

american whitewater

March/April

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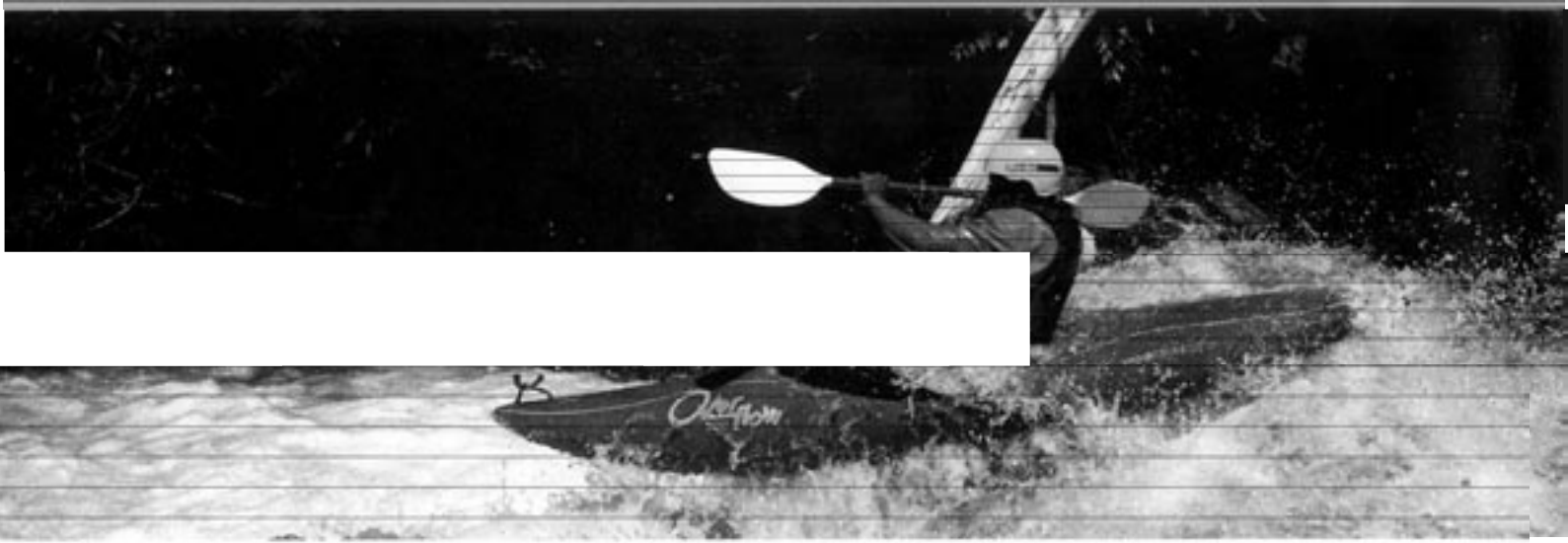
The Cheat Watershed

Page 29

Special Issue

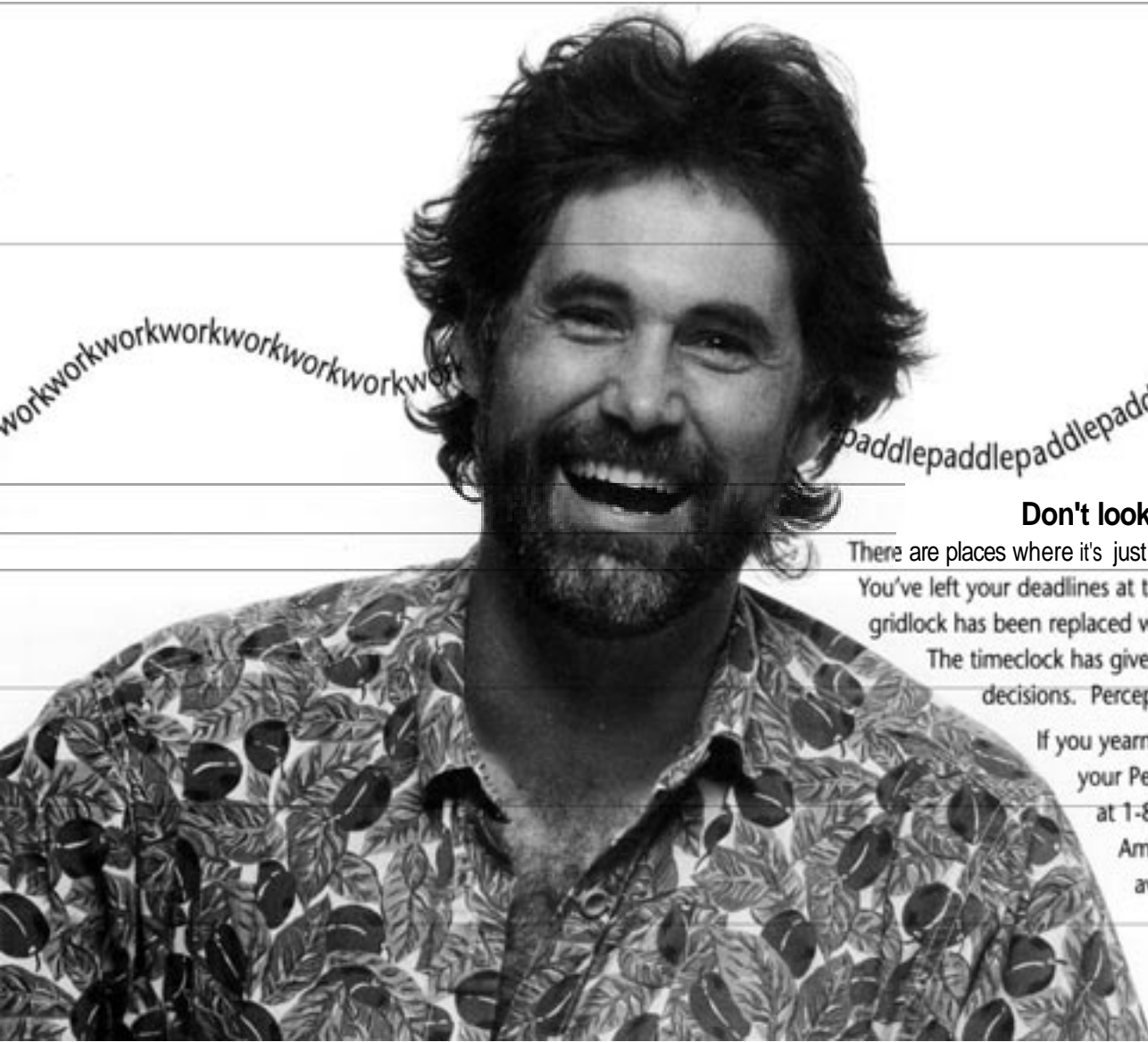
Up, Up, and
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Journal of the American Whitewater Affiliation

Volume XXXV, No. 2

Letters 5

Forum 4

▼ **The Rating Game**
by Bob Gedekoh

Briefs 66

▼ **Race and Release Schedules**
▼ **American Kayaker slain in Costa Rica**

Conservation

▼ **Deerfield Victory** 12
▼ **Inside the beltway** 25
▼ **Hydro Update** 14

Safety

▼ **A Death on the Gauley** 62
by Charlie Walbridge

Access

▼ **The Wave at Alta Weir** 18
▼ **Access Update** 21
▼ **Inside AWA's Access Program**
part III 16

Humor

▼ **Rating Eggs Benedict** 65
by Greg Mallet-Prevost
▼ **Boating Blues** 74
by Peter Cogan
▼ **Off Season Training Tips** 76
by Greg Rempe
▼ **The Amu Darya Incident** 86
by Jonathon Katz
▼ **End Notes from Bigfoot** 90



The Cheat Watershed

by Bob Gedekoh



Me and Ed

by David Regela



Up, Up and Away!

by John Weld



Robe Canyon Defies Mastery

by Nathan Lewis

Front and Back Cover Photos by Kevin O'Brien.

Kevin O'Brien is a free lance photographer, writer and filmmaker specializing in adventure sports and travel. A paddler for 20 years, his whitewater images are published worldwide. He lives with his wife, Chara and daughter, Sierra, in Hidden Valley, PA.



THE RATINGS GAME

Before you read another sentence, check your ego by the door!

Are you sure you've put it away? Good. Because the subject of this Forum is the whitewater difficulty rating system. It is hard for me to imagine any topic related to river running more controversial. And it is my impression that the basis of most of this controversy is the human ego.

At the onset let me tell you, I really hate this subject. The only reason I am writing about it now is that steps are being taken to modify the system so that it will regain its usefulness for paddlers of all levels. I am encouraged by what I hear, and I feel obligated to tell you a little about it.

First, some background information. I grew weary of listening to my boating companions argue about river ratings several years ago. I almost never allow myself to be drawn into these discussions, which are inevitably inane and totally unproductive. When is the last time you actually heard someone "win" one of these debates? By "win" I mean change the other person's mind. It never happens.

What's the point? Do I really care whether Decision on the Cheat is a III or a IV? Do I really care if Pillow Rock on the Upper Gauley is a IV or a V? Do I really care if Swallow Falls on the Top Yough is a V or a VI?

The answer is no. Because I know these rapids very well and I don't need a label to help me decide whether to run them.

But, in fact, there are times when the river ratings system does matter to me. For instance, when I am down south or in Quebec, paddling strange rivers. Then I need the rating system to help me decide



whether I want to attempt a run. On those occasions, when I open an unfamiliar guidebook, I need to know what they mean by class IV and what they mean by class V. I need a rating system that is consistent, so that I will have some idea what I am getting myself into.

Every boater I know concedes that there is a need for a standard system... and that the current state of affairs is full of inconsistencies. But, until recently, there was little agreement on how these problems could be solved.

Let's look at the some aspects of the situation objectively. Perhaps the solution to the problem will then become apparent. (Egos are still checked at the door, right?)

Consider these facts:

Boating skills and equipment have improved dramatically since the rating system was devised. There are more boaters paddling difficult whitewater

now than ever before. Whitewater that was once considered impossible is being paddled every day.

This raises the question, how can Initiation on the Gauley and Big Splat on the Sandy both be Class V? Can the North Fork of the Payette be put in the same Class V category as the South Fork of the Salmon? There is clearly an order of magnitude difference. But this is not reflected by the system, as it now stands.

Then there is the issue of guidebooks. As a consequence of the evolution of the sport, older guidebooks are often said to "overrate" the difficulty of rapids, while newer guidebooks are said to "under-rate" them. To some degree this has become an east/ west issue, since many of older books cover eastern rivers, while many of the newer books cover the west.

This creates a potentially dangerous situation. An easterner who fancies himself a class V boater because he has survived the Cheat Canyon at three feet is in for a terrible surprise when he climbs on the Cherry Creek Section of the Tuolumne.

And a true "California Class V boater", at home on Cherry Creek, is likely to be disappointed in the whitewater on the Cheat.

Does that mean that western rivers are harder than eastern rivers, or that western boaters are gutsier than eastern boaters? Of course not. Trust me. I get around. There are talented maniacs and incredibly difficult rapids all over the country.

But once a boater, eastern or western, has decided that he is a class V boater, he will be understandably loathe to relinquish that distinction. Do we really expect hundreds of boaters who consider themselves to be class V boaters because they paddle the Gauley to cheerfully downgrade themselves to Class IV status? This seems relatively unlikely.

Another potential problem with downgrading class V rapids to class IV status is that it necessitates downgrading

EDITORIAL DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in the features and editorials of *American Whitewater* are those of the individual authors. They do not necessarily represent those of the Directors of the American Whitewater Affiliation or the editors of this publication.

On occasion *American Whitewater* publishes official organizational policy statements drafted and approved by the Board of Directors. These policy statements will be clearly identified.

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LETTERS.....

Whittemore... Not Widdemore!!!

Hi Bob,
I've been meaning to write for months because this **little** error keeps cropping up in the mag. Now it has hit a headline (p.43 of the **Nov/Dec** issue) as well as several times in the accompanying article....

The correct spelling is **JESSE WHITTEMORE**.

Maybe he doesn't care, but I think **he** ought to get proper credit for his efforts, not misspelled credit.

Best wishes,
John Sweet
Mustoe, Virginia

Editor's Reply,

Thanks for the correction. We had made this mistake so many times that we almost had Jesse convinced that he was spelling his own name wrong!

Actually, Jesse had noticed it, but was too gracious to call it to my attention.

Sorry, Jesse.

A SWEET ADDICTION

Dear Paddle Friends of AWA,

Whitewater an addiction? Yes, and I'm an addict. Unfortunately I can't paddle every day. The best medicine for my cherished addiction is, first, your great magazine, then movies, tapes, pictures, and more of AWA Whitewater.

Thank you for the hard work in saving our rivers. If there is anything I can do to help please let me know.

Tell Jonathan **Katz** and his friends I enjoy all their adventures. Keep up the **good** work!

I went to the Gauley **Fest** 1994 and had a great time. The Gauley is a fantastic river. Will be back again this year.

Oh! And give Carla Garrison and her he-man my best.

Hope to see you on the river,
Joseph Okoniewski

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class IV rapids to **III**, and so on. Call it the Trickle Down Effect.

Remember, although there are a lot more class IV and V boaters than ever before; there are still probably **fifty** times more class **I, II** and **III** boaters. And the rating system is important to them, too. In fact, it is probably more significant to them than it is to more advanced and experienced paddlers.

I recently had the pleasure of discussing this with Mary Shaw and Roy Weil, the editors of the popular Canoeing Guide to Western Pennsylvania and Northern West Virginia. This book, first published in 1969 and currently in its eighth edition, is, by anyone's standards, very conservative. But Roy and Mary stand by their ratings, arguing that the thousands of class **I, II** and **III** boaters who rely on their book need to know that there is a difference in difficulty between the Casselman and the Lower **Yough** and the Cheat.

I remember using their guidebook more than a decade ago when I was a beginner, and I think they are right. Roy and Mary are justified in their concern, which has also been voiced by Charlie Walbridge, that "downgrading" rapids and rivers will diminish the usefulness of the rating system to entry level paddlers. To reiterate an important point, which advanced and expert boaters often forget: entry level boaters make up the vast majority of river users, and they need to know what they are capable of paddling, and what they can expect when they move up a class.

So, how can the system be modified so that it is useful to everyone?

The current rough proposal, which is making the rounds and seems to be gaining acceptance, is to maintain the old standards for Class I-IV rapids. Downgrading of easy **IVs** to **IIIs** and easy **Vs** to **IVs** will be discouraged.

Instead, the class V rating will be expanded to serve the needs, and, let's be honest about it, the egos of expert boaters. Most likely the system will be patterned after the one used by climbers... ie. **5.1, 5.2, 5.3...** etc.

Presumably current "easy" class V rapids that were being downgraded to class IV status by some, will be assigned ratings in the low Vs. And, if boating skills and equipment continue to improve, the upper range will increase.

How will the numbers be assigned? Certainly gradient, river size and risky features need to be considered. And it goes without saying that the **difficulty** of a rapid is usually dependent on the level of flow.

Some questions need to be resolved. For instance, should the accessibility of a rapid influence its rating?. And how should rivers be rated; by the level of difficulty of the most **difficult** rapid, or by the level of difficulty of the typical rapids?

Finally, some decision will have to be made about the Class **VI** rating. **If one in-**

dividual has flushed through an incredibly dangerous rapid once and survived, does that mean it is not a **VI**? Conversely, if a single paddler perishes in a difficult rapid, in spite of the fact that hundred of others have paddled it successfully, does that make it a **VI**?

It has always seemed to me that the class **VI** rating has more to do with danger than difficulty. Theoretically, a class V rapid could be extremely difficult, yet still be relatively safe... ie. user friendly. On the other hand some relatively "easy" class V rapids feature dreadful siphons and undercutts. If you run them clean you are fine, but if you screw up, you can kiss your butt **goodby**.

But what I think isn't the issue. I'm not good enough to make these distinctions. The new Class V system should be devised by a core group of expert boaters who are paddling on the cutting edge, but who also have a healthy respect for the history of the sport and the needs of others. Expert boaters who are able to check their egos at the door for the good of everyone. The AWA Safety Committee, specifically Charlie Walbridge and Lee Belknap, are currently soliciting opinions from such experts, in hopes of reaching a consensus.

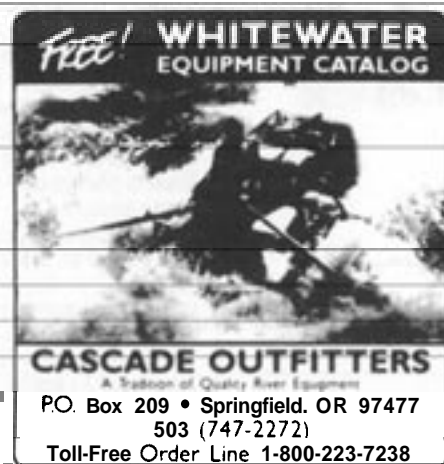
Certainly the expanded class V system must be developed by Class V boaters for Class V boaters. The input of Class **III** and **IV** boaters really is not needed in accomplishing this, although the time may come when a similar modification will be introduced to the Class **IV** range.

Hopefully this new Class V system will be refined soon, so that we can put some of the endless Class **IV/ Class V** bickering behind us.

Oh, I'm sure there will still be arguments about whether Nutcracker is a **5.5** or a **5.6**. That's inevitable. But at least all the class **II, III** and **IV** boaters out there will be left unscathed.

Devising the new system will, no doubt, require a lot of effort, patience and compromise. But the final result should be worth it.

Bob Gedekoh



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LETTERS

DAVE MILLS REMEMBERED

Dave Mills took me, along with Mark Hubbard, on my first trip away from the Lower Yough. He talked through the whole ride to Ducktown, and all I could think as I froze my feet off in my Coleman sleeping bag was "I have to spend twelve more hours in a car with this guy!"

That was six years ago. Before a year passed he would convince me of my ability to boat the Gauley, the river which took his life in October of this year.

Dave and I became regular companions. As the weekend drew near I would dial his number and ask not "Do you want to go?", but "Where's the water?" His van-one trip, mine-the next. We shared a love of

music and eclectic tastes; there were always new tapes to discuss. In short; there was no one I would rather travel or boat with. We trusted one another.

Boating will be different in '95. Twila's will be quieter. My beer will remain upright at the takeout. I'll have to find the water myself. And my confidence will probably sag without my mentor.

I'll miss him.
Ed Bumpass
Wayne, Michigan

LETTER FROM LOST PADDLE TO AWA

Dear AWA:
As a member of the American Whitewater Affiliation, I recently received a letter dated December 3, 1994. I was very surprised to

read the first page which talked about a large rafting company's plans to build a lodge inside the Gauley River National Recreation Area. The thing that was most disturbing about this letter is that it distorted a number of facts and breeches good communication. I would like to point out a few things that I believe your members need to know.

First of all, Lost Paddle, Inc. is not a rafting company. Lost Paddle, Inc. is owned by individuals in the rafting business who maintain a separate structure with a different mission. Lost Paddle deals not only with rafting companies but is a landholding corporation that deals in any real estate venture. Class VI River Runners, Inc. is a rafting company owned by the same people as Lost Paddle, Inc. In case you have not seen them, I have submitted a copy of Lost Paddle's comments on the Gauley General Management Plan. Class VI River Runners, Inc.'s comments were those submitted by the West Virginia Professional River Outfitters Association. If you would like a copy, we can send them to you.

The second disturbing fact and probably the most disturbing, is that our comments were sent to a number of different river conservation people in the private sector so there would be no surprises when the public information came out. Specifically, a copy of these comments were sent to Mac Thornton and Rich Bowers. Even though this was not necessary, we thought that this was good for keeping an open line of communication. If there were questions or concerns, I would expect at least a phone call to clarify some points.

The third point is that no one asked us what this lodge would be. It should be obvious to anyone that in the short and limited season of the Gauley, it would not be practical to build any type of

large lodge if boating was the only source of demand for this service. What many of you probably do not know is that we purchased this land a number of years before the Gauley became a National Recreation Area from out-of-state coal and lumber interests. For many years prior to our purchase, this land had been maintained as the Koontz Bend Hunting Club. A requirement for our purchase of this land was to maintain this arrangement with the Koontz Bend Hunting Club. If you read our comments on the General Management Plan, you will see that the lodge would be built for hunting, fishing and boating. This hunting and fishing has gone on at the Koontz Bend property long before it was a whitewater river.

Specifically, our plans were to build a small lodge that would cater to hunters and fishermen as well as some of our rafting guests. If you read through Lost Paddle, Inc.'s comments, you will see that we "support the protection of the visual corridor" and that we "agree that logging, mining and further new road construction should be restricted from the visual corridor". This 200 acres-plus tract of land that we own at Koontz Bend has the Koontz Bend Cemetery and the Koontz Bend Farm in the center of the property. Most boaters have never seen this or been to this area. The assumption that this lodge would be built within the riparian zone is simply an incorrect assumption. In all probability, the lodge would be built at the sight of the Koontz Bend Farm.

