

THE VOYAGEUR



www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org

Autumn 2014

THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

Several club members had interesting trips over the summer and have indicated a willingness to share their experience in upcoming meetings this year. Wednesday Sept. 24 is the next scheduled meeting at Tyson's Pimmit Library and Kim and Jenny want to show us some of their pictures. I am looking forward to their presentation.

The moonlight picnic was a great success this year. We had excellent weather and a large turnout from the club including some new members. I think everyone had a great time. Many thanks to Mark Wray for his uncanny ability to pull off these summer parties.

This is the time of year we traditionally consider the club's officer corps and I will be sending emails out later this fall to address this issue.

Hope to see a lot of you on Sept. 24.

Rick

The Boatable/Un-boatable State of Valley Falls State Park by Ed Evangelidi

I was in the middle of leading one of my cockemamie extended trips where we were looking for water in the Tygart valley area of West Virginia in the middle of a somewhat dry August. One obvious area is the neighborhood of Valley Falls as there is a boatable release from Grafton Dam 365 days a year. We drove down to Valley Falls State Park early in the morning to set shuttle; before the park was occupied by park employees. We then drove up to Grafton Dam to enjoy an easy float down river. On the way thru the town of Grafton we noticed a good flow coming out of Three Forks Creek and paddled up it a good bit. Three Forks Creek was the story of another another disappointing run by another paddling group that was never written up.

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San Juan River, Mexican Hat-Clay Hills Crossing, May 26-June 2 by Jamie Fico

It took three days driving about 75 miles per hour across 5 states in our 2000 Dodge Caravan to get to the Mexican Hat Boat Launch in Mexican Hat, Utah. It was May 26th and the river was churning rapidly with excitement as we stepped out of our dusty old van, and joined the bustling crowd that jostled throughout the put-in. We couldn't have asked for a more perfect day to begin our trip. Our group had met the night before for a "Last Supper" in Farmington, New Mexico's local Golden Corral, one of the only cuisines open in the

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San Juan (Continued from page 1) static town. My dad, Frank Fico, and myself were already well acquainted with Kim Buttleman and Jenny Thomas. Our summer adventures together started in 2006 on the Green River, Desolation and Gray's Canyon. New to our group was Daniel Weinberg, Jenny's nephew, who was using this time before he started medical school to get a taste for some of his aunt's river passions. While my Dad and I had paddled the San Juan back in 2004 with the rest of our family, it would be the first time for the majority of our group.



The Mexican Hat boat launch *Dad (Frank), Kim Buttleman, and Daniel posing at the Mexican Hat boat launch*

around noon already had a good crowd of rafter families outfitting their rigs with massive coolers, high-powered cookers, and stand up paddleboards for recreation. Our meager canoes next to those made me feel a little nostalgic for the days when my sister Kerry, and long time friend, Ryan Mills, and I would sit atop our own raft and shoot each other with water guns. In any case, we loaded our boats pretty quickly and started our cruise down the river. The San Juan ranged between 1800-4000 CFS while we were on it, about 4-5 times higher than when we had done it in 2004. The higher water took us quickly to camp with us barely having to stick our paddles in the water.

The first rapid we came across right after the put-in was a class 2, and it had given us a rocky beginning back in 2004. However, we passed through it easily in the high

water with Jenny leading the way in her ducky. It wasn't too long before my Dad pulled out his staple video camera and started filming the beginning of what would be a two hour long tape by the end of the trip. The weather was hot and dry in the 80s and 90s for the entirety of the trip with few days of cloud cover and just one day of agonizing headwind. While sunscreen and a



Dad attempts to talk, video, and steer the boat at the same time!

hat were necessities, the canyon was not as blistering hot as it had been back in 2004 when we ran the river in July.

When the first day was over, it had only taken us about 2 hours to travel the nine miles to camp, which was an unnamed sandbar on river right.

The next day, Tuesday May 27th, we paddled nine miles again to Juniper Camp. To get there, we passed through the Goosenecks, an impressive river formation that is only 1 air mile but takes paddlers 5.5 miles of snaking back and forth before relenting into a more straightforward path. The effect from above is quite spectacular. There are four or five switchbacks of river that splits the canyon in this area into three long fingers.

