

THE VOYAGEUR



www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org

January 2007

THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

It appears that this is my last president's put in for the foreseeable future. Jim Pruitt is ascending to the presidency on January 1. I am sure you will miss my witty and verbose columns. I assure you I will miss all my presidential duties. I will especially miss writing this column.

The holiday party was another smashing success despite the last minute change in venue. I would like to express our thanks to Barbara Brown for hosting the party. Barb's house makes a wonderful party venue. I would also like to thank Rick Koller, Ginny DeSeau, and Ron Knipling who combined to assume the vice-presidential duties of organizing the party. We also thank the people who cooked turkeys, hams and chickens. Lastly, I thank everyone who attended. It is all of you who make our parties so special.

The next meeting is January 10. It is on a Wednesday. I could not get a Tuesday this month. I do not have a program lined up yet. Between Jim and I, we will find a program for your entertainment. I hope to see you all there. Thank you for tolerating my extended presidency. I also thank you for my holiday gift.

Ernie

Selway Adventure, July 31 – August 6, 2006

by Jenny Thomas and Kim Buttleman

Kim is a trip planner extraordinaire! Many months before this adventure, Kim began accumulating gear – two Aire inflatable tandem kayaks (a.k.a. duckies), extra long breakdown paddles, air pump, a myriad of new dry bags, and lots of carabiners and straps for tying down gear. We were to venture into the Selway Wilderness in Idaho, self-supported and, although we hoped to have more people join us, in the end we traveled alone.

We had applied for Selway permits in the lottery system in January, but did not get one – the Selway receives the most applications for the least number of slots of any of the western rivers, with about a



3% chance of success in the lottery. Snow pack for the Selway in the winter of 2005-2006 was 130% of normal, so we thought we would have plenty of water even if we put-on after the end of the permit season (July 31st). Unfortunately, there were several warm rainy days in late spring when most of the snow

melted off and the Selway river volume swelled to as much as 30,000 cfs (Lowell gage). Over the next few months we kept track of the flow, watching in dismay as the level plummeted. When it got down below one foot on the Paradise put-in gage, Kim asked (on the Idaho whitewater mes-

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SELWAY (Continued from page 1)
 sage board) how low you could run the Selway in duckies. One person responded that his lower limit was 0.5 feet; another said he knew he couldn't get his raft down at that level and was canceling his permit for July 31st – a permit which Kim snapped up. Jenny drove out with the gear and the day before she picked Kim up in Spokane she drove to the put-in at Paradise, about 60 miles by gravel road from Darby, MT. She hiked down the river a few miles and thought it looked low but runnable, so when she gave her thumbs-up we decided to go for it. The river was low with about 6 inches of water and a gage reading of 0.4 feet (about 80 cfs) at the put-in. (The USGS gage at Lowell, below the takeout, reported ~800 cfs on the day we put in and ~700 when we took out.)

We quickly arranged a shuttle with Karen Kidd (phone: 406-821-3560). It was expensive, \$250 for 250 miles, but well worth it since it saved 7 hours of driving, and she even kept our cooler stocked with ice for the week we were on the river so we had cold beer at the take out. We camped on the way to the put-in and had an up close and personal encounter with a mama and baby moose, when Kim was awakened to footsteps and looked out the door of the tent at the mother looking back in at him.

The first few miles or so of the river were relatively shallow -- the rapids were runnable, but very technical. If we got stuck on the "flats," where the river widened

and became shallower, we simply hopped out of the boat, moved it over a few feet to where there were a few more inches of water and hopped back in. We each had to get out about five or six times in this stretch. After about five miles various creeks added enough water so that these get-outs were reduced to once or twice a day until we got to Bear Creek at about mile 16.

From then on it was clear paddling.

At mile 26, you come to the



Jenny at the put-in.

only sign of civilization along the 48-mile trip. At the junction of Moose Creek with the Selway, there is a lodge with an airstrip and a U.S. Forest Service research complex. Neither can really be seen from the water, but there is a walking bridge across the river there. Moose Creek contributes 30 to 50 percent more water to the Selway and a section of the river called the "Moose Juice" begins soon after the confluence. At our water level, there was one rapid called "Ladle" that was Class IV, and six or seven technical Class III to III+ rapids within the 6-mile stretch of "Moose Juice." We boat scouted just about everything. At this level the upper

part of Ladle is a maze of house-size boulders, with routes that disappear around corners. We finally decided on a route on the far right side. After hitting a rock in the lower part, Kim flipped near the bottom of Ladle and thinking, "Uh oh, he's got the food!," Jenny followed him down to make sure he was OK and dinner was secure. Below the "Moose Juice," the river calms down somewhat, but there is still a succession of rapids to keep one amused.

