

THE VOYAGEUR



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May 2009

THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

Well, we had some recent wet weather followed by a quick warm up to summer-like weather. The last couple of weeks have provided us with rains and many paddling opportunities. Coinciding with this rain were a couple of week-long trips, which I hope to hear some trip reports from in the coming year. *[see below for one of them — Ed.]*

I would like to thank Keith Merkel and Mike Gilchrist for their presentation “Canada Trip(s)” at the March meeting. The presentation was impressive and the interactions (or shall I say disagreements) between Mike and Keith were quite entertaining! Looking forward to the May meeting, we will have Court Ogilvie as our presenter, showing a DVD of our recent trip down the Grand Canyon. Please mark your calendars for the 20th 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.

Looks like this year will provide plenty of opportunities to get out and enjoy our rivers. Watch your email inbox for Jenny's weekly updates! I hope to see more of you on the water this season.

Jim

I Thought This Was a Spring Trip (April 18 - 25, 2009) by Keith Merkel

Every year for the last several years, since Scott and Denise moved to Connecticut, Scott has been leading a bunch of New England boating friends south each spring to run rivers with some local BRVers. I believe I've been on all of these trips. It was with dismay that I learned that Scott couldn't lead the trip this year due to a rotator cuff injury. He has since had surgery to repair the damage and hopes to be back boating by this fall. In order to keep with tradition, I volunteered to run this year's trip.

We had a fine group of boaters on this trip, all kayakers except for one open boater/C1. From the BRV, Len Rice joined us for the first three days while Ned Howenstine boated the entire trip. The rest of the boaters were from New England. Jim Michaud, open boater and C1, along with Dustin Farrenkopf, boated the entire trip plus the Upper Yough on Friday, the 17th. Ian (Kaplan?) and Jon Montelius joined us after

our run on the Top Yough and boated all week. Marc Bleicher joined us Sunday morning and left Friday night after having boated all week. Finally, Scott Keenan and Tim joined us Sunday night and boated Monday through Wednesday.

Although there are often cold days on spring trips, the weather on this trip was pretty extreme. The trip started and ended fine — we had warm, sunny conditions on the first and last day (it was probably in the high 80's on our last day), but most of the other days were cold and wet. We had rain, freezing rain, snow, hail, sleet, and even a thunderstorm one morning.

Saturday, April 18th, Top Yough, 380 cfs

The trip started with Ned and Len meeting me at the

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Greenbrier Double Play Greenbrier Hotel & Greenbrier River

by Jenny Thomas with input from her most marvelous husband, Kim Buttleman

Kim and I went to the Greenbrier on March 29th to take advantage of your wonderful wedding gift to us. What a perfectly sumptuous, romantic and beautiful place. From the moment we arrived until the moment we left we were enveloped in total decadence and warm, friendly Southern hospitality.

The weather wasn't so conducive to roaming about, but we did take in a few games of shuffleboard in subfreezing wind chills, while others taking coach tours looked on somewhat amazed. I have to say that I beat Kim hands down. We completed our own personalized walking tour by checking out the natural sulfur spring that was the reason for this resort to be constructed way back in 1780. After roaming about, we thawed out at the afternoon tea, with crumpets and all manner of delicious goodies, and listened to the Greenbrier's in-house pianist play Chopin, Satie, and others. What a great gig! And, what an interesting person — we talked to him for quite a while afterwards.

We had missed the live tour of the underground "bunker" facility when we arrived, but we watched an informative video about it in our room on the "bunker channel." We learned about the history of its construction (how they got away with it unnoticed since they built a new wing on the hotel at the same time), its purpose and use.

When I was a youngster, my father, who worked for the U.S. Public Health Service, frequently went away to the "secret place" where Congress and other important leaders would be evacuated in the event of nuclear war. Little did I know he was going to the Greenbrier — another fine gig, I'd say!

Dinner [right] was outrageous — for an appetizer, I had sautéed shrimp with a patty of grits, local ramps, tomato and a ham cream sauce; cream of celery root soup for a second course; and bacon wrapped venison loin with red cur-



Kim covers up Jenny's winning shuffleboard pucks.





