

THE VOYAGEUR



www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org

July 2008

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

I didn't receive a Put-In column from the Prez this month, so you get to hear from me.

There was good water up in the mountains for the most part this spring, at least that's what I've heard. I spent nearly every Saturday morning from late March through early June coaching my daughters' volleyball team, so I don't really have any first-hand knowledge. But I got the family out for a beautiful Memorial Day Weekend on Smokehole Canyon (see trip report on page 4), and I'm headed out for the Savage release on July 6th.

I have to believe that many of you had some great trips over the last few months, but you wouldn't know it from the submissions I've received for the newsletter. The May and July issues should be chock full of reports from prime creeking season, so please resolve to remedy this situation next year.

Hope to see many of you at the Moonlight Picnic!
Frank

West Virginia Fun on Two Creeks, 10-11 May 2008 by Glen Johnston

We wanted to catch the Laurel Fork, but it was at 18" and rising with more rain on the way. Checking the gauge later we figured it had crested near 2 feet. The Dry Fork gauge was around 6000. We took some good options and had a great weekend:..Kim Buttle-

man, Jenny Thomas, Ned Howenstine, Lisa Carlisle, Pete Dragon, Glen Johnston.

Saturday: did Gandy Creek. This is the same "Sinks of Gandy" but after it comes out of the hole in the ground. It

(Continued on page 2)

2008 BRV Moonlight Picnic

LOCATION: The usual **Violette's Lock/Virginia Canal Loop**, off River Road, north of Potomac, MD.

DATE: **Saturday, July 19, 2008**

TIME: Meet at Violette's Lock parking lot at **5:00 PM**. Canoe/kayak departure at approximately 5:30 PM; return to Violette's Lock approximately 10:30 PM (or whenever you like).

BRING: Food (see below), blanket/chairs as desired, water, bug repellent, flashlight(s).

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

A-G: salads, uncooked veggies, fruit dish

H-N: desserts, snacks

O-Z: pasta, casserole, cooked veggies, rice, etc.

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

COST: **\$5** for adults, **\$3** for children 2-12 years old, **free** for those under 2.

RSVP: BRV Board members will be contacting all DC-area members. RSVP to your caller or to Lou Campagna at 301-929-0136 by **Thursday, July 17th**.

CAMPING: It is permissible to camp at the picnic site, so if you would like to do so, bring your gear. There are usually some who camp, so you won't be alone.

PARKING: Parking at Violette's Lock is unrestricted, but there is little police surveillance. This has not been a high theft location in the past, but please do not leave valuables in your vehicles!

TWO WV CREEKS (Continued from page 1)

was a great class 2+ with a couple of good 3's. Tons of surfing; took us almost four hours to run 3.5 miles. Easy to boat scout but it had a couple of river wide strainers.

There was one really nasty spot where the river took a sharp bend to an overhanging rock ledge on the right. The overhang covers most of the rapid and is high enough to allow clear passage at the level we ran. But it is deceptive. The rapid was a steep smooth ledge type. This was a serious pinning spot with a large hole and a big log with a couple branches wedged in the ledge on the right side of the rapid. We ran this on wet rocks way to the left and felt proud doing it. It would have been prudent to get out of the boats, but we chose to scrape our boat bottoms. This thing can be scouted from the road above the bridge which is near a sharp road bend; there is a sizeable car turnout for parking on the right of the bridge and the rapid is about 50-100 yards up from the bridge. However we missed the log when we scouted from the bridge and only saw the rapid as a really steep ledge drop with a dynamic hole. It would be advisable to walk down to the river and scout it from the entrance to the rapid before running. The overhang is obvious as you come down the river, but scout first.

Cold for the time of year with a promise of rain all day. Easy carries around obstructions, small stream, road next to river most of the way. Looks like good primitive camp sites along the river as well. Lots of hiking trails; may be worth consideration for a non-boating, good-time camping experience. This is the road that leads up to Spruce Knob, and we started our run just below where the river started braiding into small streams and was coming out of the marshes. The river could possibly be run down further into the little town areas but take outs may be a problem with lack of eddies and some very low bridges.

Sunday: good option here by the trip leader (Kim Buttleman) — Seneca Creek. Put in about .5 miles up from where it joins US 33 with a good size stream. Real steep section above 33 and a bit boney, but a hoot nonetheless and looking like a East Texas beauty queen, smelling sweet and all dolled up, with trees and flowers in bloom. After 33 the creek was joined by a couple side creeks and a good volume boost.

