

THE VOYAGEUR



www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org

March 2009

THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

Winter is almost over. I finally got frustrated and paddled the last day of February after my longest time ever out of a boat. Our group of five braved a launch temp of 28 and a take out temp of 37 and it seemed quite comfortable as no one in the group found it cold. Must have been because we were all warm inside from finally getting into our boats! For those who do not paddle in the winter, hopefully things will warm up soon.

Thanks to Frank Fico for putting together his presentation on his trip down the Salmon which was well received at the January Meeting. It was nice to see some footage filmed from a moving raft for a change of perspective.

Looking forward to the March meeting we will have Keith Merkel and Mike Gilchrist, presenting their Canadian voyages. Please mark your calendars for the 10th and come on out. If anyone has a trip or other presentation they would like to present to the group in 2009, please let me know.

I hope 2009 brings us some well-needed water, although it looks about as promising as the economic outlook right now. Perhaps we should paddle to the Capitol and request a precipitation bailout package :)

Jim

Little Falls, 4 January 2009

by Len Rice

In mid to late December, I took advantage of the recent rains to surf the middle chute in the 5 foot range and Rocky Island around 4.2 feet. There were 3-4 other boaters at each location, allowing for little waiting time and premium conditions for old school bow surfers like me. I was a little disappointed that levels had fallen to 3.8 feet by January 4, my next opportunity to boat, but I had never run Little Falls at this level so I figured this was a good option for a solo run. As it turned out, I was glad to have been paddling alone that day, as this trip provided some unexpected and awkward challenges. The temperature that day was in the 40s as I put on at Brookmont. I decided that I would paddle aggressively on the upper portion, scout and probably run Little Falls, and try to maintain a good pace back up the canal.

I bombed down the wood-free channel from the

feeder canal to the main part of the river and enjoyed the open ferry to the Virginia side, not having to pick my way through the usual rock garden. Few surfing waves with eddy access existed through the first several rapids, although there were plenty of standing waves that one might be able to catch on the fly. On scouting, Little Falls appeared pretty straightforward on the left, and I actually found it easier at this level than in the lower threes, where two more powerful diagonal waves greet you at the runout.

Satisfied with a successful run, I headed up to the canal where there were a few visible chunks of ice floating on an otherwise tranquil canal. I got back into the RPM and launched into the canal, where a solid thud of 3/4" ice greeted me, then the slow cracking sound of the ice as my boat settled into the water. After sev-

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Book Review: *River of Doubt*, by Candice Millard

Reviewed by Ron Knipling

[*Spoiler Alert*: This review tells the whole story!]

Poor planning, lousy equipment, unskilled paddlers, inadequate provisions, no maps, threats of hostilities from the locals, internal discord, a schism in the leadership, long portages, unrunnable rapids, smashed boats, washed-away gear, and lost boaters. Sound like just another typical BRV trip? No, this was a 1914 river descent involving a U.S. President, Theodore Roosevelt.

Teddy Roosevelt was the most energetic, impulsive, and adventurous of our presidents. Roosevelt was daring and exuberant, both in his politics and his personal life. He was a naturalist, big game hunter, world traveler, and war hero. But in 1912 he was in the doldrums. Roosevelt had become President with the assassination of William McKinley in 1901, and was re-elected for a second term in 1904. In 1908, he chose not to run, deferring to fellow Republican Robert Taft. But he decided he wanted the presidency back, so he formed the Bull Moose Party and in 1912 ran against Taft and Democrat Woodrow Wilson. Roosevelt and Taft split the Republican vote, and Wilson became President. Roosevelt felt betrayed and rejected, and began to seek an intense physical adventure to take his mind off his wrecked political career.

But Roosevelt was still world-renowned as a progressive American leader, innovator, and adventurer. He was invited to South America for a high-level diplomatic tour, and for exploration. A

number of American naturalists, explorers, and publicity-seekers developed a plan for a first descent of an Amazon River tributary called the "River of Doubt" because its course and point-of-confluence with the main Amazon were unknown. Roosevelt was to lead the expedition together with Colonel Cândido Rondon, Brazil's most famous explorer. He was accompanied by his young adult son Kermit, several American naturalists and explorers, and soldiers under the command of Colonel Rondon.