What were probably the only car-topped boats in the Greenbrier's parking lot departing for the river.

rent game jus for the entrée. Kim's was equally sensational and the wine was exquisite. It was definitely the most decadent meal we've ever had!

Oh, we wandered the halls, took in the history of the place, and the enormity of it all. We were totally charmed and spoiled by the staff, even the woman who stopped to chat after turning down our bed for the night.

The next morning I went for a fabulous massage while Kim had breakfast. Somehow I did manage to miss out on breakfast, but the massage was well worth it. ("Breakfast was very good, but I think Jenny got the better part of the deal," says Kim)

How can we tell you all that we had the BEST TIME EVER!! We were treated like royalty for a day and we loved every minute of it. Thank you so much for your generous gift to us. We will NEVER forget it.

So, you may wonder why this article is called the Greenbrier Double Play — well, that's because we soon reverted to our normal selves after checking out of the hotel.... We decided that it would be appropriate to boat, or shall I say, romantically float, the beautiful Greenbrier River, and so we did — from Cass down to Clover Lick [*above right*]. What a perfect ending to a perfect trip! We brought bicycles and had intended to bike the shuttle on the rail-trail alongside the river, but we got there too late and ended up buying a shuttle from the local outfitter store in Cass. Had we done the bike shuttle, this article would have been called the Greenbrier Triple Play.



SPRING TRIP (Continued from page 1)
 Myersville McDonalds at 7:30. We had a quick breakfast and were on the road to the Top Yough before 8:00. I had made prior arrangements to meet Jim and Dustin at the Top Yough around 10 AM. They had traveled down Thursday and ran the Upper Yough Friday on natural flow, starting early to beat the scheduled dam release which would have made the Upper Yough too high. We would have made it on time if it were not for a vehicle fire on I-68 that stopped traffic for over half an hour. Fortunately, Jim & Dustin were patient and we found them at the putin for the Top Yough. It was a gorgeous, sunny day for a Top Yough run.

Dustin, Len, and I ran Swallow Falls, which was at a nice, manageable level. Our runs of Suckhole were eventful, especially for me. I entered the top of Suckhole on the right, intending to run the right side of the first hole and then head left to avoid the Suckhole eddy and continue down the rest of the rapid. However, I hit the top hole at a slightly right angle and was immediately shunted towards the suckhole. Not what I was expecting, to say the least. Fortunately, there was a rock blocking my path towards the debris pile and I was able to stop before getting into trouble. I then backed up into the current, was swung around backwards, went down the next drop backwards, spun around again (yea, I'm going straight down now) only to have my bow hit the left bank causing me to almost broach the final drop. Again, I somehow managed to straighten the boat, but had no momentum to punch the final hole. The River God was

kind, however, as I backended out of the hole without getting stuck. I managed to finish the whole rapid upright, much to the amusement/amazement of the others, but I was not a happy boater. In addition, Ned flipped in the top hole, but rolled and ran the rest of the rapid OK. Dustin ran the last part of drop backward and, like Keith, got backended in the bottom hole. In contrast, Jim (OC1) had a perfect run, including catching the difficult-to-get-to right chute on the last part of the drop.

While en route to camp, we got in touch with Ian & Jon, who were driving towards Elkins as per my initial instructions when I thought perhaps Shavers and/or Laurel Forks might be running. As luck would have it, they had just exited off I 68 onto 219 south and were just slightly behind us as we went from the Top Yough to Rt. 219 in Oakland. We decided to wait for them at the 219 traffic light turn in Oakland. Now our group increased to 7 boaters.

Since we were running a little early, I decided to show the Northerners Blackwater Falls near Davis, WV. After a short hike to see the falls, we drove to Elkins where we had dinner at CJ Maggies. Our next stop was Audra State Park where we camped the next two nights. I had my sights on either the Buckhannon or the Middle Fork. Due to popular demand, the Middle Fork won.