The creek is mostly class 3, 3+ and continuous fast flow, maybe two or three easy 4's that had good sneak routes. We ran the creek down to Seneca Rocks where it joins the South Branch of Potomac, just below a nasty-looking dam. Junk Yard rapid and a river wide low-head about .5 miles before take out should be boat scouted and seriously considered before running. You see those two rapids when you see Seneca Rocks as you are coming down the river — the low-head is first. You can also scout a bit as you zip by on 33.

One other rapid beyond the bridge that crosses about .5 miles down from Onego (according to Kim, Onego got its name from the former one-lane bridge) was a pretty zesty class 4 and deserves a good look before running it. It's in one of the gorges and cannot be car-scouted. The 3+ just below Onego bridge should not be confused with the harder rapid in the gorge. The gorge rapid has a serious hole on the bottom right that should be avoided. We ran it hard left.

Several trees are down with river-wide consequences in the gorge sections, a couple in bad spots with very little in the way of eddies. Savage River-type eddies that mean bang your boat into the bank and hold on to a branch. Plenty of play (even more than Saturday) but we were on a time budget and had to keep moving. Several places where the river moves away from the road and goes into gorges. Beautiful scenery; lots of birds this time of the year.

There is no known gauge; you have got to ride up 33 a way and take a look-see. Mostly easy to boat scout, even the ledges, but the fast water and lack of eddies could be a problem with trees in the river. Some parts of this river had the feel of the top part of Kitzmiller. I would run it again, and again, and again.

Rain came down in buckets as we took off around 3:00. Ate dinner at Ka-Ka-Pon in Wardensville, good meal. They continue to expand this restaurant without losing the hometown touch. We had good quality food with great service and decent prices. I give it 3.6 to 4.0 paddles on a scale of 5. River fun index was around the same; do these rivers with enough water in them and you will like them. I got two PFD's and it was well worth the drive there and the drive through the torrents of rain back home.

South River, 11 May 2008 by Ed Evangelidi

Has anyone paddled the South River? How about the Stony or the North Fork? Of course, you say, but this South River may have a generic name and is relatively close by but is often overlooked by boaters in our area. I'll bet the nearby Conway and Moormans Rivers bracketing the South are much more familiar to boaters. We three open boaters (Mike Martin, John Duke and I) paddled it Sunday, May 11. Although not an "oldster" like most of us in the club, John Duke paddled extensively with the club when he was in his teens and Louis Matacia was regularly leading scheduled trips. We scouted it Saturday after leaving the Saturday-only riff raff, like Court Caldwell, Ron Knippling and Beth Koller to get back home. No token kayakers on our Sunday trip. There is a gauge on Rt. 230 and it said 1' on Saturday and 8" on Sunday. We are suspicious of this gauge as this tiny river likes to braid a lot and I doubt that anything but the fully channelized sections can be run near the so-called paddling zero.

With the 4" drop in the river and unsettled weather, we decided to only go up one bridge crossing from Rt. 230 and put in. This cleared us from the two very nasty low-water bridge portages upstream. But we made up for our lack of scheduled portages with countless unforeseen portages around deadfall. We could tell that much of the deadfall was recent and had we paddled it before whatever wind storm caused it this spring, we could have had a very pleasant trip; as Steve Ettinger did in 2004. The blowdowns were not visible from the road, and some were in long stretches with blind curves and did not have safety eddies available. This is clearly life-threatening. One particularly bad strainer just below Rt. 230 involved a blind left turn, lots of overhanging trees and branches and an upstream one-boat eddy on the left. It was an upstream eddy because one had to first get around a deadfall guarding it. I was able to do the maneuver to get into the eddy, but was not able to blow my whistle in time to stop John from committing to the rapid (there was dense jungle here and no visible contact could be made between boaters). Since this was a one-boat eddy, I grabbed a tree with one hand to stabilize myself in this moving eddy and grabbed John's boat to create an "eddy" for him. (Hey, some people don't

call me Eddy for nothing.) Mike heard my whistle and came down after we had beached our boats and had two safety catchers in the eddy. The other potential killer strainer without an eddy was also on a left turn and I only noticed it because I got out to scout what I thought was a wire fence problem and caught sight of it downstream. We portaged the whole rapid.

