

# THE VOYAGEUR



[www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org](http://www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org)

March 2007

## THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

Well, the long wait is over. As was announced in the last *Voyageur*, Ernie has released the helm and after all the chad settled, it seems I was elected or conscripted, not sure which. It was a long and arduous campaign, lots of baby kissing, travel to the far corners of the region, etc. I plan to sleep until the next meeting.

Bob Maxey started my recruitment at the Gauley trip this fall. It was my personal first descent of the Lower Gauley; thanks to Rick Koller for having me along! Bob caught me in a moment of weakness at camp one morning and asked if I would serve, and I said I would think about it. I proceeded to dither for a few weeks before I agreed to step up and let Ernie relax and just go boating. So everyone be sure to thank Ernie for his service, especially for hanging in there for overtime. Now that Ernie has retired, perhaps we will see more rain!

Something that all clubs seem to be facing is lower memberships. One thing which helps keep a club alive is activity. On this note, easy access to club information and events, especially official club trips and pickup trips, does a lot to foster activity. Taking a note from other clubs in today's internet age, I proposed and created a message board we can use to share information. By the time this is published a link should be active on the BRV website. Please take a look and use the board, pass the word along to others, and let's generate some activity! If you have suggestions for changes or improvements, let me know. And we could use a volunteer to moderate the board — please let me know if you would like to take on this task.

I look forward to meeting more members in 2007, having a great time paddling and swapping lies. I hope everyone and their families had a safe and happy holiday season! Here's to a great 2007 for all.

Now to the back yard for a rain dance...

Jim Pruitt



**Mid-Winter Paddling!** Bob Kimmel (left) and Brad and Chris White (right) enjoy a run on the Tye River in the shadow of the Blue Ridge on a balmy early January weekend (photos by Ron Knipling).

## When a West Virginia Trip Is Considered a “Southern” Trip

by Scott Gravatt and Carin Cookman

*Scott writes:*

As I look ahead, planning a spring '07 boating trip “down south” to West Virginia, it seemed like a good time to reflect back on the trip we made last spring, a first of its kind for Denise and Scott! The idea for the trip was hatched after many conversations with the new friends we have made while boating rivers throughout the hills of New England, since our move to Connecticut over four years ago.

I'm referring to the usual conversations about what rivers we've run and what rivers our New England friends have run, and the realization that these New England boaters had not experienced wild, wonderful West Virginia!

So Denise and I thought, why not take a group along on one of our “southern” trips?

We know the rivers, rapids, put-ins, take-

outs, campgrounds, motels, restaurants, and

most importantly, where all the Sheetz stores are! The added bonus was that we would hook up with BRV boaters who would help us lead the NE boaters down the rivers. We sent out emails announcing the trip, and that's how it all started!

The NE contingent of 8 boaters started driving south on Friday afternoon, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006. Most of us met up at a motel in central PA. The next morning we drove the rest of the way to Ohiopyle, for a run on the Lower Yough. The

Ohiopyle put-in was where we met up with the BRV boaters. Over the week-long trip, 14 BRVers joined us for one or more days (too many to name). Introductions were made and the shuttle was run. The NE boaters had that nervous anticipation that comes before a first time run. On the other end of the scale were the BRV boaters, who had run the Lower Yough so often they couldn't remember how many times!



*Scott Gravatt plays in Big Nasty in the Cheat Canyon.*

*Carin Cookman, New England K-1 writes:*

The week started with 17 paddlers on the Lower Yough at 3.34, a fun level for a first time down the river. This boater took her first combat roll on the first (unnamed) rapid and second at Entrance. Fear immediately took hold as I anticipated the next 7 miles; but I took a deep breath, calmed down, and had no trouble the rest of the day. Richie entertained at Cucumber. There were a few more minor rolls and swims, but the New England-

ers ended the day high on the river and ready for more.

Day two took us back to the Lower Yough at 3.1. A number of BRVers, anxious to help their northern friends feel comfortable, took swims. New Englanders were happy to demonstrate their rescue skills.

We then traveled to Teter's campground for days three and four on the Cheat. Weather and water cooperated. We paddled at 2.13 and 1.8.

On day five, five boaters had enough energy and flexibility left for the Cheat Narrows, while others took the day off or headed home.

