

# THE VOYAGEUR



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

September 2008

## THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

We had a pretty good spring and summer this year! Seems to me water levels were better than the last few summers. I only recently went for a low water Little Falls run. I hope everyone took advantage of the water while we had it. As we wind into fall, thoughts turn to Gauley Season. There is currently one scheduled club trip to join, or create your own!

I would like to thank Lou Matacia for his presentation at the May meeting where discussions ranged from safety and strainer removal to gauge painting and dowsing. Lou, your handouts were very nicely put together! For the September meeting (Tuesday the 9<sup>th</sup>) Court Ogilvie and Lou Campagna will be presenting their summer trip to Alaska.

This year's Moonlight Picnic was a first for me. It was a great time and the moonlight paddle back was simply fantastic. Some of us went downstream to Pennyfield Lock with the moon out in front to lead the way. I will never forget the picture of canoeists in the moonlight.

We are in need of more presenters for the fall meetings and going into 2009, so let me know if you have something you would like to share with the club.

Jim

## BRV Canada Trip 2008 (photos by Keith Merkel)

*At left, Cahil Converse on the Tourilli River (Ste. Anne watershed), north of St. Raymond, not far from Quebec City. At right, an unidentified boater on the Jacques Cartier River, Ste. Catherines section. Look for the trip report and more photos in the November Voyageur.*



## A Compendium of Summer Trips from Beth Koller

### Vanity, Vanity Boater is Thy Name

Tony Allred, Richard Haberstat, Beth Koller, Joe Sullivan, and a local paddler from Cumberland got together on Sunday, May 11 for a run down the Bloomington section of the North Branch of the Potomac River. The river was running at about 1000 cfs. It was a bright and sunny day. All of this made it quite picturesque. This was important since the goal of the trip was to take photographs — good photographs — of participants running Robin's Nest and Top of the World rapids. Beth found her new dry bag to be quite functional. Participants did a good job of paddling from underneath the shade of the over-hanging trees and looking at the photographer.

Tony took us on a special on-river side trip. There had been a few small towns along the river that were kept alive by the railroad that ran through the valley. Life in these communities changed as the dam was built, the rail line was abandoned in favor of one located higher on the ridge, and the coal petered out. We bushwacked our way to the remains of one of these ghost towns on river right, but later found a downstream trail that more directly accessed the town. This trail is at the bottom of the rapids Go Left Young Man. It is after the Lunch Stop and before Robin's Nest. We checked out the small coal mine, whose entrance height was about three feet. We also visited the cemetery, which was founded in the late 1800s. It is still actively tended. It was a trip into the past.

### Cheat Canyon Run: An Initiation for the Uninitiated

*[see photos on page 7]*

After chatting with Richard Hopley, who was there with a group of North Carolina paddlers, a hearty group of five (Daryl Hall, Beth Koller, Rick Koller, Ernie Katz, and Mike Martin) headed down the Cheat Canyon on sunny August Saturday morning (8/8/08). The bridge gauge hovered at 1 foot. This was a virgin run for Daryl. Big Nasty proved to be no problem for anyone. She had an early spill on a guard rock, but acquitted herself admirably on the rest of the run. Rick picked out a center slot at Anticipation that was new for many of us. Daryl was squealing with delight after she exited the eddy at Tear Drop. Rick ventured down the mid-river slot at High Falls without incident or cheese grater boat damage.

Coliseum was scouted from upstream by the group. Rick then refreshed himself in the river right falls and hopped into his boat to check out the right side of Recyclotron. The usual river left run appeared to be obscured so Beth went downstream to investigate. Even then the far left route looked different. Based on Rick's guidance, Daryl forged ahead right through the hole and down the tongue with aplomb. Mike was not so lucky. He ran a foot or so to the left of Daryl's line. Soon we were seeing a canoe hull. OOPS! Daryl was so excited from her run and was so busy scrambling on shore that she did not immediately see Mike's dilemma. Mike managed to effectively self rescue in the swirling eddy below the drop. Beth (who watched the spectacle from an eddy immediately upstream) and Ernie elected to run a modified left line. Despite scouting, Beth and Ernie became more intimate with the Pete Morgan rock than they intended. Rick could not believe that Beth was within kissing range of the rock and that Ernie repeated the scenario a few minutes later. Ernie did top it off by almost flipping, losing his paddle, and hand paddling the rest of the drop backwards! Score: 10!!! Rick and Mike switched boats (Dagger Genesis and Bell Prodigy X respectively). Rick liked the snappy feel of the boat, but his geezer knees and the outfitting would not let him complete the run in Mike's canoe.