The river also had two surprise Class 3 rapids (the river is classified as a fast, continuous Class 2). The first was a tight flume down to a heavily pillowed rock wall (picture Dimple Rock with a pillowed left move) and then two sets of rock tweezings in short order. The second, harder rapid, was a small waterfall broken out on the right (where most of the water went) followed by a good flume leading into guard rocks below (picture some of the harder ledge drops on Tohickon). Mike was able to catch a small eddy on the left part way down and realign for the second part. John and I bumbled somewhat on the same route without benefit of the eddy. I had no choice, as I almost filled up and flipped at the top as both rapids had draping branches at the tops of the rapids that spiced things up, and the branches on the second rapid caught me momentarily. The other pleasant surprise was the lack of barbed wire at the last bridge, as had been reported in a guidebook. The dam well below the confluence with the Rapidan looked quite lethal and required taking out a bit upstream on river left to portage. We finally took out just below US 29 at a very obscure but good dirt road accessed from downstream river right. Note that this is not the slippery dirt road closer to the river, but one that is accessed from much higher uphill on US 29 (while heading south only). The Ruckersville gauge downstream on US 29 read 500 CFS and with both the Conway and Rapidan rivers being bigger contributions, I guess we had an ample 150 CFS or less.

So, given this somewhat negative report, why would anyone consider this river? 1) Wait until someone else has run it with maybe good news about the strainers being washed out. 2) 'Cause (like my situation) it was the last river in the Rappahannock River basin on my list of rivers to do. Even after dry periods, remember that the South shall rise again.

Smokehole Camper, 24-26 May 2008

by Frank Fico

We had perfect weather for Memorial Day Weekend this year, so Bridget, Jamie, Kerry, Abbie (our dog) and I again headed out for all three days. The water was high due to rains the previous week, and I was worried that any additional rain just before the trip would push water levels to beyond what we could handle in canoes loaded with camping gear. So I borrowed Gus Anderson's raft, and set it up as an oar rig. The rest of the family was happy to be chauffeured down the river, and I was interested in rowing a more technical Eastern river. As it turned out, there was no additional rain, and the water level dropped to what I would consider minimum for a raft: Franklin 3.15 (Saturday)-2.8 (Monday) and Petersburg 5.8-5.2. This was still the highest water level we've ever had for a Memorial Day Weekend on the Smokehole.

Once again this year we couldn't get anyone else to join us for the full 3-day weekend, which necessitated employing advanced-to-expert level shuttling logistics. Bob Kimmel met us Saturday in Petersburg, and we left his vehicle there and packed him and his gear into our vehicle. We dropped him off with his boat at Eagle Rock, while we drove down to the low-water bridge. He paddled down to meet us while we rigged the raft (and still had to wait a little while for us to finish). We hadn't gone more than a mile or so when Gus, Debby and Ashley drove along the shuttle road

and flagged us down. We had planned to meet them at Big Bend, but they were earlier than expected. Ashley joined us in her sit-on-top kayak (which she and Jamie shared throughout the weekend), while Gus and Debby used our vehicle to shuttle their car down to Petersburg. They put on at Big Bend later in the day and met us at camp.

Our 3-boat party continued from our regular put-in at Big Bend down to our regular campsite on the gravel bar opposite the spring at Blue Rock. The water level was disappointingly low for me in the raft, and I had to work harder than I would have liked to stay off rocks. But we had no serious hang-ups, and Chimney Rock Slide Rapid was very enjoyable. There was a canoe pinned on a pourover rock in the rapid just below, and I had to be very careful of the rope that was stretched from river right (luckily, we had been warned about it, or easily could have come upon it blind without time to move the raft left). The canoeist following me must have missed the warning and drifted right over the pourover, and provided Bob with some practice guiding his swamped boat to shore. When Gus and Debby arrived about an hour later, they said the pinned boat had just been freed.

We were treated to a couple of aerial fireworks that evening from the venerable group that always camps



Bridget, Frank, Debby and Gus (back row) and Jamie, Ashley and Kerry (front row) at the ledge overlook high above our camp, looking northeast. Part of Blue Rock is adjacent to Gus's hat, and the river and part of our camp's sandbar is visible between Gus's legs. Our camp is not quite visible from this overlook due the orientation of the ledges, but it is just downstream off to the left along the sandbar.

across the river, but nothing like they had at their 30th anniversary a couple years ago. Bob departed early Sunday morning to complete our shuttle arrangements: he was to meet Len Rice's group at Petersburg at 10:00, drive them up to the put-in, then return their vehicle to Petersburg and leave in his vehicle. The rest of us made the traditional trek up to the ledge overlook after breakfast, before it got too hot. Gus rigged up a tarp for a sun shade after we returned, and we relaxed at camp most of the afternoon. I got a little worried when Len and crew hadn't arrived at our camp by mid-afternoon, but they finally showed up late afternoon. It turned out that they had Bob drop them off at the low water bridge as well, to take advantage of the higher water level just as we had done. This year, Len and his friend Mike only brought 6 of their kids along — Len had gotten rid of his 12-passenger van, so they were somewhat constrained with a minivan.