Richie and I took a scenic ride through the Monongahela National Forest en route to Summersville, where the gauge-watchers said the best water was.

*Scott writes:*

Thursday, day six, we got on the Lower

Gauley at 1400 cfs, which is medium-low, but still plenty of water. (Releases in the fall are about 2800 cfs.) It was a fun trip, with a few wipe-outs here and there. This run is about 13 miles long and there are 17 named rapids! We were all beat by the end of the day.

On Friday, day seven, we decided against doing the Lower Gauley a second time. It's a long paddle and a long shuttle, and we were just too worn out to face it again. That narrowed our choices, and we started thinking about the



*Denise Gravatt at High Falls in the Cheat Canyon.*

New River. We had basically written off the New because it had been running way too high all week, starting the week at around 9 ft. But today it was down to 3.1 ft. Still quite high for us, especially the open boaters. After talking it over, we decided to go for it.

The New is a big river and this was going to be big water. I think we did the best we could to warn everyone what they were getting into. A couple of boaters decided not to go, so we were down to Keith Merkel and six NE boaters. Once we were on the river, Keith coached Ian and Dennis (all K-1s), Denise and Carin buddied-up (K-1s), and Ken and I brought up the rear (OC-1s).

It turned out that the waves and holes were even bigger than I thought they would be. This was an extremely challenging run for everyone! Fast, pushy current, huge pour-overs, giant holes and waves, and swirling eddy lines that you had to fight to even stay upright! We had a total of 11 swims, and at least 4 serious combat rolls, all split between just four boaters. Carin did not have the most swims,

blasted out of the big left side eddy, giving chase. But there was no escape for a swimmer in the main current going right into Middle Keeney. Denise and Keith were right behind her through the huge waves and holes, and got to her as soon as she hit the slower water at the bottom. She was fine, but it sure was scary to watch! Carin had another swim at Undercut Rock (first part of Miller's Folley) and the "rescue team" was barely able to get her far enough right to miss Bloody Nose. These were the worst, but dramatic, hairy swims were the norm of the day, and everyone got a lot of rescue practice! At the end we were all relieved,

but she had the two most dramatic! She flipped in Upper Keeney, tried to roll several times, then punched out. As soon as she came out of her boat, Denise peeled out of a right hand eddy and Keith

exhausted, still shaking, glad to be alive, pumped-up, and looking forward to going back again!

That evening we ate like pigs at Dirty Ernie's in Fayetteville, then drove north for 2 hours to a motel. Saturday, day eight, the remaining boaters were back on the Lower Yough, at a lowish level. It was relaxing compared to what we had been doing!

This was a great trip and we really enjoyed introducing our New England boating friends to a few of the great rivers we love to paddle, and to quite a few BRV'ers, who were excellent hosts!

*Carin adds:*

New England boaters were thrilled with the scenery on the rivers, the length of the rivers, the number of and quality of the rapids. Most of all, we were thrilled with the friendliness and helpfulness of our new southern friends. We hope to join you again next year, and we invite you to join us on the Dryway, the Dead or the Kennebec this summer.



*Ken Glusman (NE boater) in Lower Keeney.*

## Snowbird Paddling by Ed Evangelidi

Snowbirds are what year 'round Floridians call the influx of warm weather-seeking tourists that visit each winter — just like similar minded migratory birds. Many migratory birds common in Florida are vultures and most tourists are not paddlers, but we won't go there. Last year I became a paddling snowbird convert by joining in with a mostly North Carolina group of dedicated paddlers. We concentrated around the centrally located Ocala National Forest. This year the venue was changed to the Withlacoochee State Forest, just west of Ocala. Last year I drove down ahead of the group meeting dates to try to snag a few east coast rivers. The weather was miserable with heavy rain and I only got in one eastern creek and some wet hiking days. This year the weather was equally rotten and I skipped the area entirely. Florida precipitation tends to be more scattered than I am used to and precision weather information might have allowed me to move say 50 miles or less away to paddle in clear weather either year.

