

# THE VOYAGEUR



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

September 2011

## THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

Summer is winding down and the Fall traditions are about to begin. Gauley season and the New River Rendezvous always provide excellent entertainment. And speaking of traditions, the BRV moonlight picnic had very good timing this year. We all assembled at Violet's lock as usual but the weather was definitely putting the "Dither" in us all. Various rainstorms and nasty cloud formations greeted us as we parked our cars at the put in. At least one person had some sense and bailed on the trip but not before leaving his contribution to the dinner. We decided to press on despite the threatening skies and, as it turned out, the weather stabilized and we found a suitable gravel bar for the festivities. The evening turned out to be a fantastic one, no bugs, no rain, perfect temperature and of course good food and company. There happened to be a convenient pile of firewood at the site and Ryan Mills, Jamie and Kerry Fico built a grand fire for our post meal enjoyment. The group stayed out until about 10:00pm and headed back to the Canal in the moonlight as planned. Mike Martin and Daryl Hall led me, Wendy, and Phil Dimodica (Phil was up from Charleston S.C. for a visit and decided to join up with part of his old crew) down the river to Pennyfield Lock in the moonlight for our take out. It was not that easy to see the entrance to the creek and we hugged the river bank so we wouldn't miss it. Going back up the creek to the parking lot was not as easy as expected; we had to get out of our boats a couple times to negotiate shallow water in the darkness. Still, it was a good time and it was good to see everyone and get to talk to Phil D. after several years of his absence.

The next meeting is Tuesday Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> and the presentation is TBA. If anyone has some interesting pictures or chili recipes to share with us let me know. I will email the membership as the meeting date approaches for an update as usual.

Rick



### **Good Day, Irene!** **Pohick Creek, August 28th** by Frank Fico

**Level:** *Accotink Creek USGS gauge:* 350-100 cfs  
*Rt. 1 RC gauge:* +2"— -3"

**Participants:** *Upper put-in:* Courtney Caldwell, Mike Martin, Alan Dickerson, Ken Cohen, Mike Weiss, Jim Mallard, Mark Wray, Mark Barker  
*Lower put-in:* Frank Fico, Kim Buttleman, Jenny Thomas, Wes Mills, Wes Bryden, Larry Lempert, Len Rice. (About half OC-1 and half K-1.)

*(Continued on page 2)*

*POHICK (Continued from page 1)*

It was every whitewater boaters' dream: a hurricane hitting during the hottest and driest part of the year to breathe life into all the free-flowing rivers we can catch only in the spring. The BRV email list was abuzz for days before, but we all had to play a waiting game to see just where Hurricane Irene was going to track. Boaters were looking for a more westerly track, which would put water in the higher gradient streams of the piedmont and Blue Ridge. Of course, this track would also wreak more havoc and destruction upon the region (as what ultimately happened in up-state NY and Vermont), so it was probably a good compromise that Irene took a track that limited boatable runoff around here to fall-line runs along the I-95 corridor.

I was feeling somewhat left out because I had a commitment to volunteer at my church Sunday morning that I really couldn't get out of. Early Sunday, I checked the rainfall amounts and verified there would be enough water to run the fall-line creeks. I saw that Mike Martin had posted a trip to be determined after the weather and road conditions had stabilized. He had mentioned Pohick Creek as a possibility, which gave me hope because Pohick's location in southern Fairfax County meant I could get through my commitment and make a 2:00 meeting time. It was really just a question if the water would hold out that long, as it appeared the Pohick watershed generally received less than 2" of rain. So I jumped onto Mike's message and asked if anyone was interested in a 2:00 meeting time for a Pohick run. I also called Wes Mills who lives

very close to the upper put-in. When he agreed to meet me at the take-out at 2, I went ahead and loaded up my boat and gear before heading off to church, while Wes took over the coordination of "my" trip.

Pohick Creek is my favorite local run after a heavy rain. Looking back at my paddling database, this was my 15th time running Pohick, although the majority of the runs were in the early 90's (when I was a much more active paddler overall). In fact, the last time I had run Pohick was in 2008 (as it happened, with Larry Lempert who was making his first descent at the time). But in all those prior runs, I can't remember a party larger than 4 or 5 boaters — you normally don't have time to collect more people to do a spur-of-the-moment run following a heavy rain. And Pohick is a solid class 2-3 creek run, so you can't just pull any casual boater off the street to join you (though I have run it OC-2 with a friend of mine back in 1992).