Gus and Debby departed camp early Monday morning to get some things done at home. Before the rest of us departed later, I led a group across the river to a cave that Gus, Ashley, Kerry and I had discovered the day before. For all the years we had been camping here, I had never explored up above the mouth of the spring.

This time, I noticed a faint trail leading upward, and followed it up and around a corner to find the cave mouth, mostly hidden from view from our camp by vegetation. The four of us had explored the cave, and found it led down to the underground stream that emerges at the spring, and across it for a little ways before the passageway becomes too narrow. The existence of this cave is yet another reason why this is an ideal place to spend two nights and a layover day, despite the fact that one could easily paddle the 14 miles from Big Bend to Petersburg in a single day.

The row out was uneventful. I had been worried that I would get hung up more often before reaching the confluence with the North Fork, but there was only one or two problem spots where I had to have the passengers get out in order to float the raft over rocks. The broken out dam after the confluence and the ledges above Petersburg all had plenty of water.

Those of us waiting for the long shuttle got drenched when a thunderstorm finally put an end to the great weather. But that and our late arrival home after dropping off Ashley and the raft couldn't detract from a banner long weekend of great weather, good water, and fine company.

UPCOMING TRIPS

July 12-20	New River w/ Boy Scouts	LI	Mark Wray	703-222-4842	redshoestwo@juno.com
July 12	Cheat or Lower Yough	HI/A	Dick Pierce	703-524-2087	rpierce@law.gwu.edu
July 19	BRV Picnic	PN	Lou Campagna	301-929-0136	campagnal@verizon.net
July 19	Lower Yough ¹	HI	Jennifer Plyler*	301-445-4815*	pls98@verizon.net
July 20	Violette's Lock	PN	Kathleen Sengstock	301-649-3917	Kathleen.sengstock@mail.house.gov
August 2	Cheat	A	Rick Koller	301-864-2474	rkoller@helix.nih.gov
August 2	Lower Yough ¹	HI	Jennifer Plyler*	301-445-4815*	pls98@verizon.net
August 7-21	Quebec Rivers	A	Mike Gilchrist	703-931-2430	mgilchri@leo.gov
August 9-10	Cheat or Lower Yough ¹	HI/A	Wes Mills	703-866-9815	wesmills1@cox.net
August 16	Lower Yough ¹	HI	Jennifer Plyler*	301-445-4815*	pls98@verizon.net
August 16	Mather Gorge or Little Falls	I	Ed Grove	703-533-8334	eddyout@erols.com
Aug 30-Sep 1	New River Rendezvous	A	Ernie Katz	703-356-7105	erniekatz3@verizon.net

Notes:

*please call before 8 PM

¹ For all Yough trips, please contact the trip leader no later than Wednesday preceding the scheduled weekend trip. This should allow sufficient time to reserve boat permits.

Difficulty Level: Novice (N), Practiced Novice (PN), Lower Intermediate (LI), Intermediate (I), Advanced (A)

[The following article appeared in the April 13, 2008 edition of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette]

Youghiogheny River, Pristine Streams Run Near Proposed Strip Mine

by Don Hopey

Bicyclers and hikers on the Allegheny Highland trail soon could have a new attraction as they follow the Youghiogheny River: a large strip-mining operation next to Ohiopyle State Park in Fayette County. Amerikohl Mining Inc. wants to mine for coal a quarter mile from the popular trail that is a part of the Great Allegheny Passage route from Pittsburgh to Cumberland, Md., and is one of just eight federally designated National Scenic Trails. The company's proposal has caused widespread concern among trail, fishing and conservation groups.

"Having this kind of potential degradation of the water and watershed is a significant concern and very disturbing," said Linda McKenna Boxx, president of the Allegheny Trail Alliance, the coalition of seven rail-trail groups that built and maintains the 335-mile trail.

"People riding downriver from Ohiopyle find that section of the trail very serene and beautiful," said Dexton Reed, an executive board member and past president of the trail alliance. "If the mining gets that close to the trail and the river, it's going to be a problem."

The state Department of Environmental Protection will hold a public meeting on the Amerikohl permit application at 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Dunbar Township Supervisor's Building, 128 Township Drive. DEP spokeswoman Helen Humphreys said the permit application proposes mining operations on 280 acres of a 588-acre tract abutting a northern boundary of Ohiopyle State Park in Dunbar.