My first paddle this trip was on the Withlacoochee River where I paddled 14 miles (up and back) from my camp site. The next trip was the first scheduled group trip and we went from our campsites downstream 9 miles. Central Florida is interesting in that there are two long rivers: St Johns in the east and Withlacoochee in the west, both flowing north, which drain the large inland area, and coastal rivers flowing at the edges of these watersheds. Many rivers originate in large swamps or giant springs and

some swamps may drain into two to four rivers flowing in different directions. The Withlacoochee and Oklawaha (St. John's major tributary) offer up the best prospects for multi day trips. Both have sections with some development and few remaining sections with stunning virgin semitropical scenery. These state water trails have many campsite areas to plan trips around.

After two beautiful but not exceptional days on the Withlacoochee, it was time for two days on beautiful but not exceptional trips on Gulf coast rivers. Weeki Wachee River starts in a tourist park where more than boatable water flows out of a spring. It flows for about 10 miles before it empties into the Gulf. Most rivers with open water boating access are highly sought out throughout the U.S. for property development. Parts of the river are protected and parts are built up with a growing amount of McMansions with McMotor boats. But the best parts of Weeki Wachee and Chassahowitzka River are the shallow areas or shallow tributaries where paddled boats rule. Both of these rivers had manatees that migrate into spring areas when rivers start to get "cold". Virtually all Florida rivers are not only very clear but much more full of fish than our rivers. This also attracts ibis, blue herons, pelicans, bald eagles, river otters, etc.

December 30 was the day that one paddler picked to prepare his annual group feast dinner. Most of the group was going biking that day and since I don't bike, it also was the day that I picked for an

"exploratory" adventure. There are tributaries on the nicest section of the Oklawaha called the Dead River and Cedar Creek. They seem to be merely segregated waters of the Oklawaha, but must have some spring input to give them their own name. Anyhow, my information was that we paddle upstream an undetermined distance and enter the flow that becomes the Dead River. After an undetermined distance, we come out again on the Oklawaha and paddle back up to our original put in. Simple plan. The initial upstream paddle was beautiful and we only had some minor nosing around while we rejected the false possible leads into the Dead River. We entered the Dead River and encountered strainers. Easy ones at first but then some requiring extensive portaging. After hours of this we stumbled on an old abandoned iron bridge that we expected to find very early on in the trip. This pointed to a longer day than we expected. Many more hours later we noticed the sun starting to get low in the trees (there was no horizon on most of these rivers as the banks were dense jungle) and decided that we had a serious choice to make — the way ahead involved a very long and painful portage that would eat up most of our remaining daylight, the way behind involved a known but extremely time consuming paddle and portage and, thirdly, a bushwhack to the fairly nearby Oklawaha looked like a reasonable choice but was abandoned after scouting revealed too much hurricane damage to overcome overland. (We never did arrive at the

Oklawaha in our portage scouting attempts). Martha (a Northern Virginia kayaker) voted for turning back but I suggested pushing on as the only option that “might” get us out of there that day. She suggested some dangerous strainer climbing instead of the long, painful portage ahead and it saved us some much needed daylight. We actually were only about an hour or so away from the cut through to the main river. We arrived back at our cars after dark and way too late to get back for the group dinner.

Ready for some “tame” paddling, I was agreeable to the next choice of the Hillsboro River to our south. The Hillsboro has some Class 1-2 rapids (rock garden type), perhaps some of the most southern mild rapids in the continental US, but those sections were too low to run that day. We did an 8 mile section just outside metropolitan Tampa that was as beautiful as some of the best sections of the

Withlacoochee and Oklawaha.

We eventually moved camp further east and paddled Rock Springs Creek, lower Wekiva River and Tomoka Creek. Rock Springs is perhaps the most beautiful of the trips with a refuge on the north shore and a state park on the south shore. The creek, like many Florida creeks, is tiny and is kept cleared/open by an outfitter. The only mistake that I made was to arrive there on a Tuesday. Both the put in and take out (private properties) are closed Mondays and Tuesdays. Thus it was another hiking day. We also ran into some Maryland paddlers while in that area. We also ran into mosquitoes at camp; thousands of very hungry mosquitoes. Made me long for the days when only gators were of a concern.

I'll probably do another three week trip in central Florida this coming winter and y'all are welcome. If you are interested in do-

ing your own trip, here are some useful resources:

Guidebooks: many good choices here. I use [A Canoeing and Kayaking Guide to Florida](#).