Now, let's talk about the "intensive development of Koontz Bend" that your December 3rd letter referred to. Our plans at this time are very long term. Financial commitments presently put Lost Paddle in a position where this lodge would probably not be built for at least five to ten years. It is

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however, our goal as private landowners, to inform the public that we intend to maintain this property as private property for all recreation users. We have told the National Park Service many times that we are not interested in selling the Koontz Bend tract. We have offered the sale of our Woods' Ferry tract many times. However, we cannot continue to make this offer if they do not act on this in a timely fashion. It has been five years since we made the original offer to the NPS. Our comments on the GMP ask the National Park Service to deal with access as a top priority.

AWA is, of course, encouraged to have its own opinion. It is our opinion as private landowners that we have been very good stewards of the Gauley River Canyon. I believe anyone can see we have been and will continue to be better stewards than a coal and timber company with New York ownership. In the past, we have allowed private boaters access across our land at Swiss, Mason Branch and Koontz. We have allowed river shuffles to operate free of charge with all proceeds going to river conservation. We have done **all** building of our roads with strict demands to the construction company that limited impact on the visual corridor be a top priority. We have rerouted one of these roads at a great expense from the more convenient location to a more difficult location for one reason only. That was to keep the road hidden from the visual corridor.

I believe that Lost Paddle has always attempted to keep an open line of communication. We did not expect you to give a knee-jerk reaction. What we expected was that you would give us a call and have communication with us to find out the facts. We consider your December 3rd letter to be an unfair representation of our industry as a whole. We urge you to please publish this letter in the next newsletter or do an editorial clarification. We would appreciate the opportunity to do a fact check if you do an editorial. I would hope that this is nothing more than a misunderstanding.

On a broader scale, we are concerned about what we perceive to be an anti-outfitter tone coming out of the AWA. Specifically, in this letter along with a prior problem we had a few months ago and in some of the positions on the **Ocoee** project for construction of the \$25,000.00 kayak venue. We believe the approach you used in this December 3, 1994 letter will hurt river conservation efforts on the Gauley and in West Virginia in general as other private landowners and other traditional users learn of your stringent,

strident and negative approach once rivers are "designated". Perhaps this perceived bias is only that. I certainly hope so. We believe that if the AWA really looks at the Gauley, that we are not the enemy. There are many problems that exist presently and will exist in the future that will need cooperative effort among diverse user groups to save the resource for the next generation.

If you have additional comments or questions, please call. We also believe the Gauley River Canyon is "a national treasure... too beautiful to be paved over."

Sincerely,
David H. Arnold
Douglas S. Proctor
Jeffrey A. Proctor
Managing Directors

AWA'S REPLY

January, 18, 1995

Dear Dave, Doug, and Jeff:

Our President, **Risa Callaway** wrote to all AWA members on December 3, 1994 describing some whitewater river issues of concern to AWA. The proposed Lost Paddle lodge planned for the Gauley National Recreation Area was one of the issues mentioned in that letter.

You criticized our mention of the lodge, stating that AWA distorted facts and breached good communication. You made the following major points:

1) AWA said that a large rafting company planned to build a lodge in the Gauley NRA. Lost Paddle, Inc. is not a rafting company. It is a real estate company owned by people who own Class VI, a large rafting company.

2) AWA should have talked to you before writing to our members about Lost Paddle's plans.

3) No one at AWA asked Lost Paddle what the lodge would be like. A hunting and fishing built by Lost Paddle would be better than other kinds of development by other companies because Lost Paddle is a good steward for the land.

4) Lost Paddle's developments would not be intensive and would not be in the riparian zone as were some of their earlier developments.

5) The Journal has an anti outfitter tone.

As for #1, we did incorrectly state that the lodge was planned by a large raft company. We could have **identified** Lost Paddle, a real estate company owned by people who own a large raft company. We did not do so in order to protect the anonymity of those involved.

However, the separate corporate identity of your real estate company does not affect our concern about your plans to build a lodge inside the boundaries of the Gauley NRA. We do not prefer development by one entity over another. In fact, we asked the Park Service, in our comments on the Management Plan not to build Park Service roads and developments inside the Gauley boundaries.

We advocate development outside the boundaries, and urge all developers to seek opportunities to build lodges, parking areas, campsites, etc. adjacent to, but not inside of, the NRA

##2. We plead guilty for not calling someone at Lost Paddle to verify the facts we were reporting. That would have been the better course, and we will do so in the future. However, we had no reason to doubt the veracity of Lost Paddle's letter to the NPS. Indeed, the facts stated in your letter and quoted verbatim in our letter appear to be true.

Lost Paddle's letter was included in public comments to the NPS on the Management Plan. It seems that, despite our lack of "good communication"; we did not mistake Lost Paddle's intentions. Of course, we would like to open up a dialogue with Lost Paddle to see if there is any way that we could persuade Lost Paddle to shift its development outside the boundaries of the NRA.

#3. We do not believe that a development by Lost Paddle is necessarily superior to development by others. Lost Paddle Inc. has already developed a portion of the Gauley corridor in ways that many AWA members would prefer not to have happened. It is true that Lost Paddle and Class VI have enjoyed generally good relationships with the private boating community. However, this does not mean that the private boating community applauds everything that Class VI or Lost Paddle intend to do with lands inside the NRA.

#4. AWA did not assume that the Lost Paddle development would be in the riparian zone. We are aware of the location and aware that the lodge will be at a higher elevation. This is certainly better than development in the riparian zone, but it does not resolve our concerns. "Intensive" is a relative term. Lost Paddle was complaining the Park Service plan for the area would not allow development as extensive as Lost Paddle desired. In that sense, Lost Paddle's development is more "intensive" than the Park Service saw fit and more "intensive" than we would prefer to see.

We feel that development adjacent to near the NRA but not inside of it is appropriate and, in fact, very desirable. AWA sent Class VI a copy of our comments on the Gauley GMP. Those com-

LETTERS

ments supported the Park Service plan with respect to the designation of that area as an "outstanding natural feature subzone". That still reflects our views. Tourist service facilities should be located outside that zone. We believe that the preservation of a core area, surrounded by outside service facilities, would be best in the long term for the area and for the tourist economy of Nicholas and Fayette Counties.

To turn the Gauley corridor or parts of it into a developed area with more roads and lodges, etc. would destroy the very reason that people seek to visit the Gauley in the first place. They do not come to the Gauley to stay in a lodge. They come to enjoy the river and its magnificent canyon scenery.

#5 AWA is not anti outfitter. AWA is outfitter neutral. We are pro-river conservation and anti-river degradation. It does not matter who is involved, government agencies, outfitters, real estate developers, hydro developers, other recreational users, fisheries management agencies.... whoever.

We believe that outfitters are an essential means for those parts of the public to access wild rivers and other areas which they do not have the skills and ability to access on their own. This is a useful service. But these businesses should not damage, overdevelop, or commercialize the natural resources they use for business purposes or attempt to exclude noncommercial visitors. Some outfitters have damaged, probably beyond repair, the natural character of the Gauley. We do not applaud that. On the other hand, some have allowed private boaters access to the river through their property. We applaud this.

In our view, outfitters, like the rest of the world, are a mixed bag in terms of river conservation. We work with outfitters throughout the country, and have joined forces with many outfitters on river conservation projects. AWA appreciates and admires pro conservation outfitters, like Cascade Rafting in Garden Valley Idaho, Adirondack River Outfitters in Watertown, NY, and many others. However, AWA opposes anyone whose developments could damage important whitewater rivers or degrade the scenic and natural values of the lands surrounding those rivers.

We would like to make one additional point. The November 1, 1994 letter from Lost Paddle to the NPS stated that the purpose of establishing the NPS was to allow economic growth "inside and outside the boundaries" of the NRA. We think this is a misreading of the statutory mandate and the legislative history which led to the establishment of the Gauley NRA. The statute requires that the area be managed in accordance with the national park system organic act to preserve and protect its resources. Congressman Rahall did not state that he favored private development inside the boundaries of the NRA. Congressman Rahall has always sought to preserve, protect, and enhance recreational opportunities at the Gauley. The desire to attract tourism to West Virginia was a big part of the equation which led to the effort to design-

nate the Gauley corridor as a NRA, but the concept was not to develop the canyon or streamside lands within the NRA. The idea was to use that area to attract people to Nicholas and Fayette counties and to encourage development of tourist facilities near but not in the NRA. We think this is still a good idea.

We hope that this letter will clarify our point of view and answer some of your questions. We look forward to working with Class VI and Lost Paddle Inc. in the future in ways which will protect and preserve the wonderful scenery of the Gauley River which all of us admire and appreciate so much.

Sincerely,
Phyllis Horowitz

In November, the AWA submitted detailed comments on the Park Service's draft General Management Plan for the Gauley River National Recreation Area. To obtain a copy, contact AWA's Access Program.

KAYAK CHILE

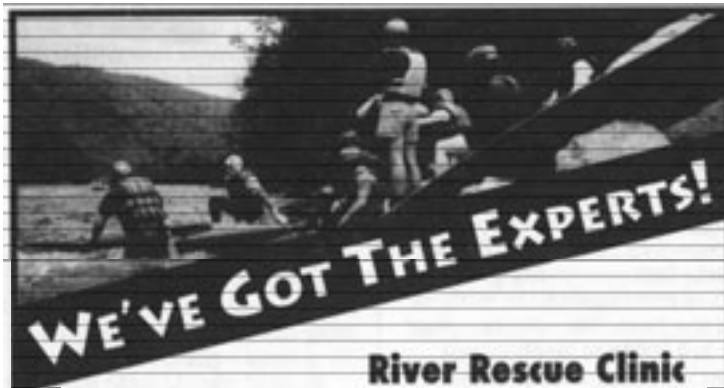
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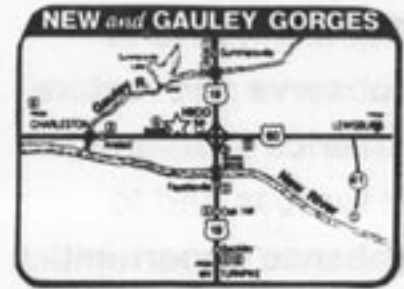
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The American Whitewater Affiliation (AWA) is a national organization with a membership consisting of thousands of individual whitewater boating enthusiasts, and more than 100 local paddling club affiliates.

CONSERVATION: AWA maintains a complete national inventory of whitewater rivers, monitors threats to those rivers, publishes information on river conservation, provides technical advice to local groups, works with government agencies and other river users, and-- when necessary-- takes legal action to prevent river abuse.

RIVER ACCESS: To assure public access to whitewater rivers pursuant to the guidelines published in its official Access Policy, AWA arranges for river access through private lands by negotiation or purchase, seeks to protect the right of public passage on all rivers and streams navigable by kayak or canoe, resists unjustified restrictions on government managed whitewater rivers and works with government agencies and other river users to achieve these goals.

EDUCATION: Through publication of the bi-monthly magazine, and by other means, American Whitewater, (AWA) provides information and education about whitewater rivers, boating safety, technique and equipment.

SAFETY: AWA promotes paddling safely, publishes reports on whitewater accidents, maintains a uniform national ranking system for whitewater rivers (the International Scale of Whitewater Difficulty) and publishes and disseminates the internationally recognized AWA Whitewater Safety Code.

EVENTS: AWA organizes sporting events, contests and festivals to raise funds for river conservation, including the Ocoee Whitewater Rodeo in Tennessee, the Gauley River Festival in West Virginia (the largest gathering of whitewater boaters in the nation), the Arkansas River Festival in Colorado, the Kennebec Festival in Maine and the Deerfield Festival in Massachusetts.

AWA was incorporated under Missouri non-profit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its principal mailing address at P.O. Box 85, Phoenicia, NY 12464, (914)688-5569. AWA is tax exempt under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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Deerfield Victory!!!

by Tom Christopher, AWA Director

New England Power Company Pioneers Landmark Settlement Agreement

On October 5, 1994, whitewater boaters, fishermen, conservationists, government agencies, and the New England Power Company took a giant step together to protect one of New England's most important watersheds.

NEPCO, a major regional utility based in Westborough, Massachusetts, together with twelve environmental and recreation organizations and government agencies joined in an agreement that commits the company to enhance recreation, fisheries, and conservation along the Deerfield River in western Massachusetts and southern Vermont. In return, NEPCO will have the support of the environmental and recreational groups, and the government agencies in its quest to secure a 40-year license renewal from **FERC**.

The **Deerfield** River Settlement Agreement demonstrates the ability of diverse interests to come together in good faith to balance environmental quality, recreation, fishing, energy production and other purposes served by America's rivers. The agreement ensures that the Deerfield River will be managed over the next 40 years to improve resource protection while recognizing the value of hydropower as a renewable energy resource.

The **successful** conclusion of this landmark agreement underscored New England Power's commitment to providing electric power in an environmentally responsible manner, said John W. Rowe, president and CEO of New England Electric Systems. It is a model of the ability of industry, government, and environmental and recreation organizations to work together on complex public policy issues. This benefits fish and wildlife, recreational users and the entire Deerfield watershed for decades to come.

The unifying objective of the settlement negotiation has been to maximize the most beneficial mitigation and enhancement package for the whole watershed from the headwaters in Vermont to the Deerfield River confluence with the Connecticut River in Massachusetts. For the past five years, resource agencies, regional planning commissions, intervenor groups and

others have worked to develop comprehensive plans and data needs pertinent to the settlement process. The American Whitewater **Affiliation** along with New England FLOW, the Appalachian Mountain Club, Trout Unlimited, the Conservation Law Foundation, American Rivers and key federal and state resource agencies worked together to develop the concepts for balancing the resource values of the Deerfield River.

The estimated net present value (NPV) of the settlement negotiation package is estimated to be between 27 and 30 million dollars. Whitewater boating flows and other **recreational** facilities are valued at 3.2 million dollars.

AWA's conservation director Rich Bowers stated that the Deerfield Settlement Agreement demonstrates the national potential for restoring rivers through the FERC relicensing process, especially where an enlightened and forward thinking public utility is involved. He continues,

New England Power is to be commended for the bold initiative that the settlement agreement represents and has to be recognized as an industry leader with a strong ethic of environmental responsibility.

Under the terms of the Settlement Agreement, New England Power will:

- ▼ Assure whitewater releases from two of its dams at agreed upon times for kayakers, canoeists and other boaters.
- ▼ Provide the public free access without fees or costs to all nondeveloped river resources and **non-developed** project lands.
- ▼ Install fish passage at various sites along the river.
- ▼ Implement a program of wildlife enhancements within project boundaries.
- ▼ Provide minimum flows and reservoir management to protect aquatic habitat.
- ▼ Establishes a Deerfield River Basin Environmental Enhancement Trust Fund to finance future conservation and educational projects.
- ▼ Grants conservation easements to land management organizations on more than 18,000 acres of land that NEPCO owns to help preserve the land in its natural state and to prevent private development along riparian boundaries.

This settlement agreement is the first in the northeast and only the second in the nation in which an applicant for a federal hydropower license has reached such an agreement with a broad coalition of parties with an interest in its relicensing application.

Out of the **Deerfield** relicensing process, New England FLOW was born, and with support from the AWA, grew to establish itself as the dominant advocacy group representing boaters and whitewater enthusiasts in the New England region. What FLOW did was to develop the first coalition in the region and began negotiating with NEPCO as early as 1988. FLOW was the first interest group to reach an agreement with New England Power and then participated in bringing other important interested parties to the bargaining table to successfully broaden the whitewater agreement to encompass the comprehensive settlement that was eventually developed. By doing so, New England FLOW's board of directors received the nationally recognized Outstanding

.....
River Advocate Award in 1993 presented by American Rivers each year.

Tom Christopher, FLOW's secretary and AWA board member said, The best aspect of this agreement is that it not only puts forward a whole new level of cooperation between a major public utility and conservation and recreational groups, but is also sets a standard that other relicensings can strive towards. Hopefully we can take the Deerfield victory and show a balance can be achieved—rather than an adversarial position—to utilities and natural resource agencies in other states.

The whitewater release schedule puts 106 days of releases annually below Fife Brook Dam, a regionally important Class III run used for races, training, squirting, and rafting from April until October.

The Class IV Monroe Bridge section will also be provided with 32 releases during the same time period with most of the days occurring on every summer weekend when good water is extremely scarce.

These two outstanding boating resources virtually assure that the Deerfield will become another world class whitewater mecca in the years to come and will help pump needed boater dollars into rural economy.

The Deerfield Settlement agreement will now be filed with FERC, and the parties hope FERC will expedite New England Power's license on the terms and conditions set forth in the Agreement. In many other hydro-power relicensing cases pending before FERC, contentious battles are being waged between utilities, environmentalist, boaters and fishermen. This Agreement is an alternative to a potentially costly and protracted litigation process to reconcile the various interest at stake in the Deerfield River Watershed which could delay improvements to the watershed indefinitely.

Congratulations to all of the conservation and recreational groups, to New England Power, to the federal and state resource agencies, and to everyone that put in thousands of hours working together to make this historic settlement agreement happen. Never has a river's future shined so brightly in the spirit of cooperation and in the name of compromise.

Obed-Emory: Tennessee

The AWA submitted comments in late January for the revised General Management Plan for these Wild and Scenic rivers. Particularly critical is the need for this plan to address water development projects on tributary streams. If you would like a copy of these comments, contact AWA.

Little River: Alabama

In January, the National Park Service entered into an agreement with the Alabama Power Company for the sale of over 8000 acres within the Little River National Preserve. The NPS is continuing discussions with the State of Alabama and Cherokee County for the acquisition of the remaining properties within the preserve.

Big Creek, Chattooga River: Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina

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CONSERVATION

much of the watershed of the Chattooga, has proposed a timber sale along Big Creek in the headwaters of the Chattooga. Big Creek, Overflow Creek, and Holcomb Creek join to form the West Fork of the Chattooga and offer some of the Southeast's best **creekin**. The timber sale calls for more than 5.3 miles of new logging road construction and will log nearly 5 million board feet of timber.

The Chattooga River Watershed Coalition—a tri-state organization of seven local, regional and national citizen's **groups**—filed an appeal against this sale. Buzz Williams, executive director of the coalition, stated, The fact that the Forest Service is even proposing this large, destructive sale in this particularly sensitive area is evidence that the Forest Service is not serious about its new policy called ecosystem management. ▼

Hydropower Updates

At the end of 1994, and during the first months of the new year, numerous decisions, meetings and policies were made regarding hydroelectric dam policy, and river conditions at specific dams. Many of these will have long lasting impacts (30+ years) to rivers and watersheds, including some outstanding whitewater rivers. Here's a brief update.

FERC DECISIONS

Coosa River, Alabama
In early January, AWA staff met with members of the Coosa River Paddling Club, Alabama Power Company, and state and federal agencies at FERC headquarters to discuss final flow requirements for the Jordan Dam on the Coosa. Not in attendance, but deeply involved in this process is the nearby Birmingham Canoe Club.

After 15 years of negotiation, the

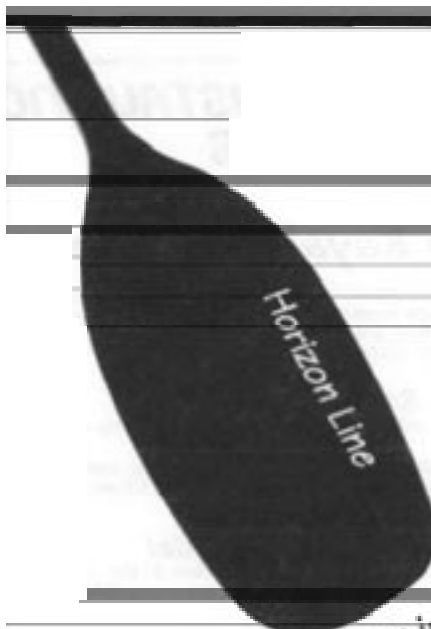
final proposal by the power company would provide: six hours (6 a.m. to noon) of **8,000 ds.** each day during April and May; **4000 ds.** as a minimum flow for the rest of the year; and weekend recreational flows of 4, 6 and **8,000 cfs.** on weekends June through October. Special releases of **10,000 ds.** will be released on Memorial Day, July Fourth, and Labor Day. A special release will **also** be provided for the annual Coosa River Whitewater Festival, usually scheduled for May.

The Coosa is a **large** river, and flows are sometimes deceptive. For instance, numerous surveys indicate that optimum whitewater flows range from **8,000 to 13,000 cfs.** The minimum flow for boating is between **3,500 and 4,000 cfs.** AWA has recommended to clubs that they push for weekend flows above the **4,000 cfs.** range. As proposed, **4,000 ds.** weekends are minimal and may not provide useful boating on the Coosa. The Coosa provides the only dependable, summer-time flows in Alabama. The nearest summer run for local boaters is five or more hours away on the Ocoee.

American River, California

Nature may be cooperating with recent political shifts to revive one of the biggest pork projects ever, the Auburn Dam on California's American River. After years of drought, California rivers (and towns!) were awash in flood level flows, including some seven subdivisions in Roseville along the American River.

Far across the country, in Washington, DC, Representative John Doolittle (R-CA) has taken over the reins of the House Subcommittee on Water and Power, and has vowed to make a multi-purpose Auburn Dam




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his top priority. Doolittle has mentioned that recent flooding **reaffirms** the need for this \$2.6 million dam.

In 1992, river interests, including AWA, American Rivers, Friends of the River and others were successful in defeating a "flood control" dam on this river. At that time this position was held by long time **friend** of rivers Rep. George Miller (D-CA). This "new" version dam would permanently flood some 48 miles of river, including valuable and outstanding whitewater sections of the American.