Newbie Daryl even enjoyed the shuttle—from the wind in your hair and the branches in your face to the on-board refreshments. Glenn Miller is looking good these days and had his granddaughter helping with the finances. He expressed gratitude to the boating community for its concern over his wife, Donna. The day

was topped off by a fine meal at Munroe's, a combination restaurant and antique-craft shop in Kingwood. The entrees were good and reasonably priced. Mike recommends the pork chops. Beth and Rick recommend the spicy sausage pasta.

### **Little Falls Run**

A weather front was rolling in, but Courtney Caldwell, Daryl Hall, Beth Koller, and Mike Martin were not deterred from making an afternoon run at Little Falls on 8/9/08. The water level was just below 3 feet (2.75?) and the tide was low. We entered the Potomac River via the feeder canal. Daryl was aghast as Beth tipped over in the last pitch before the river. She did not think that it was possible to roll up in such shallow water. We then explored the base of the dam run-out by doing some interesting attainment maneuvers. The high water level provided ample opportunity for surfing, ferrying, and eddy hopping. After scouting Little Falls, the open-boat paddlers (Courtney, Daryl, and Mike) took a tight left line through the first pitch and then a right-of-center line through the Maryland chute. Beth ran down though the center into the Maryland chute. She disappeared from the view of the paddlers in Maryland side eddies several times. A take-out at Fletcher's Boathouse added to the aerobic aspects of the trip. (Note: The C&O Canal has not been filled so paddling the shuttle has not been an option.) The tide produced mud flats that made take-out at the docks difficult; take-out on the rocky beach 100 yards downstream was not problematic.

### **Cocktail Time Evening Runs on Wednesdays**

Alan Dickerson and Mike Baummer have been leading trips on the Potomac River on Wednesday evenings. (Many kudos to them!!!!) Because the water level has been relatively high, the Angler's Inn to Lock 10 route has been utilized most of the summer. Only in the last few weeks has the Little Falls section been run. There have been as many as 12-15 participants and as few as 3-4. Kayaks have tended to outnumber the open canoes. Several novice boaters have markedly increased their attainment skills at Yellow Falls. We all have enjoyed the wildlife on the river, including the birds of prey. Look for the box under the American Legion Bridge that is being used as a housing development. There are peregrine falcons residing there, although we don't know how they tolerate the noise. We have also seen bald eagles — two last night alone!!! The most scary time was when we hustled down the river to beat the incoming storm front. Just as we were completing the shuttle, the skies unzipped, and a torrent of rain was released. Sometimes we have topped off our trip by going out for ice cream. Mmmmm!!! Unfortunately, one of the closest locations for ice cream, Sprinkles, in Potomac, has lost its lease. Boo Hoo!!!!

### **Reel Film Festival**

ACE Rafting had their third Reel Paddling Film Festival at dusk on August 30th, 2008 at their New River site in Minden, WV. There were some short flicks, including a claymation spoof on training for Lockapalooza (an event at the Genesee Waterways Center Lock 32 Whitewater Park in Pittsford, NY) as well as some longer features. The latter included paddling the Zambezi River below Victoria Falls. There were the first runs of the Minus One and Minus Two rapids. Another feature was an exploratory run in Mexico with Eric Jackson. Activities included cutting paths through the jungle with machetes, lowering boats with ropes, jumping falls as a portage technique, losing a boat in a cave, and running slot canyons. In conjunction with the film fest, ACE ran a silent auction with proceeds from the winning bids benefiting the West Virginia Rivers Coalition. Donated items included a kayak, throw ropes, helmets, weekend get-away lodging, raft trips, t-shirts, hiking socks, and other gear. WVRC staff and board members were on site to answer questions.