DeLorme Atlas: a necessity for finding obscure river access points, and it has info on many good runs.

Florida state web sites: the state is divided into 5 Water Management Districts and each district has a web site with useful info. The state Greenways site also has great info. Also check state forest, state parks sites, etc.

Clubkayak.com: a nice site with maps, etc. Other web sites have scheduled trips that you can glom on to (Sierra Club, etc.), but mostly weekend trips or info on particular parts of Florida (outfitter web sites, etc). Many, many paddling clubs too.

Other national commercial outdoor sites — many choices (GORP, etc).

## **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.

## North Florida Biking and Kayaking, January 2007

by Bob Youker

We started in Jacksonville on the Jacksonville-Baldwin Rail Trail (14.5 miles) Lovely paved trail, mostly under trees. Hard headwind and I wished I had started in Baldwin to ride west to east with the wind. These trails are written up in the newly published Rails-Trails southeast guide book. Also available on their web site. North Florida can be quite cold in January. First two days were in the 50s but warmed up to low 70s after a few days.

Next day to historic town of White Springs and bicycling two ways the 3.5 mile paved Woodpecker Trail in the Big Shoals recreation area north of town. Lots of unpaved mountain bike trails including one to see Big Shoals, the only "white water" in Florida. Good access to the Suwannee River for kayaking. Lots of nice paved roads in town and at the Stephen Foster State Park there. Other river access at Suwannee River State Park and Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park (canoe outpost).

Next day to the Suwannee River Greenway trail at Branford (11.5 miles) Good view of the Little River spring near the start of the trail. Trail ends at Ichetucknee River where there is excellent kayaking (upstream and down). Susan did several trips on it. The tram road makes a good bike path in the state park. In Branford the Ivey Memorial Park is right on the river with good access for kayaking.

There is also a bike trail now from Ichetucknee River (State Park) to O'Leno State Park near High Springs town along Rt. 27

and Rt. 18 to Rt. 41-441 (about 12 miles). There is good access near High Springs at several places on the Santa Fe River including upstream paddling to the "river rise" off Rt. 41-441.

Next day from Trenton to Fanning Springs and Old Town on the Nature Coast Trail, about eight miles.

Next day: The Gainesville - Hawthorne trail is about 16 miles long and traverses lovely country and is shaded most of its length. It starts in very interesting Boulware Spring Park, site of the original Gainesville Water Supply System. Stayed in Silver Springs where there is access to the Silver River at the Ocala boat basin on the Ocklawaha River.

Next day: kayaked the Rainbow Springs river 3.5 miles from K.P. Hole county park to Rt. 484 in Dunnellon. Then biked the Withlacoochee State Trail from start in Citrus Springs 16 miles to Inverness. Stayed in a bungalow at Nobleton Canoe Outpost on Withlacoochee River where you can kayak up or down river.

Next day biked 16 miles on Withlacoochee Trail from south end to Nobleton. Kayaked down the river and next day kayaked up the river. Finished the last 15 miles on trail for total of 46 miles.

Next day biked 9 miles on the General Van Fleet trail and drove to Mission Inn in Howley Hills for some luxury. Biked 7 miles on the west end of the West Orange Trail, also called South Lake trail in Clermont.

Next day did 7 miles on the east end of the West Orange trail in

Apopka and moved to an apartment in Mt. Dora..

Next day did 14 miles on the Seminole-Wekiva trail north of Orlando and kayaked the Dora Canal near Mt. Dora.

Next day Susan kayaked the Wekiva River at Wekiva Falls.

Next day was rainy and we toured the town of Mt. Dora.

Next day biked the Cross Seminole Trail at Oviedo.

Next day Susan kayaked the Wekiva River and Rock Springs Run at Wekiva Marina and I biked the roads in Wekiwa Springs State Park.

Next day we went up to Alexander Springs and Juniper Springs. Susan kayaked from the spring down to the bridge and back at Alexander Springs and finished the day kayaking on Lake Dora.

The next day I biked on the 10 miles round trip on the Baseline trail near Ocala at the Baseline Road trailhead. Susan kayaked on the Silver River at the Ocala Marina.

Next day was very cold and we just visited De Leon Springs from our cabin at Oklawaha River Canoe Outpost near Ft McCoy. The river has great paddling.