We stayed at our camp for a lay-over on May 28th and took a 2.5-mile hike 1300 vertical feet up the



Jenny and Daniel standing on the beach of the "primrose camp," officially Lower John's Canyon.

Honaker Trail. Since we made the climb by 10:30am, my Dad and Daniel decided to do an extension over the top of the canyon to Goosenecks State Park overlook. Looking back now, I probably

should have warned Daniel about my Dad's taste for hikes that went far off the beaten trail and his camel-like constitution that allowed him to travel miles on just the bare necessities. Unfortunately for the two of them, it was the hottest day of our trip, well over 90 degrees up on the canyon rim. They barely had enough water to make it back to camp. Meanwhile, I met up with Kim and Jenny on my way back down the trail and the three of us were pleasantly sitting in our camp chairs with our feet lazing in the water when my Dad and Daniel showed up at camp, one a bit more parched than the other.

The next day, May 29th, we paddled fourteen miles to Lower John's Canyon. Lower John's was by far my favorite campsite of the trip. Wild primroses covered the camp and we were visited by occasional hummingbirds. We found a



Dad and I sitting at the top of the Honaker Trail.

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San Juan (Continued from page 3)

new activity for the sand that blanketed the camp — the classic beach game of bocce. Kim and Jenny had brought a lightweight travel version and we played it for the entire evening. My Dad won the match with me coming in a close second.

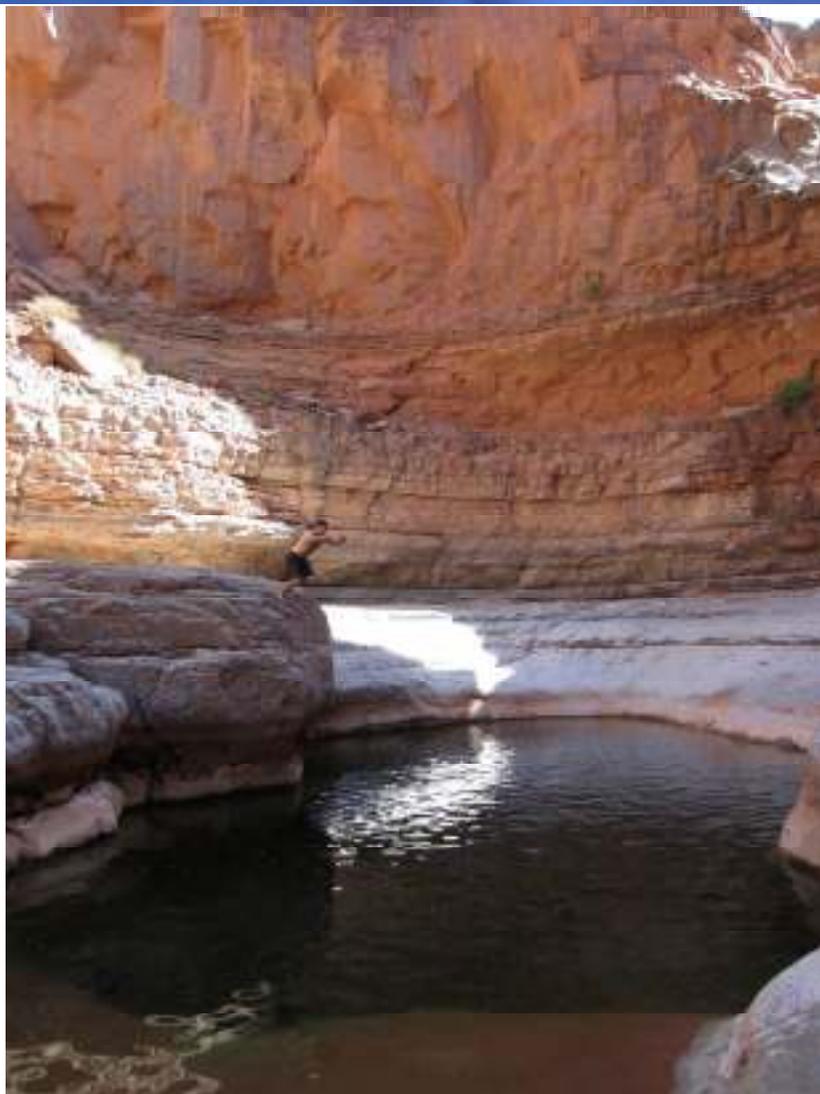
On the morning of May 30th we had an exciting visitor to our camp. Jenny discovered a yellow and blue scorpion when she was folding up her tent ground cover [see photo at right]. After oohing and ahing and snapping some trophy pictures, part of our group split off to take a morning hike up John's Canyon. Once up there, we discovered a plunge pool so deep we couldn't feel the bottom. My dad, Daniel and I took turns jumping in from the rock above. After lunch we left Lower John's camp for an eight-mile paddle to Slickhorn Gulch camp "D".