Sunday, April 19th, Middle Fork of the Tygart, 3.5 feet

Overnight, I heard some rain hit-

ting my vehicle as I tried to sleep. Immediately, I had visions of that rain spiking the level of the Middle Fork to flood levels like it did on one memorable trip I was on around 1990. On that trip, the river rose rapidly as we tried to paddle it, cresting at over 10 feet which was beyond the top of the gauge. We had boats, people, and paddles all over the place by the time we reached the Tygart, forcing some boaters to hike out and others to chase boaterless boats and paddles. For reference, the Tygart crested at 17 feet that day.

Fortunately, on this trip, the rain did not move the gauge at all and we had a pleasant, low water run down the Middle Fork. We connected with Marc at the putin around 10:30. He drove down Saturday night, leaving after 7 PM and stopping for only 3 hours of sleep. How he was able to boat this day, I have no idea.

Everyone had a great run on the Middle Fork & Tygart. The only incident I remember involved expert boater Jim Michaud. He had decided to forgo his open boat today and use his C1 instead to make the railroad carry out easier. Unfortunately, he was not quite as comfortable in the C1. This became obvious as he failed to correctly make the last ledge drop on the right in the first boulder pile rapid (third hard rapid up from the Tygart junction). He momentarily broached and/or pitoned on the rock separating the two right channels and slipped sideways into a hole at the bottom. After a couple of roll attempts, he bailed. That was the only time all week that I saw Jim have any problems. He

was perfect in his open boat, as always.

Although we all had a hankerin' for barbecue, we wound up having dinner at the Philipi Inn since the barbecue place we've visited the last couple of years was not open for dinner on Sundays. After a fine meal at the Philipi Inn, we returned to Audra to camp.

Monday, April 20th, Upper Meadow, 530 - 580 cfs

While having breakfast in Belington, I called Rick Koller to get river levels (thanks, Rick). After a little dithering, we decided to head to the Upper Meadow. While the level was low, I figured it would hold and possibly go up a little with the rain we had overnight. Fortunately, I was right. The water level was low, but it turned out it was rising a little, so the run was slightly above minimum.

We had two incidents today, the first on the river and the second on the shuttle. While leading the group down the river, I kept wondering if I would recognize the two biggest rapids. I did recognize the first rapid that looked like it was a river-wide blockade and was able to lead everyone to the right channel. The second big rapid, which I was told years ago was Top of the World, but for which I find no reference as such in the guide books, occurs after a long pool about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through The Rapids. After flowing over a very small ledge, most of the river goes down a big chute in the middle with a huge hole at the bottom. The safe, sneak route is to take another channel to

the left of the main one and avoid the hole and then follow the S-turn run over the next couple of ledges. Well, even though Jim had said in the pool above that he thought this looked like the "falls" rapid, I didn't recognize the drop as I approached. At the last instant, I had a thought that this might be the big drop, but it looked like so many other big chutes on the river and not at all dangerous so, I figured, go for it. Fortunately, I had a lot of momentum going into the hole, that, while it stood me up in a backender, it let me loose and I was able to paddle the rest of the rapid upright. Even though Jim was correct about the rapid, he followed me anyway, thinking I knew where I was going (little did he know). He backended also and landed upright as well which was impressive since he was in his open boat. Wish I had seen it. The two other kayakers who followed Jim were not as lucky as he or I. They both were wrestled from their boats while in the hole. Luckily, the remaining boaters had enough sense to stop, scout, and rescue once they saw the mayhem. They all ran the left side sneak.

The second incident involved one of our shuttle vehicles. We had 2 vehicles at the takeout, Marc's and Ned's, and 5 at the putin, and it just started to rain when we reached the takeout. Marc decided to immediately take a couple of drivers back to the putin so their passengers wouldn't have to wait as long at the takeout in the rain. Ned and the rest of the drivers left for the putin about 15 minutes later. When we arrived at the putin we noticed all 5 vehicles were still there and we hadn't seen Marc on the shuttle.