So imagine my surprise when I pull up to the Rt. 1 take-out and find Wes has gathered a party of 7 for this late put-on, and that Mike Martin and Courtney Caldwell had decided to come here as well, putting on with a group of 8 a couple hours before. Fifteen boats on this tiny creek is certainly an all-time record; I was glad we were in two separate groups.

Due to the late put-on, I recommended we use the lower access off Lake Pleasant Road, which cuts off the first two (mostly flat) miles of the traditional 6-mile run from Hooes Road (now basically a ser-

vice road along the Fairfax County Parkway). The rest of the group agreed, and we quickly loaded everyone up in two vehicles to head up to the put-in. After gearing up and carrying down the asphalt path to the creek, we were surprised to find Mike and Court's party just arriving from upstream. Their party was comprised of mostly first-timers, and although there were no rapids of consequence in the upper section, they had encountered blind turns and strainers in the fast current that had slowed their progress. I had my group wait for them to move on downstream, but the serious fall line rapids start just downstream, and we soon ran into them scouting.

I had been concerned about having a group as large as 7 on the river, but they were very experienced boaters (yes, we were the "graybeards" — with the exception of new member Wes Bryden who was markedly younger, but he was tuning up for the Gauley!), and most had run it before. Now I was faced with leading a group of 15, about half of which were first-timers who needed to scout some of the harder rapids. On the positive side, the sun was out, it was warm, the creek was near zero offering more eddy opportunities, and we had several more hours of daylight.

So our mega-party continued on down into the cluster of technical rapids, capped by class 3's Double Z and Pohick Falls. I had forgotten how many rapids there were before Double Z, so I approached each one tentatively before committing. One rapid had a tree down near the

*(Continued on page 4)*

## A New River to Me by Ed Evangelidi

I'm always looking for a new river. Can't help it if I brag to anyone how great Blacklick Creek, Nescopeck Creek, Great Trough Creek (Pa.), Trout Run, Bluestone River or Left Fork of Buckhannon River (WV) are. Even the flat Oswego River (NJ) or Trussum Pond (Del.) are great finds to me. With these personal finds comes some not so great "finds"; like the time last fall when I cajoled Mike Martin to paddle the New River from the US 19 bridge to Hawks Nest Park. One river guide showed 2 nice rapids. Let's just say that one rapid was mildly nice and the other rapid wasn't even there. So when I had a chance to paddle the New River from Glen Lyn Va. to Shanklin's Ferry WV (11 miles) I was hoping for a great find but would not be surprised if the trip turned out to be relatively undiscovered for good reason.

The Va. & WV guidebooks seem to downplay this section with almost no mention of the rapids and a general focus on the mystery move shuttles. The people I was paddling with — National Committee for the New River — considered this to be the most overall enjoyable section of the New River. How could guidebook writers give this section such short writeups while an organization that spends 4 weeks each year paddling the entire New River look forward to this section

each year?

We had 11 boaters (mostly kayakers) and one stand up paddle boarder on this trip. The majority had paddled this section before and were back looking forward to repeating a good trip. The shuttle is not so bad and quite "normal" compared to all of the other shuttles we all endure on the lower New River. The only problem was 2 short cut intersections without road signs. So your first longer shuttle here might be just following the Bluestone Wildlife Management Area signs to Shanklin's Ferry. River right shuttle is recommended. Both the put in at Glen Lyn Park and the take out are also nice places to camp (but no showers).

The trip starts out looking like any other section of the New; first there is a long shallow rapid similar to the rapids upstream or way downstream at Hinton then the obligatory long pool. Repeat for many miles, but note how civilization is missing on both sides of the river. What makes this trip special to those who come here often is that the entire run is protected by the Army Corps of Engineers and is therefore much more undisturbed than any other section of the river. There are some corn fields, power lines and mine tailings visible but not much more.

But you are a whitewater boater you say? Besides the many long riffly rapids are 2 rapids that get your attention. The first is Shumate Falls (rated Cl. 2-4) and much later, Stateline or Wylie Falls (rated Cl. 2-3). Both appear as rocky lead in rapids with horizon lines and are not easy to scout (may wish to scout from shore). Both had Cl. 2 lines on the right side but imposing hidden drops the rest of the way across the river.