On the way there we experienced Government Rapid. The class 3 rapid had a nasty hole on the right and other spots to avoid on the left. Jenny in her ducky made it through the rapid fine on the middle right. Next my Dad and I followed her path in our open canoe. Unable to move an inch against the force of the water pushing us to the right, we went straight through the hole. A slap of water knocked me back in my seat and the next thing I knew, I was sitting in water up to my hips with the canoe underneath me. We were able to keep the boat going with the front submerged completely in water but couldn't avoid a rock sticking out on the right. Filming us on shore, Jenny assures the camera that "we look fine," until we hit the rock and then



"oh, no they're not!" but still manages a quick,

Daniel takes his turn at the John's Canyon plunge pool.



“Goodbye!” as she shuts off the tape. That’s the moment when I decided to jump ship and swim ashore. The boat, its passengers, and all its contents were soaked but fine except for a small dent on the front of the Old Town. Kim and Daniel made a smarter, well-informed decision by sneaking down on the left after us.

Saturday morning the entire group took a hike up Slickhorn Gulch. We were joined by some of our neighbors camped close by on Slickhorn C. They showed us another swimming hole. It was nice, but failed to trump the depth and clarity on John’s Canyon. We returned to our camp for lunch, but realized we had to get moving when the next group showed up ready to camp on our site in their big rafts and pinned our helpless canoes to the shore. In their defense, it was a tight landing area without an eddy nearby, and they were anxious to get rid of us after waiting for our campsite the day before as well.

After we were sent on our way, we paddled eleven awful miles through increasing headwind to Steer Gulch, our last camp. Thoroughly worn out, but determined to make the last night of the trip memorable, we all stayed up late that night sharing stories and discussing how the rock face across the river looked strikingly like Whoopi Goldberg.

In the morning we awoke to a flooded camp. Our tents had luckily been placed on high ground and it was only our kitchen area that had transformed into a boggy puddle. However, nothing was lost

and we only had to deal with wet feet making breakfast and on the way to the groover. After lamenting and joking an appropriate amount about our watery camp, we set out to paddle the remaining seven miles to our takeout at Clay Hills Crossing. As we approached the takeout, the canyon hills started sinking lower and lower until they all but flattened out along the river. The San Juan’s current steadied and widened into the beginning of Lake Powell.

Our sadness over the trip’s end didn’t last long as we spotted two dusty vehicles making their way down to the takeout. It was Wes Mills and Ryan Mills shuttling our cars and carrying a cooler full of beer for the aching boaters. *[Wes and Ryan didn’t come all the way out just to run our shuttle. They joined Jamie and me on our drive home over the next five days — Ed.]*



SAVE THE DATE: 2014 BRV Holiday Party

LOCATION: Lyon Village Community Center, 1920 N. Highland Street, Arlington, VA 22201

DATE: **Saturday, December 6, 2014** TIME: 5:30-10 PM COST: \$10 adults, \$5 kids under 12

FOOD: Bring a dish to feed at least eight people, as follows:

A-E: main meal side dish F-J: salad K-R: appetizer S-Z: dessert

Be sure to bring serving utensils for your dish, if needed. BRV will provide turkey/ham and drinks (soda, wine and beer — approximately two per person).

RSVP to Mark Wray; look for email reminders as the date approaches.



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Year Up

Dear Paddling Friends of Steve Ettinger,

In addition to his passion for paddling, Steve was very much involved in New Futures, a local organization that provides a practical yet innovative program of scholarships, career services and mentoring support to low-income DC-area young people pursuing shorter-term post-secondary educational opportunities leading to fulfilling jobs (www.newfuturesdc.org).

New Futures is creating the Steve Ettinger Scholarship as a token of appreciation and recognition of his contribution to New Futures. We will present the scholarship at the New Futures 15th Anniversary Celebration Dinner at the National Press Club on October 7. The scholarship will be given in Steve's name to a deserving DC area young person, who otherwise would not be able to complete his/her post-secondary education.