Turns out Marc and company passed the one crucial turn they had to make because they thought the road they had to turn on went downhill immediately (it doesn't). They then proceeded to wander who knows where all over the back roads in "Meadow River country," getting a flat tire in the process. Apparently Marc's GPS was as confused as they were. Meanwhile, after Ned and the rest of us got back to the takeout and still no sign of Marc, we began to get worried that maybe they flew off the road or something (not that unlikely a possibility). After Ned went back out in search of Marc and about an hour after their disappearance, we got a cell phone call from them saying that Ned was leading them to the putin and everything was OK. Their comment "At least we had beer!". This was all after I specifically asked Marc if he knew the way to the putin. Maybe you should wait next time, Marc.

We (minus Len who headed home) went to Fayetteville afterwards for dinner. Unfortunately, Dirty Ernie's was still closed for the winter and was not opening until that Wednesday. Dang, still no barbecue. But we found a fantastic restaurant, Diogi's Mexican Grill & Cantina, on the same road as Dirty Ernie's just before you reach the main street in Fayetteville (103 Keller Ave., www.diogismexicangrill.com). Highly recommend it. The El Salvadoran chef cooks delicious Mexican entries. And, yes, they do serve beer. They even have WiFi.

After dinner, we split up with 4 of us braving a chilly night at Sum-

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SPRING TRIP (Continued from page 5)
mersville Lake Retreat and the rest staying at a hotel in Fayetteville (those wimps).

Tuesday, April 21st, Upper Cranberry, 3.7 feet

After getting river levels from the campground hosts, we joined forces with the rest at the Go-Mart gas station on Rt. 19 at 129. Although it was at a low level, the group decided to run upper Cranberry. However, when we got there, Jim & Dustin decided the level was too scrapey for them and they just hung out and videoed us at Cranberry Twist (a.k.a. S Turn). Also, we decided to have lunch and take our time unloading boats and getting suited up at the putin since it was very cold and raining. After a brief time, the sun came out and tricked us into thinking it would be a great day on the river. What we didn't know was Mother Nature wasn't quite done with us yet. We alternated between sun, rain, sleet, hail, and snow during the few hours we were on the river. Fortunately, the sun was out while we ran Cranberry Twist and when we arrived at the takeout. Mother Nature couldn't take away the fun we all had on such a wonderful river even though it seemed more like winter than spring.

We all then drove to the Four Seasons hotel in Richwood, the only hotel now open in Richwood. Dustin was itching to get some boating in that day since he skipped the Cranberry. We all convinced him that he should run Rudolph Falls on the North Fork Cherry which is right behind the hotel. He quickly

suited up and had 2 fine low water runs down the falls. It was scrapey at the top, but fun through the main drop. Not totally satisfied yet, he decided to surf the hole at the bottom of the falls. It was a bit grabbier than he expected and he was forced to exit his boat in order to get out. Of course, all of us on shore were laughing and taking pictures.

Now, the Northern boys have a quaint tradition called "bootie" time that requires swimmers to drink a bottle of beer from one of their booties. Dustin obliged and everyone had another great laugh as he cringed drinking that obnoxious brew.

Following that entertainment, the Northern boys decided they wanted to have a cookout and proceeded to have a feast in the parking lot of the hotel. Fortunately, we were the only ones there and the guy watching over the place that day was a boater who understood. After the feast, Ned, Tim, and Scott returned to the Cranberry to have a quiet but cold camp on the bank of the Cranberry and woke up to heavy snow squalls in the morning.

Wednesday, April 22nd, New River Dries, approx. 6,000 cfs

After checking river levels on Jon's laptop at the hotel in the morning, we all caravanned to our usual breakfast spot in downtown Richwood, only to find that it had closed for good. We found another place for breakfast on Rt. 39, a couple of miles outside of Richwood on the way to Fenwick. The food was good, but the service was

a bit slow. They don't appear capable of handling large groups quickly. We were told there is also a diner (Fenwick Diner?) that serves breakfast further up the road from Richwood.