Oddly enough, recent flooding in the Sacramento area had little to do with the river, and was not centered over either the North or Middle Fork of the American. Creeks and culverts in low lying areas were the main problem.

Penobscot River, Maine

In November, the FERC released its Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) regarding both the Ripogenus and Penobscot Mills Projects on the upper section of this river. The Penobscot is the largest river basin in Maine.

Based upon earlier recommendations by the AWA, AMC and commercial outfitters, the West Branch below **McKay** station would enjoy enhanced whitewater flows, increased from minimums of 2,000 cfs. to 2,400 cfs. during the normal recreation season. In addition, under the second alternative proposed by the FERC, Great Northern Paper (GNP) would release whitewater flows into the Upper Gorge for two weekends during May. These releases would run approximately 1,000 to 2,000 cfs.

This draft also includes an agreement between GNP and the local Fin and Feather Club which will allow Maine residents, including boaters and fishermen, free public access to the river. FERC has also called for a 200 foot building setback and a 100 foot vegetative buffer around all Ripogenus and Penobscot Mills impoundments to protect the aesthetic, water quality and recreation use of the area.

AWA will continue to tweak this document in order to improve recreation and conservation issues, in-

cluding: restoration of the 4.5 mile back channel (the original river which currently has flows of only 2 to 5 cfs.); access for all public users of the resource, not just Maine residents; and evening flows of 1,800 cfs in the main river for diverse flow conditions and wider use by the boating community.

Saco River, Maine

In the **November/December** Journal AWA reported a far reaching fishery **settlement** affecting seven dams on Maine's Saco River (Hydro Update). In November, FERC released a DEIS for this project, including the Bonny Eagle project which affects whitewater boating in the Limington Rips and Chases Mills areas. In addition, the New River Channel **dryway** (the original riverbed), provides intermediate to advanced boating at flows just under 3,000 cfs.

In this DEIS, FERC recommends a "barrier-free" picnic area for Bonny Eagle Island, which would also provide access to the New River Channel. A real problem in the past. Outside of improving access, FERC recommends no scheduled releases into the Channel for boating, concluding that natural flows provide adequate whitewater opportunities. Flows in excess of minimum boating needs occur approximately 40 days throughout the year.

Pemigewasset River, New Hampshire

Beaver River, New York

Diverse river interests, including AWA, New York Rivers United, Niagara Mohawk and others are developing a settlement agreement which would affect eight dams on the Beaver. This river is a tributary of New York's Black River.

When completed, this settlement will provide for reduced reservoir fluctuations, increased minimum flows (including scheduled whitewater flows at the Moshier, Eagle and Taylorsville dams), and fish protection measures at appropriate sites.

The settlement also creates a Beaver River Advisory Council which

will monitor changing river conditions, and to recommend changes over the license term. Finally, the settlement creates a Beaver River Fund to be used for environmental improvements.

Nisqually River, Washington State

In a great victory for whitewater boaters, the November FERC-DEIS requires Tacoma Public Utilities (TPL) to provide four days of whitewater recreation on the awesome Nisqually Gorge (see **September/October** Journal).

Finding that the Gorge provides a "highquality" and "unique" whitewater experience, FERC has called for six hours of whitewater releases between 800 and 1,000 ds. during the last weekend of June and the last weekend of November. In addition, FERC is requiring TPL to install a flow phone and to coordinate with boating interests on how to use existing releases to improve whitewater recreation.

In making this determination, FERC examined and rejected earlier accusations that boating flows would: prove detrimental to downstream fish; draw down the upstream Alder and **LaGrande** impoundments; cause TPL excessive liability concerns, and; cost the local ratepayers exorbitant power increases.

FERC also orders TPL to create a recreational management plan for the gorge, including improved safety **signage**, a permit system, and boater limitations on release weekends (100 boaters a day in June and 75 per day in November).

While a great win, AWA views this as only one baffle in a longer war. TPL has previously stated that, even if required to release water for recreation by FERC, that they would not — preferring the risk of license refusal to liability risk. AWA has countered, given the number of rivers impounded by dams today, that most of the available summer whitewater rivers in the nation are dependent on dam releases, and that there is no history of liability cases regarding flows from dams. ▼

Inside AWA's Access Program

Part III: Navigability

In the future, will paddlers need to do legal research before going boating?

Skill and equipment advances are allowing paddlers to boat smaller and steeper streams. At the same time, the rights of boaters to navigate these streams is being challenged, often by riverside landowners. Many times, these landowners are large, wealthy corporations who want to keep the public from enjoying common resources.

The issue of navigability lies at the intersection of two competing concepts. On one hand, the public trust doctrine holds that certain resources (air, water and lands beneath navigable waters) are owned in common by all citizens. The pub-

lic has the right to use, protect and enjoy these resources, an interest that is far broader than paddlesport.

On the other hand, the notion of private land ownership—the right to do what you want with your land—is a central proposition to American government and society. Riverside landowners have valid concerns that should be recognized, such as keeping their property free from trespassing and litter. American private property rights are generally very broad; they are adopted from English Law which is a strain of Roman Law. The fifth amendment states that no private property can be taken without just compensation.


The complexity of the issue lies in the need to balance these two concepts.

The Congress and Supreme Court is where this bafflezone of ideas is fought. And the war has recently heated up. Billy Tauzin, Democrat from Louisiana, is a ringleader of the property rights movement (aka Wise

Use) and has introduced bills before the House of Representatives—called takings bills—that would require we, the people to compensate (read money) any landowner that thinks that the value of the property was reduced by as little as 10%. The true muscle and clout behind the seemingly grassroots Wise Use movement are big extractive industries (mining, grazing, logging) which are fed up with regulations that detract from their bottom line, despite the fact that many provide for a healthier, cleaner environment. And what about the issue of givings: if the feds improve the value of your property, do you then owe them money?

This war of ideas between private and public ownership will, like Bosnia, be one of attrition. While the AWA is tracking the national scene, we will be more effective at the local level—river by river and state by state.

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The Problem

In many states, no one really knows whether it is legal or not to boat certain rivers. The right of downstream passage is usually framed by whether a stream is considered navigable, a definition that varies wildly from state to state—the result of an inconsistent and confusing body of statutes and case law.

Some states have adopted broad, expansive definitions. For example, in California, a river that is navigable in fact by small recreational crafts during some part of the year... is considered navigable by a growing body of case law. In addition, the California courts decided that the public has a constitutional right to use and access a navigable stream. They take their playing seriously there.

New York has also taken a progressive outlook: an August, 1994 appellate court ruled on the South Branch of the Moose River that pursuant to the public trust doctrine, the public right of navigation... supersedes... [the landowners] private rights in the land. States such as California, Oregon, and Montana have also seized the public trust doctrine with conviction.

In other states, we're not so lucky. Georgia, for example, has a particularly narrow interpretation: an 1863 statute defines a navigable stream as one which must be capable of transporting boats loaded with freight. On some streams in Colorado, you are not allowed to touch the rocks or the streambed. Think twice before you boof. (See sidebar for a more complete discussion of navigability and stream bed ownership.)

So... many of the cases that narrowly define navigable streams are old and do not take recreational use into account, an important component of commerce. But what is the best way to accomplish this reform?

In many key whitewater states, the fate of legal navigation is being decided in court. At present, however, there is no coordinated effort within the boating community to improve boaters' rights. It's like the old wild, wild west. There is no law and order. Some cowboy boaters, getting busted for trespassing, are going to

the courts. Sometimes this is a wise, carefully investigated decision. In Montana, a coalition of interests did extensive research and won an important victory. Other times, with thinner legal and financial resources, and in a more hostile judicial environment, boaters have lost critical lawsuits, setting a bad precedent for river recreation in those states.

The Plan of Attack

AWA believes that there are many states where archaic statutes and cases unfairly restrict the use and enjoyment of public resources. Many states have laws which have narrow definitions of a navigable stream that are based on outdated tests of commerce. These laws have not kept pace with trends in modern society: the steady decline in commercial navigation and the exploding popularity of recreational navigation. Many states have recognized this trend and have ruled accordingly. In the 1994 New York decision, the court ruled that recreational use of a stream (i.e. navigation in fact) is an acceptable test for commerce.

AWA's progress in the navigability arena will rely heavily on grassroots, our local clubs and members. Establishing and maintaining good relations with riverside landowners go a long way in paving the way for legal access. The AWA will continue to act as a central nervous system to the boating community by serving as a clearinghouse of advice and information, helping to coordinate the actions of individual boaters across the country.

In the near future, the AWA will assemble a complete library of cases and literature that deal with navigability and the right of downstream passage. With this information and with our growing hands-on experience, we will publish a handbook about navigability in every critical whitewater state to be distributed to the boating community.

We hope that with this information, boaters and landowners can avoid hostile confrontation and can recognize common ground, parrying the need for long and expensive litigation.

However, in many cases, legal efforts will be necessary. We continue to provide assistance to ongoing efforts (for example, in Georgia and Colorado). Down the road, we plan to organize a legal team that will actively assist in getting a stronger right of downstream passage in a key whitewater state. This effort may involve defending a boater in a right of passage case. Our effort will also focus on trying to open public roads that get you to the river. In the past, the AWA and the Colorado Whitewater Association (CWWA) joined forces to reopen county road 371 that leads to the put-in of the Numbers on the Arkansas.

As with any well-planned legal effort, the AWA will need to do extensive research before starting, only taking cases that have a high probability of success. The goal is to establish the right of downstream navigation case by case, establishing models of success (like in Montana and New York) that can be duplicated in other states.



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The Federal test of navigability most relevant to recreational users relies on the 1870 Supreme Court case, the *Daniel Ball* and the equal footing doctrine of the Constitution. Under the *Daniel Ball* case, a river is navigable if it is susceptible of being used in its ordinary and natural condition as a highway of commerce over which trade and travel may be conducted. In later cases and in the Submerged Lands Act it was held that each State owned the land beneath the navigable waters of that State.

The equal footing doctrine says that each state enters the union on an equal footing with the original 13 colonies. Those colonies joined the union owning the beds of navigable waters within their boundaries (except where particular parcels were deeded away to a private owner by the King of England).

Whether a river in any state fit the *Daniel Ball* navigability criteria at the time of state's admission to the Union is an evidentiary nightmare. Determining a fit with these criteria depends upon historical use of the stream (e.g. log drives, etc.).

If a river is navigable under the *Daniel Ball* test, the bed of the river belongs to the state and is held in trust for the public. State ownership of the river bed carries with it the public right to boat on the water above the state-

Here is a quick primer on navigability.

owned river bottom.

Unfortunately, the federal definition of navigability does not apply to every small tributary. And there are difficult evidentiary problems in establishing what uses a river was susceptible to when it came into the union.

The beds of streams that are non-navigable under the federal test are generally owned by steamside landowners. This is not the end of the road for boaters, however. If a river does not fit the federal test for navigability (and most whitewater streams do not) you need to look into state law. State cases regarding public rights of passage and state concepts of navigability often expand on the federal test dramatically. In some states, the Public Trust Doctrine is a key factor. In those states and a few others, the State may hold a public "easement" or right of passage on behalf of the public at large. This allows the public to pass over private lands on the bottom of streams which may not be considered navigable under Federal or state law. If you're lucky you live in one of those states.

If you would like help in determining if your stream is navigable, please write or call AWA's River Access Program at (301)-589-9453. ▼

Three Part Access Program

In the last three issues of the *Journal*, we have described the three headed gorgon of access problems and how the AWA plans to slay it. First, at access sites that are privately owned, the AWA will try to buy title or easement to the land. Second, when the issue of liability rears its ugly head, the AWA will reduce the fears of public officials and private landowners through public outreach and will seek to reduce landowner liability exposure by strengthening recreational use statutes. We will play a role in tort reform and may decide to help defend against unreasonable and unfair lawsuits. Finally, we will work—state by state—to establish stronger rights for recreational use and downstream passage on rivers.

Once again, the success of our efforts depends upon our dedicated volunteers and members. We welcome any suggestions that you may have on any part of our strategy. ▼

The Wave at Alta Weir

by Paul Martzen

Many boaters with a local river have a favorite play spot where they might congregate after work or first thing on a Saturday. Many areas have a river or creek with access problems requiring the furtive put-in and the hasty take-out. Fresno area kayakers have a spot fulfilling both categories. A single wave where all of us can surf at once for hours on end with only the risk of being cited for a misdemeanor.

Interested? First, a description of the wave. It is 216 feet wide, stretching all the way across the lower Kings River. The are large eddies on either end. At low flows, around 1,000 cfs the wave is a mellow green hump only 6 to 8 inches high and suitable for novice surfers. As flows increase, the wave gradually steepens and breaks more and more. At high flows the wave is only a few feet high but is

intimidating in the speed of the water and too steep to easily stay on. Precise boat angle can give a good side or diagonal surf but most locals get washed off pretty fast above 8,000 or 10,000 cfs.

If we come off the wave, we try to stick in one of several erratic subsidiary troughs which reside behind the main wave. If we are not too tired we can usually make it back to the eddies at either side. Failing that a kayaker is forced to float through a class 1-2 riffle for 50 yards, then pull over and carry back up through a pasture on river right.

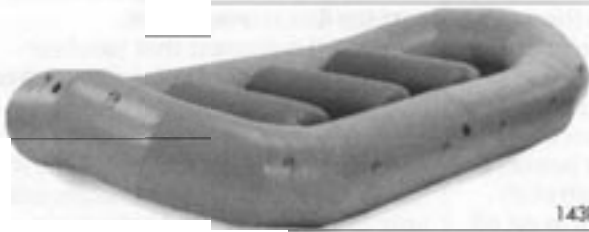
So, what can we do on this swell wave. Well, just sitting out there all together is sort of cool. Kind of like group meditating; sit there, contemplate the water spraying off the bow. Sometimes we try synchronized surfing but you know how kayakers are independent sorts, and clumsy

too. We've had some timed races across and back. I seem to recall the best time being just under one minute.

So now you know the attraction, but what is the hassle? Well, this wave is formed by the Alta Weir which diverts water into the Alta irrigation canal. Ever since I've started kayaking in the early '80s the wave has been the fun, safe hydraulic described above. This feature was created by the irrigation district which poured many yards of concrete to form a smooth gradual apron below the weir. Previous to the construction of this apron, the weir was still good for surfing at high and medium flows according to Tom Johnson of Kernville. However, at low flows around 1,200 cfs, a classic, river wide death trap recirculation formed.

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Whitewaterguide (by Charles Martin), two kayakers were caught in the backwash and perished in 1972 or '73. Local reputation of the weir gives the impression that others besides kayakers have died there as well. So far I have not been able to determine exactly how many have died there or when.

By 1975 the weir had a fierce reputation and the county passed an ordinance banning any boating from 450 feet upstream of the weir to 300 feet downstream. The county passed several other ordinances at the same time, regulating different sections of the Kings River and banning navigation between Pine Flat Dam and a nasty gauging weir a couple hundred yards downstream. Whether the ban on navigation stopped the deaths at Alta Weir is hard to say; I do not have good records. The Sheriff's office believes the ban has been effective.

The irrigation district must have thought differently however, as they decided to change the weir by adding a gradually sloping apron which

eliminated the backwash. Since that change, I am certain, there have been no deaths at Alta Weir.

Since the early '80s local kayakers have had *de facto* access to the weir and have surfed it on a regular to sporadic basis. The wave is in full view of a road on the south side but surfers have never seemed to attract any public attention. On one or two occasions a passing Highway Patrol officer has waved at kayakers to get off the wave and the kayakers have proceeded downstream. On at least one occasion a Highway Patrol officer has observed kayakers and not intervened. Several of us have discussed what it might take to get the law changed, but since we had access in fact, there was seemed little urgency.

That changed on August 29, 1994 when 3 kayakers were observed by two young members of the sheriff's boating unit and water rescue team. The two sheriffs came out to the shore dressed in lifejackets and equipped with throw ropes and rescue gear. They may have been on their way to Pine Flat Reservoir when they observed the kayakers at the weir, became concerned and hurried to the rescue.

When the officers saw that the kayakers were in no obvious danger they seemed to hesitate. One of the kayakers went over to the eddy to talk and the officers told him that boating was illegal at the weir. The kayaker protested, believing that it was not illegal and asked what the ordinance was. The officers apparently were not sure and retreated to find out the specifics of the ordinance. The kayaker returned out to the middle of the wave and told his partners that they might as well continue **surfing**.

When the officers returned, they waved all three kayakers to the shore and cited them for violating the county ordinance. The offense is a misdemeanor punishable by up to \$500 and 6 months in jail. Similar boating offenses (motorboats usually) are typically drawing \$200 to \$300 fines per person in the county court.

The three kayakers have plead no contest and all charges will be dropped if the three boaters keep their noses clean for six months.

We hope to persuade the authorities that the Alta Weir poses no particular safety hazard to experienced boaters and that it should be legal to surf the downstream wave.

We will document that the river features downstream of the weir have been safely navigated for the past 10 years and present no unusual hazards. One potential problem is the upstream abutments, but kayakers are only interested in the downstream wave. We intend to create charts showing the original design of the weir, the repaired design, and the nature of lethal and safe hydraulics. We have developed a strong presentation which we will show to the sheriff, to the county board of supervisors **staff** and to the district attorney.

I have already spoken to the sheriff's boating unit commander. While he states he is strongly opposed to changing the ordinance he has expressed a willingness to discuss the issue and to inspect the weir. I am hopeful that our arguments will seem reasonable and will be persuasive.

The California constitution gives the public a strong right to navigate public waterways such as the Kings River. The state codes also give counties and other public agencies the power to regulate to some extent the use of waterways with reasonable cause. Protecting the public from the lethal danger of a low head dam is within the counties right. It is the same as requiring a detour on a highway when the road is damaged or a bridge is out. However when the danger is no longer there, the road, bridge or weir is repaired, the **detour/portage** is no longer justified and the public's right to navigate should take precedence.

Lessons learned so far? Well, it usually pays to be very diplomatic to police officers, especially if they have come to rescue you! Greater diplomacy at the weir might possibly have forestalled the citations.

If we had taken the time years ago to pull together all our information to lobby the powers that be, we may have already been able to change the ordinance. If that had happened I would not be writing about an access problem. I would just be announcing the 5th Annual Alta Wave Rodeo! ▼

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ACCESS UPDATES

These notes are designed to give an overview of access issues and AWA's efforts from around the country. Please call or write AWA's Access Program if you have information about access to whitewater rivers: AWA Access Program

1430 Fenwick Lane
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Mountaineering Fees in Denali

Starting in 1995, climbers on Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker in Denali National Park and Preserve will be charged a "Mountaineering Program Fee" of \$150 each. The National Park Service (NPS) has backed off on its initial proposal to subsidize search and rescue (SAR) activities with this fee. Originally, the NPS had proposed a \$500 fee because of the high costs incurred by the high level of SAR services provided at Denali. Other park users are not required to pay \$150 for ranger stations, patrols, and educational materials, prompting many climbers to argue against this as a "discriminatory" fee.

This decision is consequential for boaters who are familiar with a long history of discriminatory fees on river resources. The original study which produced this finding also mentioned the need for fees to address SAR costs for back-country hikers and whitewater boaters. Of immediate concern are rivers within other national park systems.

Great Falls: Maryland, Virginia, D.C.

In January, the AWA met with the new site supervisor of the Great Falls National Park in Virginia. In the near future, the AWA will help the Park Service with a whitewater boating exhibit in their visitor's center and will discuss new guidelines for running the falls.

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Big Sandy Creek: West Virginia

The AWA is in the process of negotiating a license with the Allegheny Power Company to provide better parking facilities at the put-in of this gorgeous run. Allegheny Power owns much of the riparian land along the Big Sandy and Cheat River.

Jarvis Creek: Alaska

Jarvis Creek is a glacier fed river flowing north out of the eastern segment of the Alaska Range. From the confluence of McCumber Creek, Jarvis Creek Canyon contains one of the classic whitewater runs in this state containing five miles of continuous Class IV water with three Class V rapids. The put-in for the whitewater involves driving the Old Coal Mine Road to its intersection with the four mile trail that follows Sargent Creek To Jarvis Creek.

The Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) has leased the mining rights to a company that plans to extract coal in the watershed of Jarvis Creek. The proposed mine would disrupt the local environment and could interfere with public access to this creek and surrounding areas.

Gore Canyon: Colorado

The AWA is continuing its efforts to establish a legal put-in for this Class IV-V run downstream of the Highway 9 bridge. Restoring access on the North side (the best put-in that lies just above the mouth of the canyon) at this site will be highly unlikely for several reasons, not the least of which is that the owner of the Grand River Ranch is one of the most powerful landowners in Colorado.

At present, BLM is negotiating with the Eagle Pass Ranch to purchase lands at the put-in by the confluence of the Blue and Colorado Rivers.

Green River: Washington

The Green is one of the most popular runs in Washington State (Class II-IV). One of the take-outs is privately owned by the Green River Gorge Resort. In the past, they have allowed boaters to use this site. How-

ever, probably because of two recent deaths at the site and other problems from trespassers, the Gorge Resort closed access via a gate this past spring.

According to a non-profit organization called Friends of the Green, the State Department of Parks and Recreation approached the Resort for sale, but had no success. The

AWA is investigating ways to work with local boaters to secure permanent access at this site.