The Selway River map lists 8 Class IV rapids, 13 Class III rapids, and 19 Class II rapids. There were many other, generally smaller rapids along the way and sometimes it was difficult to determine which ones were on the map and which were not. The rapid ratings on the map were for rafts floating the river at a gage level of 3 to 4 feet. At our water level, some of

the rapids were harder, because they were more technical at lower water, and some were easier, because they were not as pushy as they would be at higher water.

The scenery along the river is truly outstanding. Typically there was a low bluff on the west side of the river with various evergreens growing on cliff sides. The eastern side of the river was less vegetated, with mostly grasses and some sage. There is a trail along the east side of the river for the whole 48-mile stretch. For variety, we hiked the trail along Three Links Creek, which was just beautiful. The water in the Selway is incredibly clear, with visibility down to as

much as 15 to 20 feet.

There are no restrictions to camping – you can camp wherever you want; however, there are clearly established sites in sandbars alongside the river. There are also no restrictions for waste disposal or for a fire pan either, which made it much easier for us to travel in the duckies. We were told that several campsites were “snakey” (the



Jenny at Tee Kem Falls.

Selway is known for its rattlesnake population); however, we only saw one rattlesnake during the course of our trip.

We put on the river at about 4:30 p.m. on July 31st and later decided to add an extra day and just take our time (since the river was so beautiful and we had plenty of food). In total, we spent 7 days and 6 nights there. The trip could easily have been done in 5 days.

We ended up seeing fifteen other people on the trip: A couple in kayaks, another two in duckies,

Barry the river ranger, and one group of about ten in small rafts and duckies. Most days we saw no one. We plied Barry with scotch one evening and heard some of his tales. He had been the river ranger for twenty two years, and this was his very last trip before retiring to Chile.

Jenny cried for the last two miles because she didn't want the trip to end – it had been a

truly wonderful trip. Although it was terribly romantic and kind of exciting to be alone on the river, we hope that others will gear up and be able to join us on future trips.

We would go back again at 0.4', but probably not any lower, and we doubt that we could have gotten down if we had put on more than a few days later.

For a good summary of this run, look at Bill Tuthill's website cacreeks.com/selway.htm

Middle Creek (of the Monocacy) by Ron Knipling

Marsh and Middle Creeks on the Maryland/Pennsylvania line north of Frederick are two nice but seldom-paddled Monocacy River tributaries. On Saturday December 23, after a 1-2" regional rain, Will Greene and I headed up there to catch one or both of these streams. Marsh has bigger, Yough-like rapids, but was running near bank full, which seemed a bit much for just the two of us on a winter day. We opted for the smaller and easier Middle Creek just down the road. It was running at about +6" and perhaps 200-300cfs flow. There is no USGS gauge on either stream, but the Monocacy at Bridgeport was running at ~7 feet or ~2,000cfs. Our trip began at Station Road and ended 4.6 miles downstream just below a non-runnable dam at Harney Road. Along the way, you pass through scenic farm country and under both Rt. 15 and Business Rt. 15.

The 4.6 miles of Middle Creek has numerous Class 1-2 rapids and no flat water except for ~100 yards of backwater above the dam at the takeout. The gradient is 18'/mile, with one mile at 40'/mile. The biggest ledge, Class 2+, is just below Business Rt. 15, and the 1.5 miles from there to the dam has continuous Class 1-2 rapids. We had 3-4 strainers requiring lift-overs but none was hazardous. Overall the stream was reminiscent of Passage Creek, minus the 5-6 best rapids in the Passage gorge. One braided area of Middle Creek seemed almost identical to the braided section of Passage below the fish hatchery. We saw kingfishers, herons, deer, and other wildlife, but the loveliest sights along the way were several exquisitely restored stone and half-timbered farm houses. The day started brisk and windy, but became warm, sunny, and quite delightful.