The trip began in Paraguay, with more than two months of overland travel into Brazil and the headwaters of the River of Doubt. Many of the explorers dropped out or were asked to leave the expedition before it ever reached the river. The group putting on the river consisted of about 20 men, mostly soldiers under the command of Rondon. Most of the seven boats starting the trip were huge, cumbersome, and extremely heavy dugout canoes. Once on the river, progress was very slow. There were many obstacles, including unrunnable rapids requiring portages. Mosquitoes were unrelenting, and the group was on constant lookout for hostile natives. Hostilities between settlers and natives were a regular occurrence in the Brazilian jungle, and this was the first group of outsiders to venture down the uncharted river.

During the two-month descent (covering 500-600 miles), several

boats were smashed in rapids, and the group had to make extended stops to build new boats. Much gear was lost, and one boater drowned in a rapid. Food was rationed. One soldier was an outcast who stole food from the group's supplies. When accused, he hid in the jungle and then murdered one of the other soldiers looking for him. He then disappeared into the jungle for good, though he was seen briefly about a week later. He is presumed to have died.

Roosevelt hurt his leg and developed a severe infection. Meanwhile, his son Kermit and many others suffered from malaria. Late in the trip, Roosevelt was near death and contemplated suicide because he considered himself a burden to the group. Throughout the expedition, Roosevelt pushed to keep the group moving (in the face of starvation), but Rondon, adamant to document the course of the river, argued for a slower pace to complete the mapping. Finally, after weeks of starvation, they came upon some settlers who had migrated upriver from the Amazon. The settlers provided food and better boats for the completion of the trip. They were, of course, astounded to see the famous U.S. President among the motley group of sick, starving canoeists coming down the river.

The river was renamed the Rio Theodore Roosevelt. News of the expedition and Roosevelt's near-death spread quickly throughout the western world. When he re-

covered several months later, Roosevelt gave speeches on his trip to geographic societies in New York and London. But for months there was open speculation that the trip had been a hoax. Finally, Roosevelt, his son, and Rondon convinced the world that it really happened. Although the trip was hailed as a triumph, the once-vibrant Roosevelt never fully recovered physically, and died just five years later at age 61.

This was an enthralling book. Great history, and also an instructive story about human foibles. Part of the problem was Roosevelt's own brash sense of overconfidence and indestructibility. It's a wonder that only three men died in the descent. One thing missing from the book is a modern perspective on the rapids. The author described the rapids as difficult, dangerous, deadly, and impassable, but never described them in contemporary paddling terms, such as class ratings. This would have been relatively easy to do, if she had consulted present-day river or tour guides. The book featured no whitewater jargon. As a paddler, I kept wanting to read more words and phrases like "boulder garden," "hole," "weak boat," "windowshaded," and "sneak route."

LITTLE FALLS (Continued from page 1)

eral attempts at icebreaking, each providing me with about 2-3 feet of progress, I stopped to consider my options. Perhaps the ice would thin out further up the canal. Or maybe the ice was thinner on the opposite side.

While I sat there considering my options, I tried to look inconspicuous as the occasional jogger passed by. In between joggers I backed up my boat and took aim at the opposite side of the canal, my final plan being to leave my boat in the woods adjacent to Canal Road and walk back to Brookmont, retrieving my boat on the drive out. Now an older couple came walking up the tow path, so I patiently waited until they passed before attempting my push to the other side. When I thought they were out of earshot, I paddled forward aggressively and rode up on the ice until it gave in under the weight of the boat. Whereas the other passers-by seemed oblivious to my embarrassing situation, this older woman turned around and looked curiously at me. I waited until she resumed walking and backed up to try to attempt the next three

feet. Again, she turned around, this time catching me in my charge towards the next section of ice. Abandoning any sense of pride, I forged ahead, eventually crossing the canal after about seven charges.

The walk back to Brookmont was pleasant enough and actually afforded new views of the river that you can only achieve by walking. On the way, another boater in a truck passed me going east on Canal Road. I can only imagine what he was thinking. I did notice that the ice sheet seemed to thin out closer to Brookmont, but hiking was definitely the best option for the circuit. The next time I plan on a cold weather run of Little Falls, I'll bring another boater and set shuttle, or bring a rope and tow my boat over the ice using the towpath!

