition to the caretaker's regular duties. He thoroughly enjoyed the beauty in the early morning and at night, and enjoyed spending a longer time in such a special place.

Dave Winer has designed an improved canoe cart, having put a great deal of thought into the project. Our possible new Deputy Captain Rodolfo and his daughter were helpful to Dave. Dave also made a new foam pad and table cloth for the pool table to protect the surface and hide a burned patch.

Steve Newman has designed a prototype canoe dock bumper that will be installed to one side. It will make it easy to transition from the dock to a canoe.

Robin Richter enjoyed arranging the Fall Party that was attended by 63 people. Her team of good people put in a lot of work to pull it off. The only complaint was that it ended too early. Robin would like to see other events such as paddleboarding, fishing, painting, and nature seminars.

Lynda Slayen has offered to host the annual meeting/holiday party or other winter meetings. Vicki Judson also offered her home for winter meetings.

Fond memories of the solstice parties were shared, a tradition that was started by Phyllis Talliaferro, the wife of former caretaker Doc Talliaferro.

Treasurer Ned Goddard has requested all officers and supervisors to provide him with budget requests for the coming year. He also discussed some changes he has made from manual to electronic banking and budgeting. This was necessary to avoid fines since both federal and state governments have mandated electronic reporting. It may also lead to an ability to pay annual dues electronically. Ned said that he has a goal of increasing the insurance on the building by \$30,000 each year because he feels that the current level is inadequate.

Drew responded to Ned's request for input to the budget, indicating that he wants to build into the annual budget a fund to be used to limit erosion on the upper part of the Island.

Jerry Barton raised a concern about the possibility of hypothermia in case of an accident when boating in cold water. He will post something on a bulletin board.

During the upcoming fall work day on Sunday,

November 15, in addition to the usual raking and taking the floats out of the river, we will need help to cut wood for the stoves.

Ann Marie Cunningham proposed an amendment to the bylaws to bring them in line with standing practice. Senior members and honorary members have been voting since those membership categories were created, and the bylaws do specify that honorary members can vote. She proposes an amendment to section 18 to read, "A Senior Member shall be entitled to use of the club facilities as specified in the Standing Rules, and one vote in accordance with section 13." This will be discussed at the next meeting on November 11.

And, last, but definitely far from least, Jody Benjamin reported by email that Sandra Young and Raj Purohit, Eric Simpson, Rachel Rudy and Nat Reid, Robin and Florian Kogelnick, Kathy Kelley, Phoebe Hamill, Barry Lynn and Anya Schoolman, Tanya and Geoffrey Cook, and Vicki Judson enjoyed a stint at the helm of our ferry so that Joe could enjoy his day off. Also, Robin and Florian Kogelnick were flooded out of their opportunity due to weather. We are very grateful to all of them.

Respectfully submitted,
ANN MARIE CUNNINGHAM
Co-Recording Secretary

**DON'T FORGET
TO COME TO THE**

WORKFEST



Sunday, November 15, 9:00 a.m.

Fall Island Party 2015

75-plus Islanders and guests attended the party hosted by Robin Richter and Lynda Slayen on Saturday, September 26th, in the clubhouse hall. People danced, socialized, and ate scrumptious food. Pizza, drinks, and snacks were provided by the club. Members, waitlisters, and guests brought some great salads and side dishes that were served from 6–10. A wonderful time was had by all. Many folks hung out by the fire pit and roasted s'mores. It was a great opportunity to meet other Islanders at this annual event. Beautiful flower arrangements were created by Jane Winer and Starr Mitchell. Special thanks to Ned Goddard, for cleaning and doing prep work in the Hall; Drew Walsh for helping the DJ get to and from the Island, manning the ferry, and running other errands for the party; David Winer for making an awesome cover to protect the pool table where all the food resided; Linda Phillips who helped in the kitchen; and Cecily Abrams and Tryon Wells helped as did some others—you know who you are—thank you. I want to thank Lynda and her wonderful husband Gary and some of their neighbors who were recruited to help set up on Saturday afternoon. They made many trips carrying items to ensure this party was successful and fully stocked.