## North Fork Mountain, WV by Bob Maxey

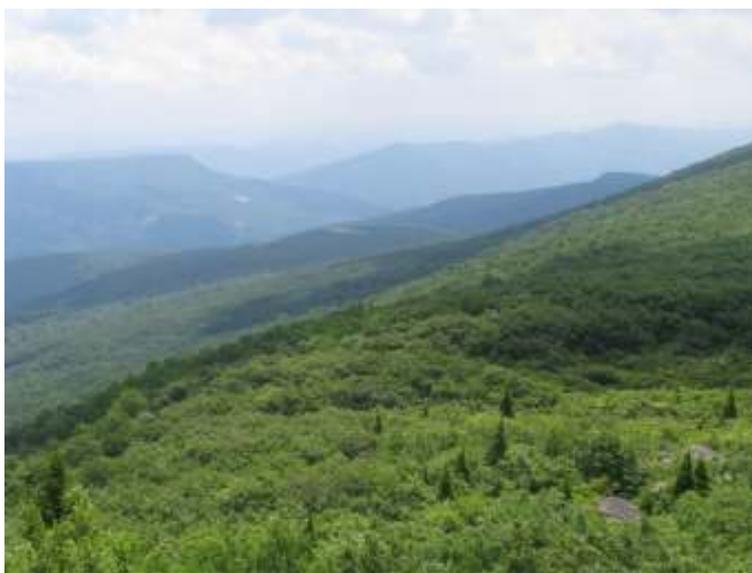
If you know me, sooner or later you will visit Dolly Sods, west of Petersburg, West Virginia. From Bear Rocks in the northern Sods, you can look south and east to see a chain of mountains running from the Petersburg Gap south into the far distance. If you are lucky enough to be driving east from Dolly Sods in the evening, the rock cliffs on North Fork Mountain are brilliantly lit by the sun.

There is a trail that extends from U.S. Highway 33 west of Franklin 22 miles north to near the hamlet of Cabins. I have visited the North Fork trail several times; it has 5 or 6 access points along its length. Although it can be done as a backpacking trip, it would require caching of water mid-way on a 2 or 3 day hike. We recently met a group of hikers who did the trip as a day hike, which is feasible during the summer when the days are long. (Take lots of water.) Also, there are not great ups and downs on the hike, which is unusual considering the spectacular views, mostly west, from the ridge. In general, the North Fork trail follows the crest of the ridge, but remains adjacent — and not on top of — the ridge itself. Is this due to the fragile ecosystem consisting of numerous small lichens, ferns and other plants on these rocks? Did the blazers of this trail want to avoid rattlesnakes (we saw



*View west from North Fork Mountain; Champe Rocks and North Fork Potomac River below; Dolly Sods on horizon.*

none)? Who knows, but when hiking this ridge, be prepared to waste a lot of time going from the trail and up onto the rocks. What a spectacular view! From mid-trail there are several views of Seneca Rocks, the top of which is 1500 feet below you. The view from the ridge west towards Spruce Knob and Dolly Sods is spectacular and rivals many a sight from the western United States.



*View east from Dolly Sods, showing Petersburg Gap and North Fork Mountain profile to mid-point.*

We made a camp near the top of the ridge on the road from the Smoke Hole. It helps to have a high-clearance 4WD vehicle — or a rental vehicle! From there, you can make a spectacular car camp and hike either north or south — the views are wondrous in either direction. After a day's hike, I sat in my handy camp chair, sipping several beers and enjoying the view up Seneca Creek valley. How long ago did I paddle down that beautiful creek, seeing the clouds enshroud the valley in the March rain? Too long I say, but that is for another day, and higher water. The hunters who made our camp left an overabundance of cut logs — more for our fire. One night of grilled chicken, another night of grilled steak, each with fresh corn-on-the-cob. Isn't life wonderful? After a 3-day visit on North Fork Mountain we leave and resolve to come back — sooner, not later.

## In the Corbett Tradition by Ed Evangelidi

In late July and early August of this year a group of about 20 boaters (mostly open boaters) from at least 6 states continued the tradition that Roger Corbett started of exploring and enjoying rivers in Wyoming and Montana. Most were previously introduced to these rivers on trips led by Roger. This year we explored tributaries of the Snake River in Wyoming and tributaries of the Clark Fork of the Columbia River (not Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River) as well as the Gallatin River. The largest contingent of boaters were from the Houston Canoe Club.

We started from a base in the National Forest near Jackson, Wyoming and paddled the Hoback, Granite, Gros Ventre and Buffalo Fork as well as the main Snake River. Most were Class 3 rivers. We then moved to the National Forest near the Gallatin River and paddled two sections of the Gallatin. Finally, we moved to a commercial campground on Rock Creek and paddled a few sections of Rock Creek and the Blackfoot, as well as a piece of the Clark Fork. The selection of rivers varies from year to year but are generally of a Class 3 nature, with some easier and harder rivers or sections added for variety. Most of these rivers are adequately covered in the local guidebooks and a few are in the fine web page [www.jacksonholekayak.com](http://www.jacksonholekayak.com).