It was at this restaurant that I had another incident. I went out to my car for something and I rushed to get back under the restaurant roof's overhang because it was raining. However, I did not notice the air conditioning unit sticking out of the wall near my vehicle. I smacked that unit so hard with my head that I actually fell to the ground. I came back into the restaurant looking like a bloody mess. Fortunately, I have a hard head and, after stopping the bleeding and putting on a couple of duct tape-like waterproof bandaids, I was good as new. Unfortunately, there is a picture of me somewhere with a gray pair of bandaids on my head in a cross or X pattern. *[I'm looking forward to running all these great photos in the July issue. Be sure to send them, Keith! — Ed.]*

Today we decided to travel back to the other (west) side of Rt. 19 and paddle the New River Dries. This is a section of the New that seldom has water in it because 10,000 cfs are removed for power before it flows into the Kanawha. With the Kanawha around 19,000 cfs and the Gauley (at Belva) pumping in around 3,000 cfs, there was 16,000 in the New before the dam and, thus, 6,000 cfs in the Dries below the dam. This section can be reached from Rt. 16 west of Fayetteville or Rt. 60 west of Rt. 19 and before you get to Gauley Bridge.

At 6,000 cfs the Dries were pumpin'. Not quite the levels the hot shot experts like to surf at, but plenty of water for us. I'll never forget the look of terror on Ian's face as he paddled down some of the drops. There were huge holes we had to paddle around and Land-slide rapid, the only one we scouted, was a lot of fun. Anytime you have too much water in the area, check this little gem out. What was curious, though, this time was that this run was crankin', but other runs in the area were low. Must have been more rain in the New watershed. Another curious thing was that the Dries ran only this day, I believe, or at most the next day also. It was not running earlier in the week. The Dries has a lot of great surfing spots, but as Dustin found out, the holes can be quite difficult to get out of. This day, I would say the run was Class 3-4, mainly due to avoiding holes in high water. At lower water, it's mostly a class 2-3 run.

After this run, we decided to head back north to check out Kitzmiller and lower Big Sandy. Along the way, we stopped at USA Steakhouse in Clarksburg for dinner. After dinner, Tim and Scott bade farewell as the remaining 7 of us headed to Teters to camp.

Thursday, April 23rd, North Branch of the Potomac — Kitzmiller, 4.8 - 4.7 feet

Today found us traveling about 45 minutes east from Teters to western Maryland to run the North Branch of the Potomac at Kitzmiller. We had a great level of 4.8 on

the online gauge or 4.6 at the bridge. It dropped about a tenth of a foot while we were on the river. It was a nice, juicy run. No one had any major problems. I found the hole at the bottom of Rattlesnake a bit inviting. However, it must not have liked me that much since it surfed me out upside down and let me roll up afterwards. Ned surfed up a storm as usual all day and everyone had just one heck of a time. Even Dustin, who likes big water, was very happy with the run. As usual, we put in at Steyer and took out at Shallmar to cut off much of the flat water. It was still a bit chilly, but at least it stopped looking like winter.

Friday, April 24th, Lower Big Sandy, 5.7 feet

Finally, on Friday it began to feel like spring again, so we ended the trip as we began it, with a nice spring day, and we soon forgot about the winter we had in between.

We decided to run the lower Big Sandy. As usual, it was an awesome run. Most of us ran Wonder Falls with only one having a slight problem with the landing. But, hey, it was his first waterfall. It was especially enjoyable watching Jim Michaud style Big Splat in his open boat. Dustin was equally impressive at Big Splat in his kayak. Jon, however, showed us why Big Splat has it's name. He emerged unscathed, but the same cannot be said of his boat, which lost about 4 inches in length because the bow was compacted and bent vertical. It did get him down the rest of the river, though. Ned had issues with

First Island and I can't say I had a great run there either, although I did remain upright. In fact, I seemed to be off all day on my lines. I think I wore myself out all week and was just too tired to maneuver my boat at times.