Lynda and I really appreciate the wonderful e-mail accolades sent by party goers. We would like to see this fall island party continue for years to come. It is a terrific way to get to know other Islanders and cherish this special place. What a great way to bring in the fall.

ROBIN RICHTER

Grand Canyon Raft Adventure

On October 5, Lucky and I emerged from a nine-day raft trip through the awesome magic of the Grand Canyon, a trip that exceeded our already high expectations.

We hiked in via the South Rim's Bright Angel Trail, through 2½ billion years of astounding geology down a vertical decline of 4,000 feet over 7½ miles. Our big packs went by mule, but even with a cool pre-dawn start and small pack, the descent was challenging. Temperature at bottom was 104 degrees by the time we arrived. The canyon is a place of extremes.

At the River our group of 20 stowed our gear into

two dry bags supplied by our high quality outfitter, Arizona Raft Adventure. We piled into five rafts and one modern dory. The dory was modeled on the craft used by James Wesley Powell who made the first trip down this wild river in 1869.

Lucky and I tumbled into a raft captained by veteran boatman Phil Sgamma, from Bozeman, Montana, who told us that we would soon be approaching one of the fiercer rapids on the river, called Horn Creek, rated 10 on the special Colorado River rating system 1–10. You hear the roar of the rapid before you see it, and Lucky and I were sitting up front hanging on for dear life.

Rapids in the deep Colorado River are different from those I had experienced before. In the canyon the danger rarely comes from getting stuck on a rock but from the deep and powerful sucking "holes" that are created by the constriction of the river and the huge waves, which if not encountered straight on can easily flip a raft. Eddies are ferocious in the canyon.

Into the Horn Creek rapid we went, right into the area of greatest turbulence and highest waves. The waves, like ocean breakers crashed over us and, as in the ocean, I felt it was being "boiled" as the raft climbed and plunged—water up my nose and hard solid sheets pounding my body. Then it was over. Phil had taken the raft straight into the rapid, avoiding holes and keeping the raft pointed into the huge waves. We were wet but highly relieved. The rafts are self bailing and can absorb huge quantities of water. (The dory is a different story, even with its battery powered bailing apparatus.)

"Hey diddle diddle—go down the middle." That's how trip leader Derek Spice explained the technique for most rapids. This over simplifies the job considerably since there are sucking holes to avoid and powerful eddies that can grab a raft and sweep it into a hole or dangerously reorient it toward a "sunny side up" capsizes.

Another rafting maxim explained by guide Aaron, "head into the tongue and then point toward the 'C'"—with the tongue being the smooth water going into the fastest part of the rapid and the "C" being the concave part of the shore to keep from being over drawn by the faster water usually flowing on the convex side of the shore.

Having survived Horn Creek rapid, we learned that two more large rapids awaited us that day—Granite Rapid (rated 9) and Hermit Rapid (with a notorious fifth wave), also rated 9.

We got soaked on both rapids although the hot and extremely dry air left us dry in short order.

It had been a long day, and at our campsite we retrieved our gear along with a third bag with sleeping bag and tarp. AZRA also supplied foam mats and tents. Most days we left our tent unopened and slept under the stars and full moon.

A source of much humor—the Groovers—are the adapted ammo cases used to comply with U.S. Park service rules that prohibit any human waste left on land. The “groovers,” are deployed and kept for the duration of the trip for solid waste, with liquid waste dumped into the river. (Plastic cups for nighttime convenience were distributed. Conventional privacy norms were cast aside.