### Big Sandy Creek (WV) Access Improved

*[part of an early September news release from American Whitewater]*

Friends of the Cheat, with the help of whitewater paddlers throughout the region, constructed a new parking area along the Big Sandy Creek in Rockville, West Virginia. This will provide secure public access to this popular whitewater run. The location is on river left, just upstream of the Rockville Bridge. There is space for over 30 cars here, and we hope that this will relieve congestion on busy spring weekends. The road from the bridge to the lot was also widened and greatly improved. Future plans include trails to several different spots along the shore.

Construction of the lot was partly funded by grants from the Conservation Fund of the Canoe Cruiser's Association and the American Canoe Association's L.L. Bean - funded CFS Program. The rest of the funding was provided by area paddlers and whitewater clubs. Special thanks goes to Allegheny Wood Products, whose personnel graded the area and spread the gravel at no cost. See the American Whitewater website for additional information on Big Sandy Creek.

### Book Review: The Lonely Land, by Sigurd Olson by Bob Maxey

I met some Minnesotans last year at the High Pointers Convention in Wisconsin. I asked them what nature books they would recommend for their part of the world. The Lonely Land, by Sigurd Olson, was a highly worthy recommendation. It describes a trip taken in the early 1960s. The lonely land lies a thousand miles northwest of Lake Superior in upper Saskatchewan. Here the Churchill River flows in a wandering course through one of the last great wildernesses of North America. Although this is mostly flat water canoeing, the descriptions of the lakes, ecology and rapids are excellent. I looked at my road maps and discovered that few roads cover the area. Who knows, maybe someday the BRV will take a trip through this area. It sounds great!

**For Sale:** Whitesel Piranha OC-1. No damage, excellent condition, one of the last ones made. \$675 OBO. Ron Knipling, 703-533-2895.

## **Upcoming Trips and Events from Beth Koller**

### **Rustling Up Paddlers for the Russell Fork**

The Russell Fork River has 16 miles of great whitewater between Haysi, VA and Elkhorn City, KY. There are three sections that are typically run. The topmost section of the river below the dam is class II-IV run at standard release levels. Minimum levels are 400+ cfs. Fun levels go up to 2,000-3,000 cfs. The run includes both play spots and technical rapids. The middle Interstate Breaks gorge section can be run 9-10 months of the year (200 cfs or more). Above 500 cfs, the river is technical and creeky with class V rapids. Below 375-400cfs, the river is a class IV run. The lowest section is generally class I-II, although a ledgy drop called Meatgrinder can be more challenging and reportedly may be worth a scout and/or a portage. There are two nearby tributaries: Grassy Creek (class IV) and Elkhorn Creek (class II). The Army Corps of Engineers typically schedules releases over 4 weekends in October. Standard releases are 800 cfs except for the last weekend which is 1000 cfs. Beth Koller is looking for paddlers who might be interested in paddling the topmost section. We will need to see if some Ohio paddlers can serve as guides.

### **Lazy Legs?**

Running the Gauley River? The West Virginia Rivers Coalition will be running the shuttle on the weekend of the Gauley Festival weekend (Friday, September 19; Saturday, September 20th; and Sunday, September 21st) and the following weekend (Saturday, September 27th and Sunday, September 28th). As a new service, privately owned rafts will be hauled in addition to hard boats. Hard boaters and boaters using individual inflatables will be asked to make a \$5 donation in support of the work of the WVRC. Owners of privately owned larger rafts will be asked for \$10 donations.

### **Dining Out for Clean Water**

On Saturday, September 27, West Virginia Rivers Coalition will be raising money with a unique co-operative activity with Fayetteville, WV eateries: The Cathedral Cafe 304-574-0202 (breakfast), Rezan's 304-574-0848, Pies and Pints 304-574-2200, and Gumbo's Restaurant 304-574-4704. These establishments have agreed to donate a portion of the meal tab to the WVRC. WVRC staff, board members, and volunteers will be on-hand to answer questions about the organization and to provide membership forms. Participants are eligible to enter a drawing for a free whitewater rafting trip from Class IV and lodging from Country Road Cabins. So when you get off the Gauley or New Rivers, think about supporting the local merchants and raising money for the conservation and restoration of West Virginia's exceptional rivers and streams.

### **Black Tie Affair 2008**

It's time for the 2nd Annual Black Tie Affair. It will be THE place to be. The event will take place in late September or October. The location will likely be Fletcher's Boathouse after a paddle on Little Falls. The premise of the event is to paddle good water and to dine on good food in the spirit of a good spoof. Participants will wear a black tie or tiara while on the river. (If you are Terry Irani, you will wear both in addition to a life jacket modified to include tuxedo tails.) Last year we had lace tablecloths, silver, candles, and floral arrangements as part of the decor. We had multiple courses. Courtney Caldwell prepared special venison and chocolate entrees. Many others brought their special recipes. There were suitable beverages for each course, served in faux crystal. The meal was topped off with cigars (only Mike Martin really smoked) and after-dinner mints. Contact Beth Koller if you want to attend and/or be involved with the planning.