Steve became one of the original Board members when New Futures was formed in 1999, and since that time until his recent death served as pro bono Treasurer. He spent countless hours managing accounts, making payments and overseeing New Futures investments. Beyond that, Steve touched us all with his strength, sense of humor, insightfulness and love of living.

We thought that his paddling family would like to participate in this opportunity to honor Steve by making a contribution to the Steve Ettinger Scholarship. Any and all amounts will be appreciated! You can contribute either online by going to the New Futures website (www.newfuturesdc.org) and clicking Donate Today in the upper right corner (indicating Steve Ettinger Scholarship in the Note area) or by sending a check made out to New Futures (noting Steve Ettinger Scholarship in the memo line).

All checks can be mailed to:
New Futures
805 15th Street, NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20005

I hope that you will join me in participating in this wonderful opportunity to honor Steve.

Sincerely,

Mike Gould
Founder, New Futures, and a close Personal Friend of Steve

Blue Ridge Voyageurs Membership Form

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

Annual Dues: _____ **\$15.00 (newsletter sent via postal mail)**
 _____ **\$12.00 (newsletter emailed in .pdf format)**

Optional Contribution to BRV River

Conservation/Access Fund: \$5.00 or _____

Total Amount Enclosed: _____

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

Name: _____

Address: _____ **Phone** _____

_____ **Email:** _____

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

VALLEY FALLS (Continued from page 1)

Anyway, we continued paddling and took out at the state park. By then the park was fully staffed and an employee came up and asked if we had signed "the waiver". We said we were there early in the morning and did not. He advised us to quickly leave as we could get fined if the boss saw us. Instead of quickly leaving (the take-out at Valley Falls involves a bit of a portage to get to the cars – not something I do quickly) I drove up to the office to sign the waiver.

The waiver is designed for kayakers who wish to run the many falls there. They were out of waivers but no matter — I signed a piece of scrap paper that they would copy to a waiver form later. I told them that I was not intending to run the falls in my canoe. They advised me that it was against the law to canoe the falls in a canoe as a canoe was not made to run the falls. Only kevlar kayakers! This of course got my hackles up and I advised them that canoes had run much harder drops. They would not hear this — canoes cannot run the falls without getting hurt or worse. Below the falls are some very hard, very tight rapids. They said canoes cannot run those either as a canoe would easily get pinned there. Of course a kayak cannot get pinned in a tight technical rapid. After a bit of back and forth where my message was

not getting anywhere we left to get the boats loaded and a few kayakers were running the falls in plastic, not kevlar boats. I did not want to get into a new argument about plastic being much better than kevlar for running falls. They were running many lines without problem but the employee keeping an eye on us pointed to his head and said you had to have something missing up here to run those falls. They obviously only put up with boaters as a nuisance in their park.

So if you happen to drive into Valley Falls State Park with your canoe and intend to paddle something other than the falls (you can also legally portage the lower rapids and paddle below the state park), make sure you sign the kayakers' waiver designed for running the falls...and don't get into an argument about whitewater canoes being similar to whitewater kayakers.

ROSTER UPDATE

Scott Gravatt
 s.gravatt@comcast.net

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 email list for information and pick-up trips; *The Voyageur*, published 4 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 dates to be announced via email in January, March, May, September, November. The Moonlight Picnic will be on July 12 and the Holiday Party will be on December 6; details to be provided in the Summer and Autumn newsletters, respectively. 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.

2014 BRV Officers: Rick Koller, President; Mark Wray, VP; Mike Martin & Daryl Hall, Trip Coordinators; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation.

2014 Board of Directors: Ginny DeSeau, Ron Knipling, Wes Mills

The Voyageur: Newsletter of the Blue Ridge Voyageurs

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

Address changes: contact Frank Fico, 1609 Autumnwood Dr., Reston, VA 20194-1523, (703) 318-7998, fico1@netzero.net. The annual roster will be kept current via updates published in each issue of *The Voyageur*.

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



The Voyageur

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

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- Steve Ettinger scholarship (p. 6)

Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 24

Deadline for Winter *Voyageur*:
Friday, December 5th

RENEW NOW FOR 2015 — see page 7.