There is much wildlife here, especially for fishermen and little boating except at the put in and take out. We used the lower takeout and enjoyed picking our way through island channels. We did have pretty bad headwinds throughout the day.

Since few of you would drive from BRV territory to the New for just an 11 mile run; there is an additional 6 mile run from Shanklin's Ferry to Indian Creek that is also highly rated for scenery and has one significant rapid. We had over 1800CFS at Glen Lyn and would recommend that level or higher. We also paddled from Pembroke to Bluff City (11 miles, with a tough to find take out under US 460 bridge) and enjoyed white cliffs and a surf spot just above the take out. Also check out the New River Grill in Pembroke.

**CORRECTION:** The Moormans River trip report in the July *Voyageur* was written by Alf Cooley, not Dick Pierce as was listed. Your slightly red-faced editor regrets the error. As Mike Martin stated in an email on July 12th: "The change in perspective thus credits two swims to Dick that were committed by the actual author, who described the day's events with the same grace and savoir as that which we might expect from the good professor. Thanks to Alf for setting the record straight."

*POHICK (Continued from page 2)*  
 bottom, which would have forced a long and rocky carry. I was able to walk out on the thicker part of the trunk and clear a narrow channel, then stayed to ensure each boater made it through without getting sideways against the trunk [that's me assisting Wes Mills in photo at right].

I was able to recognize Double Z from above, and had everyone halt while Len Rice went ahead to probe it. After he reappeared in view below the drop, he gave me the scout sign, so I took a look. [See photo below, view from below the rapid looking upstream.] There was a tree trunk just above the final drop that could threaten a boater trying to make the full "double Z" move. After taking a look, we directed everyone to sneak the final ledge on the extreme left (not visible from above), which really ended up being a better option at this low level anyway. (Turns out I had written up this very same advice in the notes from my trip of 5/26/97, but hadn't had time to re-view them.)

Right after Double Z is Pohick



Falls, a more straightforward class 3 drop that offers much better visibility from above. We had at least one swim here, as the preferred route put your bow dangerously close to a pinning rock in the middle of the drop, and some of us open boaters had to quickly move the bow right and then brace hard after glancing off the rock. There were a couple other minor swims farther downstream where a hidden log caused some mayhem in an otherwise innocuous-looking turn against a bank. Other than a couple rough descents of Double Z by those who failed to run the left side sneak, there were no other incidents that I know of.

And I wouldn't necessarily know if anything else happened, because after Pohick Falls, the creek calms down for awhile, and our group was finally able to spread out. There was one major logjam about a mile downstream that required a long carry or scrambling over the debris pile. Downstream of that point, we had about 6 boats in the first group, with the



remainder taking their time, and even finding some surfing opportunities. The final drop at Lorton Ledges is just before the take-out. The top of this final fall line rapid is comprised of low ledges that offer good surfing at this level. The final ledge is about 5 feet, and offered no clean chute this day. We re-grouped there to ensure there were no further incidents. Everyone negotiated the drop safely, but with varying amounts of bumping.

It was a good day on a creek that offers scenery and whitewater that are in places reminiscent of a classic piedmont run like the Thornton or Covington. Unlike the clear, cold water of those streams, however, you will almost certainly find Pohick's waters running warm and brown, due to its urbanized watershed. This, combined with the thunderous traffic of I-95 will ensure you remember that you are fully embraced by the DC suburbs. But still, what a gem of a whitewater stream to have so close by. The next time we get a 2" rainfall (or even 1+" when the ground is saturated), put the call out and enjoy!

## Pioneering Competitor, River Explorer and Boat Designer John Berry Dies by Charlie Walbridge

*[posted to the American Whitewater website on August 28th]*

John L. Berry, whitewater pioneer, died peacefully on Aug. 11th at the age of 86. Berry lived in Bethesda, Maryland and was an outstanding whitewater canoeist and competitor during the 50's and 60's. He began racing in 1956 at the Brandywine Slalom. He was National C-1 and C-2 Champion in 1960-61 and a member of the first US whitewater team, at the 1961 World Championships. What he and his teammates learned there resulted in huge advances in American whitewater sport.

