

# The Sycamore Islander

November 2019 | Volume 98 Number 11



Photo by local historian Laura Leigh Palmer (a friend of Joe's)

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**November 13 (Wednesday): Monthly Club Meeting**, 8 pm, at the home of Amanda and Erich Cabe, 6701 Tulip Hill Terrace, Bethesda 20816. If lost call: 301-828-5794

**November 10 (Sunday): Fall Work-Fest**, 9 am to 4 pm on the island

**December 8 (Sunday): Island Holiday Band-Fest**, ~1-5pm on the island

John Butler, Entertainment Supervisor, is interested in getting members who play music to perform a few times a year. This will be the first of such events. He has talked with a few people about this and has himself (and band mates) on board. The band fest can also include poems or other spoken words. More information soon. Questions to [john-butler@msn.com](mailto:john-butler@msn.com)

**December 11: Annual Club Meeting and Holiday Party**, 8 pm, at home of Vicki Judson

## Relief Caretakers' Schedule and Online Sign-Up System

To sign-up to be a Relief Caretaker (any Saturday), you can access the "Sign-Up Genius" app from the [SycamoreIsland.org scheduling webpage](http://SycamoreIsland.org/scheduling_webpage) (or by clicking the Relief Caretaker Schedule and Instructions icon on the Club's home page). Click on the link. There are simple instructions. [You can also sign-up by contacting the Relief Caretaker Coordinator, Madeleine Carter, at [madeleinecpcarter@gmail.com](mailto:madeleinecpcarter@gmail.com)]. The app now provides a calendar that indicates the Relief Caretakers that have signed up through November and provides reminders.

**[Since Joe will be away for five days beginning November 11, there are still lots of slots open in November]** Relief Caretakers signed up for the coming month are:

### November 2

10 am to 2 pm: Eric Simpson  
2 pm to dark: Jennifer Urquhart

### November 7

10:30 am to 2 pm: Lauren Brandt  
2 pm to dark: Mark Del Bianco

### November 11

10:30 am to 2 pm: Lisa Hemmer  
2 pm to dark: **Volunteer Needed**

### November 12

10:30 am to 2 pm: **Volunteer Needed**  
2 pm to dark: **Volunteer Needed**

**November 13**

10:30 am to 2 pm: **Volunteer Needed**  
2 pm to dark: **Volunteer Needed**

**November 14**

10:30 am to 2 pm: **Volunteer Needed**  
2 pm to dark: **Volunteer Needed**

**November 15**

10:30 am to 2 pm:  
2 pm to dark: **Volunteer Needed**

**November 16**

10 am to 2 pm: Amanda Cannell-Boone  
2 pm to dark: **Volunteer Needed**

**November 23**

10 am to 2 pm: John Membrino  
2 pm to dark: **Volunteer Needed**

**November 30**

10 am to 2 pm: Meredith Griggs  
2 pm to dark: **Volunteer Needed**

**Thank You to the many volunteers that served as Relief Caretakers during October!!**

**Caretaker Joe Hage’s Father, Richard Hage, Died October 30**

Our condolences to Joe Hage upon the passing, at age 89, of his father. The Club is sending memorial contributions to the two charities mentioned in the obituary and will have a representative at the services. Joe said his father had a stroke in January, was in a nursing facility and then had been cared for at home. Cards can be sent to either Joe Hage, Sycamore Island, 7023 MacArthur Blvd, Bethesda, MD 20816 or email address. His father’s Obituary is on the web at <https://www.collinsfuneralhome.com/hage-richard-e>

**Nominations for 2020 Club Officers and Supervisors**

**Still seeking a volunteer for Relief Caretaker Scheduler. Also, we need advice on our Island insurance policies and would like someone with experience to volunteer. Contact [johnnoble@mac.com](mailto:johnnoble@mac.com).**

The Nominating Committee of John Noble, Bill Marmon and Anne Waidmann make the following recommendations for Sycamore Island Officers and Supervisors for 2020. All recommendations will be presented and acted upon at December’s Annual Club Meeting and Holiday Party.