## UPCOMING TRIPS

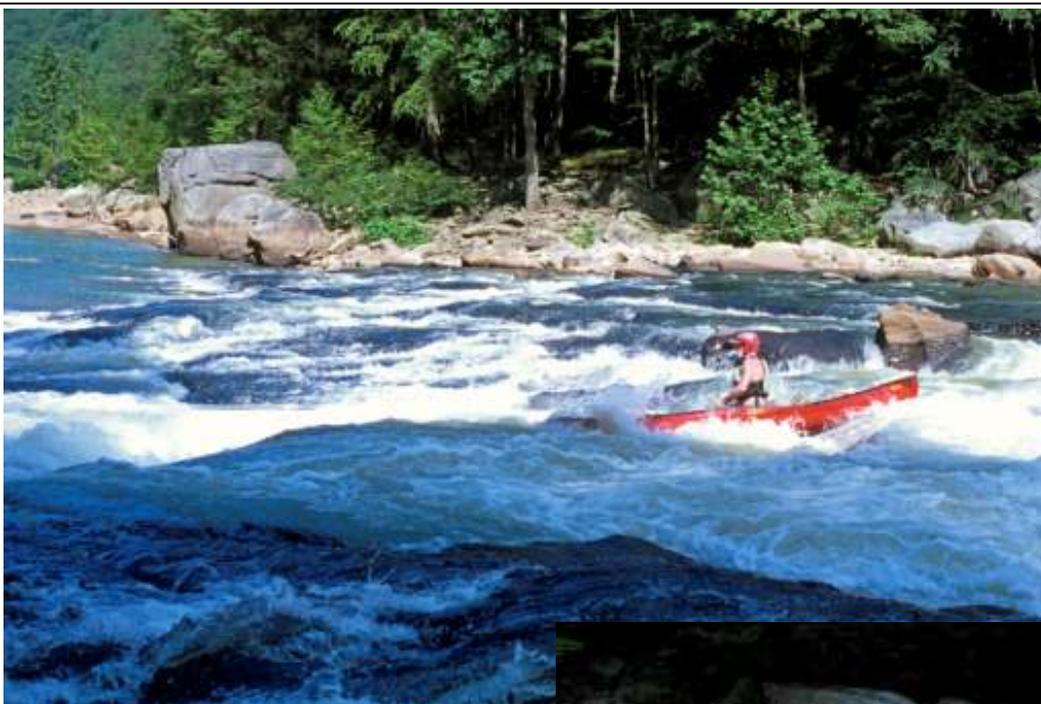
Sept. 13-14	Lower & Upper Gauley	A/E	Court Ogilvie	703-528-5185	courtogilvie@yahoo.com
Sept. 13	Lower Yough <sup>1</sup>	HI	Jennifer Plyler*	301-445-4815*	pls98@verizon.net
Sept. 27	Lower Yough <sup>1</sup>	HI	Jennifer Plyler*	301-445-4815*	pls98@verizon.net
Oct. 4-5	Dealer's Choice	HI	Karen Egbert &	301-445-4815*	jon.karen@att.net
			Jon Hitchings		
Oct. 11-13	Eastern Shore rivers	PN	Ed Evangelidi	304-262-8924	edevange@localnet.com
Oct. 25	Fall Color trip	PN	Star Mitchell	301-530-3252	starmitchell@verizon.net
Nov. 1-2	Tohickon Creek	I	Courtney Caldwell	703-802-0155	courtney.caldwell@lfg.com

**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)



### Membership Roster Updates

Tom Burke  
4027 Estabrook Drive  
Annandale, VA 22003  
703-941-5833 C  
tburke4@aol.com

David Kogut  
6144 North 12th Street  
Arlington, VA 22205  
703-532-0550 H  
202-662-3889 W  
703-772-6726 C  
david.kogut@verizon.net

### *Cheat Canyon, 8/8/08* *photos by Beth Koller*

*Above, Rick Koller successfully runs the mid-river slot at High Falls.*

*At right, Daryl Hall enters Big Nasty on her first-time run of the Canyon.*

*See trip report, page 2.*



## 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 9, November 12, 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 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](mailto: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](mailto: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 November *Voyageur*:**  
Friday, October 31st

**NEXT MEETING**  
**Tuesday, September 9th**