Notes: There are canoe rental set ups in each of the state parks on rivers. In addition I used 6 canoe outposts in Florida as follows (some have cabins and camping):

1. American Canoe Adventures, Suwannee River - White Springs: 386-397-1309

2. Suwannee Canoe Outpost, north

*(Continued on page 7)*

## **Pohick & Accotink Creeks, New Year's Day, 2007**

### **by Ron Knipling**

After a nice overnight ~1" rain on New Years Eve, Frank Fico and I braved a wet New Year's morning and headed to one of the best nearby whitewater streams, Pohick Creek. There is no USGS gauge on Pohick, but Accotink Creek is nearby and parallel, and had peaked at 660cfs that morning. We knew that Pohick would be running at a nice level, and sure enough it was at +1' on the RC gauge at the Rt. 1 takeout. We opted for a shorter trip than usual, putting in at Lake Pleasant Drive instead of the usual Hooes Road. This puts you on the stream just a few rapids above the best rapid, Double Z. At this level, Double Z was actually padded somewhat, although still squirrely. My trajectory through it was entirely ballistic but, thankfully, upright. Further downstream were a few strainers, the most dangerous of which was just above Lorton Road near the end of the run. A large tree across the creek looks fairly benign on the approach but the current under it is just strong enough to flip a boat and possibly entrap a boater underneath. Frank challenged it gallantly, broaching on the tree and pulling his boat across, but I eschewed valor and discretely dragged my boat past it on the left bank. In another place, the creek braided with no unblocked routes so we had some short boat carries. Lorelei Rapids just above the takeout was particularly lively at this level and made a nice grand finale.

Doing the short version of Pohick gave us time to also do a nearby ~3 mile section of Accotink between the off-limits Engineering Proving Ground and Fort Belvoir. We put in behind a warehouse at the end of Ward Park Road, off of Yarnwood and Fullerton Roads. You need a map to find this. It was a ~200 yard boat drag down an embankment, but we found Accotink cranking at a nice level. This was a first-time run for me and I found this section of Accotink to be fast and fun. The takeout was at a pumphouse-like building on river left just below the Telegraph Road bridge, and accessible from Telegraph.

This short Pohick/Accotink combo was definitely superior to a single longer run on Pohick. Also, Accotink is a bit larger than Pohick so it might be a good fallback run on days when Pohick is too scrapey. Later I checked the USGS Accotink water level graph and found that it was falling to ~300cfs during the time we were on the two creeks. In all, this was a fine way to start 2007. Too bad our BRV brethren were too hung over from New Year's Eve debauchery to join us!

## **Catoctin Creek, MD, Near Middletown**

### **by Ron Knipling**

In my desperate quest for new river experiences, I identified an 8-mile stretch of Catoctin Creek near Middletown, MD that I had never paddled. On Wednesday, February 28, amid melting snow, I drove up there with car, boat, and bike. I expected the predicted sunny skies and 50+ degree temperatures for the day to raise the creek above its 150cfs overnight level, but it actually dropped during the day to 120cfs in spite of the snowmelt. But I never had to get out of my boat, so by definition it wasn't subzero!

*FLORIDA (Continued from page 6)*  
of Live Oak: 386-364-4991

3. Santa Fe River Canoe Outpost, High Springs: 386-454-2050
4. Ocklawaha Canoe Outpost- Eureka: 352-236-4606
5. Nobleton Canoe Outpost, Withlacoochee River (South): 1-800-783-5284
6. Wekiva Falls Resort, Sorrento: 407-830-9828

My trip began and ended at the Rt. 17 bridges over Catoctin, the first near Myersville and the second below Middletown. The gradient here is a respectable 28'/mile, though almost all the rapids are Class 1. It's a quiet, pastoral section with a few rock formations and some lovely original and restored farmhouses and barns. Near the Station Road bridge is a small half-timbered log cabin in mint condition, as are the stone walls around the adjacent field. There were the usual assortment of aquatic birds, and a beaver seemed enthralled by my surprise presence on his pool.