**OFFICERS**

- President --John Noble
- Vice-President --Madeleine Carter
- Recording Secretary -- Lucky Marmon
- Recording Secretary -- Bill Marmon
- Recording Secretary -- Meredith Griggs
- Treasurer -- Florian Kogelnick
- Financial Secretary -- Sharon (Sherry) H. Fizdale
- Membership Secretary -- Anne Waidmann
- Islander Editor -- Mark Friedrichs
- Archivist -- Karen Possner
- Captain -- Alec Graham

**SUPERVISORS**

- Finance -- Ann Marie Cunningham
- Law -- Rebecca Beynon
- Clubhouse -- Jim Drew
- Grounds -- Alice Bullard
- Carpentry/Painting -- Karl Kosok
- Website -- Richard Bertaut
- Entertainment -- John Butler
- Camping/Parties -- Molly Newberry
- Canoeing -- Joe Cecil
- Swimming -- Vicki Judson
- Relief Caretaker Scheduling —**Recruiting**

## Fall Work-Fest, November 10, 9 am to 4 pm (Nov 17<sup>th</sup> rain date)

Please mark the date(s) on your calendars. There is lots of work to be done and, as always, the Club will provide the basics for lunch (although everyone is encouraged to bring sides):

### **Rake leaves from fields**

### **Bring in all docks and secure them on Island**

### **Replace ferry railing**

### **Move picnic tables**

### **Replace signs/ dig holes for signage**

### **Take down old tree house**

### **Food**

- Grill food for lunch
- Set up tables for side dishes
- Make lemonade and ice water in big jugs
- Set up buffet with paper plate etc.

### **Grounds**

- Move grills, chairs table etc.
- Clear trails on Island and trail down the hill
- Replace rotted 4x4's for brick walkways
- Trim branches and trees
- Cut vines from trees
- Remove invasive plants and vines
- Wrap trees with chicken wire and unwrap trees that are too tight
- Regrade topsoil under canoe shed
- Pull down dangling branch

### **Cleaning**

- Clean out wood stove
- Clean Club kitchen/refrigerator
- Clean Club room/sweep/mop
- Clean windows of Clubhouse
- Clean bathrooms
- Clean screen porch
- Sweep out tool shed
- Wash windows of tool shed
- Clean ceiling fans

### **Painting**

- Scape and spot-prime wood siding.
- Paint siding
- Paint rusted metal in screen porch.
- Paint numbers and letter on canoe shed racks
- Paint exterior casement windows in Clubhouse
- Paint logo on clubhouse

### **Ladder work**

- Clean gutters and clear leaves from rooftop.
- Clear leaves off of canoe shed
- Apply roofing caulk to duct work on roof
- Install wire mesh to eaves of clubhouse addition

### **Carpentry**

- Replace rotted 2x4's at screen porch floor
- Repair Clubhouse bench
- Reinforce cross brackets in canoe shed

### **Cut logs and split for cord wood**

- Collect kindling
- Stack firewood
- Cut and Clear fallen branches

### **Kids**

- Clean and organized board games
- Clean foosball table
- Pick up trash on the Island
- Clean safety equipment

### **Electrical**

- Install new outdoor light fixture near Island-side ferry landing.
- Install electric boxes and outlet on mainland.

### **Club boats**

- Check canoes and kayaks for repairs
- Patch holes in red club kayak and 17.4 Club canoe

### **Lawn mower**

- Sharpen blades
- Change oil

## [CARETAKER'S LOG](#)

**Sunday -- October 6, 2019**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 2.7    Water Temperature: 71**

It looks like this week's upcoming weather will spell the end of the river-swimming this year. It's supposed to be cloudy everyday with lows at night in the fifties so the water temperature is going to drop. I must say it's been a glorious stretch of great swimming weather, almost makes up for last year's bust. I think I swam pretty much every day in September and every day now in October. I can't remember what my record is for latest swim of the year is, but October 5th has to be getting pretty close to my personal record.

This dry weather did a number on the jewel weed. Sadly the poor things withered before they could go to seed. That means we won't get to "pop" their seed pods this year. I was thinking that periods of dry weather may also explain the fluctuations in the number of jewel weed plants we have year to year. If they don't drop seeds at the end of the year how are they supposed to proliferate?