We ran our own shuttle on the lower Big Sandy. The road down to Rockville is not in great shape, but it is passable. What I found amazing was the new putin parking lot AW has built. Where we used to be able to squeeze just a few cars on the side of the road on river right, i.e., across the bridge, there is now a large gravel parking lot that can easily handle at least a dozen cars. Kudos to AW!

Epilogue

Well, all great trips must come to an end. Marc left right after we got off of the Big Sandy. The remaining 6 of us lingered for one more night and cookout feast at Teter's. Jim was ready to boat the Upper Yough on Saturday again, but no one else was a willing, so we all started driving home after breakfast.

This was a fantastic trip with a great bunch of boaters and friends! I look forward to this trip every year. Everyone said they had a great time. No one complained about the weather, just laughed at the silliness of it all. Many said it was one of the best trips they've ever been on. From the scenery, challenge, and variety of rivers, it couldn't be beat. Let's see if Scott & Denise can pull off an even greater trip next year.

“Boundary Waters”

by Ed Evangeldi

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. Yes, we had cold rain, hot blazing sun, fierce winds & sandstorms... and that was not the worst of it. But we also has purrfect paddling days with canyons and rapids and wildlife to admire. The techies amongst the group kept a sharp eye on where we were, but I always knew that with these “boundary waters” — Texas was always river left and Mexico was always river right. How much simpler could it be?

Participants on this adventure were from Florida, Georgia & West Virginia. Paddling OC2 were Bob & Sue, Walt & Sally & Marty & Gail. OC1 participants were Carl and myself: Juan Valdez Jose Jimenez Taco Bell de la Long Portage. Other participants playing cameo roles were “the Texans” and “the Mexicans”. Roadrunners, armadillos, javelinas, beavers, nutrias, turtles, hawks, ducks, catfish, bats, big & little dipper, etc. were played by themselves. But not all of the players were there all of the time.

Once upon a time, in a land far, far away (well, Florida to be exact), there was talk of a Rio Grande trip. As happens between January and March, potential participants came and went. Even Carl, the one person who was familiar with the targeted paddling trip, was touch and go for a while. Fortunately he was a “go” to do the substantial organizing (get river info, reservations, permits and private property usage agreements, etc.), show up, help run shuttle and *then* have to bail because of a slow start to the trip that would have caused him to miss an appointment that he needed to keep at the back end of the trip. What’s a mere thousand miles or so to drive and not paddle the river? This then left the seven desperadoes without a knowledgeable leader. No problem: we had sketchy maps and guides, GPS’s and bad dirt roads. We also had gauge readings that proved to be in error with our printed guides and a major flood last year that “changed everything” on the river. No problem: we were naive and gung ho. We were also fortified with “Nan’s Burritos” from the Stillwell store.

First official day was dedicated to running shuttle. Second day was dedicated to running shuttle. It was planned as a one-day shuttle but mother nature threw

a cold miserable all day rain shower that kept the shuttle bunnies cold in the sideways driving rain (we expected very hot temperatures) while the shuttle drivers negotiated the long part of the shuttle before realizing that they had to turn back because of too-deep stream crossings. This put us one day behind schedule and resulted in Carl having to depart. Day two was another day of watching boats and gear (shuttle bunnies were not counted in the wildlife sightings as they were far from wild at this point) and running shuttle. This time the take out cars were dropped at a “close enough” point near the take out. Day three found the participants marching back and forth like a bunch of ants; carrying boats and gear to the river. The early afternoon departure from La Linda brought us quickly into the first of the lower canyons. Many more beautiful canyons followed and many Class 1+ rapids awaited. The easy rapids were what I call “wall shots”, where the current funnels into a chute aimed at a wall of rock or occasionally, river cane or downed trees. Many guidebooks recommend portaging many of these rapids, but any competent whitewater boater would have little problem with these rapids. Our group had little problem with these rapids. We soon were in a groove of flatwater, wall shot rapids and camping. We spiced the routine with a few side hikes and encounters with various Texans - many of whom told us about how much the river had changed from the flood. Some of the rapids changed substantially, but the normal flood water scouring of shoreline and deposition and erosion of sand bars were more prominent.