Food at camp was fantastic. Because the river water is cold (constant 50 degrees) fresh food including vegetables, salad, and meat were stored for the whole trip—great steaks the next-to-last night. The river guides were inventive cooks, turning astounding Dutch oven casseroles and other delights. We had ordered beer in advance and treated ourselves to one cold brew every night from a bag hung in the cool water as soon as we reached our camping spot.

The day’s rhythm—coffee call (sounded through a conch shell) at six a.m., breakfast soon thereafter, pack up and deliver our bags, gather around for briefing on the days activities, closed by reading from James Wesley Powell’s diary or some other river legend.

Almost every day we hiked up one of the many canyons and creeks that feed into the Colorado. We frolicked in waterfalls and washed our silt encrusted bodies. (At every campsite the guides filtered river water for drinking and cooking.) We scrambled up huge boulders and walked along narrow ledges where we didn’t dare look down. Several times we swam through smaller rapids. All twenty of us emerged uninjured, although there were plenty of biffs and scrapes.

The Colorado’s two most ferocious rapids are Chrystal and Lava. Both have claimed human lives, although usually when water flow was much higher than the 10–15 cubic feet per second (cfs) we experienced. We ran Chrystal the second day. Anxiety was heightened by a stop to overlook the rapid from a bluff and stories by guides about the transformation of the rapid into a relative terror after a debris flow in 1983 that created a super-dangerous hole.

Our guides were real pros, and we cruised through



with aplomb—almost an anticlimax after the buildup.

Lava rapid, caused by a huge lava flow millions of years ago, also turned out to be a piece of cake for our guides although there were hours of anxiety beforehand.

Everyone took turns rafting with the guides including the with the dory, captained by veteran boatman Bruce Quayle, who had grown up on the river with his boatman father and had run the Canyon at least 180 times. One raft was the paddle raft where an ever-changing group of six paddled under guidance of a guide sitting in the rear.

Rafting the Grand Canyon allows you experience an ever-changing panorama of towering and diverse rock strata, an up close and breath-catching view of how Earth’s crust was formed. It remains wild and isolated and beautiful

We took out at Diamond Creek at mile 225, where a barely accessible gulch permits hearty vehicles to venture. The ruggedness of the takeout guarantees a gradual re-entry into the “real world,” even more gradual for us because our ancient converted school bus broke down half way up the gulch. It was fixed several hours latter with duct tape and raft straps.

Finally to the hotel in Flagstaff and the best hot shower of our lives. Smart phones were cranked up and hundreds of messages flowed. But no one, including me, a certified digital junkie, had any regrets about being off the grid. Quite to the contrary. We remain dazzled by an experience we will treasure, savor, and remember forever.

BILL MARMON

Fall Workfest

In a few Sundays it will be time to get our club ready for winter. The Fall Workfest is on Sunday, November 15th. We get started around 9 a.m. with coffee, donuts, and perfectly grilled turkey bacon (thank you George Mulusky)!

There will be plenty of projects to do all day long so arrive when you can. Lunch from the grill will be provided by the club; please bring your favorite side dish or dessert to add to our feast. If you have an extra rake, chainsaw, or some spare rags to carry down the hill, they will be put to good use.

Below is a list of what we have planned so far. . . let me know if you have something to add.

- Volunteers to run the ferry
 - Strong backs to bring our docks and swim floats in for the winter
 - Turn over existing compost before we add more leaves
 - Rake leaves off the lawn
- Cut up fallen tree trunks and limbs, collect, split and stack firewood, collect kindling
- Set up walls for winter bathroom
 - Wrap young trees with chicken wire to keep the eager beaver away
 - Pick up trash in and around MacArthur Boulevard and the parkway lot, around both Islands, and the club's vicinity within the Park.
 - Clean and organize clubhouse
 - Help out on a few specialty projects

All this work will not get accomplished without your help! This is a great opportunity to break a sweat for the Island, eat delicious food, and enjoy old and establish new friendships.

All wait-list applicants and members are welcome and encouraged to attend. See you on the Island!