Three Generations of Boy Scout Canoeing by Mark Wray

Boy Scout Troop 167 has been paddling open boats for more than 40 years. The program got started in 1963 down at Thompson's boat house at a course taught by Dick Bridge. The boys were impressed that Mr. Bridge went canoeing in a white shirt and necktie! The troop took basic, whitewater, and solo canoeing courses from the CCA up until 1967. Some of the "old timers" that helped us learn and led trips for us also included Henry DeMarne, Dick Holcombe, John Thompson, Roger Corbett, and Ralph Smith.

We owe our greatest debt of gratitude, however, to Lou Matacia. Mr. Matacia introduced us to many of our favorite runs, as well as selling us all of our boats and most of our equipment. After we built our

fleet of seven, 17-foot aluminum Grumman canoes, Lou allowed the troop to trade \$100.00 and our most beat up canoe for a brand new Grumman once each year. He would also sell us four ash paddles for \$10.00. The boys worked hard to raise money for equipment, but Mr. Matacia made sure our funds went a long way. The troop converted a surplus WW II communications trailer to carry boats, and we were off to the river as much as possible.

Early trips included Vio-

lette's Lock, Cedar Creek, the Trough, Shenandoah, Goose Creek, Kelly's Ford, and Cacapon. In 1967, the troop took 23 canoe trips. As the scouts became more skillful, we paddled more challenging water, such as the Staircase, Needles, Smoke Hole, Passage Creek, Four Mile Run and others. By the 70's the troop had some pretty decent paddlers. We ran Smoke Hole canyon, the Lehigh, the Loop of the lower Yough, Prince to Thurmond in flood, and the New River Gorge, all in 17-foot aluminum canoes with no flotation! There were also long summer trips to the Allagash Waterway in Maine, the Greenbrier and New in West Virginia, and the Nantahala, Ocoee, and Chattooga in the Southeast.

Troop 167 continued paddling throughout the



Front row, left to right: Leah Turner (future scout), John Turner (adult leader, former scout), Mark Barker (adult leader, former scout), Mel Herrmann, Mark Wray (adult leader, former scout), Malcolm Turner (future scout), Wade Turner (adult leader, former scout), Fiona Turner (future scout). Back row: Max Turner (current scout), Sean Turner (current scout), Steven Wray (adult leader, former scout), Megan Wray (current scout) and William Wray (former scout)

80's and 90's with the older, experienced boys teaching skills to the younger ones. Several scouts went on to be professional raft guides on the Staircase, Chattooga, New, and Toulumne. At least two have run Great Falls and one, John Hefti, raced in the 1979 and 1981 World Championships in C-2.

In 2000 the troop changed over from aluminum to Royalex. We now own six 16' Mad River Explorers, two 16' Old Town Appalachians, one Blue Hole Sunburst II, one 13' Mad River Freedom, and we still have four 17' Grummans. Springriver has been a great supporter for many years, giving us good deals on boats and equipment. Two years ago they donated the trailer to the Scouts that they used to keep at their Falls Church store. We are grateful to Matacia Outfitters, the CCA, the BRV, Springriver, and everyone who has helped the troop over the years.

From that first basic canoeing course in 1963, right through to the present, Assistant Scoutmaster Mel Herrmann has led the Troop 167 canoeing program. Mel, a charter member of the BRV, and excellent boater in his own right, can still kneel in a canoe, but at 89 has a little trouble standing up once at the take-out. Nevertheless, the boys do not lack for on-the-water leadership. Five of our current adult leaders were scouts in the troop. We grew up under the leadership of Mr. Herrmann's canoeing program and wanted to pass that heritage on to our kids.

Troop 167 Canoe Trip Schedule 2007

December 30 2006: Santa Claus Canoe Trip, Violette's Lock (beards and Santa hats required)

January 13: Cacapon River

February 17: Cedar Creek or Passage Creek (depends on water level)

March 3: TBD

April 20-22: South Branch Potomac (Big Bend to Petersburg Saturday, Canyon Sunday)

May 12: Staircase

June 9: Potomac Gorge

Book Reviews by Bob Youker

Wherever Waters Flow (Headwater Publishing, PO Box 494, Franklin, N.C. 28744, 828-369-6491, \$26.95) is a new whitewater book out by Doug Woodward, who started his paddling in the Washington area and was one of the early members of Canoe Cruisers. One of his early totally novice trips was down the Cacapon in very high water in May 1960. "At the junction with the Cacapon (from North River) all hell broke loose and we almost lost it right there — big rolling, noisy brown water, with haystacks rising and exploding in our path like mortar rounds. Less than a quarter of a mile from the junction, the bow buried and did not rise again. For perhaps thirty seconds we continued upright in our submarine, nothing visible but our torsos and paddles." Any paddler who has hit that type of high water can empathize with the author.