The first substantial rapid was Hot Springs rapid, a low Class 3. It filled boats up with water but did little else to the boaters. The rapid was followed with the Hot Springs themselves. They were actually tepid springs with mildly biting bugs but were greatly welcomed by our by now slightly weary group. This fortified our group for the tackling of Upper and Lower Madison rapids. Upper Madison proved to be quite long and our group ran the top part, camped and portaged the too shallow lower part of the rapid. A group of Texans and “Tecate Kid” camped on the other side of the river from us. The next day, the Kid helped us line down the left side of Lower Madison rapid while

the other Texans showed us how not to run a rapid and how to unpin a canoe. Tecate Kid is a guidebook writer and the others were Pecos River veterans who gave us useful river information. Dry roads at the take out allowed for an uneventful ride out.

After significant discussions (beers and burritos played a significant part in the discussions), we decided to paddle part of the "Big Bend". The paddle from Santa Elena to Rio Grande Village normally takes 5 days, and we then lost two paddlers to other obligations. The remaining 5 of us camped overlooking beautiful Terlingua Creek — next to a camper who talked to himself all night. Paddling in Big Bend National Park reminds me of the zone defense used in basketball. In addition to the permits and other requirements, we now had to camp each night in a pre designated zone established for the security of our country. We made sure that we were not confused with other surreptitious Rio Grande users who may also be paddling canoes loaded with camping gear and cameras instead of unemployed undocumented people. I also note that camping exclusion zones seem to only occur where someone with a boat and a clever idea may wish to river camp when the land campgrounds are full. But I must be mistaken, and I'm sure that our country's safety doesn't concern itself with collecting camping fees. (Texas is too close-sounding to taxes.)

We again faced the best of times and the worst of times. The worst was the continual lowering of water levels throughout the trip. By the next trip we were scraping along on areas that would have been easily floated at the earlier release levels. By the end of our trip we would have 3 cracked canoes; with at least two of them due to the low water and heavily loaded boats. But the most beautiful canyon encountered — Mariscal Canyon — awaited. Mariscal was inspiring and broke up what was generally only "O.K." desert scenery on this section. It had a few rapids in it that required attention as it had a somewhat fast flow through twisty turns, an undercut rock and partially blocked by downed tree routes.

We unwound the shuttle and camped with rabbits and a roadrunner who claimed a nearby tree as his camp site. The next target paddle was the link between the first paddle excursion on the lower canyons and the

second trip in the western part of Big Bend Park. This was a 3 day paddle and we again lost two more paddlers to land commitments. By now we were veterans of fierce head winds, sand storms and low water. We also were wise to the defenses of the plants on the unmarked "hiking trails" consisting of picking your way through all kinds of spiny plants. My legs may have competed with an operating room used gauze pad. I also learned on an earlier hike near a wax factory that cows will hike unusually steep terrain but if it is not a cow trail, it is indeed very steep. We also encountered "Singing Victor" who will belt out an old pop Spanish tune in hopes of a contribution. We also enjoyed Boquillas Canyon, by far the longest canyon of the trip. Boquillas can also be partly sampled from a hiking trail. Most of the other scenery on this section is typical desert. Boquillas del Carmen was also the largest Mexican settlement that we paddled near. One more Hot Springs; this time on the Texas side. It had palm trees, ruins of a former hot springs business, pictographs and sightseeing tourists.

I'm sure that there will be talk of another trip next March as there are the upper canyons and the Pecos River yet to explore. By then we will have forgotten the winds and terrible back roads and only have memories of what was worth taking pictures of. I will have forgotten the 1900 miles that I need to get there and the cactus needles that found me as a target and will forget exactly what Heath, Temple, Maravillas, Big, San Rocendo, San Francisco and all the other "minor" canyons look like. The others will have forgotten the river jokes that I will probably repeat.