White Salmon River: Washington

AWA continues to help the Forest Service obtain the funding for the purchase of lands within the Wild and Scenic corridor of this Class II-

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ACCESS

V river. One critical parcel (at BZ Corners) is the only site that affords access to the river. Thanks to everyone who wrote letters to Congress.

The President's Budget should be released in early February, and early reports suggest that the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)—the program through which money is appropriated to states and the federal agencies (Forest Service, BLM, Fish and Wildlife) for the purchase of land—will continue to exist at current levels. What happens to the budget once it arrives in Congress is another story. The AWA has joined a coalition of conservation groups to heighten awareness for the LWCF and specifically for lands needed for river access and conservation. ▼



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Inside the Beltway

by Ed. E. Lyne

An eight-lane interstate highway (known as the "beltway") encircles the nation's capital like a monstrous snake, separating the noxious inferno of politics from the rest of the nation. The populace peers in with an attitude of bewildered dismay. Meanwhile, politicians, bureaucrats, T.V. newscasters, lobbyists, lawyers, thieves, reporters, muggers, government contractors, drug addicts, and spies form a cacophonous Tower of Babel. At the center, gripping his new Contract with America like the Sword of Gehg his Khan, Newt Gingrich, newly enthroned Speaker of the House, announces a gradiose strategy to transform the planet. Undetred by this horrific scene, alert whitewater boaters, trapped deep inside the beltway, carefully filter the pandemonium to report on anything and everything affecting whitewater rivers.

A s Dorothy said, "Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore".

Thin & inside the beltway are beginning to go off the edge.

It's not just that Congress put Sonny Bono in charge of Federal tax policy and then told him to loan \$40 billion to Mexico.

It's not only the fact that a guy named after a lizard became Speaker of the House, took out a contract on America, published it in TV Guide, proposed shipping our kids off to orphanages, and announced that men should handle all hand-to-hand combat because they are genetically designed to hunt giraffes and can sit in foxholes longer than women. Women get infections in foxholes, the Speaker said, but men are basically "little piglets" who enjoy mud.

It's not that the Speaker's mother calls Hillary Clinton a bitch every time a journalist drops by the house.

Its not even the fact that the U.S. Surgeon General got kicked out of Washington for recommending that teenagers learn how to masturbate in school to avoid getting A.I.D.S. or warts on their hands.

It's more than the fact that one Member of Congress, Ken Calvert (R-California) got reelected by a large margin after being caught by the California Highway Patrol in flagrant delicto with a prostitute in the back seat of his car, parked on the freeway shoulder. He was "stressed out" by the gridlock in Washington, he told the press, and needed quick relief. Voters bought the story.

It's more than any one thing. It's a pattern. There is definitely something weird in the water.

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Friday, June 9, 7:00pm - 10:00pm
Registration - **ALL** competitors: Location - NOC Ocoee Outpost.
NO REGISTRATION AFTER THIS TIME!!!!

Saturday, June 10, 9:00am
Competitors Meeting/Bib Pickup: Location - Hells Hole Competitors area **ALL COMPETITORS MUST ATTEND.** Preregistered competitors can sign waivers at this time. Preregistrations must be post marked by June 1.

Saturday, 9:30am
Torpedo - Squirt Boat competition begins.
(class order: Jr., Int., C-1, Exp. K-1)

Saturday, 9:30 am
Hells Hole - Open Canoe competition begins.

Saturday, 12:30pm
Hells Hole - Preliminary Hole Riding competition begins. Class order

12:30pm	3:00pm
Jr.	Exp. K-1 Women
Int. K-1 Women	Exp. K-1 Men
Int. K-1 Men	Duckie/Sit on Top
C-1	



Saturday, 7:00pm
Dinner/Party/Auction: NOC Ocoee Outpost
Sunday, June 12, 9:00am
Put-in: Raft Race registration
Hells Hole: Finish preliminaries
squirt finals
Open Canoe finals

Sunday, 1:00pm
Hells Hole: Expert C-1 finals
Expert K-1 Women finals
Expert K-1 Men finals

Sunday 4:00pm
Awards: Hells Hole



Photos by Sandi Loftis

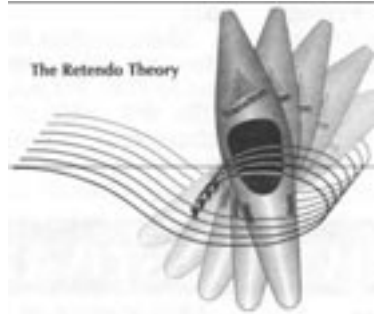


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FRIENDS OF CHEAT OUTLINES GOALS

by Dave Bassage

"The Times...they are a changin'" in Northern West Virginia. Friends of the Cheat, a watershed organization, has formed to spearhead the drive to restore, preserve, and promote the outstanding natural qualities of the Cheat River watershed. The primary objective of FOC is to foster cooperative efforts by Federal and State agencies, private industry, and local landowners to address the severe acid mine drainage problems that paint the Cheat Canyon orange and render it virtually sterile.

Other issues on the agenda include cosponsoring the Cheat Riverfest May 6, coordinating the annual Cheat cleanup, completing a Preston county system stream survey to biologically evaluate the health of Cheat tributaries, monitoring new industries, and encouraging the establishment of a local economy based on environmentally benign businesses.

All this presents a formidable challenge to a fledgling organization, but initial support has been strong. New attitudes on the part of the coal industry and renewed resolve by regulatory agencies offer fresh hope to a river some "experts" gave up as irretrievably dead long ago.

The initial impetus for Friends of the Cheat was the blowout at T&T Coal's #2 mine on Muddy Creek in April of 1994. The dramatic increase in acid and iron oxide levels in the Canyon was immediately noticed by river users. The local news media picked up the story.

West Virginia's Division of Environmental Protection found T&T to be in violation, issued a cessation order, and fined the company \$750 per day until they brought the pH levels up to an acceptable level. T&T initially challenged the DEP action, claiming that the acid water was actually entering their mine from an adjacent abandoned mine. The DEP held firm, and the founding members of FOC, along with

West Virginia Rivers Coalition, Mountain Streams Monitors, and Downstream Alliance filed as intervenors in the case in support of the State.

The day before the scheduled hearing, T&T reached a settlement with the state, effectively taking full responsibility for treatment at the spill site and agreeing to pay all associated fines. An ammonia treatment system is in place to raise pH levels, and several small settling ponds have been constructed to remove sediment, primarily iron.

Unfortunately, there is insufficient area between the source of the spill and Muddy Creek to build ponds big enough to handle the volume of sediment still being discharged. So large quantities of iron are still finding their way into the Canyon. FOC is involved in researching alternative treatment systems to solve this problem.

Although solving the T&T problem still requires a lot of attention, FOC is trying to look at the bigger picture and pursue a comprehensive plan to attack acid mine drainage (AMD) problems throughout the watershed.

AMD is a hot topic with various agencies these days. The Environmental Protection Agency and the Office of Surface Mining are forming new alliances to deal with the problem and even the Corps of Engineers has expressed interest in becoming involved, now that big dam projects are out of favor.

Coal operators are shifting away from opening new mines, especially in acid producing areas, and moving into the reclamation business. Anker Energy, whose president has a home on Cheat Lake, is supporting the Friends of the Cheat by providing generators and partial funding for the Cheat Riverfest.

Patriot Coal, a subsidiary of Anker, has pledged to "adopt a stream" in the Cheat Watershed and invest their money, equipment, and ex-

perience to abate acid mine drainage.

This may include introducing a new technology, incorporating the use of alkaline fly ash produced by some of the newer, cleaner, power plants. Alkaline fly ash forms a concrete like substance when mixed with water and show promise as a means to isolate highly acidic substrat and overburden from the water.

FOC is also coordinating efforts by other groups in the watershed. CLEAR, a Cheat Lake organization, is concerned with water quality and AMD issues affecting Cheat Lake, along with developing public access to the lake, a public beach, primitive campsites, and biking trails. Downstream Alliance has partially completed a study of all the streams in Preston County to determine their respective ability to support life.

FOC plans to help DA complete their study, which will provide valuable baseline data. The West Virginia Rivers Coalition is actively pursuing federal protection for the headwaters of the Cheat and is cosponsoring the Cheat Riverfest with FOC. AWA is working on access issues on the Big Sandy.

FOC hopes to coordinate all these efforts and more into a comprehensive watershed management plan. The idealists in the group envision a clear flowing watershed teeming with fish and wildlife, with mountain bike trails through the Canyon and cross country ski trails in the winter.

To this point much of the efforts of FOC have involved organizational and information gathering activities. There is an incredible amount of work to be done if a real difference is to be made, but a lot of people care and many are willing to direct their energies towards making a positive difference.

Memberships in Friends of the Cheat are \$20 for one year and can be sent to FOC, PO Box 182, Bruceton Mills, WV. 26525. If you want further information, or want to volunteer your time or expertise, contact Dave Bassage at 304-3793141.V

COMING MAY 6, 1995...CHEAT RIVER FESTIVAL

Mark your calendars now for the first-ever Cheat River Festival slated for May 6, 1995.

Join fellow paddlers, river activists, and the local community for a full-day of fun and fellowship at the confluence of Muddy Creek and the Cheat River in Albright, W.VA. Come and celebrate the Cheat River and help raise funds for restoration efforts in the Cheat watershed - all in one day!

Daytime activities include a Cheat Narrows Downriver Race, Whitewater

Triathlon, and Guide Olympics. Evening events will begin at 5pm with a silent auction, whitewater gear sales, gear swap, and raffles topped off with good food and local music. Conservation groups and community organizations will provide educational booths to inform Festival-goers of river and community issues.

By special arrangement the release on the Upper Yough will be held early, from 8-11, so that Upper Yough paddlers will have time to come to the festival.

100% of proceeds will be used to help protection and restoration efforts within the Cheat watershed and will benefit the newly-formed Friends of the Cheat and the West Virginia Rivers Coalition.

To learn more about the Cheat River Festival including sponsorship or booth rentals contact Roger Harrison (304) 472-0025 or Dave Bassage (304) 379-3141.V

CELEBRATING... AND SAVING...



WEST VIRGINIA'S WHITewater TREASURE TROVE

by Bob Gedekoh

What makes a river
Nirvana to you?

Wilderness?
Excitement? Relaxation?
Playspots? Thrills?
Beauty? Solitude?
Challenge?

No matter what kind of
paddling experience you
fancy, odds are you can
find it, somewhere in
West Virginia's fabulous
Cheat watershed.

Read on... and consider
just a few of the
possibilities!

THE CHEAT WATERSHED

Photo by Kevin O'Brien.
Chris Huffman running Big
Slat, Big Sandy river, WV

BIG FUN... The Cheat Canyon

When you want to have FUN, head for the Cheat. The Cheat Canyon, that is. On sunny Saturdays in late April, after a good hard deluge has set the river to pumping. When the murky water is slurping at the five or six foot mark on the bridge at Albright. On those days, when even the veteran raft guides are a trifle white knuckled, that's when the Cheat Canyon is at its finest.

Get ready for the ride of your life: eleven miles of raucous, aquatic rock and roll. Eleven miles of booming class IV whitewater. Eleven miles of big, Big **FUN**.

You can surf yourself silly in those big old rollers in Decision and Beech Run.

But don't get too cocky... Big Nasty is just around the corner. You could sneak down the left... on the far side of the island. But that's for sissies! Come on, go for the gusto!

Keep your bow pointed left and paddle like hell. Just don't let that reactibn wave spin you. And don't get distracted. You surely don't want to be sucked into the Maw of the Monster.

Oh, the hole at Big Nasty won't kill you... but it will dish out a dose of hydromastication that you won't soon forget.

Now, ride the runaway train down through Even Nastier, down through the Doldrums... Catch a wave here, surf a hole there.

Before you know it you're closing in on High Falls. Listen to the roar. Scout if you want... but it won't do much good. Left center is best... into the meat of it. Charge it hard, hold on tight, and hope for the best.

And if you are fast, and if you are lucky, that big old wave won't implode, just as you claw your way to it's peaked crest. But if you're sluggish, or paddling under a curse, you'd best have a good **bigwater** roll. A good roll, or a lot of good friends, waiting at the bottom to pick up the pieces.

Top to Bottom: The Cheat, Particle Accelerator... at high water, photo by Mike Kinney. Doging the hole at Big Nasty, photo by Mike Kinney. Margaret Anderson charging Cyclotron on the Cheat, photo by Wade Zinter. Jim Snyder squirts through Coliseum, photo by Paul Marshall



If you're still feeling feisty, drop sideways into that big old hydraulic down in Maze. It's friendlier that it looks. Really! Once you set their your mind to it, you'll probably break free, after a minute... and a cartwheel... or two.

Now comes the pounding heart of the Canyon... Coliseum. Some say it gets its name from the craggy rock formations along the shores. Don't you believe it! They call it Coliseum because it is the place where the Christians are thrown to the lions!

Pee pee down the left. **POO POO** down the right! What's the level today? Six feet! Looks like an honest Class V to me!

You'd best ride that pillow high, right up against the rock... lest you slide down, down, down into the Recyclotron. Made it by okay? Good. Now you've got about a second and a half to figure out what you are going to do before you flush into that damned Particle Accelerator!

Fun, huh?

The Cheat Canyon... running high!

BIG FUN!!!



Seeking Solitude... The Laurel Fork of the Cheat

When you need SOLITUDE, head for the Laurel Fork of the Cheat. High in the watershed: up where they call the Appalachians mountains and really mean it.

Pick a day in late March, when the last snowdrifts are melting and the skunk cabbage and coltsfoot are boldly poking their snouts through the mud. A day when the Parson's gauge is reading 7, or better still, 8.

Put in at the bridge at the foot of Middle Mountain and drift round the bend. Say **goodby** to mankind; the only signs of civilization you'll see for twelve miles are the ruined abut-

ments of a narrow gauge railroad... long since gone. Wonder if there is a soul alive who rode that train?

Float down through the meadows and into the forest, down into the cleft between the mountains. As you paddle along you might spot a deer, fording the river.

But keep your eyes peeled for those river wide ledges, too. When the water is high, they are greedier than they look.

Take time while you're portaging the broken down falls to nibble on a ramp, the pungent wild onions that the natives revere for their purgative properties. See how many different wild flowers you can identify. But don't dally too long, unless you are planning to camp overnight. You've still got a goodly ways to go...

Above: Craig Homberg laughing it up at Typewriter Hole, Cheat River, photo by Kevin O'Brien

mile after mile of churning class III.

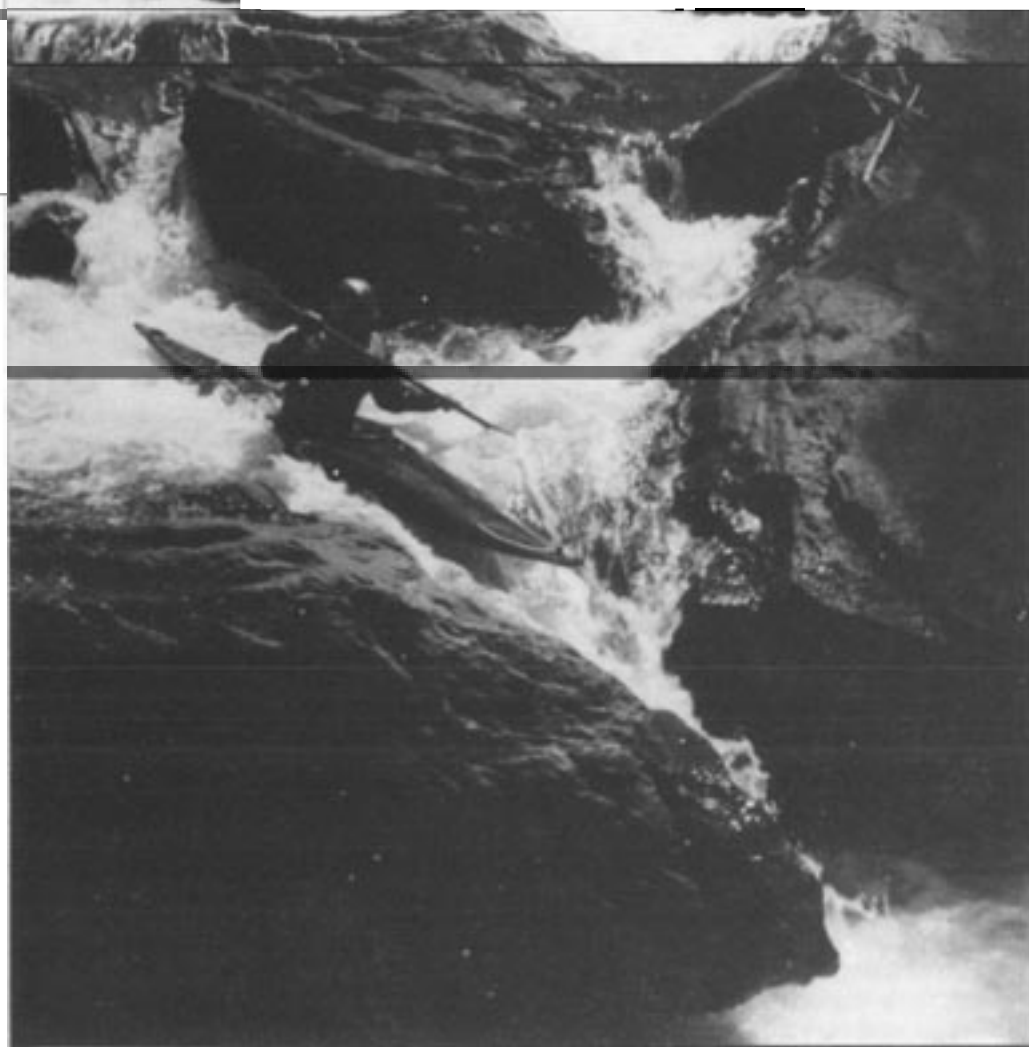
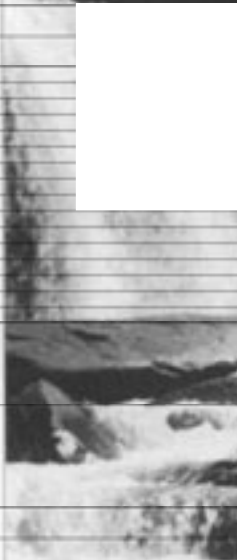
Nothing intense... but you will be pleasantly busy. The Laurel Fork will give you a little to think about, besides the scenery... and time.

The shadows lengthen fast and early in the deep valley of the Laurel Fork. Odds are by the time you round that last bend and paddle down to the Jenningston bridge, it will be nearly dusk. And it will seem a lot less like spring and a lot more like winter.

You'll likely be tired and cold. And your belly will probably be empty.

But your head will be full of wonder!

The



...y... Put in on the North Fork as day is from night.

Poet Edgar Lee Masters described life as "A gambler, head and shoulders above us all... who stacks the cards to catch your weaknesses and not to match your strengths." He could just as easily have been describing the Upper Blackwater, a river that features some of the toughest and meanest whitewater in the eastern United States.

If you want to test your mettle on the Blackwater, pick a balmy day, after a moderate rain... and check the gauge in Davis. Make sure it's not rising... and make damned sure it's not rising fast!

Now take careful stock of your ability, experience and common sense. Do the same for your comrades in arms. Ask yourselves, how big a risk are we willing to take? Then pick your pretty poison.

Stick to the Lower Blackwater, from the junction with the North Fork down to Hendricks, if you're a mortal, class V boater. If you can paddle the Upper Yough and/or the Big Sandy, you can handle this eight mile odyssey. (Hint: 95% of Blackwater boaters should be content to master this class IV-V obstacle course.)

Choose the Upper Blackwater, from the base of the spectacular sixty foot falls in the State Park to the junction, only if you're a ballsy CLASS V+ BOATER and a little bit crazy! (Hint: Big dogs only! In the

Top: Put in on the North Fork of the Blackwater..Mad Dogs ONLY!, Photo by Wade Zinter. Bottom: Steep Creeking on the North Fork of the Blackwater, photo by Wade Zinter



*Above: Put in Upper Blackwater,
photo by Kevin O'Brien*

company of other big dogs, who know river intimately. This is more difficult than the Lower Meadow; comparable in difficulty, many say, with the Narrows of the Green.)

Choose the North Fork, from Douglas to the junction, if you're an adrenalin addicted CLASS V+ BOATER... and totally CRAZY! (Hint: Mad dogs only! Mad dogs with kevlar hides and bones of steel!)

But no matter where you launch, remember, the Blackwater is not a forgiving mistress.

This is especially true of the Upper Blackwater, whose two and one half mile course gives new meaning to the word inaccessible. Before you venture onto the Upper B., stop at one of the overlooks in the State Park and take a long, hard gander down into the gorge. The Upper Blackwater is that silver ribbon, more than 1500 vertical feet below: slithering down... down... down. Over sheer ledges and around and between and beneath jagged, undercut boulders.