As a member of the Canoe Cruiser's Association of Washington, DC, he explored much of the Potomac and Cheat headwaters during the 1950's. He also made several early descents of the Lower Yough. In 1957 he and his long-time C-2 partner Bob Harrigan led a first descent down West Virginia's Cheat Canyon. The trip took two days with Berry solo paddling a half-decked wood-and canvas canoe. In September, the pair led one of the first trips down the New River Gorge, taking three days to go from Thurmond to Fayette Station. During the mid-sixties he also led several trips down a pre-dam Gauley River. He completed one run at very low water but was forced to abort the second run because of high flows.

Dave Kurtz, a long time slalom paddler and coach, writes, "John Berry was one of the paddling leaders that inspired me and others in my group, Explorer Post 32 in State College, PA, to get involved in white-water and slalom paddling. His participation with Bob Harrigan at the 1961 Worlds moved us to go for it in 1963. At those Worlds we had the C-1 Trio (paddling new C-1 canoes designed by Natan Bernot) of Tom Southworth, Dave Guss, and myself plus the

Explorer Post 32 C-2 duo of Hank Yeagley and Les Bechdel along with the C-2 Mix duo of Bill Bickham and Barbara Wright. We simply wanted to carry on the start of the Berry-Harrigan exploits." Olympic Bronze Medalist Jamie McEwan remembers that his first C-1 was a green John Berry boat he found under the Christmas tree when he was 15. He got into it on the living room floor and the rest is history! Other Mid-States Berry Boat paddlers included Bob Burrell and Charlie Walbridge.

In 1970 Berry quit a high-paying finance job and moved from the DC area to Waitsfield, VT. He changed his business name to "Millbrook Boats", because the "Mad River Canoe" was already trademarked. In 1975, Millbrook Boats moved to the Hudson River in Riparius, NY where he created several legendary open canoes: the ME, the Flasher, the Flashback, and the AC/DC. He was active in open canoe slalom racing and his designs revolutionized the sport. Anyone who paddles a whitewater canoe today owes much to his innovations. In 1988, Berry sold the business to John Kazimierczyk, who continues the Millbrook legacy of innovative light-weight designs.

A resident of Belchertown, MA since 1989, Berry paddled on the nearby Swift River daily until this past year. His beloved wife of 63 years, Janet Berry, passed away a year ago. He is survived by his three daughters, Katharine L. Berry, Rebecca Berry Creswell, Virginia Berry and son John Berry, Jr., four grandchildren and a great grandson.

## Death of Former BRV Member Mike Wevrick Reported

*[from an email sent to the membership in early August]*

I just noticed a posting on the Monocacy message board from Mike Martin noting former BRV'er/Monocasin Mike Wevrick's passing. As Mike Martin mentions in his post, Mike was a very nice guy and was great to be around. He presented several of his Canadian wilderness trips at our meetings over the years he was here. He managed to extract a unique adventure out of each of his trips which made them very interesting. His presentations always conveyed to me the extreme wildness of the northern Canadian barrens. See Mike Martin's posting for more details.

— Rick Koller

## **An Open Letter to Gauley River Boaters** *[posted to [www.AmericanWhitewater.org](http://www.AmericanWhitewater.org)]*

Dear Boaters,

The rangers and staff of the Gauley River National Recreation Area welcome you to the 2011 boating season. National Park Service (NPS) employees have been working, and are continuing to work, on preparing the put-in's, take-out's, and other public use spots for upcoming Gauley River NRA visitors. We hope that this season will prove to be safe and spectacular for everyone.

There are a few changes for the upcoming season over last year. We are pleased to announce the recent acquisition of a parcel of land at upper Swiss that provides a public take-out on the lower Gauley for the first time in the history of the NRA. This 25 acre parcel of land at upper Swiss had already been used by boaters for years while it was in private ownership. Those accustomed to the use patterns on this property will not see any changes for 2011.

The Gauley Tailwaters campground and the boat launches will continue to operate much like they have in the past. Camping at the Gauley Tailwaters campground is free of charge and is on a first come, first served basis. There is a maximum of 8 people allowed in each campsite. There is a 2 tent, 2 vehicle maximum at each site. Quiet hours are from 10pm to 6am in the campground. Rangers provide patrols and may register each campsite. Campers who bring their pets are asked to keep their pets on a leash. The public boat launch at the Tailwaters is being improved by the park maintenance staff prior to the boating season.