By the way, if you like the USGS Little Falls Gauge at http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/nwisman/?site_no=01646500&agency_cd=USGS, you'll love the NWS Little Falls Predictor at <http://newweb.erh.noaa.gov/ahps2/hydrograph.php?wfo=lxw&gage=brkm2&view=1,1,1,1,1,1>

EddyFlower Vertical Challenge

[From an email solicitation sent to BRV. I will collect names of anyone interested in participating in a BRV team, or it can be coordinated through the message board on the BRV website. — Editor]

EddyFlower proudly presents the third annual EddyFlower Vertical Challenge. The challenge is simple: Teams of five paddle as much gradient as possible in 32 days. This year we are introducing new functionality that will allow paddling clubs to compete with other clubs from around the country to see which club can rack up the most donations and vertical. We will automatically track the total club, team, and individual vertical as well as donations in the competition. The club with the most vertical at the end of 32 days of paddling will be crowned Top Club. There are no limits to how many people can be affiliated with a club. So the more people

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Help Clean Up the Rivers You Love to Paddle

by Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation Chair

On Saturday, April 4, 2009, BRV paddlers will once again participate in the annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup. It is a wonderful opportunity to give something back to the river for all the joy it gives to us!

The Potomac River Watershed Cleanup has been organized every year for the past twenty years by the Alice Ferguson Foundation. (See www.hardbargainfarm.org.) Last year's cleanup recovered over 291 tons of trash, including more than 18 tons of recyclables, 2,625 tires, 13,000 balls, 25 bicycles, 26 shopping carts, 6 TVs and 2 bathtubs. The 2008 Cleanup took place at over 300 locations in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and West Virginia — all part of the Potomac watershed.

Paddlers play a critical role in river cleanups. Once trash gets into our rivers, it makes its way downstream and piles up on islands and remote shores beyond our land-bound neighbors' reach. But with our boats, we can access these remote piles of unsightly rubbish, bag the stuff, and haul it back to shore. Then we leave our bulging trash bags piled up neatly in a parking lot. The Alice Ferguson Foundation will send garbage trucks to pick them up later.

I will once again organize a cleanup trip especially for paddlers. I still have to choose a site, so call me if you have a suggestion. Or — if you're feeling especially energetic — organize your own trip at the river-access-point of your choice. Please check the BRV trip schedule or call me for more information. I can be reached at kathleen456@verizon.net or (301) 649-3917. We all know trash is a disgusting sight on a river trip! Let's get together and clean it up!

Environmental News

by Ed Evangeldi

From the *Potomac Basin Reporter*: There is a program now east of the Anacostia River to plant trees and beginning sometime in this spring, the program will be expanded to homeowners D.C.-wide. The DOE does a landscape audit of your property and provides up to \$1200 in free landscape improvements.

The 2008 USGS budget crunch resulted in the closure of three area gauges: North Branch Potomac @ Pinto, Potomac @ Williamsport and Tuscarora Creek, Md. This was from an initial threatened closure of eleven area gauges. The problem is that the budget only allows USGS to fund less than 30% of the cost of maintaining gauges. More than 800 other entities contribute to maintaining 7500 stream gauges nationwide. Average annual expense is \$13,000 per gauge.

From the *Highlands Voice* (WV): A coalition of environmental groups have filed a suit in federal court to try and overturn a Bush-era rule change that allows mining operators to ignore stream buffers in mining and filling operations. Between 1985 and 2001, 724 miles of Appalachian streams had been buried by mine operators.