## Costa Rica Rios! by Ron Knipling

During the week of February 17-24, Bob Kimmel and I joined eight other U.S. and Canadian boaters for a week of Class 2-4 rivers with *Costa Rica Rios*. CRR offers a very affordable (\$1,500 + travel) week of rivers based in Turrialba, C.R., about 120 km east of San Jose in the Central Highland region. Nine of the 10 paddlers were open-boaters, and CRR provided excellent accommodations, equipment, and river guidance. I hope to give a presentation of the trip in an upcoming BRV meeting, but here is a summary of the rivers paddled:

Day 1: Pejibaye (flowing into the Reventazon): Class 2-3 small river, similar in rapids to the upper Smokehole.

Day 2 (after a big rain the night before): Class 2-3 Sardinal River, similar to Passage Creek.

Day 3: Middle Sarapiqui at 2,000-3,000cfs, a big turbulent river somewhat like Bloomington at that level. Part of our group did the easier Lower Sarapiqui.

Day 4: Upper Pejibaye, a small Class 3 stream that reminded Bob of the Tellico.

Day 5: Six miles of the Class 2-3+ "Upper-Lower" Pacuare in hard boats. This section is like the Yough or Cheat, and was the best all-around run of the week.

Day 6: Rafting 15 miles of the Class 2-4 Lower Pacuare.

The first five days were mostly in hard boats, mostly OC-1s, and the last was in rafts. We had no major river mishaps, although one fellow did take a few open boat swims early in the week and then switched to rafting. One of the rafts was a Shredder, the ultimate divorce boat. The slightest miscue or asynchrony between the two paddlers throws the boat off line. Even mild-mannered Bob became a menacing beast after just 45 minutes together with me on the Shredder.

All of these rivers had excel-

lent scenery and lots of wildlife, though the Pacuare surpassed all others and is a truly World Class river. Most nights were spent in the CRR hotel in Turrialba, but two nights were at ecolodge-type facilities, one a rainforest resort called Recreo Verde between river days 2 and 3, and another at CRR's river outpost on the Pacuare between days 5 and 6. The latter was particularly tropical and idyllic, like a Henri Rousseau painting [see photo below].

The other paddlers on the trip were from Colorado (the biggest contingent), Maine, and Ontario. There were four CRR river guides, all from the U.S. or Canada. Two of them, Don and Bettina George, are fellow late-middle-agers who normally work for NOC but spend part of the year in Latin America.

I highly recommend this outfitter and trip. The entire trip was well-organized and generally first-rate. The accommodations weren't luxurious, but they were clean and comfortable. All meals were provided and they were hearty and nutritious. Costa Rica temperatures are almost always in the 70s and 80s, and the biodiversity of the tropical plants and animals is spectacular. For example, we saw many three-toed sloths on the trip, and even rescued one that was crossing a busy highway. All part of the fun in this dazzling paradise.



## Last Run by Tom Masters

*[reprinted from Coastal CaNews, newsletter of the Coastal Canoeists, Summer 2006]*

Have any of you ever known it was the last run? Not the last run of the day or even the last run of the year. But truly the last run you'll ever make. I have had that privilege.

It was in late September, a little over six months after being diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease). My muscles had started to weaken and there was the constant cramping to deal with. I had mostly been concerned with what might happen if I put someone else in jeopardy. So I had been out of the water for nearly a year. But after a fair amount of coaxing and the promised use of a duckie, I thought, "what the heck, let's give it one more try." After all it was the Mongaup *[a dam release run like the Bloomington for NYC-area paddlers — Ed.]*. In basketball terms it was a slam-dunk on the home court.

So, a small but selective team was put together. Roger, Tom and Dave were there for me. All were strong paddlers, all strong men and all good guys. I just had one proviso: if by some chance I got into a precarious situation, they had to promise to not put themselves in jeopardy. With that agreement made, off we went.

On the way down to the put-in I was already showing some of the impact of my disease. As I clumsily made my way into the duckie, I made a casual remark to a stranger about how I used to be pretty good at this. He replied with "we all are getting a little older." Honestly, my first reaction was to think about jabbing him with my paddle. But

instead I just realized the humor in the situation.

So off we went. I have to admit a little trepidation when we hit the first rapid. After sailing through it without any problems, I started to relax. Soon, I was starting to feel like my old self. Moves would soon come back to me. I even went so far as to entertain the possibility of another run on a more difficult river. Well, that thought was soon to be extinguished.