NPS will continue to manage Mason's Branch as we did last year. Because of the limited amount of public land available at this access, the narrowness of the road, and the retained rights of both the upstream and downstream adjacent landowners, NPS will restrict private vehicle access on Saturdays and Sundays. Private boaters may park at the upper parking lot at Mason's Branch Fridays and Mondays. The road and parking lots are closed to private vehicles on Saturdays and Sundays. To help with parking, American Whitewater has leased the Legg field above Mason's Branch. The field will be available throughout the Gauley season for private boater parking. The NPS is also making arrangements to provide a free boater shuttle service from Mason's Branch to the Legg field. This free service has worked well since the acquisition of the property and is a benefit to boaters who cannot park their personal vehicles at the take-out on the weekends. Mason's Branch suffered damage from a flash flood in August; a portion of the primary ramp was washed away. The repair by NPS employees is currently underway and expected to be completed prior to the beginning of the season.

NPS will manage parking at Wood's Ferry as it has in the past, on a first-come first-served basis. We will ask boaters to park close together to take advantage of all the available space and to create parking opportunities for other boaters. Wood's Ferry filled to capacity on the Saturday afternoon of Gauley Fest weekend last year. Boaters should be aware that this may happen again on particularly busy days and that parking is available but not unlimited.

NPS river patrol operations will continue as in the past. The NPS provides daily river patrols during the scheduled releases with an emphasis on EMS and rescue. The NPS river ranger patrol boat carries an AED in addition to other medical supplies and our rangers are available to provide both routine and emergency boater services as the need arises.

Park Rangers and local emergency personnel may request a reduction of the scheduled water release from Summersville Dam in the event of an emergency. Such a request was made on two different occasions during

2010. To help ensure that boaters are not surprised by a sudden and unexpected drop in water level, NPS river rangers will implement a sign and signal flag program to provide visual aids along the river in the event of an emergency. A press release explaining the system is posted to the Gauley River NRA website.

As our Gauley season planning efforts progress, we will post information on our web page at [www.nps.gov/gari](http://www.nps.gov/gari) and will continue to provide information to private boaters through partnering organizations such as American Whitewater and the West Virginia Rivers Coalition. For this season as in the past, we appreciate all of the boater public cooperation that helps to make the Gauley boating season the special time that it is.

Sincerely,

Jeff West, Chief Ranger, New River Gorge National River

**2011 Potomac River Ramble Scheduled for September 11th.** The Potomac River Ramble is a canoeing and kayaking event that features environmental programming, restoration projects, festive meals, meetings with elected officials, and much more. Novice and experienced paddlers alike enjoy a unique on-the-water experience that builds a strong environmental ethic, while having a lot of fun. The Ramble aims to elevate awareness of the Potomac River's importance to the region and to encourage local residents to play an active role in its restoration. Spend a day on the Potomac paddling between the shores of Maryland and West Virginia. The one day Ramble will start mid-morning on Sunday September 11th just below Dam 4 and end in cozy Shepherdstown, W.Va. Along the way, we will stop for an out-of-boat brunch and a couple of educational programs focusing on watershed issues. Please visit <http://www.potomacriver.org> for more information. Special thanks to River and Trail Outfitters for co-sponsoring the event.

### ROSTER UPDATES

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### 2011 BRV TRIP SCHEDULE

(end of season)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Sep 3-5	New River Rendezvous	A	David Kogut
Sep 16-18	Pine Creek, PA (paddle, bike, hike, etc)	PN/LI	Star Mitchell
Oct 1-2	CCA ACA SWR L4 Class		Charlie Duffy
Oct 8-10	NJ Pine Barrens car camper	N	Ed Evangelidi
Oct 15	N. Branch Potomac fall colors	PN	Star Mitchell
Nov 5-6	Tohickon Creek, PA	I	Courtney Caldwell
Nov 11-13	Eastern Shore car camper	N/PN	Ed Evangelidi
Dec 17—Jan 14	Central Florida trips	N	Ed Evangelidi

Thanks to those who've posted trips! Please contact Mike Martin ([imnostooge@yahoo.com](mailto:imnostooge@yahoo.com)) if you can fill a gap in the schedule.

## 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 2011: January 26, March 22, May 10, August 13 (Moonlight Picnic), September 13, November TBD, December 3 (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.

**2011 BRV Officers:** Rick Koller, President; Mark Wray, VP; Mike Martin & Daryl Hall, Trip Coordinators; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation.

**2011 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](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 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 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

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**Deadline for November *Voyageur*:**  
Friday, November 4th

**Next Meeting:**  
**Tuesday, September 13th**