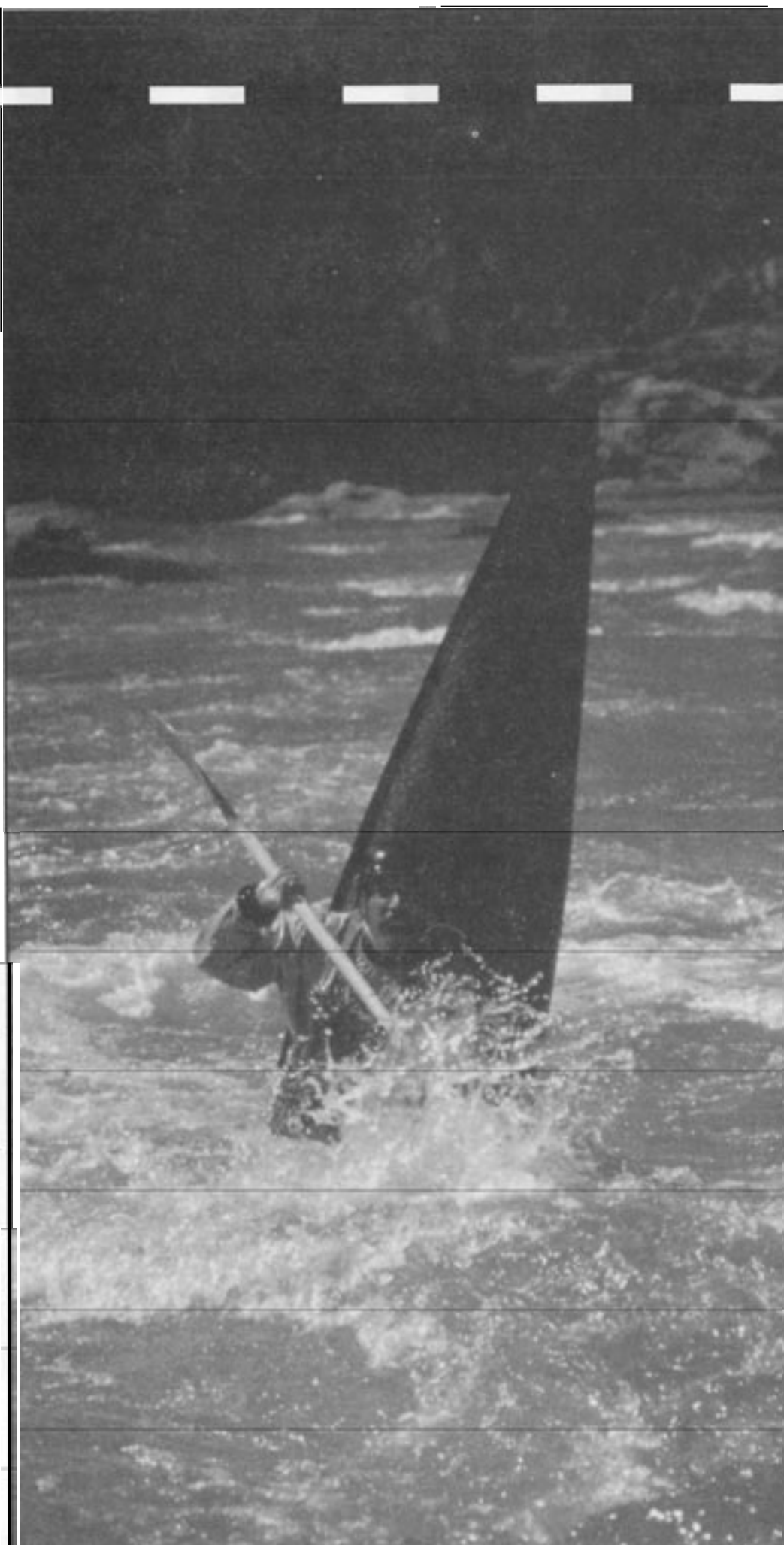
Listen carefully. As far away as the river is, over the whistling of the wind and the chatter of the birds, you can still hear it rage. That, in itself, should tell you something.

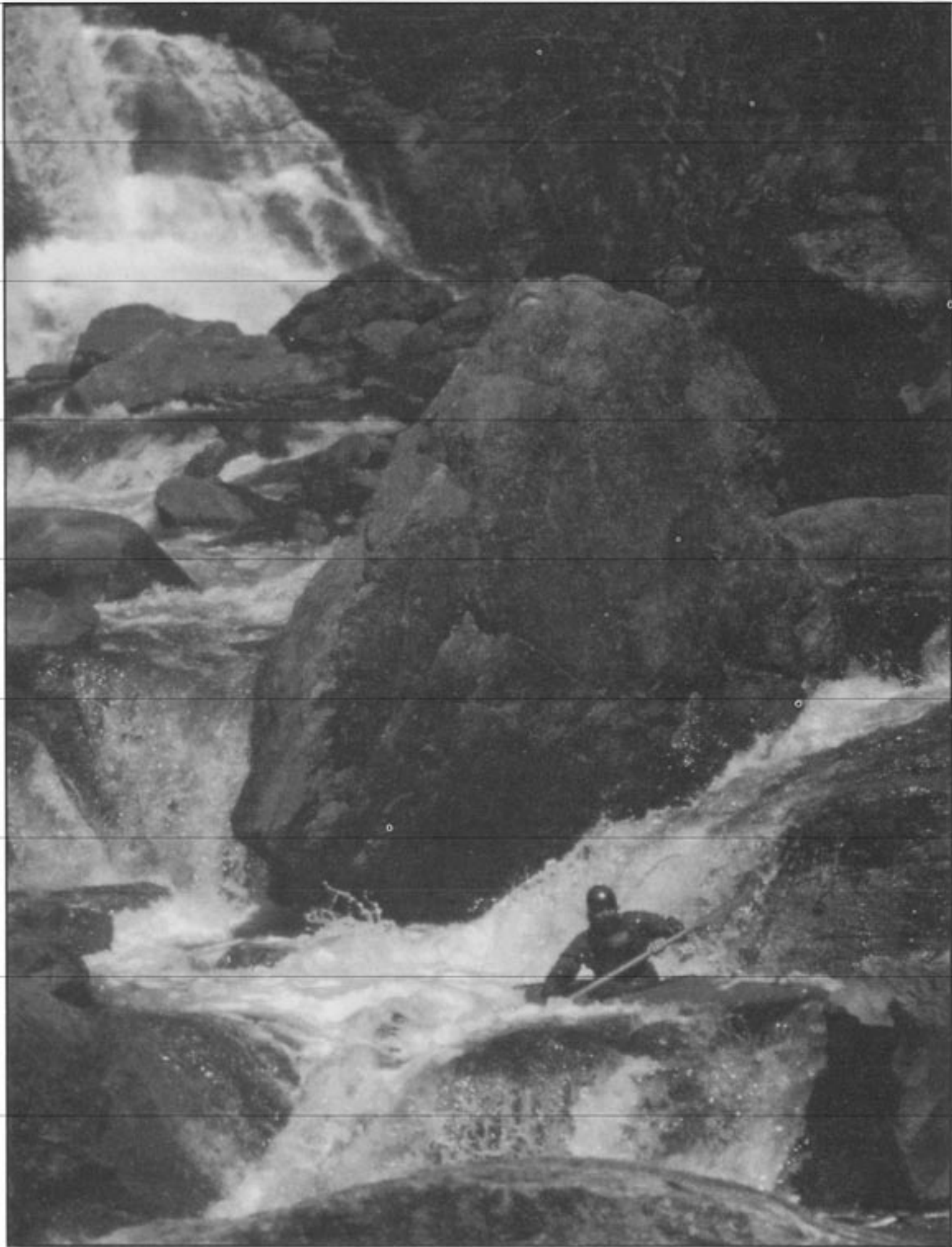
Then take note of this; the walls of the Blackwater Gorge are extremely steep and rugged. Punctuated with sheer cliffs, avalanche fields, waterfalls and a nearly impenetrable jungle of rhododendron and that living barbed wire that West Virginians call greenbrier. You don't suppose there are any rattlesnakes down there, do you?

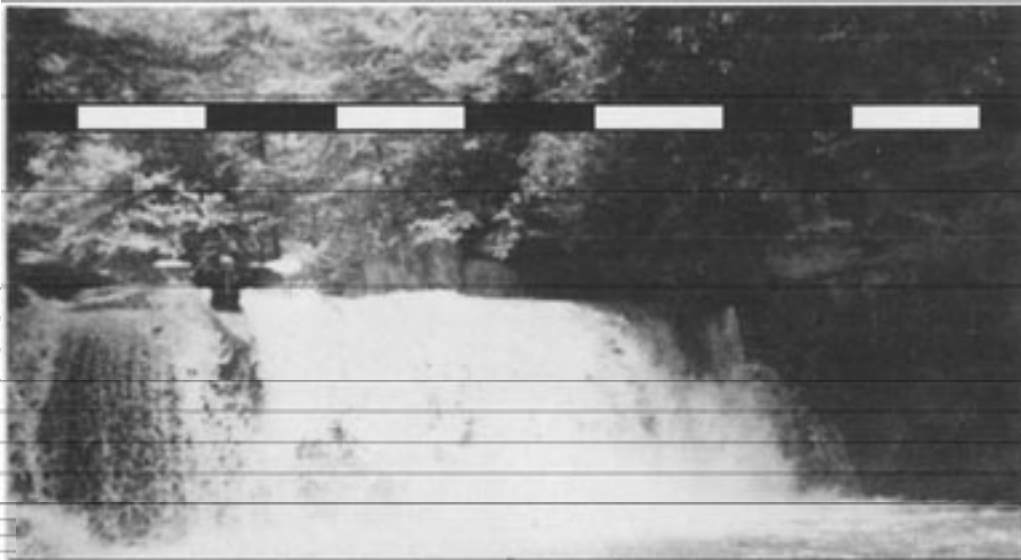
And there isn't a single negotiable trail to the river in the entire Gorge. So, if you get badly trashed on the Upper Blackwater, a distinct possibility considering the 250 foot/mile gradient, you will be in some very serious... trouble!

You could find yourself wishing really hard you were somewhere... anywhere... else. But when it comes to deliverance from the grasp of the Blackwater Gorge, if wishes were horses, beggars would ride!

Right: Scott Stowe, ender at Coliseum rapid, Cheat River. Far Right: John Regan, UpperBlackwater, photo by Kevin O'brien







The Upper B. is no place for the timid, careless or cavalier. Floatation, breakdowns, throw ropes, slings and carabiniers are a must. Take some duct tape and a first aid kit, **too**. **Expect** to lose a little hide.

Insist on scouting and/or portaging Tomko Falls and Pinball... at the very least.

Successfully running remote, cutting edge, class V+ whitewater like the Upper B. is as much about responsibility and common sense as it is about skill and daring. But you know that, don't you?

Take your time, keep your cool, and pay real close attention to your guide. When he (hate to be sexist, but there ain't many women paddling the Upper B.) tells you to boof over that blind ledge, at that very spot, at that very angle; do exactly that. Or pay the consequences! They don't call it Boof Left, Or Get Ready to Piton for nothing!

And if you get spanked... and you may well get spanked somewhere along the way... remember... when you run with the big dogs, you can't pee like a puppy!

When your guide finally groans from an eddy, "My Nerves are Shot and I Just Can't Take It Anymore", don't panic... take heart! That's just the name of the last real man eater on the Upper. Believe it or not, the junction... and the end... is in sight!

Only one more to go, and your ultimate Cheat Challenge (ordeal?) is over! You won't forget it soon. Most everyone takes home a souvenir of their maiden voyage down the Upper Blackwater... bloody knuckles!

Top: Mark Fair running Double Indemnity on the North Fork of the Blackwater, photo by Wade Zinter. Middle Left: The Upper Blackwater- The Cheat's ultimate challenge, photo by Wade Zinter. Middle right: Put in on the North Fork of the Blackwater, photo by Wade Zinter. Bottom: Cutting edge kayaking on the North Fork of the Blackwater, photo by Wade Zinter. Right page top: Running the Falls on the Shavers Fork of the Cheat, photo by Bill Young. Right page bottom: Powering through a ledge on the Shavers Fork, photo by Bill Young.

High Mountain Grandeur... The Shavers Fork

If its wilderness GRANDEUR you're seeking, look to the Shavers Fork. A river contained, but not tamed, for mile after rugged mile by towering chains of mountains, with only the railroad tracks to keep it company. Ask yourself this, is the Shavers Fork the Animas of the east, or is the Animas the Shavers Fork of the west?

Drop a shuttle vehicle in **Bowden** and check the level. The Shavers Fork looks like a big old river, but it rises and falls fast. Twenty two miles is a long way to scrape or, at the other extreme, to surf, on the crest of a flash flood!

Now take the rough, dirt Forest Service road out of Beverly to the top of Cheat Mountain. Commandeer a four wheel drive, preferably a buddy's, and hope for the best. If you are fortunate the snow will have melted and you'll make it to the put-in at **Magee Run**. (Hint: Hopeless in March, maybe in April, likely in May.) When it comes to the Shavers Fork, getting to the put-in half the challenge... and, provided you make it intact, half the fun.

The first six miles are easy; so take some time to look around. There are beaver living in the banks, **and** wild turkeys often soar across the valley, flying from a roost on one mountain to a nut tree on another. If you paddle quietly you might even sneak up on a black bear, rooting in the mud along the banks, looking for juicy roots and tasty bug morsels.

Finally, after a few class **III warmups**, the river turns abruptly to the right and straightaway plunges over the Falls. It is possible, at least



at lower levels, to negotiate this plunge at a certain spot on river right. But, be careful. The approach to the lip is not nearly as clean as that to Wonder Falls, located on the Big Sandy, far downstream in the Cheat watershed.

Once you've passed the Falls get ready for several miles of Class IV-V action. The Shavers Fork becomes increasingly serpentine, the stream bed constricts, and the gradient escalates dramatically. While the mountain vistas here are no less magnificent, you probably won't notice. You'll be far too preoccupied eddy scouting, boofing ledges, and, hopefully, dodging pourovers.

When the Shavers is howling there is danger here... protracted

complex rapids featuring menacing boils and reversals... and damned few eddies. Some of these rapids look deceptively easy from the top. But at lower levels paddlers are more likely to fall victim to cold and exhaustion than to any specific hazard.

Take time to scout and set safety at the ten foot sluice, located just above the second railroad trestle. The recycle at the base of this falls can play havoc with boaters, both in and out of their kayaks.

Wimps take out at the thirteen mile mark, in the nearly deserted hamlet of Bemis. But you're no wimp... you're paddling nine more miles to **Bowden!** And why not? Paddling an extra hour and half beats

the hell out of spending an extra hour running shuttle, right? Keep telling yourself... and your companions... that.

After all, there are still two or three miles of solid Class III+ water before the Shavers Fork flattens and commences to meander.

Getting weary? Don't get frustrated. You've paddled flatwater before, and rarely in such splendid surroundings.

When you finally get to **Bowden**, bite the bullet and load those boats quickly. Then head into **Elkins** for a hot meal and some beer.

After a day on the Shavers Fork, you deserve it.

Wade Zinter tackles Big Splat on the Big Sandy.



For Beauty's Sake... The Big Sandy

When you need to be surrounded by BEAUTY, head to the Big Sandy, the last major tributary to the Cheat, not far upstream of Cheat Lake and the confluence with the Monongahela.

Sure, when most boaters think of the Sandy, it's thrills and spills, not beauty, that comes to mind. Wonder Falls and Zoom Flume and Little Splat and, of course, Big Splat. But you know better. It's a lot more than whitewater that makes the Sandy special.

Plenty of rivers have runnable falls, and screaming chutes and demanding class V and VI drops. But there aren't many rivers as stunning as the Big Sandy!

The Sandy runs, intermittently, throughout the year. Rising after a rain for a day or two, then falling. So if you're patient, you can watch the seasons change on the Big Sandy.

Rest by First Island rapid in the spring, when the **redbud**, or later, the dogwood are blooming. Goldfinches and indigo buntings dart about. The monarch butterflies, who have fluttered all the way from Central America, follow the Sandy upstream to their summer homes.

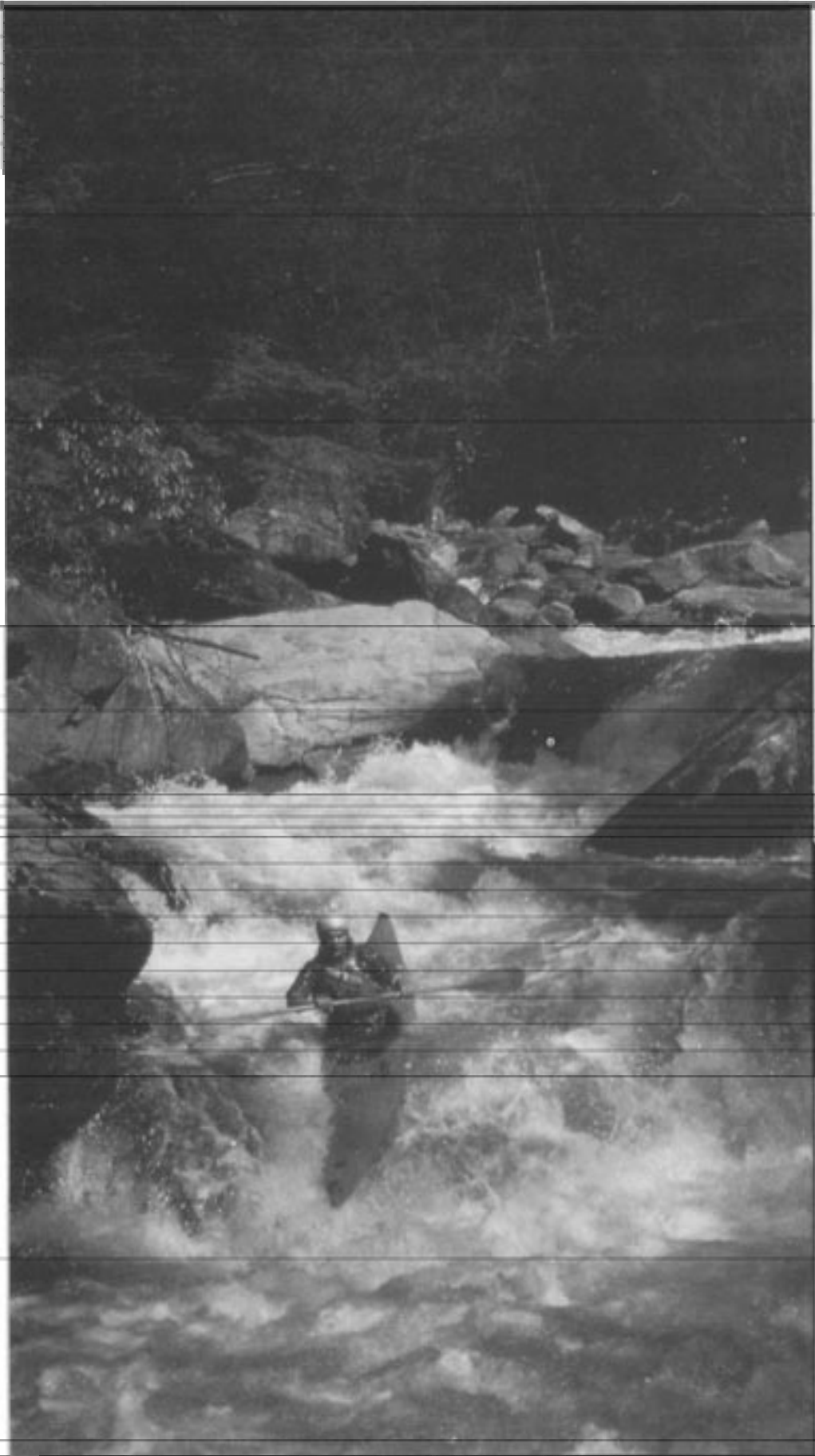
Pause by Zoom Flume in mid summer and admire the pure white blooms of the rhododendron, contrasted against the lush green foliage on the hillsides. But keep an eye out for the grumpy copperhead that holds court on the ledge.

Paddle quietly through Second Island rapid on a hot summer day and you may catch a glimpse of some real water sprites: students from WVU, sunbathing nude beside the popular old swimmin' hole.

Take a break on the lip of Wonder Falls in autumn and watch the bur-



Master Boat Designer Jim Snyder runs Wonder Falls with "attitude", photo by Paul Marshall



gundy and maroon oak and orange and yellow maple leaves floating on the breeze and swirling in the micro eddies along the shore. Listen to the red and grey squirrels, squabbling as they stash acorns in their secret caches.

And when you are portaging, or scouting, Big Splat in mid winter, take time to admire the icy skullcaps and collars of shimmering chandelier ice on all the midstream boulders. Delicate icicles hang from every shrub that dips its branches towards the current, and there are massive pillars of aquamarine ice across the river left face of the Splat ledge.

The leaves are gone from the deciduous trees, but the hemlocks stand like bold, green sentries, stationed across the barren hillsides. Cardinals hop from limb to limb, eyeing the scarlet and royal blue berries on the shrubs along the shore. They never seem to eat any; they must know something we don't know.

Irrespective of season, a lot of folks take pleasure in the whitewater on the Big Sandy. But you know that the Sandy has much more to offer. **All** you have to do is take the time to experience it.

To Treasure The Cheat

The Cheat watershed is undeniably a national treasure, one of the most magnificent whitewater river systems in the United States. There **are** literally dozens of paddling opportunities- ranging in difficulty from flatwater to Class VI, and ranging in size from minuscule to gigantic.