“Clean coal” requires the removal of the “dirty” byproduct and putting it somewhere. In late 2008, 5.4 million cubic yards (or more) of coal waste broke loose in Tennessee and inundated two valleys. The ash is laden with many heavy metals that are toxic to humans and others. To see some of this, go to: www.ilovemountains.org/tvaspill/ I note that ash is used to help neutralize mine acid drainage (e.g., Cheat basin near Albright), but the toxic metals are often not removed from the remediation operations. In a 2007 Pennsylvania study, of 15 sites where ash was used to “improve” old mine sites; the ash in 10 of the sites pol-

BRV Supports River Conservation Groups by Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation Chair

This year, BRV continues our tradition of supporting conservation groups that work to protect the rivers we enjoy. The Board agreed to distribute a total of \$500 in donations among eight deserving organizations. The organizations are described below:

Alice Ferguson Foundation (\$100) shares the wonder and excitement of the Potomac River with more than 10,000 students from the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Area every year. The Foundation also organizes the annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup, which cleans up rivers and streams throughout the Potomac watershed.
www.hardbargainfarm.org

American Whitewater (\$75) works to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. American Whitewater restores rivers dewatered by hydropower dams, improves management of public lands, and protects public access to rivers for responsible recreational use. www.americanwhitewater.org

Cacapon Institute (\$50) uses science and education to protect rivers and watersheds from the Cacapon to the Potomac to the Chesapeake Bay.
www.cacaponinstitute.org

Friends of the Cheat (\$50) restores, preserves, and promotes the outstanding natural qualities of the Cheat River watershed. Projects include stopping mine drainage, converting abandoned rail lines to rail-trails, guaranteeing recreational access to hikers and boaters, and hosting the Annual Cheat River Festival.
www.cheat.org

Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR, \$50) works to maintain the water quality and scenic beauty of the Rappahannock River and its tributaries. FOR leads public education programs and provides technical support to local governments, developers, and teachers in areas such as watershed planning, water quality monitoring, invasive species control, and streambank restoration.

www.riverfriends.org

Friends of the Shenandoah River (\$50) protects and restores the aquatic environment of the Shenandoah River, which has been adversely affected by a variety of pollutants such as industrial wastes, inadequately treated sewage, solid wastes, erosion, and agricultural and urban run-off. www.fosr.org

Potomac Conservancy (\$75) protects the health, beauty, and enjoyment of the Potomac River and its tributaries through policy initiatives that promote sound land use policies and community programs that engage people in caring for natural resources. The organization also works with landowners to provide practical solutions to those looking to protect creeks and streams. www.potomac.org

West Virginia Rivers Coalition (WVRC, \$50) seeks the conservation and restoration of West Virginia's rivers and streams for the benefit of all who depend upon them: the wildlife that live in the state's watersheds, the people who visit the state for recreation, the people who live along the rivers, and the people who rely upon the water resources for their water supply.
www.wvrivers.org

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS (Continued from previous page)

luted the ground water and nearby creeks. In some ash sites the accumulation is so big that WV has authorized the addition of sulfuric acid to any discharge from containment sites!!!

The George Washington National Forest is revising its management plan for the next 10-15 years. Under consideration are oil and gas drilling, wind farms, timber farming — as well as land preservation. If you use their rivers and trails as much as I do, you might want to Google “George Washington National Forest” and “forest plan revision” to see how your favorite areas might be affected. Many of the long distance trails and scenic trails are threatened. Don't know that Stony Creek or Passage Creek or North River will be affected, but I have not read the proposals.

Canoeing with the Cree, by Eric Severeid

Book Review by Bob Maxey

If the name Eric Severeid seems familiar, it is because he was a famous CBS news commenter in the 1960s and 1970s. Immediately after graduating from high school, he and Walter Port launched a secondhand 18-foot canvas canoe into the Minnesota River at Fort Snelling for an ambitious summer-long journey from Minneapolis to Hudson Bay. Without benefit of radio, motor or good maps, the teenagers made their way over 2,250 miles of rivers, lakes and difficult portages. Nearly four months later, after shooting hundreds of sets of rapids and surviving exceedingly bad advice, the ragged, hungry adventurers arrived in York Factory on Hudson Bay, with winter freeze-up on their heels. Canoeing with the Cree is Eric Severeid's classic account of this incredible odyssey. With a keen eye he describes their journey from peaceful western Minnesota farm country to the granite islands dotting Lake Winnipeg, the rivers and gorges lined with spruce and yellowing birch and poplar, and finally the low marshes and glistening water of Hudson Bay. Severeid and Port faced a land exhilarating in its vastness and frightening in its remoteness. When lost or exhausted, they turned to the Cree Indians, traders and backcountry dwellers for food, shelter and guidance. The newspaper stories that Eric Severeid wrote on this trip launched his distinguished journalism career, which included more than a decade as a television correspondent on the CBS Evening News.