DREW WALSH

Notes from the Island

Thursday, October 1, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.8 Water Temperature: 70

We're not sure yet how high the river is going to get but we do know that the river is going to rise so I went

ahead and got ready for the flood, just in case. It's been a while since I had to paddle out into the muddy waters and wrestle with the ropes and docks.

First I shut down the ferry and raised up all the ferry ropes. Technically, it might not be above five feet in the morning tomorrow but I figure no one is coming down here during the deluge anyway.

I pulled the swim float closer to shore and made sure to get all of the cables unsnagged from the river bottom. Most importantly, I put some floatation under the ramp to the plastic canoe dock. I used my new little mini dock under the ramp so now the ramp can float up with the dock as the river rises.

Monday, October 5, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.5 Water Temperature: 70

It looks like we dodged a bullet this time as far as the flooding is concerned. Thankfully, that hurricane went out to sea and we can breath a sigh of relief. There was some rain though, and the river is predicted to go up yet again. I opened the ferry yesterday, but it looks like I will have to close the ferry again this afternoon as the river is not done with its surprises.

Wednesday, October 7, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.8 Water Temperature: 70

River is down, ferry is open.

Friday, October 14, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 4.0 Water Temperature: 65

I tried to get this news in *The Islander* last month—I wanted all club members, past and present, to know that George Loeb died on September 14, 2015. George died after a bout with *C. diff*, an infection he acquired after a heart failure episode.

George was a member of The Sycamore Island Club for over 50 years! He and his wife Marcia and their two boys, Alex and Dan, became members way back in 1964. During those fifty years, George was a huge asset to the club, serving several terms as Club Captain in the early 70's and then several terms as Club President after that. George and his wife Marcia were also instrumental in reviving the long-dead annual Sycamore Island Labor Day Regatta back in the late 90s. George and Marcia also led the Entertainment Committee and George was running the grills and serving up burgers and dogs when I met him at my first Regatta. Sadly, George had spinal and cervical arthritis and in recent

years was unable to come to the Island. I was never very close to George but I feel like I have a connection to him and his family through his canoes that are still here on the Island. Years ago, I bought a C-1 canoe from George's son Dan, and last year I bought George's sailing canoe and sail. He will be missed.

Here is the link to his obituary:
<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/washingtonpost/obituary.aspx?pid=175856396>

Thursday, October 15, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.2 Water Temperature: 65

My little mini dock worked very well as floatation for the canoe ramp and I was able to move the canoe dock through the recent flood waters without a problem.

I met the new Potomac Riverkeeper, Dean Naujoks. He had just completed his 300-mile Potomac River paddle, from Cumberland, Maryland to Point Lookout, Maryland! I was lucky enough to join him for the last twelve miles of his three-week trip and I had a good time paddling the tidal Potomac and getting to know him. He's a great guy and we're lucky to have such an experienced Riverkeeper on our Potomac.

To see the pictures follow this link: https://www.facebook.com/PotomacRiverkeeperNetwork/posts/10153768656309009?notif_t=notify_me_page. I'll ask him if he wants to do a presentation for the club.

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.0 Water Temperature: 56

The river is down and the temperature has plummeted as well. The cool thing is that the water is very clear now and I can see the river bottom under the ferry.

This morning was clear, but yesterday the fog was thick and beautiful, slowly blowing down the river in small clouds. It's such a pretty time of year.

The receding waters have left a rim of mud around the Island which makes it hard to get near the water without getting muddy but it does create a great place to look for animal tracks. I saw the usual raccoon tracks and there were also some fresh deer tracks, which means there may be a deer here right now.

I also saw the tracks of a grey fox! I didn't think that the foxes liked to swim and this would be the first fox tracks that I've seen here when the river wasn't frozen. I'm pretty certain about the tracks because there was also some identifiable scat nearby. It's pretty cool being surrounded by all these wild animals!