*Josh Hubbard, Upper blackwater,
Photo by Kevin O'Brien*

The Cheat watershed is so diverse that it offers something to every paddler, irrespective of ability or interest.

There are ultra tight, ultra technical steep creeks, like Dougherty, a hair raising screamer, even at less than one hundred cfs. There are meandering Class II trout streams, like the Glady Fork and Horseshoe Run. There is cutting edge class V+ whitewater on Upper Otter Creek and Upper Red Creek, as well as on the Blackwater.

Leisurely overnight camping trips are popular on the flatwater between Parsons and Rowlesburg. The Dry Fork and the Cheat Narrows offer ideal class III training grounds for intermediate boaters, starting to feel their oats. Once their skills improve, they can test their mettle downstream, on the class IV+ waters of the Cheat Canyon.

There are roadside runs and wilderness runs. Runs that take all day to complete and runs that can be made in minutes. Runs to play on and runs to work at. And runs to relax on, too.

It is hard to imagine a single eastern watershed with more to offer.

But the Cheat watershed is in trouble. Mine acid is pouring in from Muddy Creek, right there at the Canyon put-in. The water is orange and the rocks are too. It burns your nose and burns your eyes and leaves your skin feeling raw and gritty.

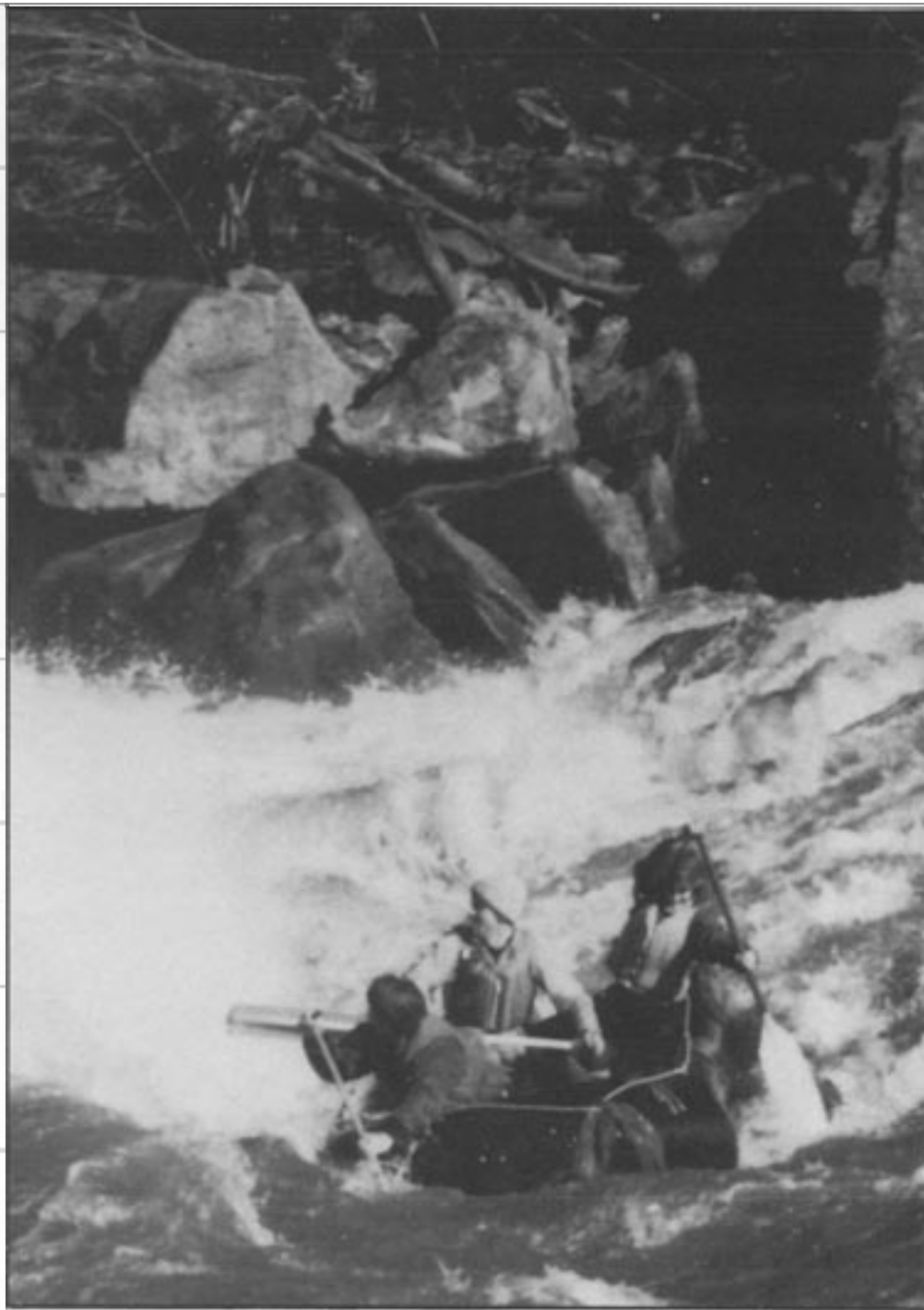
Drainage from mines is poisoning the Blackwater and the Sandy, as well.

Meanwhile, the **Corp** of Engineers is talking about flood control dams (again!), upstream of the Narrows. Dams which would drown the scenic Cheat river valley.

And the Japanese have acquired a taste for hardwood, so the logging industry is salivating over the timbered mountainsides of West Virginia. Mountainsides which tower over the Cheat and its tributaries. The bulldozers and chain saws have been, and will continue to be, busy.

Strip mines continue to pop up everywhere, dumping silt into the streams and leaving ugly scars on the land.

And recreational development is preceding at breakneck speed in the headwaters of the Blackwater and



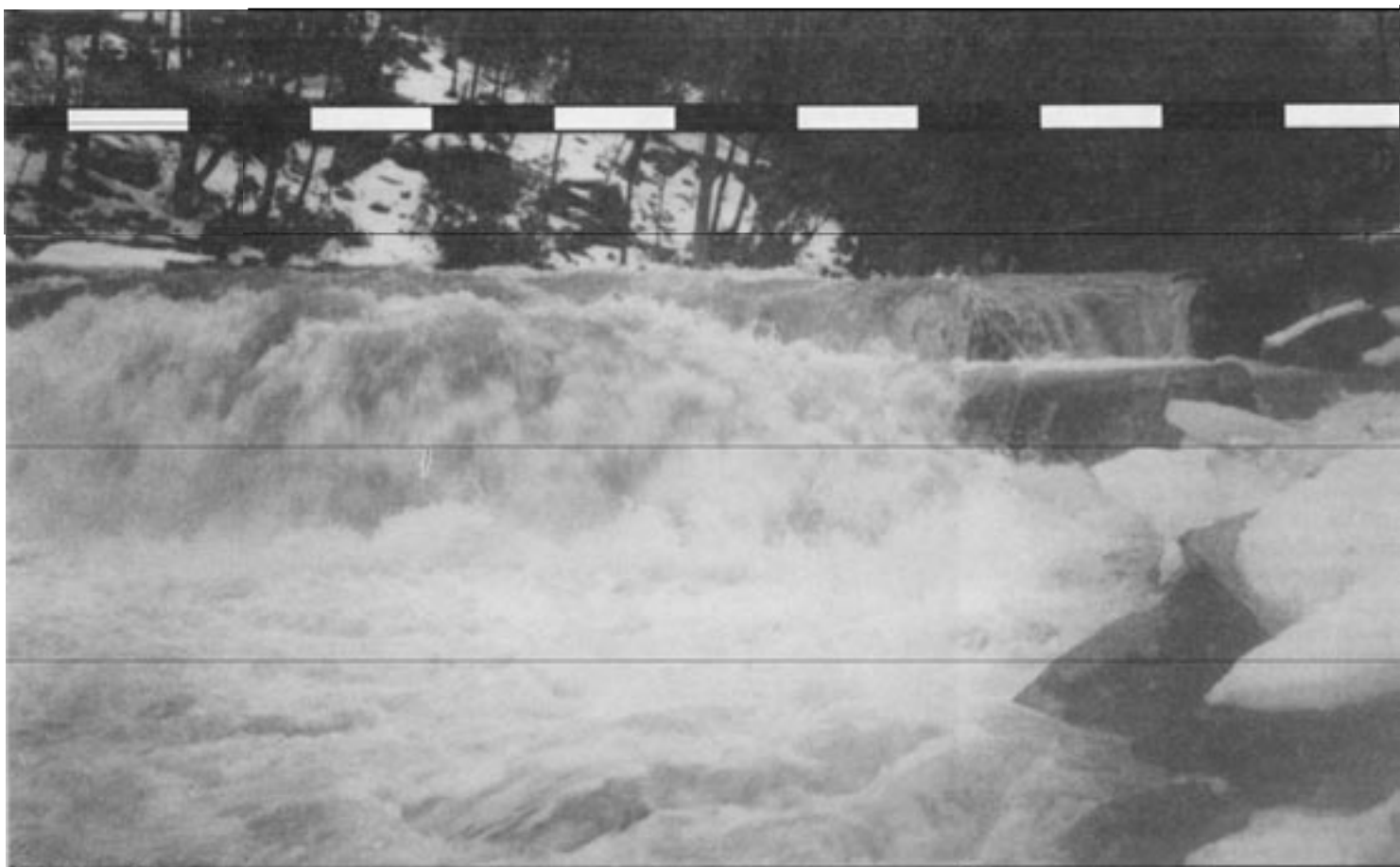
the Dry Fork, where ski resorts attract exponentially increasing numbers of visitors each year. Who will monitor the environmental impact of this growth?

These are just a few of the reasons why the time has come for those who TREASURE the Cheat to take action.

What can you do?

For a start, join the newly formed

Into the Maw of the Monster on the Cheat's Big Nasty, photo by Mike Kinney



Friends of the Cheat, as well as the West Virginia Rivers Coalition. And, of course, maintain your membership with the AWA. These organizations are banding together to fight the good fight.

Next, stay informed. Be ready to take action when there is a call to arms. Be prepared to write letters and to call politicians. To pester the hell out of the folks who make the decisions.

And finally, make sure to come to the first Cheat River Festival, May 6, at Albright. This one shouldn't hurt at all!

Sponsored by the **WVRC** and the Friends of the Cheat, and supported by the AWA, this Festival promises to be a fitting celebration of the incredible Cheat watershed. Like the Cheat itself, the Festival will be wild and raucous and fun!

If you **TREASURE** the Cheat too, I'll see you there! ▼

Top: Laurel Fork, the falls in winter, photo by Gary Ward.

Bottom: Bill Love surfing up No Balls (aka: Q-Ball) Cheat River, WV, Photo by Kevin O'Brien

MAGNANIMOUS

by David J. Regela



Magic, **real** magic, the kind that early Americans once accepted as a natural part of living, is all but gone now. It's been educated and exorcised right out of our modern, sophisticated selves. We are left with lives that are less spiritual and, well, a trifle boring. Only within the freedoms of what wilderness we have thankfully managed to retain do the ancient rhythms still count for something.

Fortunately, I was en route to just such a place.

The Idea, the Plan, penetrated my funk at about the time I hit the Arizona state line. The inspiration didn't arrive in the guise of a blinding white light, but I liked it anyway. Sure did. It was neat. Please allow me to digress.

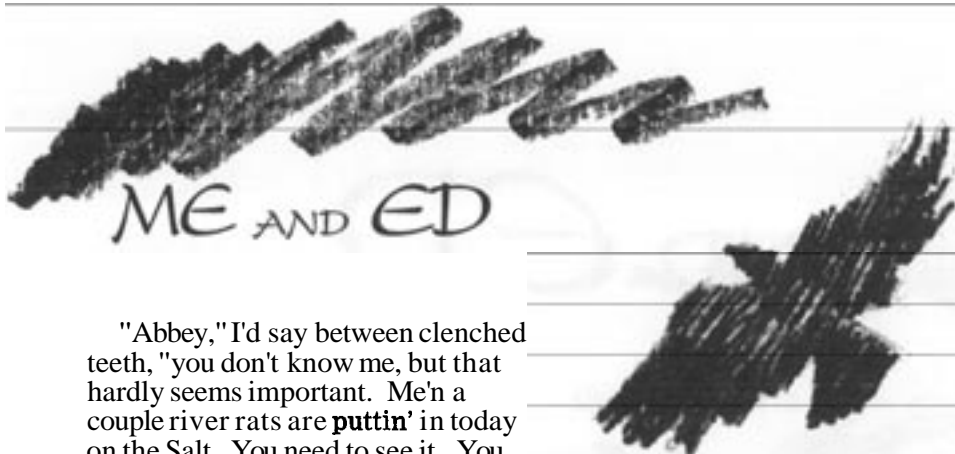
My original concept was hatched (or more properly, perhaps, distilled) more than a few years ago, whilst hunched around the fading embers of a small fire at a camp called Boatpatch Beach on the Salt River.

I had been foolishly slopping bourbon with a very large, imposing boatman of my acquaintance and lamenting the insidious, insistent dwindling of the last unspoiled places in America. (A VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS?) Anyway, my melodramatic monologue climaxed with the observation that Edward Abbey, eco-warrior and eloquent, irascible advocate for all things wild, needed to see this Salt River Canyon. In fact, I proposed to take him myself.

The scenario I envisioned went rather like this: I'd simply show-up, unannounced, at the author's Oracle, Arizona, dig one day (my informants had sort of nailed down the exact location) and invite him on a float trip.

"Abbey," I'd say between clenched teeth, "you don't know me, but that hardly seems important. Me'n a couple river rats are

"Abbey," I'd say between clenched teeth, "you don't know me, but that hardly seems important. Me'n a couple river rats are puttin' in today on the Salt. You need to see it. You can come if you want to."



"Abbey," I'd say between clenched teeth, "you don't know me, but that hardly seems important. Me'n a couple river rats are **puttin'** in today on the Salt. You need to see it. You can come if you want to."

"Hell," I'd say, "it's in your backyard, man."

Abbey, in my imagined encounter, just glares. Presently, he pivots and disappears inside. To get a shotgun?

I reconsider my impulsive intrusion and climb back into the comparative safety of my truck. I **crank-** up the old beast and drop her into gear as Abbey reappears toting a case of beer. I take that as an **affirma-** tive response.

As is the rule with most alcoholic nightdreams, I woke up with a hangover and had a damnable time rowing a boat that next day. Although I never forgot my resolution, I didn't act upon it either.

Quite propitiously, it now seems, I even learned of Abbey's death from a passing boatman while tripping on the Salt some years later. And that is, more or less, what made my current brainstorm so appropriate.

You see, the plan was to conjure up the shade or spirit of the late EA, and belatedly take him down that river. Evoke a little canyon enchantment. A little whimsy. If I could just generate the proper frame of mind, the timing would be perfect.

I was due to **rendezvous** that evening with Pablo, a boatman for one of the companies commercially licensed to **run** the Salt, who had been contracted to lead a gaggle of San Antonio kayakers **DOWN THE RIVER**. He, in turn, had enlisted me to run sweep and to pilot a gear-raft with most of their paraphernalia. (Ever notice how much **stuff** becomes

critical to a kayaker when he doesn't have to haul it in his own **funny** little boat?)

It was probable that I would have ample time to commune with my invited guest. To stage the great Salt River literary debate. To explore my **love/hate** relationship with EA. While I pretty generally admired Abbey's use of language and his brutal honesty, I fundamentally disagreed with some of his conclusions. I anticipated an intellectual challenge, an emotional tug-of-war between disparate personalities.

Pablo would serve as river **guru** to the San Antonio guys. He is also a camp-cook of singular talent. That left me with the labor-intensive, brain-dead functions. Set up the porta-potty. Haul water for the kitchen. Do a one-man driftwood patrol. Etc. All so that the colorful 'yakers could play the waves until the light had nearly died, eat immensely and well, and retire blissfully exhausted while I did the dishes. I would remain an enigma. A bearded, bow-legged boat troll who would only become significant if I managed to get some of their stuff wet. Perfect.

The westerling sun and I were dueling for the same location on the horizon. Desert flora transmuted abruptly from Chihuahuan to **Sonoran**. The first saguaro's, on hillside sentinel duty, urged me to make all due haste within reasonable proximity of the legal speed limit.

I removed my sunglasses/ which had become a bit tiresome. But the brittle glare was red-lined, and I began to blink almost immediately. Spectral afterimages lingered behind my eyelids. I glimpsed the face of M w a r d Abbey, looking exactly as he did on the dust jacket of his latest book. I canvassed eagerly to the seat beside me. Still empty. I replaced the sunglasses.

About 30 miles **from** where the highway switchbacks steeply into the canyon, I spied movement in my rear view mirror. No doubt about it - an empty beer can bounced hauntingly down the shoulder of the road. A favorite Abbey trick. A defiant Abbey response to man's arrogance in having built the road at all, despoiling what was once untouched.

I'm sure that the draft from my speeding truck had animated a discarded can that was already there. Yet twenty minutes later it happened again. Okay, I was getting good at this. My mind-set had evolved.

"HAYDUKE LIVES!" I said aloud, and downshifted my machine to accommodate the descent to the river.

The team was already assembled at riverside. Pablo introduced the 'yakers: Doc and Dooley, Jerry and Lee and Billy. (Of course, not being good at names, I'd already devised my own cataloging system for the group: tippy blue boat, tippy yellow boat, etc.) Two women, wives or girlfriends, would accompany Pablo in the lead raft. Karen and Nancy. Comely wenches. Tanned limbs and white teeth. Seemed to have all the requisite parts.



"Jerry, here, is going to paddle a solo canoe," Pablo informed me.

"Well he better be damn good," I replied.

"He is," Pablo confirmed.

"Pedigree established," I said.

"Besides, water's right at that level where it starts getting pushy. We'll see tomorrow, won't we?" I smiled.

"I can always put my headphones on," I said. "Crosby, Stills and Nash. Drowns out all but the most dedicated whimpering."

Tomorrow dawned ahead of schedule. The flurry of frantic activity on launch day preoccupied my conscious thoughts until we were actually on the water. With my gearload humped ponderously in the front compartment, Abbey's place would be somewhere behind me. We'd ease into our discussion cum debate, (I hoped), as the river accelerated over the first few miles.

Skill levels amongst the SA guys ran the gamut from very good to marginal. But they supported each other. Looked like this deal might work.

Since I hadn't felt much of a 'presence' to this point, I was understandably anxious. "THE BRAVE COWBOY," I said, beginning the engagement with my carefully planned opening salvo, "your first book to really light it up. Don't you think it was a bit heavy with the Calvinist thing? Man is doomed to failure. Only the chosen are saved? I guess it worked back then, but it seems dated from where I sit."

No response. "DESERT SOLITAIRE."

I stole a squinty glance over my shoulder. Just the back of the bus and the river where I'd been moments earlier. Great. "I liked the book," I whined. "I really did."

We floated past waterfalls and hopeful, hunting eagles. A grotto with living stalactite formations. No stylized topography in sight. Fierce rock. Sculpted by wind and water and timeless patience. My friends the saguaros put in another appearance. They trundled down the south-facing talus slopes in ever increasing numbers. Quite a clan. They looked to be in a pretty good mood. This was their place. Like the war-

riors of a century past, they allowed us to proceed. Provided we took nothing.

"What do you think so far," I said without much optimism.

Shut up! said a voice directly behind me.

This time I didn't turn. I was afraid to upset the balance.

You talk too much, Abbey said. You brought me to look. I'm looking. With your eyes. I see what you see. Trust your own perceptions, man, Abbey said. I'm just starting to enjoy myself.

Embarrassed, chastened, I complied to the best of my ability. I concentrated hard, scanning the river corridor with as much emotion as I could muster. Selfdiscovery wasn't part of the initial program, but what the hell. I noted a wily coyote, frozen in time and space, peering from behind a cholla cactus. Nodded my acknowledgment to the ash and walnut trees secreted in the pocket canyons on either side. With difficulty, I limited myself to an occasional nonintrusive comment.

We camped on a beach homesteaded by a legion of blue lupines. A hard scramble of perhaps a thousand feet brought us to a series of ledges once occupied by the people of the Salado culture. Only their dwellings remained. Archways intact. Stone tools, bits of bone, painted pottery shards littered the lofty neighborhood.

I lingered there, watching my fellow boaters work the talus in erratic descending spurts, finally becoming the toy inhabitants of the toy tent city far below. From my front-porch perch, I commanded a several mile sweep of the serpentine canyon. Certainly a high-rent district. A desert condominium with a southern exposure. Morning sun would come early here.



ME AND ED

Just at the edges of my peripheral vision, I sensed a general stirring. More insinuated than actually seen, the shadows, perhaps, of the quickening twilight. "Ed?" I said gently. "Is that you?"

Of course not, Abbey replied with indignation, I'm right behind you. As always. You can't possibly believe we're alone here, can you? Abbey asked.





"I suppose not," I finally admitted. And the concept of this place as 'home' became more specific, more real. Had it not been for the chill that stalked the early evening, I might have remained a citizen of that older tribe until the dark delayed my return to the twentieth century well beyond the margins of a safe descent.