Doug found other paddlers, learned proper technique, started building kayaks and became a solid paddler. He moved with his job to Atlanta and did a lot of paddling in the North Carolina and Georgia mountains. He ended up as an advisor on the movie "Deliverance" and gave lessons to Jimmy Carter. Doug did western and Alaska trips and tells a great story. I recommend this book highly. He mentions many names including Ed Gertler and Barb Brown.

This time of year many paddlers look to Florida for some warm weather paddling. On a recent trip to Florida I ran into a fairly new book, A Canoeing and Kayaking Guide to Florida (2005, Menasha Ridge Press available on Amazon.com for \$12). It is a complete book organized by regions. It has good write-ups and maps, but the maps are frustrating when some roads are not labeled and some roads in the text don't appear on the maps. I understand it is being updated and will be out again in April 2007. However, for anybody going paddling in Florida this winter I recommend it highly.

Another Successful BRV Holiday Party by Ginny DeSeau

The holiday season would not be complete without the annual BRV holiday gathering. This year, on December 8, about 50 people showed up at Barb Brown's home in Maryland for the event. Many thanks go out to Barb for opening her home to us (on short notice) and for finalizing her vacation schedule to fit around the party.

As usual, boaters and their families chatted for hours and shared boating and life stories while munching on good food brought by everyone. Particular thanks go out to Rick Koller for making sure that there were plenty of drinks to wash down the feast and to those who cooked the meat for all: Bob Maxey, Bridget Fico, Phoebe Hamill, and Ginny DeSeau. We were a little scant on vegetables this year, so we'll have to make adjustments in the "to bring" list for 2007. For those who could not attend, you should know that the club gave Barb a huge poinsettia (that fit perfectly on a side table in her living room), a coffee urn (to replace one that broke at a previous party that she hosted for the boating community), and a case of assorted wines (that we hope will keep her smiling). Besides the usual door prizes, the club gave our intrepid newsletter editor(s) a gift certificate and a couple of (hopefully) useful dry bags [*yes — thanks for everything! — Ed.*], and gave our "president for life" some cash as a token of our sincere appreciation for holding the helm for so long. Rumor has it that Ernie is passing the paddle, but so far no one has observed that; so, for now, we'll keep calling Ernie *El Presidente todos los anos*.

Many thanks to Ron Knipling who spearheaded the organization of the party (then took off for South America for a couple of weeks and sadly, couldn't make it to the party because he was sick) and to his "elves," Rick Koller and Ginny DeSeau. Lou Campagna is the ascending vice-president, so he'll be our party guru for the next couple of years. Be sure to say "yes" when you get a call from Lou. Hope to see you at the summer picnic.

Improved Access to North Branch Potomac

[taken from the Cumberland Times-News, 28 November 2006]

With the recent opening of the public boat launch at the Allegany County Fairgrounds, the recreational river-floating puzzle on the North Branch of the Potomac from Westernport to Cumberland is one, maybe two pieces away from being completed, according to a state fishery biologist. "It's awesome that the launch at the fairgrounds is finally open. It's been a long time coming," said Alan Klotz, who manages Western Maryland fisheries for the Maryland Inland Fisheries Division.

Mark W. Yoder, chief of Allegany County's Utility Division, designed the ramp, which is reached by crossing the railroad tracks at the fairgrounds and entering through the gate at the immediate right. A fence separates the ramp entrance from the main fairgrounds. A paved parking lot will hold 18 vehicles with boat trailers. A paved roadway of about 1,000 feet leads downhill to the launching area. Yoder said signs will be placed on U.S. Route 220 near the entrance to the fairgrounds, informing motorists that a public launching area is available. The ramp will be open during daylight hours.

Klotz said that obtaining a public launching area in the Pinto area will complete the recreational picture for floaters and floating anglers. "The county is looking at purchasing some land along the river just upstream from the Route 956 bridge and we hope to be able to place a launch there," he said. Currently, the most upstream launch is at Westernport with a 4.5-mile float to the next ramp at McCoolle. Another six miles downstream is the Black Oak ramp. From there, the Route 956 bridge is 10 miles farther. From that bridge to the fairgrounds is seven miles.