Wednesday, October 21, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.0 Water Temperature: 56

I looked up Grey Foxes and apparently they swim and they like being around bodies of water. They can also climb trees! The other thing I learned is that the grey fox is not closely related to the red fox or any of the other canines out there. It is believed that the grey fox is the oldest fox species on earth.

Thursday, October 22, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 2.9 Water Temperature: 60

It's sad that so few members were down here today because it was the most spectacular day to be down on the Island. The air was warm, the breeze was soft, the sky was clear and the trees were ablaze with color.

We sat on the dock and watched the birds and the planes flying by and the minnows swimming below. We wondered at all the amazing insects and the underwater trails, and the tracks in the mud. Then, just before the sun went down, I paddled upstream a ways and watched as the sun's golden light cast its magic across the river landscape and the Island.

Then, to top it all off, I caught my first ever walleye, and it was a fat one! Like I said, a spectacular day.

Monday, October 26, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.0 Water Temperature: 59

I happened to be up before dawn this morning and as I crossed the river on the ferry I saw some very bright stars in the sky. It turns out that the planets Venus, Jupiter, and Mars were forming a planetary trio in the eastern sky. The planetary trio—any grouping of three planets inside a circle having a 5 degree diameter—will be visible until around October 29. Venus, Jupiter and Mars are making up the first planetary trio since May, 2013. We won't see a planetary trio again until January, 2021! Very cool; sometimes it pays off to get up early.

Tuesday, October 27, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.0 Water Temperature: 59

I was up early again this morning. We heard the barking and screeching of the grey fox that's hanging around here. First we heard the other-worldly sounds up at the top of the Island but by the time we were crossing on the ferry the screeching sounds had traveled past the clubhouse and down to the bottom of the Island. We couldn't see anything moving but we heard the fox as it passed very close to the ferry landing. I



JOE HAGE

can't figure why it was making so much noise, usually it's so quiet and stealthy.

Wednesday, October 28, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.0 Water Temperature: 58

I saw the grey fox for the first time. Not the whole fox mind you, just its shining orange eyes in the darkness reflecting the light of my headlamp. I was coming home after dark and as I was crossing on the ferry my light was reflecting off of something down by the canoe dock.

At first I thought it was a reflective sticker on a canoe but then I realized that it was probably our new resident grey fox. I kept my light on it and the eyes never turned away, they just kept shining back at me as I pulled the ferry.

I quickly jumped off the ferry and went to investigate. I lost track of the animal as I walked down to the canoe dock area but saw its eyes flash again before it disappeared toward the bottom of the Island. With my headlamp beaming, I ran down the path past the Frank Davis Grill. There I saw the reflection of a pair of eyes near the bank on the Virginia side of the Island. I headed in that direction and soon I realized that these were a different pair of eyes, much further apart and

reflecting bright white instead of the orange of the fox. I took a few steps closer before I stopped frozen in my tracks. Suddenly I found myself very close to a huge white-tailed buck. I was close enough now that my lamp illuminated the entire beast, not just his eyes and it was a frightening sight. The beams coming from its eyes seemed to be about 8 inches apart. The nostrils seemed to be 4 inches apart and I would have thought it was a big cow except for the 4-foot span of humungous antlers that adorned its head. The frightening image was made even more scary by the fact that those giant antlers were draped with dangling pieces of felt, like Spanish moss hanging from an oak tree. Suddenly I felt very vulnerable and I quickly backed away, hoping that those antlers and hooves wouldn't follow.

Thursday, October 29, 2015

Water Level at Little Falls: 3.0 Water Temperature: 56

Lots of rain but no flooding predicted. The river is supposed to jump up from 3 feet to 4.5 though.

JOE HAGE
Caretaker

The Sycamore Islander

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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.

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 December issue is November 28.

Left: One of the magnificent arrangements made for the fall party. Thanks to Jane Winer and Star Mitchell.

Masthead photo of Great Blue Heron by Joe Hage