Between 200,000 and 250,000 tons of low-sulfur coal would be removed from a total of 138.6 acres, an area the size of 105 football fields. Mine-drainage settling and treatment ponds and facilities would occupy the rest of the 280-acre area.

"People coming into the park entrance wouldn't be able to see the mining operation, and people on the river probably won't be able to see it," Ms. Humphreys said. "But it will be visible and will be heard from the bike path in the winter and spring before the leaves are out, and maybe all year."

Amerikohl President John Stilley disputed that. "I don't believe you will be able to see our operation from the bike trail," he said. "It would be on top of a steep slope and behind it so the line of sight would not allow those on the trail to see into it."

The mining company plans to remove coal from two seams, the Upper Kittanning and Upper Freeport, each ranging from 24 to 40 inches thick. The seams are separated by 50 to 70 feet of overburden -- rock and soil -- that would be scraped off to allow mining of the lower seam. Actual mining would be limited to a single 45-acre area at a time, with reclamation of one area done as mining moves on to the next segment.

Although the standard state application is for a five-year permit, the company said mining would be completed in 21 months. Moving the coal to a power plant would require about 20 trucks a day, each carrying about 23 tons. "We mine and reclaim our mine sites better than anybody, and we are more environmentally conscious than the average citizen of this state. We mine in an environmentally sound manner and we don't take shortcuts," said Mr. Stilley, whose company has mined and reclaimed more than 200 sites in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia since opening in 1978. The company is one of the five largest surface-mining coal producers in Pennsylvania, annually digging about a million tons.

The property, which the coal company has leased, has never been mined, but an adjacent site that was mined in the early 1970s is discharging acid-mine drainage.

Amerikohl's mine would lie between Johnson Run and Morgan Run, two Youghiogheny River tributaries classified by the state as "high quality" cold-water fisheries. The Youghiogheny in that area also is classified as "high quality." Ms. Humphreys said discharges from the proposed mining operation would be channeled into four unnamed Youghiogheny River tributaries that are classified as "warm-water fisheries" but not "high quality."

"We're obviously concerned about what happens to the tributaries and the river if the diversion ditches and treatment ponds fail in a big storm event," said Krissy Kasserman, who heads the Youghiogheny Riverkeeper organization, part of the Mountain Watershed Association. "The Youghiogheny has just been designated the state's 'River of the Year.' Given the setting, we are absolutely opposed to the mining." There may also be more than two dozen endangered plant and animal species in the proposed mining area, she said.

In DEP's public meeting "open house" format, individuals will be able to speak with DEP mining bureau staff who will answer questions about relevant issues, including erosion and sedimentation controls, mine reclamation, and the measures DEP requires of mining operators to minimize stream impacts. A more formal public hearing is not scheduled.

BRV Crew Joins 20th Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup

by Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation Chair

On Saturday, April 5, 2008, six BRV paddlers joined over 12,000 volunteers in four states and the District of Columbia for the 20th Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup.

The BRV cleanup crew included Gus Anderson, Barbara Brown, Pete Dragon, Jim Finucane, Tim Tilson and myself. We met at Pennyfield Lock, paddled up the Maryland shore of the Potomac, and then crossed over to the islands in the middle of the river, picking up trash along the way. We collected a total of 14 bags of trash, 3 large plastic canisters, 2 tires, and some PVC pipe. We loaded all of the trash in our boats and hauled it all back to the put-in. Some of us had to make two trips to carry everything we found. We left it in a large pile at the Pennyfield Lock parking lot for the National Park Service to pick up with their dump trucks.

The Potomac River Watershed Cleanup is organized every year by the Alice Ferguson Foundation. (More information can be found at www.hardbargainfarm.org.) The Foundation reported that a total of 12,078 volunteers participated in this year's cleanup, collecting a grand total of 285 tons of trash, including 109,400 recyclable beverage containers, 13,596 plastic bags, and 1,360 tires. Trash was collected at 357 separate sites in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia. One of those sites was Pennyfield Lock.

Membership Roster Updates

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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 2008: January 23, March 11, May 13, July 19 (Moonlight Picnic), September TBD, November TBD, December TBD (Holiday Party). Meetings are followed by beer and pizza at a nearby pub. Location: Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library on Leesburg Pike (Rt. 7) in Falls Church, VA. The library is on the east side of Rt. 7 about 0.6 miles south of I-495. Or, from I-66, take the Rt. 7 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.

2008 BRV Officers: Jim Pruitt, President; Lou Campagna, VP; Jenny Thomas, Trip Coordinator; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation.

2008 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.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 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.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 September *Voyageur*:
Friday, September 5th

MOONLIGHT PICNIC
Saturday, July 19th