The day was beautiful. The company was simply the best. Everything was right. Onward we paddled, laughing together, not a care in the world.

As we came upon the last long set of rapids, I was really starting to feel my oats. So, what the heck, I thought. I should try a little surfing. As I slipped onto the wave everything felt perfect. Back and forth I rode. The hoots from my companions spurred me onward. I leaned forward to gain a little speed and then started to lean back to slow down a bit. Next thing I knew, I was staring at the sky. I was incapable of righting myself. My abdominal muscles had become too weak. But I was still surfing. I stayed that way for quite some time. My pals probably thought that I was just trying to (lamely) show off. Finally I figured I better try and get off the wave. Much to my surprise I was able to slide off safely, but I was still lying flat on my back. To top it all off I couldn't stop laughing hysterically.

Between the sounds of the rapids and my hysterical laughter, my

paddling partners did not initially grasp what was going on. When they did, they rushed to my side. Tom quickly tried to help me into an upright position. Unfortunately, I could not help him in the least. As he struggled in vain it was not long before I rolled out of the duckie.

Now the three of them were truly worried. When I finally popped my head through the surface I still could not keep from hysterical laughter. Roger was quickly there for me to hold onto his boat. Only I was no longer strong enough to hold on. Dave had righted the duckie and was calling for me to climb in. As he reached across the duckie to grab onto me, Roger and Tom tried to lift me into the boat. They must now know how the handlers at Sea World feel when they try and move Shamu around.

On down through the rapids we went. Three very determined guys trying to save a friend, while they were probably not quite sure if the friend had gone insane. At least his laughter would have indicated so.

As I said before — three strong paddlers, all strong men, all good guys. They would not quit until they got me back into the duckie. They ultimately got me into the boat and even managed to get me into proper paddling position. Unfortunately only a handful of strokes were left and we were at the take-out.

My encounter with reality was not quite over yet. To get to the

*(Continued on page 10)*

*LAST RUN (Continued from page 9)*

parking lot from the take-out requires a short uphill climb. I was on all fours like a baby with someone pushing my butt the whole way. And there was still that infernal laughter.

I referred to this experience as a privilege and it truly was. Upon hearing the story, Dave's brother referred to it as a "near life" experience. I very much like this description. To have experienced just a little bit more of life's goodness with wonderful people, even knowing it was the last time I would ever do so, was truly a privilege.

My sincere thanks to this superb group and to anyone who has ever shared life on the river with me.

*The author lives in Berkeley Heights, NJ and is a member of the Kayak and Canoe Club of New York. He is an engineer, married with two daughters. He was diagnosed with ALS three years ago and is now in the final stages of the disease.*

### **Cabin John Creek by Ron Knipling**

The cutest little whitewater stream in the DC metro area is Cabin John Creek. On Friday, March 2, after a  $\frac{3}{4}$ " overnight rain, I caught Cabin John at a nice level of 4-5", putting in at River Road and taking out at the Clara Barton Parkway. This 3-mile section drops at about 40'/mile and has numerous Class 2 rapids, as well as one sequence of closely spaced rapids that is low 3. If you don't want to run a conventional vehicle shuttle, you can hike most of the way back to the put-in on the Cabin John Trail on river right. The Clara Barton takeout for this section is a little tricky. On the river, there is a mandatory left eddy just above the culverts going under the C&O Canal. This area is not dangerous at most levels but could be if the creek is very high. You pull your boat up a rocky bank to a short gravel road that joins the parkway just below the end of the bridge. You could park a vehicle on this gravel road, or park it on nearby MacArthur Blvd., which is accessible by a path and stairway. Anyway, Cabin John is a great little nearby run.

### **Potomac River Watershed Cleanup Saturday, March 31, 9 am - noon, various locations**

The Alice Ferguson Foundation ([www.potomaccleanup.org](http://www.potomaccleanup.org)) has led this large-scale cleanup since 1989, and has incorporated the help of more than 35,000 volunteers and 250 partner organizations, including Potomac Conservancy. This year the Conservancy will be represented at several sites in the watershed, including:

- C&O Canal, Pennyfield Lock and-Carderock-Lock 10
- Riverbend Park, Great Falls, VA

The following sites are for canoe- and kayak-based volunteers only:

- Roosevelt Island/Spout Run, VA
- Sharpshin and Tenfoot Islands/Algonkian Regional Park Boat Ramp, Sterling, Virginia

Join us at one of sites listed above or manage your own site. For more information, contact Bryan Seipp at [seipp@potomac.org](mailto:seipp@potomac.org), 301.608.1188 x207.