Essential tools include: www.nps.gov/bibe/riversb.htm , www.hal-pc.org/~lfa , <http://southwestpaddler.com> , www.tpwd.state.tx.us/texaswater/rivers , <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/tx> , <http://www.ibwc.state.gov/wad/rtdata.htm> , www.traveltex.com. The first site includes much of the river paddling requirements.

We had about 200+CFS @ Big Bend/Boquillas to start and 160CFS at the low point. 220 CFS is about an optimal low water run and 160 CFS is tolerable. More water would be needed to run the upper canyons.



Folks enjoying the 2008 CCA Potomac Downriver Race last May. This year's race is scheduled for May 23rd. For more information and entry forms, please visit <http://www.ccadc.org/notices.html>, or contact race organizer (and BRV member) Star Mitchell. (Photos by Beth Koller.)



BRV Trip Schedule for May and June

May 2-3	Tygart	A	Keith Merkel	703 222-6210	krm108@juno.com
May 8-11	Greenbrier Festival Car Camper	PN	Ed Evangelidi, et. al	304 262-8924	edevange@localnet.com
May 9-10	Bloomington	I	Ginny DeSeau	301-251-2978	vd9t@nih.gov
May 22-25 (Mem)	Memorial Day Car Camper at Teeter's	LI-A	Mike Martin, Courtney Caldwell, Ed Evangelidi, etc.	301-263-0386 (Mike Martin)	imnostooge@yahoo.com (also Mike Martin)
May 23-25 (Mem)	Smokehole Camper	LI	Frank Fico	703 318-7998	fico1@netzero.net
May 23	Potomac Down-river Race	I	Star Mitchell	301 530-3252	starmitchell@verizon.net
May 30	Codorus Creek or Dealer's Choice	LI	Al Cassel	202-363-7645	acasse@starpower.net
Sometime in June	Savage River Release (date TBA)	HI	Frank Fico	703 318-7998	fico1@netzero.net
June 6	Cheat	A	Rick Koller	301 864-2474	rkoller@helix.nih.gov
June 13	Staircase or Dealer's Choice	I	Ginny DeSeau	301-251-2978	vd9t@nih.gov
June 20	Lower Yough ⁽³⁾	HI	Jennifer Plyler	301 445-4815 B4 8PM	pls98@verizon.net
June 27	Dealer's Choice	I/HI	David Cottingham	202-966-8678	david.cottingham@starpower.net

Contemporary Mountain Home For Rent in Canaan Valley, WV

3 Bedroom (plus Eagle's Nest), 2.5 bath vacation home for rent in the Northpoint development; sleeps 10-12. Two-level deck, stone fireplace, hot tub, mountain bikes (2). End of the road at the top of the development — very private setting. Monongahela National Forest right out the front door, with miles of trails for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing or snowshoeing. This is truly a four-season recreational mecca: beat the DC heat and humidity with a summertime rental, mountain bike in the fall, out-the-door cross country skiing in winter, and the best of springtime WV white-water (Blackwater, Laurel Fork, Dry Fork, etc.). Rental rates range from \$150-\$300/night, with a 2-night minimum. Contact Frank or Bridget at fico1@netzero.net or 703-318-7998.

**ROSTER UPDATES**

David Bussey & Colleen Davies
18711 Cross Country Lane
Gaithersburg, MD 20879
301-947-3708
busseyd@verizon.net

Nathan Frye
5599 Sagefield Drive
Harrisonburg, VA 22801
406-370-7752
umfrye@yahoo.com

Chris Oberlin
6014 Sonoma Road
Bethesda, MD 20817
301-530-7833 (H)
202-691-6713 (W)
chrisoberlin@yahoo.com

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 20, 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

In this issue...

- Trip reports:
 - Spring week of rivers (p. 1)
 - Rio Grande Canyons (p. 8)
 - Greenbrier (Inn & River) (p. 2)
- 2008 Potomac race photos (p. 10)

Deadline for July *Voyageur*:

Friday, July 10th

NEXT MEETING
Wednesday, May 20th