This may not be common knowledge, but last year when the river flooded, the cable that powers the lights on the trail was washed away. So on this past Friday, I strung a new electrical cable across the river to restore the

lights. Getting a cable across the river is never an easy thing, but this time I had a new, ingenious idea. I've had quite a bit of experience, by now, of running ropes and cables across the channel to the mainland. In the past I would put a very long rope in the canoe and pay it out as I paddled across. Sounds simple, but once the rope drops into the water, the current grabs it and slowly pulls the rope downstream. If you are lucky, and you have tons of extra rope, and you are able to paddle really fast, you might manage to get the rope across the river. Not easy. My new idea was to move the junction boxes so that the new electric cable would be closer to the ferry and the ferry rope. That way, I could use the ferry rope to help me get the cable across the river. This is where the genius comes in, I used plastic zip-ties to attach the cable to the ferry rope as I pulled it across, the cable stayed out of the water and I easily got it across while pulling the ferry. It was a little tricky getting the zip-ties just right, tight enough to hold the cable, but loose enough so that I could pull it through, but I figured it out and, after weaving the cable past the bell rope and ferry chains, I used a ladder and attached it temporarily to the utility pole on the mainland. Then I went back to the Island with the ladder and attached to other end of the cable high up in a silver maple tree. It was getting dark by the time I finished and the swimmers were heading home, but I asked Jim Drew to stay and help me. He pulled the cable taut, to keep it out of the river, while I cut off all of the zip-ties to free the cable. The cable is now across the river, yea! But that's not the end. Now we need to use some pulleys, ropes, ladders, and the come-a-long, to get the cable good and tight and high above the river. Once that is done we can connect the wires and restore the lights on the trail.

The Verizon saga continues. The technician was out here again on Monday, for the sixth time. Same technician, same result, nothing. I did meet his supervisor this time and he seemed even more clueless than me. They didn't even know that it was their company, Verizon, that ordered the installation of the new cable, wow. This all started way back in January 2018, when Verizon ordered us to switch from copper to fiber-optic.

**Sunday -- October 13, 2019**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 2.8    Water Temperature: 67**

Did anyone else get an email reminder about the meeting today? Sadly, I don't seem to be on the Sycamore Island email list but I think there is a meeting on the Island today at 4 pm.

Unfortunately, I was right about the swimming weather. No more careless frolicking in the river now that it's cool and cloudy. I did jump in the river on Friday, the eleventh of October, just to be able to say I swam in mid-October, and I must say, there is definitely a big difference between 73 degrees and 67 degrees, when it comes to swimming anyway.

**Thursday -- October 31, 2019**

**Water Level at Little Falls: 3.3    Water Temperature: 64**

Happy Halloween and happy Nationals win the World Series Day! We may have to rebuild the baseball diamond that used to be here on the Island back when the Senators won the pennant back in 1924!

Exciting news! There is now a fiber optic cable running all the way to the Island's Clubhouse! We still need to have the technicians come out and do the final installation into the house but the cable has made it across the river!

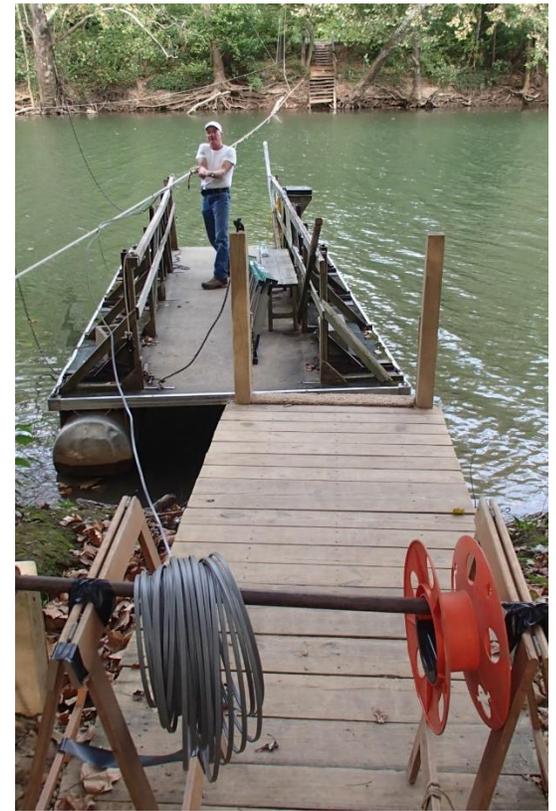
Finally, Verizon sent the right crew out here and they did a fine job. RC and his helper ran the cable down the hill while I was away on vacation, and on Monday I helped them bring the cable across the river. My job was to paddle the "mule tape" across the river in the canoe. I also helped trim the branches that were in the way. I was so glad that we had nice weather and a low river, which made it so much easier than it could have been.