### **2007 BRV Conservation Contributions**

The BRV Board decided in their January meeting to make the following disbursements from the BRV Conservation Fund to help protect the rivers we love to paddle:

Potomac Conservancy ([www.potomac.org](http://www.potomac.org)): \$75  
 American Whitewater ([www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org)): \$75  
 Friends of the Rappahannock ([www.riverfriends.org](http://www.riverfriends.org)): \$50  
 West Virginia Rivers Coalition ([www.wvrivers.org](http://www.wvrivers.org)): \$50  
 Friends of the Cheat ([www.cheat.org](http://www.cheat.org)): \$50  
 Friends of the Shenandoah River ([www.fosr.org](http://www.fosr.org)): \$50  
 Cacapon Institute ([www.cacaponinstitute.org](http://www.cacaponinstitute.org)): \$50  
 Alice Ferguson Foundation ([www.hardbargainfarm.org](http://www.hardbargainfarm.org)): \$50  
 The River Network ([www.rivernetnetwork.org](http://www.rivernetnetwork.org)): \$50

**BRV TREASURER'S REPORT**  
**STATEMENTS OF CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS**

	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	Budget <u>2007</u>
Cash Balance, January 1	\$ 2,021	\$ 2,383	\$ 2,118	\$2,310	\$ 2,097
Receipts					
Memberships	2,035	1,425	1,905	1,245	1,500
Other	75	-	-	-	-
	<u>2,110</u>	<u>1,425</u>	<u>1,905</u>	<u>1,245</u>	<u>1,500</u>
Disbursements					
Phone	233	194	64	-	-
Equipment	22	42	615	111	200
Newsletter	1,236	895	835	751	800
Xmas Party/Picnic	147	100	30	416	400
Bank Charges	-	-	12	21	30
Web Site	60	134	130	129	150
Transfer	-	212	-	-	-
Other	50	113	27	30	50
	<u>1,748</u>	<u>1,690</u>	<u>1,713</u>	<u>1,458</u>	<u>1,630</u>
Cash Balance, December 31	<u>\$ 2,383</u>	<u>\$ 2,118</u>	<u>\$ 2,310</u>	<u>\$2,097</u>	<u>\$ 1,967</u>
Members	<u>138</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>127</u>	<u>83</u>	<u>100</u>
<b>Conservation Fund</b>					
Cash Balance, January 1	\$ 828	\$ 413	\$ -	\$ 20	\$ 342
Receipts:					
Conservation	585	375	520	322	300
Transfer	-	212	-	-	-
Disbursements:					
Conservation	<u>(1,000)</u>	<u>(1,000)</u>	<u>(500)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(500)</u>
Cash Balance, December 31	<u>\$ 413</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 20</u>	<u>\$ 342</u>	<u>\$ 142</u>
Flood Relief Fund	<u>\$ 500</u>	<u>\$ 500</u>	<u>\$ 500</u>	<u>\$ 500</u>	<u>\$ 500</u>

## 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 14 (Moonlight Picnic), September TBD, November TBD, December 8 (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 West exit and go about 0.6 miles west 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 BRV'ers. 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](mailto: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 BRV'ers. 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 editor.

Address changes: contact Frank Fico, 1609 Autumnwood Dr., Reston, VA 20194-1523, (703) 318-7998, [fico1@netzero.net](mailto: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

### ***In this issue...***

- Trip reports:
  - Gravatt's "Southern" trip (p. 2)
  - Florida (pp. 4 & 6)
  - Costa Rica (p. 8)
  - Pohick/Accotink Creeks (p. 7)
  - Catoctin Creek, MD (p. 7)
  - and more! (pp. 9 & 10)

**Deadline for May Voyageur:**  
Friday, April 27

**NEXT MEETING**  
**Monday, March 19**

**2007 Membership Roster and Trip Schedule included  
with this issue — see center insert.**