Moonlight, and the surreal shapes of the white rock canyon conspired to diminish my physical stature. I actually shrunk in size. Really small. When I looked around me, I saw that our fire, tents, even our boats had become tiny, miniaturized. No one else seemed to notice.

I reveled in the magic, and listened to the whispered confessions in the moving water. Tried to understand. The elusive, eternal solutions remained just beyond my comprehension.

I sidled up to Doc or Dooley (without their boats I still got confused). "See that saguaro?" I prompted. "Is it closer than it was an hour ago?" Doc/Dooley raised an eyebrow, smiled patronizingly, and moved closer to the fire.

We fell easily into the timeless rhythms. Willing captives we were to the celestial revolutions, with lots of splashy, aerated water in between.

Jerry, the solo canoeist, flipped at Black Rock, a precipitous, full-grown drop, yet hurled himself atop the overturned craft and swam it to shore most professionally. He was good. In fact, his entry at a rapid called Corkscrew was so clean, his paddling so minimalist, that he received a standing ovation from all hands. I heard the echo of my own applause resounding off the canyon walls behind me. Except that I now knew, was confident, that it was more than mere echo.

Quartzite falls. A Carlos Castaneda kind of place - a place of power. A double-drop that once featured a lower ledge of resistant rock that created a chaotic, dangerous recircula-

tion. That is, until some craven criminal element decided to impose his own petty will on nature's masterpiece. 'Monkey **Wrencher**' is far too sympathetic a term.

Ever since the explosion that vaporized the ledge, I have been uneasy in this place. The Karma, the balance has been disrupted. What spirits remain feel mostly unsettled.

So I was sitting on a rock, inhaling a couple of lite beers.

"*J* wish you could have ~~seen~~ it before," *J* said to *Ed*. Before the sacrilege."

Doesn't surprise me, Abbey replied immediately. Man is the most rapacious predator on the planet. The ultimate destroyer. Without conscience, he said. Just don't mourn yourself into oblivion, he said. Still need to drive the bus. There's a couple good rapids yet to run. And there's no excuse for being stupid. Even in my situation, he said.

"Well, damn them anyway," I said.

I turned to find Pablo standing three feet away. He looked at me strangely, but then, we're pretty acclimated to each other and his look was one I'd seen before.

"You going to run or drink?" Pablo asked. "The rest of us are set."

"I'm ready," I said. "No excuse for being stupid. Even in my situation," I added.

That night I had a dream. At least it may have been a dream. We had camped at the outflow of a side creek. Again near the ruins of the Ancient Ones. During the lowest ebb of the night's progress, I was awakened by a touch at my shoulder.

Ever drink **tiswin**? Abbey asked.

"I'm sleepy," I protested.

Tiswin, Abbey repeated, is a **corn**-fermented beer. Many Native Americans brewed it on a regular basis. It's not bad, Abbey said. Got quite a kick. Met some of the local boys up the creek a ways. Invited me to kiva for a council. Lot to talk about.

"Just be back at sun up," I said from the depths of my sleeping bag. "We're getting on the water real early."


I don't think so, Abbey said, his voice fading a bit. Apparently, the celebration of the Planting Moon is not to be missed, he said. So much to learn. Think I'll hang-out awhile. But I wanted to thank you for the bus ride. See you again sometime, shipmate. On the river.

That was it. I awoke feeling **much**-rested, energized, blessed. And as with many multi-day river trips, where a certain amount of bonding is inevitable, saying farewell to my other companions was bittersweet. To my great surprise and obvious delight, however, Jerry loaned me an EA audio-tape of some of his favorite essays. (I don't believe in coincidences.) It was too perfect.

I played the damn thing twice on my own long, JOURNEY HOME.

Editor's note: David Regela is a professional river guide and writer whose work has appeared in Paddler, Canoe and Backpacker. He recently signed a contract for his first novel. ▼




Most anybody can learn to Go with the Flow on the Lower Yough. But going Up the Down Staircase is a little bit tougher!

UP, UP, AND AWAY

by John Weld

I have bad news for everyone out there who just started to feel comfortable going down class IV and V whitewater. "Going down" anything has been officially declared out of fashion by the raft guides, safety boaters, kayak instructors, Phil Coleman wannabees and other fringe members of society who are mysteriously considered the Who's Who of the cruising world.

What's going on with the backwaters is a

fresh and hip idea of paddling so hard back upstream that you actually might vomit bile right on to your spray skirt.

Novice boaters, open canoers and tourists on the bank may call this activity idiotic, but the happening members of Backlundusin', non Coast Guard approved PFD wearin' and T-Canyon ownin' "in crowd call this new sport "attaining".

And if you want to be cool enough to get invited to a Wilderness Voyagers Keg Party in Ohiopyle, you'd better just knuckle down and start pushing your boat back upstream.

The art of moving a boat back up through a rapid by jumping from eddy to eddy is as old as the need for kayak instructors and safety boaters to paddle up from the bottom of a rapid to rescue hapless customers pinned on rocks. In this sense, the sport of attainment has its roots in functionality. But within the last decade, paddling upstream has evolved from something that professional guides did strictly while they were on the clock, to a sport in and of itself.

The first people I noticed doing attainments as a test of skill were a group of well known boaters from the mythical, mystical town of Friendsville, on the Upper Yough. In the early '80's, while I was barely managing to survive the Lower Yough going straight downstream, these guys were blazing back upstream in beat-up downriver boats.

What they discovered was that paddling upstream through a big rapid, when done correctly, is actually more an exercise in reading water than a test of brute strength. Attaining requires expert kayak skills matched with the finesse of rock climbing. For these reasons, the sport slowly attracted a small but devoted group of fans, like the raft guides and other citizens of the nearby town of Ohiopyle, who boat the Lower Yough every day. These boat-

that takes lots of experience to get right."

Now for those of you who boat the Lower **Yough** with some regularity, I have assembled a concise guide to some of the more popular attainments. I have focused on this section of river for a couple of reasons. For one, it's the river I teach on, so I know it particularly well. More importantly, the Lower **Yough** is simply a fantastic attaining river during the summer and fall. This river is low enough to provide thousands of eddies, but steep and powerful enough to produce countless challenging attainments.

Before I get on with the descriptions I should mention a few things. For one, **all** of the attainments and ratings I mention are based on the typical summer flows of 1.7' to 2.3' on the Ohiopyle Gauge. Above and below these levels the techniques I mention start to become obsolete. I have assigned each attainment a rating based on the rock climbing **scale** of difficulty.

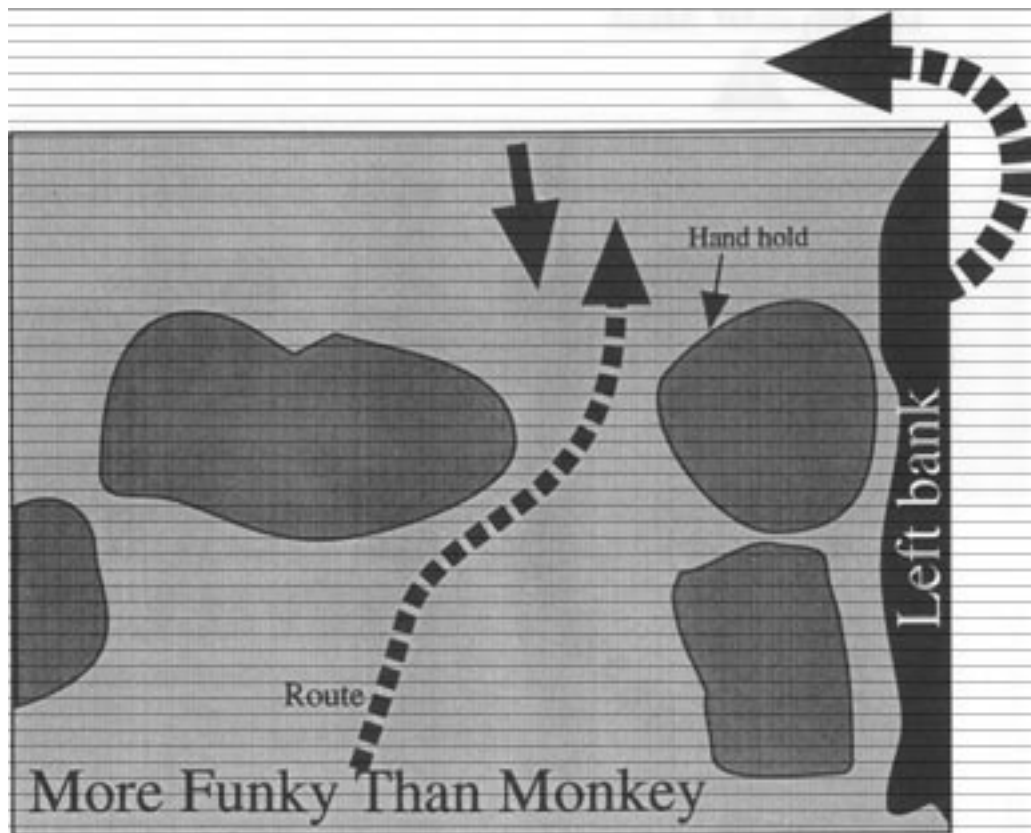
For **those** not familiar with the climbing world, a 5.5 ascent is something that you can manage without ropes in tennis shoes. A 5.8 requires ropes, and a some technique. A 5.10 is a climb that necessitates a lot of experience, and usually requires several attempts before you get it right. A 5.14 is so tough that only a handful of the most experienced climbers have ever made it (As of yet in the climbing world, no one has successfully completed a 5.15).

I chose to borrow this rating method because attaining is in many ways identical to climbing.

Also: I often refer to "attainment left" or "attainment right". This is the left or right side of the river, as you look back upstream.

One more thing: Attempting, but failing, to make some of these attainments is not without consequence. You could **find** yourself upside down or even pinned or broached at a bad spot... **i.e.**, on the face of Dimple Rock.

Make sure that you evaluate the risks of each particular attainment **before** you try it and that **your** skills are commensurate to the challenge. And have a reliable boating buddy standing by to help in case you get into trouble.

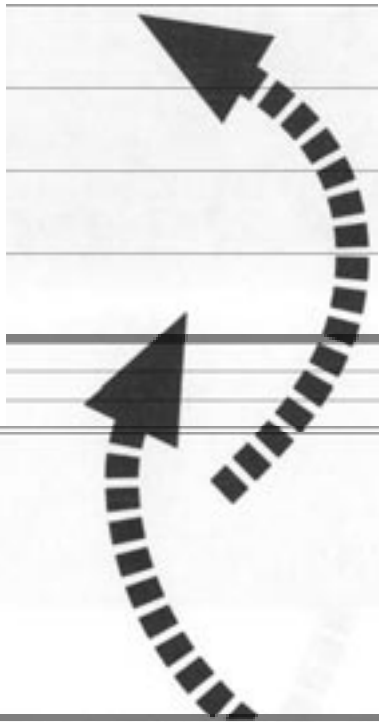


ENTRANCE RAPID

DIFFICULTY: 5.9

Description: This is a lengthy rapid that's pretty easy (**5.7ish**) for the most part, with one hard crux move. I include it not only because it's the site for the Upstream Race, but also because it's a good indication to whether or not you're ready for the rest of the attainments I mention. If you can't do this one, you are going to have a really tough time with the others. In fact, this is a good test for anyone thinking about trying the Upper **Yough** for the first time. If you have the skill and the strength to paddle up Entrance, chances

UP, UP, AND AWAY



are you'll have a fantastic first run down the Upper.

The one 5.9 crux move is called Graduation, and it can be a real stumper. This move lies two thirds of the way down the rapid at popular side surfing spot called Nemo's hole. Start in the large eddy just to the attainment right of the hole, get some speed up, and blast by the hole. Then ferry directly over towards the river right.

Hints: Use an old paddle and lots of patience. The bottom of Entrance is particularly shallow and frustrating. At the crux move, you might notice a small diagonal hole right above the initial eddy. You don't want to surf this little diagonal hole as you start your ferry because it will slow you down. Rather, ferry out just downstream of the little diagonal, hugging it close enough to use the micro-eddy behind it.

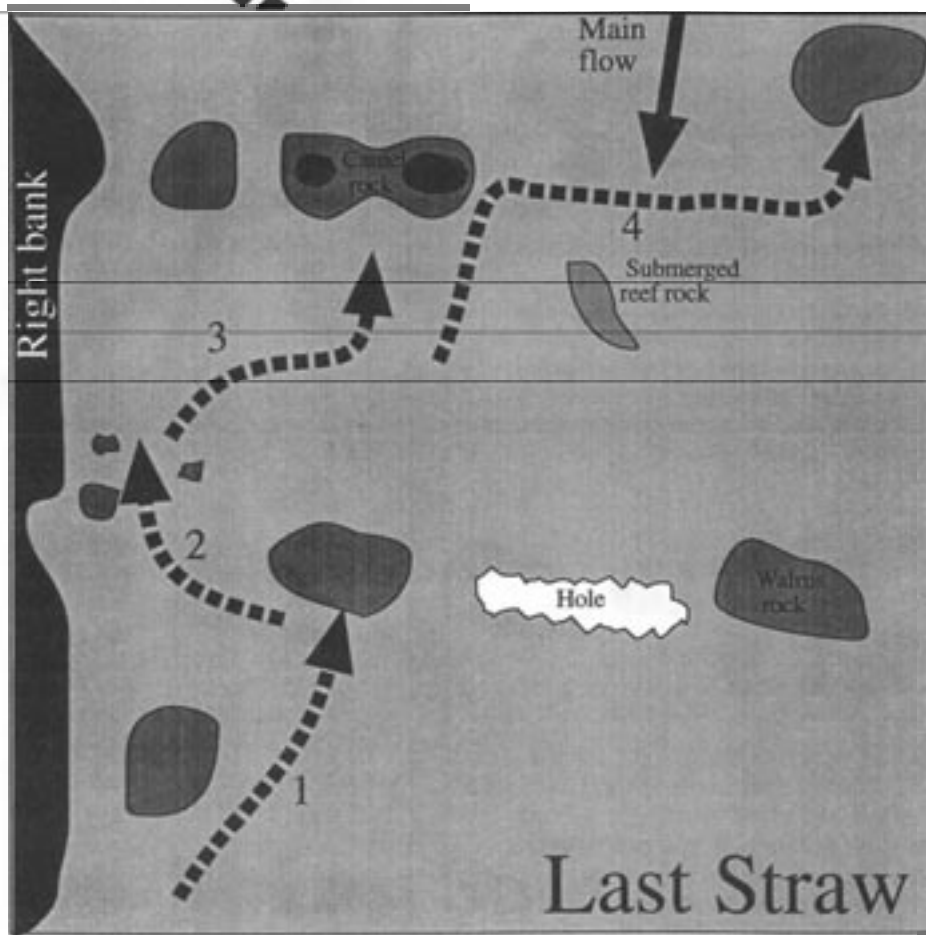
ATTAINMENT OF HATE

DIFFICULTY: 5.9

Description: This attainment is on the river left side of Piddly Rapid, which is that big clump of boulders down around the corner from Cucumber. Go down to the bottom of the rapid and you will see the 15 foot wide channel of water that goes over a 6' ledge on the river left. Now paddle up over the ledge and into the eddy nestled into the river left bank. This is called the Attainment of Hate because you have to really hate it before you can paddle up it.

Hints: Start at the bottom of the ledge on attainment left, and move diagonally to the right, up the ledge and

into the destination eddy. At low water the attainment left side of the ledge is dry and you have to skirt it. At higher water (2.2') you can get away with going straight up the attainment left side of the ledge. Also, watch for the boil at the bottom of the ledge. It's right in your way. Wait for it to surge down before you paddle over it.



THE LAST STRAW

DIFFICULTY: 5.10

This involves paddling up the river right side of Camel and Walrus rapid. The attainment has four separate moves, or "pitches". The first three take you up through the rocks on the river right bank to the eddy behind Camel rock (that's the double humped rock near the top of the rapid). The second and third pitch are particularly frus-

trating because the river is very shallow.

The fourth pitch requires exploding out of the top of the eddy behind Camel rock and ferrying up and across the main flow to an eddy behind one of the rocks on the river left side of the river. Directly to the attainment right of the eddy behind Camel is a small reef-like rock that you must blast up and around to make the ferry. At higher water levels you can paddle up the river right side of this rapid, and it's considerably easier.

Hints: The third pitch is steep and frustrating. Sometimes you must push off the bottom of the river a little with your paddle. Before you blast out of the eddy behind Camel rock, back up and get some speed. The eddy there is recirculating pretty hard; this will work to your advantage.

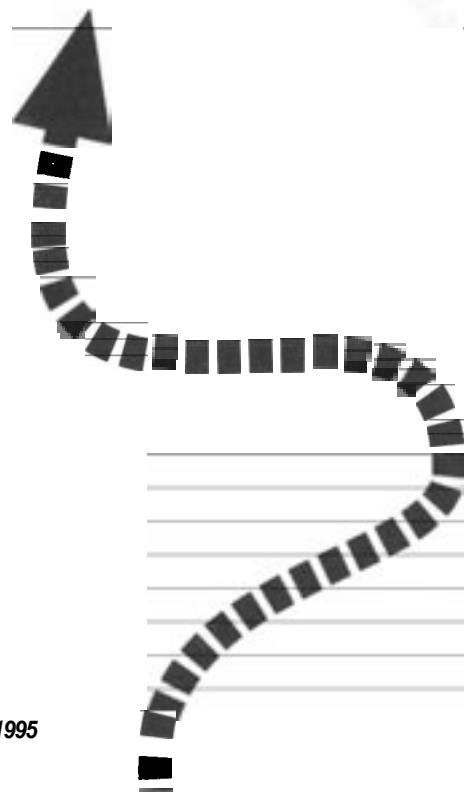
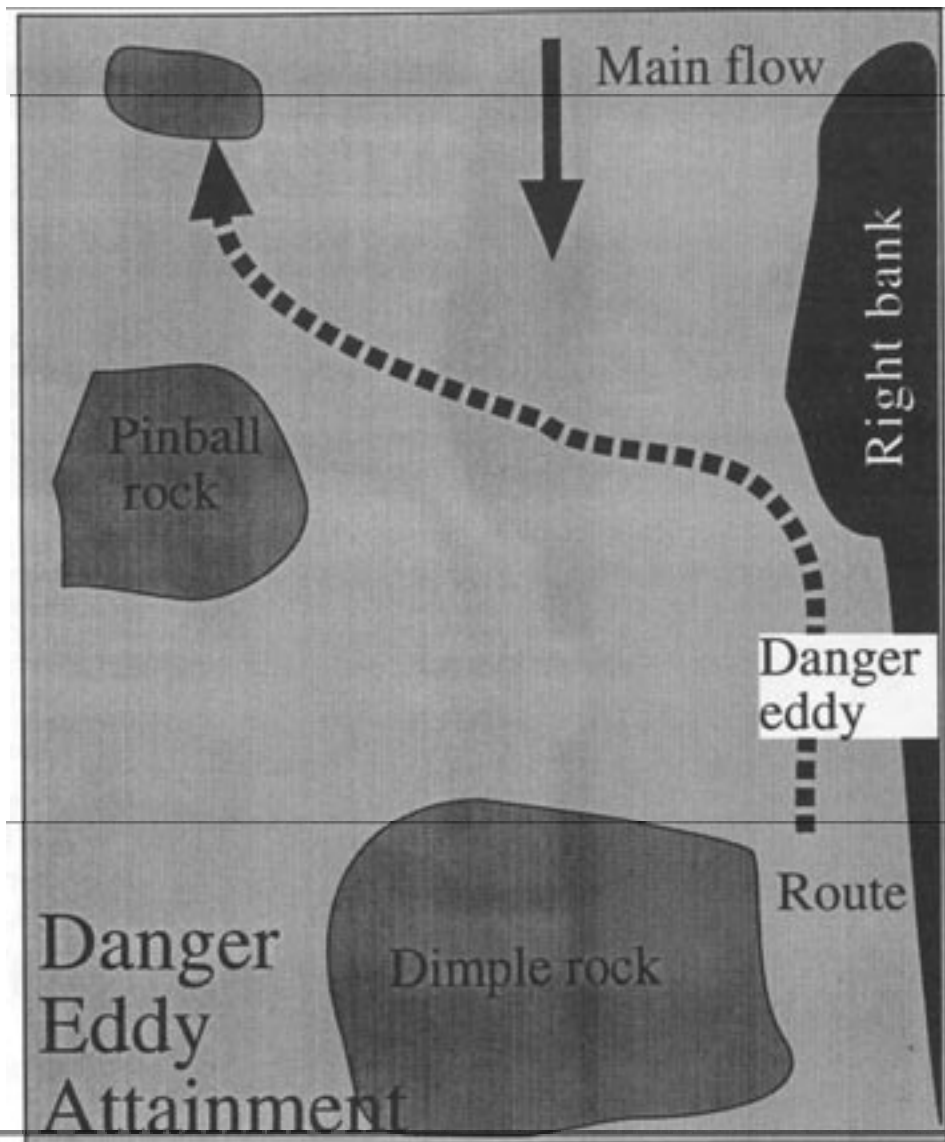
MORE FUNKY THAN MONKEY

DIFFICULTY:
5.8

This is a short, explosive move that involves hands-on contact with a rock. At the top of Dartmouth rapid on the **left** bank you'll see a 4 foot wide slot. Go through the slot and eddy out immediately at the bottom on the right.