So on Tuesday I worked on raising the electric cable for the trail lights. As you may remember from the last episode, I got the cable across the river, but it was still too low and needed to be raised up high away from the river. I gathered up the extension ladder, cable clamps, pulleys, anchors, ropes, wire cutters and screws and ferried over to start on the mainland side. It was a little dicey standing on the ladder that high up and that close to the river's edge but I was able to get a good attachment at the very top of the lamp post/utility pole that's there next to the steps. The tricky part, how to attach a rope to the cable so that I could pull it tight and hold it while I attached the cable to the pole with the pull-clamps. The key was to



use a prusik knot, a knot I used to use to ascend ropes back in my rock climbing days. This knot gets tighter the more you pull it, yet is easy to release when pulled in the opposite direction. It worked like a charm and I was able to anchor the cable high up on the pole.

Then it was back to the Island to anchor the cable high up in a silver maple tree. It took a couple of tries to get the prusik in the right place so that I could reach it when I was done but all went as planned and the cable is up. I'm happy with the results and my new cable is now higher than all of the other Pepco and Verizon cables. Yes!



I went canoeing in the canal! As you may remember, there was a torrential downpour on Sunday morning but it subsided early and it became a warm and pleasant day. I was coming home from the grocery store that morning and I noticed that the canal was up and moving fast. I had an idea, so I quickly put the groceries away and I grabbed the small Oldtown, "Pack" canoe and put it on the ferry. I guess I'm getting desperate for kicks and giggles but it was fun to drop the canoe into the canal and ride the rushing water down to the dam. It was a cool perspective to see the world from the canal just like the old canawlers did and to wave to the joggers going by. I also scared up a bunch of carp and I saw a beaver as it slipped into the canal from the berm side.

Sadly the canal is somewhat dammed by silt below the dam so it wasn't long before I was paddling through thick green duck weed and I had to turn around. By the time I paddled back up to our bridge over the canal the water level had dropped and it was easy to get out of the canoe and back up onto the towpath. Cheap thrills!



Photos by Joe Hage



## Minutes from October 13, 2019, Meeting of the Sycamore Island Club

**Attendees:** Gerald Barton, Bill Marmon, Adele Seifried, Matt Goldman, Marion Goldman, Jody Benjamin, Bobby Benjamin, Karen Possner, Richard Bertaut, John Noble, Geoff Holdridge, Meredith Griggs, Julie Saulnier, Mark Friedrichs, Susan Dunham, Dan Schember, Joe Hage, Anne Waidmann, Vicki Judson, Lucky Marmon

President Richard Bertaut called the meeting to order. Attendees introduced themselves.

**The September 11, 2019 minutes** were amended to include a complaint by Gerry Barton that his old canoe had been removed from the Island and discarded without his permission.

The amended minutes were approved unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** The Club Treasurer Florian Kogelnik was not present, but Richard Bertaut reported that spending was on track. Sixty percent of the budget had been used by the end of September. There were no new or unusual expenses.

**Financial Secretary's Report:** No Report

**Entertainment Supervisor/Coordinator's Report:** No Report

**Archivist Report:** Archivist Karen Possner reported that we are now able to visit the Club's archives again. They are officially housed at the Kiplinger Library, which is part of the DC History Center, home of the Historical Society of Washington. Karen and member Tryon Wells plans to visit next week. Eventually, she hopes to do research about the Club that has interested her for some time.

**Captain's Report:** No Report

**Caretaker's Report:** Caretaker Joe Hage reported that a new electric line has been strung across the river. The junction box still needs work. He has talked with the engineers at Verizon who are on track to get a fiber optic cable installed.

The Work Fest is Sunday, Nov. 10th. While Joe is hopeful that members and waitlisters will come and sign up to take charge of various chores, he wanted people to know that he was not in charge of the Work Fest. He would appreciate having a coordinator, who would explain and assign the various jobs to volunteers.