EDDYFLOWER (Continued from page 3)

that get involved, the more vertical and donations your club can rack up, and the higher your club will show in our real time standings report. (Check out last years Standings reports.) All donations raised go directly to First Descents to provide cancer survivors with a free, week long kayak camp.

* The Vertical Challenge opens at sunrise May 15 and closes sunset June 15

* Open to all paddlers (kayakers, canoers, river-boarders, rafters), from all countries, of all skill levels

* Teams and individuals compete for prizes in different divisions

We have tried to make this event accessible to everyone, the only thing we ask is that you:

* Simply register your club name with me and we will add it.

* Talk to and encourage your members to participate in the Vertical Challenge and to paddle for your Vertical Challenge Club.

* Help to promote Vertical Challenge in at least two flyers or newsletters prior to May 15th with material we will provide.

In exchange your organization gets:

* The knowledge that you are helping out a good cause.

* Active involvement in an event that strengthens the identity of your club.

* We will put your banner ad on five rivers of your choice on Eddyflower on a first come, first serve basis for one year. Only one club banner will be displayed per run. Example link to banner: <http://www.eddyflower.com/RunDetail.aspx?RunId=1276>

The EddyFlower Vertical Challenge was a HUGE success in 2008. Here are some of the results from the event.

* \$28,117 raised for First Descents, enough to send 28 young adults with cancer to kayak camp for a week.

* 96 new American Whitewater Memberships

* 1,420,033 vertical feet paddled, equal to 269 miles or 48 sea-to-summit on Mt. Everest

* 3,528 total laps paddled

* 200 competitors

* 48 teams from 12 states

* \$14,000 in prizes

* Over 1,200 eligible runs in 31 states

Contact me at your earliest convenience to have your club set up! If you have any questions or comments, please let me know. Thank you, and have a nice day!

Cheers,

Matthew Rensel

Matthew@eddyflower.com

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

	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>Budget 2009</u>
Cash Balance, January 1	\$ 2,115	\$ 2,310	\$2,097	\$ 1,895	\$ 1,993
Receipts					
Memberships	1,908	1,245	1,353	1,281	1,300
Xmas Party	-	-	255	-	165
	<u>1,908</u>	<u>1,245</u>	<u>1,608</u>	<u>1,281</u>	<u>1,465</u>
Disbursements					
Phone	66	-	-	-	-
Equipment	615	111	-	-	-
Newsletter	835	751	696	402	500
Xmas Party/Picnic	30	416	721	424	700
Bank Charges	12	21	118	9	20
Web Site	130	120	160	158	180
Other	27	30	115	192	200
	<u>1,715</u>	<u>1,458</u>	<u>1,810</u>	<u>1,183</u>	<u>1,600</u>
Cash Balance, December 31	\$ 2,310	\$ 2,097	\$1,895	\$ 1,993	\$ 1,858
Members	<u>127</u>	<u>87</u>	<u>93</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>90</u>
Conservation Fund					
Cash Balance, January 1	\$ -	\$ 70	\$ 342	\$ 174	\$ 154
Receipts:					
Conservation	520	322	332	480	400
Disbursements:					
Conservation	<u>(500)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(500)</u>	<u>(500)</u>	<u>(500)</u>
Cash Balance, December 31	\$ 20	\$ 342	\$ 174	\$ 154	\$ 54
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 2009: January 28, March 10, May TBD, August 1 (Moonlight Picnic), September TBD, November TBD, December 5 (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.

2009 BRV Officers: Jim Pruitt, President; Lou Campagna, VP; Jenny Thomas, Trip Coordinator; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation.

2009 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.com), 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.com. 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 May *Voyageur*:
Friday, May 1st

NEXT MEETING
Tuesday, March 10th

**2009 Membership Roster and Trip Schedule included
in this newsletter!**