"One of the DNR officials from Annapolis was up here to check out the ramp and told us it was one of the nicest in Maryland," said Jim Lashley, chief of the county's Roads Division. Lashley pointed out large rocks placed near the bottom of the ramp that are meant to slow the river flow at that location, thus making launching easier.

Blue Ridge Voyageurs Membership Form

Whitewater paddling is a risky outdoor sport. BRV is not responsible for any individual's decision to participate in the sport, or for his or her decision to run any river or section of river.

Annual Dues: _____ \$15.00 (newsletter sent via postal mail) **Add me to the email list for:**
 _____ \$12.00 (newsletter emailed in .pdf format)
Optional Contribution to BRV River Conservation/Access Fund: \$5.00 or _____
Total Amount Enclosed: _____

_____ Novice trips
 _____ Intermediate trips
 _____ Advanced trips

Make checks payable to BRV. Mail to BRV Membership, c/o Frank Fico, 1609 Autumnwood Drive, Reston, VA 20194-1523.

Name: _____ **Phone w/area code: (h)** _____

Address: _____ **(w)** _____

_____ **Email:** _____

Please check if interested in: ___ helping with moonlight picnic ___ providing a meeting program
 ___ helping with holiday party ___ leading trips ___ conservation/river maintenance

24th Annual National Paddling Film Festival Lexington, KY February 23-24, 2007
 The best in paddlesport imagery and film competition.
www.surfbwa.org/npff



About the Blue Ridge Voyageurs (BRV)

The **BRV** is a voluntary association of experienced paddlers from the Washington, DC area. Club benefits include: trips for all skill levels (most at intermediate and advanced levels); BRV website and hotline for information and pick-up trips; *The Voyageur*, published 6 times a year; club roster, published yearly in March; holiday party; conservation projects; moonlight paddles & picnics; big trips to the Smokies, Canada, Europe, and Western rivers.

Meetings: BRV will hold meetings from 7-9 pm on the following dates in 2007: January 10, March 19, May 15, July TBD (Moonlight Picnic), September TBD, November TBD, December TBD (Holiday Party). Meetings are followed by beer and pizza at a nearby pub. Location: Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library on Leesburg Pike (Rt. 7) in Falls Church, VA. The library is on the east side of Rt. 7 about 0.6 miles south of I-495. Or, from I-66, take the Rt. 7 North exit and go about 0.6 miles north on Rt. 7. It's on the right.

BRV Website: The BRV website (<http://www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org>) provides information on trips, meetings, and other club events.

2007 BRV Officers: Jim Pruitt, President; Lou Campagna, VP; Jenny Thomas, Trip Coordinator; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation.

2007 Board of Directors: Gus Anderson, Bill Collier, Ed Grove, Ron Knipling, Rick Koller, Wes Mills

***The Voyageur*: Newsletter of the Blue Ridge Voyageurs**

The Voyageur publishes information on club events, conservation and safety news, the club trip schedule, and other news of interest to BRVers. Publishing **trip reports** is a particularly important newsletter function. Trip Coordinators are requested to write up all club trips - particularly trips to unusual or especially interesting rivers. Trip reports and other articles are accepted in any form - via electronic mail (preferred; send to fico1@netzero.net), on disk, typed, handwritten, faxed or over the phone. For trip reports, try to include the following information (if applicable): names of participants, relevant NWS gauge readings of nearby rivers, description of the water level on the river (e.g., minimum, moderate, maximum, or number of inches above or below "zero"), weather conditions, hazards, difficult rapids, info on put-ins or takeouts, distinctive scenery, and overall difficulty in relation to rivers well known to BRVers. New information about the river (e.g., new hazards) is particularly important. **Photos** are also published. Send prints to the webmaster or e-mail digital photos to the newsletter editors.

Address changes: contact Frank Fico, 1609 Autumnwood Dr., Reston, VA 20194-1523, (703) 318-7998,

fico1@netzero.net. The annual roster will be kept current via updates published in each issue of *The Voyageur*.

Membership applications/renewals: submit to Frank Fico. Must renew by February 15 each year to be listed on club roster and continue receiving *The Voyageur*.



The Voyageur

c/o Frank Fico
1609 Autumnwood Drive
Reston, VA 20194-1523

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Deadline for March *Voyageur*:
Friday, March 2

NEXT MEETING
Wednesday, January 10

FINAL ISSUE — renew now for 2007: If your mailing label says 2006, this is your final newsletter. Use the membership form included on page 7 to renew.