**The New Website:** Our 20-year-old website, SycamoreIsland.org, will be phased out at the end of the year. Sherry Fizdale took the lead in finding a new host for the Club's data and news and found [clubexpress.com](http://clubexpress.com) to be the best fit. As of this meeting, we are four weeks into a six-week trial period with this server. Sherry is receiving excellent support from the servers' tech people. The new website, <https://SycamoreIsland.ClubExpress.com>, has a new menu structure, is more modern, and allows changes to be made more easily. Still, it is less three-dimensional and requires more and different steps. Pres. Bertaut is working his way through the changes and would appreciate feedback from members as they begin using the site. Bertaut noted that there will be two paths of access--one for members and another for visitors. Members will receive a greeting from ClubExpress asking them to log in and check their info. Committees will be able to meet on line. Hopefully, the site will be up and running by Dec. 31st, so next year's dues will be managed under the new system. The old Islanders will be transferred onto the new website. Each family's account will have a primary member and a tertiary member. Only members will have access to the membership list and addresses. New member Matt Goldman offered to lend Richard a hand with the new website.

**Membership Secretary's Report:** Anne Waidmann reported that current membership stands as follows: Regular Members – 155, Senior Members - 83, Inactive Members - 19, Honorary Members - 16, Waiting List - 52. There have been several requests for Senior Membership status since the change in the By-Laws voted on

this summer. Five of those have been changed to Senior Status for the purpose of the current count and membership has been offered to the next five families on the Waitlist. Dues notices for next year will note the requirements for senior membership and mention the option of requesting that status.

The next names on the Waiting List are: Christopher Lemos, Chris Maggio, Mike and Allison Leotta, Matt and Marion Goldman, Mark Del Bianco.

**Possible changes to the Lottery System:** The Club's biennial lottery system was established in 2012, after a lengthy hiatus in accepting new waitlisters. Its purpose was to shorten the length of time applicants spend on the Waiting List before becoming Regular Members. The maximum number of families on the Waiting List was set at 60, with the expectation that 15 applicants would become Regular Members each year. Most waitlisters, it was projected, would become members within about four years. Last year, only 13 families moved off the Waiting List, which will soon stand at 47 once the next five families who have been offered regular membership are admitted. It is likely that the Waiting List will still be quite large by the time the next lottery is scheduled (April 2020.) The following suggestions have been made:

1. Defer the lottery until the Waiting List drops to below 30 members.
2. Give an advantage to repeat applicants by giving them an extra disc in the hat for each time they have applied unsuccessfully.
3. Eliminate the two-tier lottery that advantages applicants under age 40.

These questions will be addressed by a task force with the following members: Susan Dunham, Gerry Barton Bill Marmon, John Butler, Larry Heilman, Adele Seifried. Contact Anne Waidmann (annewaidmann@gmail.com) if you wish to weigh in on these matters.

## Old Business

**Date, Time and Place of Monthly Sycamore Island Club Meeting.** October's meeting was scheduled to take place on the Island on Sunday afternoon from four to six o'clock, a change from the usual time of 8:00 o'clock on the 2nd Wednesday of the month. This change was made in deference to reports by several members that it was difficult for them to drive at night and come to the Island in the dark. There was a general consensus that the change in time and day had delivered more and different members to the October meeting and that it would be a good idea to schedule occasionally an alternative meeting time and date as long as members are notified well ahead of time. While the Club's by-laws state that meetings will be held the second Wednesday of the month, it was noted that the President may also use his discretion to change the date and time. If it becomes a common practice, it will necessitate a change in the by-laws. Vicki Judson offered to help draft the proper language to address the issue.

**New Business:** Vicki Judson generously volunteered to once again host the Holiday Party.

**Nominating Officers:** Vice President John Noble will head up a nominating committee and seeks help with the task. It was noted that multiple people sharing a job (e.g., there are 3 Recording Secretaries who take the Minutes), might make members more willing to sign on.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Co-Recording Secretary Lucky Marmon



Islander Editor: Mark Friedrichs; suggestions or contributions of content or photos welcome to mark.d.friedrichs@gmail.com