The trick is to paddle back up the way you came. Get as much speed as you can in the eddy and blast up as high as you can into the slot. On the rock that forms the attainment right side of the slot is a good hand hold about a foot off the water. Let go of your paddle with your right hand when you have gone as high as you can and, grab frantically for that hand hold. If and when you get it, pull yourself up through to the pool above.

Hints: You can't see the hand hold from the bottom of the move, so scope it out as you go down. I have seen a few people do this move by paddling up into the slot, turning their paddle sideways to bridge the slot, then pulling themselves up on their paddle. It works pretty well, but I wouldn't do it to my paddle.





DANGER EDDY

ATTAINMENT

DIFFICULTY: 5.11

This is a zesty little number that takes you from Danger Eddy at Dimple rapid (that's the eddy against the river left bank directly to the left of Dimple rock) up into the main flow of current onto a small wave. Then you must ferry towards the river right into the eddy above pinball rock. This is tough because it requires a tremendous amount of speed going out of Danger Eddy. You can also attain this drop directly to the river right of pinball rock, but this move is considerably easier (about a 5.7).

Hints: This only works at lower water levels, 1.7' and lower. Use the fastest boat you can find. I've done it in my T-Canyon a couple of times, but a Mirage or, better yet, a Phoenix is a much better choice.

SWIMMER'S

ATTAINMENT

DIFFICULTY:

5.8

Swimmer's Hole actually consists of two separate holes that form a V in the middle of the river. The river left side of the V is the part that everyone surfs. The river right side of the V, however, provides the launching pad for a great attainment. The trick is to start in the eddy formed behind Swimmer's Hole, and then surf diagonally up the river right side of the hole into a small eddy close to the river right bank.

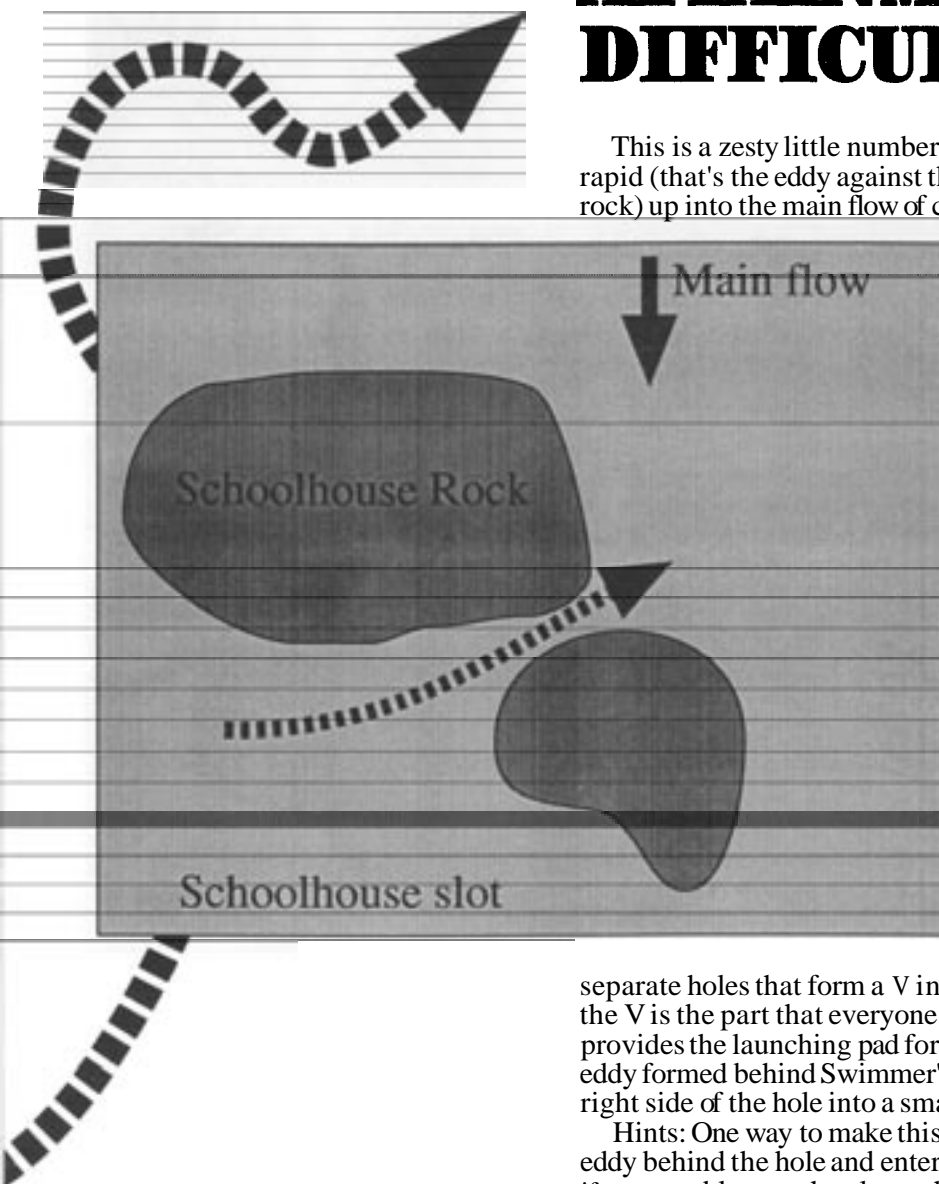
Hints: One way to make this attainment is to get a lot of speed up in the eddy behind the hole and enter the hole right at the point of the "V". In fact, if you can blast up the glassy sheet of water right above the hole and land sideways in the hole about half way up, the move will be a piece of cake.

SCHOOLHOUSE SLOT

DIFFICULTY: 5.7

Schoolhouse Rock (right down around the corner from River's End) has a two or three foot wide crack running sideways through the entire rock that you can paddle through. Going downstream from river left to river right, it's easy to fall over the foot high ledge in the crack. But going from right to left requires a little more skill.

At higher water (above 2'.2") you can paddle up and through the slot without much difficulty. But at lower water you must hit the slot at full speed,





throw your paddle up and over your head so that you can grab the sides of the slot with both hands and pull yourself back up through. If you want to make it even more challenging, you can attempt to pull yourself through with your hands, and then without getting washed downstream, turn yourself around and float back through the slot pointing the other way.

Hints: At lower water the slot is a little shallow, but if there is enough water to go down the easy way (from left to right), you can get back up.

CUCUMBER

ATTAINMENT DIFFICULTY: 5.13

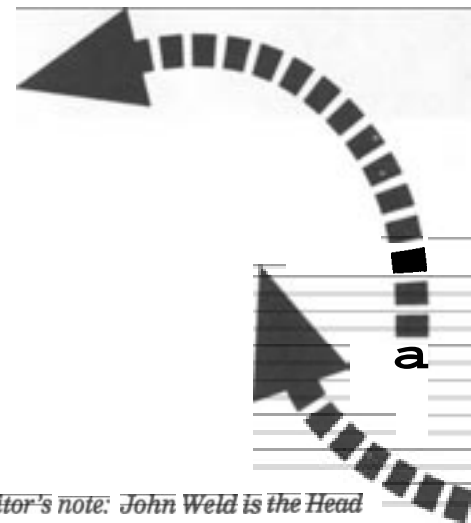
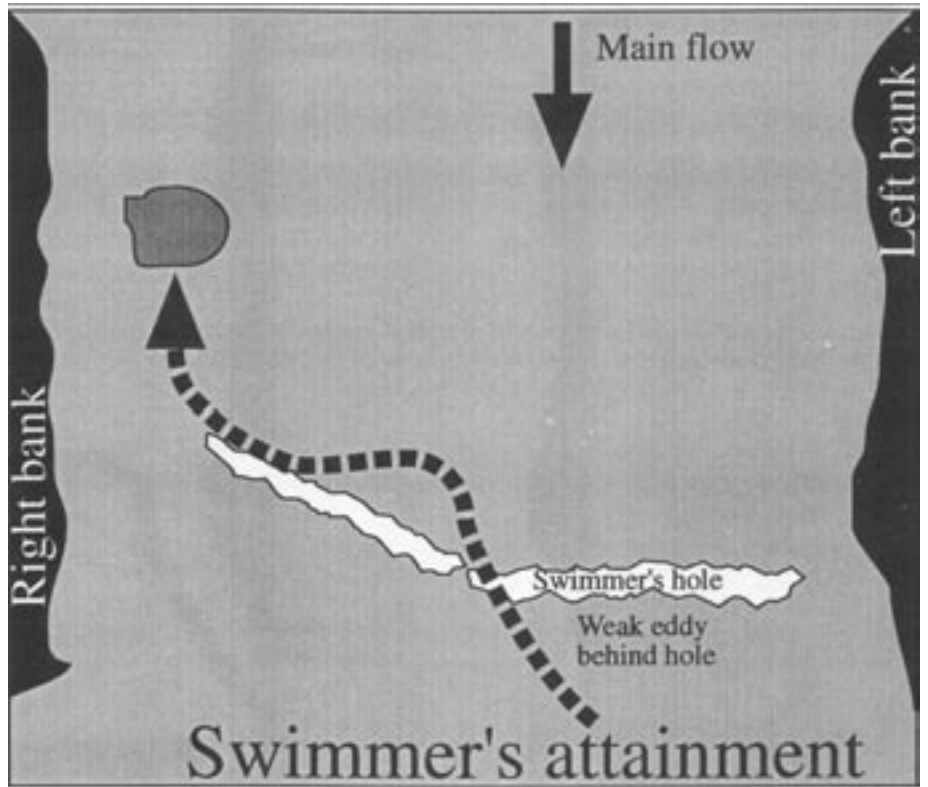
Finally, here is one last classic for-experts-only attainment that can be done at high water.

At around 3.8' on the Ohiopyle gauge, it is possible to paddle up Cucumber, the steepest rapid on the Lower. As far as I know, this attainment has only been successfully done a couple of times.

Keith Backlund, manufacturer of Backlund Paddles, has made the offer that if he witnesses someone making this attainment, he will award them his finest "New World" paddle.

To try this one start at the bottom on river left and paddle up into the eddy behind Guide Rock in the middle of the rapid. From there (and here's the tough part) ferry across the main flow of the River into the eddy halfway down the rapid on river right. From there, you can force your way up along the river right bank.

Hints: Spend the next 6 months doing arm curls, before you try it this summer.



Well, there you have it. For those bored with the standard lines **down** the Lower Yough, seven new approaches to familiar rapids. For neophytes who are still taking the sneak routes down through Dimple with two sets of nose plugs on, take the idea of attaining back to easier rapids on your home river.

There is no better and quicker way to learn how to read water than paddling back up an easy class II rapid with lots of eddies. With just a little attaining practice beginners can come back to Ohiopyle and dominate Dimple rapid!

And you better boaters should keep looking for attainments at every easy rapid on your favorite rivers. Once you have mastered an attainment, try to accomplish it with fewer strokes.

With a little practice, you can grease every attainment in this guide. Soon you might find yourself flipping through canoe club newsletters looking for that "like new" Phoenix Cascade, waiting in someone's garage like the '57 Chevy in Grandpa's barn.▼

Editor's note: John Weld is the Head

Kayak Instructor at the Riversport School of Kayaking in Confluence, Pennsylvania. When he isn't teaching, he takes "relaxing" paddling vacations to places like Baffin Island (See our Jan/Feb issue.)

ROBE CANYON Defies Mastery

A NORTHWESTERN CLASS V TREASURE

by Nathan Lewis



The Cascades. From November through June the prevailing winds drive water-laden Pacific air over these ragged spires, producing one of the most awesome rainfall differentials in the world. It drizzles a lot in Seattle during these gray winter months, but the total rainfall is modest — a mere 36 inches, comparable to, say, Boston. But when the warm, humid air slams against the 7000 foot bulk of the Cascades, it rises, cools, and drops a deluge.

The Cascade range receives over 80 inches of precipitation a year. Some areas, only an hour from Se-

attle, average 180. And if that's not enough, Mt. Olympus, on the Olympic Peninsula about three hours from Seattle, averages a staggering 240 inches of precipitation a year. That's a column of water twenty feet high!

The Cascades. Is there another mountain range in the world named not for stone (the Rockies), not for trees (the Green Mountains), not for haze (the Smokies), not for some surveyor otherwise forgotten, but for water, abundantly tracing its path to the sea?

On a rare, clear day I could see the Cascades rise over the city from my

window. I had just moved to Seattle and I hungered to paddle. I didn't even have a boat, but I lucked out and got my eager paws on an old Roto Bat that hadn't been out of my friend's basement since the Reagan Administration. I cajoled my roommate Eric into dusting off his Dancer XT, which hadn't seen much use since he dabbled in boating a few years ago in California.

"Do you know how to roll?" I

was reduced to visits to the local paddling shop, where I wandered around ogling the new creek boats, paging through magazines, fondling throw bags, and generally making a nuisance of myself. A knowing but somewhat annoyed salesperson recommended that I get in touch with the Washington Kayak Club, that beneficent organization that has led many down their first Class III's. I found them in the white pages.

After a series of calls, I managed to get the number of Mason Hayes, who was "probably boating down in California for a few weeks."

Score. As it turned out, Mason hadn't gone to California, but was about to make a run of Robe Canyon. Would I like to go?

"Sure," I said, without hesitation, although after hanging up the phone I wondered what I had gotten myself into.

Robe is hard. Near Verlot, the South Fork Stillaguamish slots into a narrow, vertical walled canyon and starts dropping well over 100 feet a mile through huge boulders, ledges, and hefty holes. I met Mason at the take out, Granite Falls. The gauge at the fish ladder read 6.75 feet. That's pretty high, about 1,800 cfs. At 6.75-7 feet, Robe regulars start thinking about what other rivers might be running.

As Mason explained all this in his gentle southern accent, we ran into our other partners for the day, Gary and Greg. They piled their boats into Mason's van for the drive to the put in.

"This boat doesn't have much volume does it?" Mason asked as they squeezed my spud into the back with Mason and Gary's Quantums and Gary's Corsica outfitted for C-I. "Don't these things get stuck in holes?"

I smiled and climbed in. Before long we were winding languorously among gravel bars, lying on the back decks of our boats and watching the clouds spin. Like many of the Northwest's canyon runs, Robe starts off with a placid float along a forested flood plain. The concept of "high water" seemed irrelevant as we lazily avoided the occasional downed tree. I found out that Gary,

intelligent and low key, is a doctor in the nearby country hamlet of Darrington.

But before long the black walls began to rise along the banks of the river, intermittent at first, then congealing into solid forms.

I dropped over the first ledge almost before I saw it. And, unlike the Class III's I had been paddling, this three-foot high shelf was backed by a smooth, regular hole. I backended and pulled the nose down with a squirt move. I sobered up quick. I had nearly blown the first whitewater on the trip. Robe Canyon had snuck up on me, and now it had me in its grasp.

Robe begins with a set of boat-scout IV's, collectively named Tunnel. A surprising number of people screw up in Tunnel. Although the rapids are not at the limits of navigation, they have a certain wildness, an uncertainty that demands full attention. I lapsed and flushed into a hole, surfed out, and finished the rapid backwards. No one saw.

While Class IV may mean flashy racer moves and micro eddies on your favorite play run, here it means "easy survival". Just get to the bottom, pointed forward and in an upright position. Tunnel ended with a big drop, V-ish, where the reaction waves from the sides curled up over my boat, shoulders, and eventually my head.

We were now deep in the canyon. The steep banks rose high overhead, delineating the tight confines of our separate reality. Like Alice entering the rabbit hole, we had committed ourselves to an adventure in a world far from the creeping subdivisions and the mundane dramas of the masses scurrying about on the flatlands above. It was dark in there.

Below my eddy the water thundered over a horizon and out of sight. The deep, distant roar told me: this rapid drops a long way into a big hole. We pulled over to the left side and scrambled onto a boulder to scout.

This was Trapdoor. I followed Greg's finger as he described the line.

"Start with a tight move over that bouldery three foot ledge, between

asked him.

Soon, we were bundled in polyprop and bouncing down some cheerful class III's and IV's. The Middle Snoqualmie, the North Fork Skykomish, the Green River Gorge. The Skykomish. Fun, sure, and it was great to be back in a boat. I hadn't been boating since way back when, last November or so, before I graduated from college in New Hampshire.

Eric, a budding aquaphile, was tasting new varieties of fear on his first Class IV's. I enjoyed watching him develop. But I yearned for some Class V. It was out there, for sure. I



the sucking holes and reaction waves. That's Last Sunshine. Then paddle for the eddy on the left. Paddle hard, because those who dally follow the main flow into the Trapdoor."

The Trapdoor was a seven foot drop into a tight slot and a violent, confined hole; one that pretty much defined doom.

"Everyone who has gone in there has gotten beaten up pretty good," Greg continued. "I got vertically pinned in there and broke my leg".

I looked at him. This was the first person I'd met who had ever been seriously pinned. Broke your leg? As the day went on, I learned that my new boating partners had more whitewater purple hearts than a dozen of my paddling friends from the Northeast.

Mason cleared Last Sunshine and was in the left eddy, peering at the Trapdoor over his shoulder. He paddled hard out the top of the eddy and power ferried to river right just above the steaming mess. The water really cruised through there, mandating an anaerobic sprint with the paddle and the assistance of a small wave, which Mason surfed to avoid the Trapdoor.

Then Mason peeled out and drove between two thundering six foot pourovers on a twisting tongue. He rode the tongue to the bottom into an unavoidable, powerful hole.

Backender. Struggling to roll in the turbulence, he washed over another five foot ledge, Trapdoor II.

"It's all one rapid, but we name the separate parts so you can better describe where you messed up", he later told me.

The river pooled for a moment, then dropped over another four foot ledge. On the left was Don's Hole, a terminal-looking, smooth, symmetric hydraulic. Mason rolled up at the lip of the hole and backpaddled furiously to squeeze into the safe chute on the right. He pulled over and got out his camera and throw bag, smiling.

Greg ran clean, while Gary paddled down the right side and crammed his boat into a tiny slot. He got out, and finished his portage on the right side. It looked dicey — no thanks! I shouldered my boat.

Here I learned something else about Northwest boating: portaging is not always the safest path. The only option was along the left bank, a crumbling mass of scree and ex-

posed rock. En route, I learned Northwest boating lesson #2: the plants have thorns. I grabbed one for balance; I managed to hold onto my boat despite the pain.

Gary beat me to the bottom by at least twenty minutes.

"Hey, I see Pete up there", Mason announced from his photographic perch. Pete Flanagan was cruising down solo to meet us. He ran Trapdoor clean, without hesitation, and glided into our eddy. I introduced myself, and we started talking about the obvious thing, kayaks. I pointed to his Wave Sports Extreme.

"I like it. It's got some speed," he said.

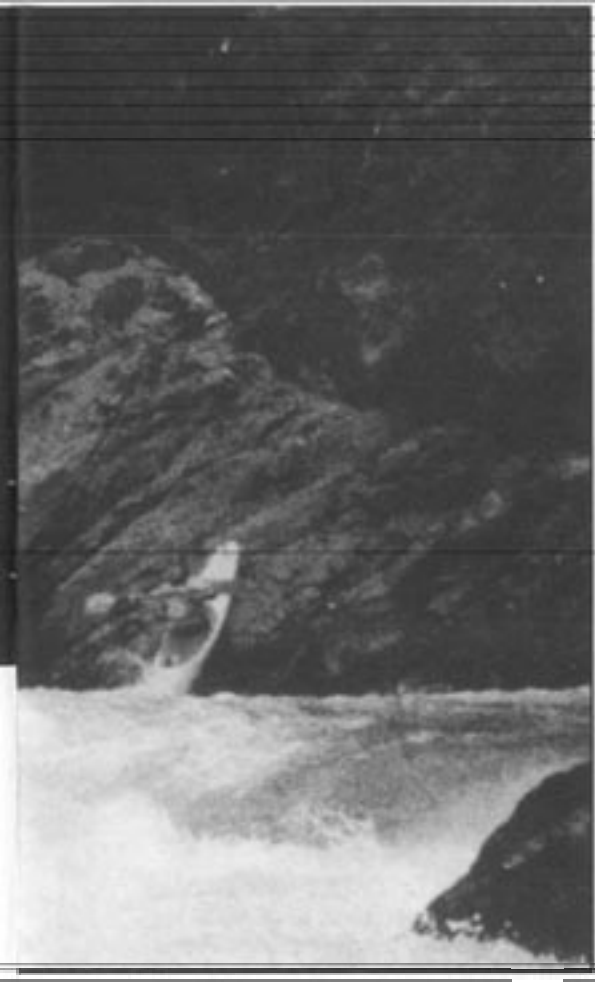
I looked at my own boat. "It's not mine. I'm just borrowing it."

"Looks kinda low volume," he said. "Does it get stuck in holes?"

I shrugged.

Our group, now five, peeled out and continued downriver. I shadowed the others from eddy to eddy, over ledges and through holes, class IV and V. I couldn't see half the moves, but had faith in the judgment of my partners as they threaded their way down the black canyon.

We eddied out. "See that big hole



over there?" Greg asked. I looked for a hydraulic.

"No, the big hole in the wall."

On the right was an old railroad abutment, made of brick, which had collapsed in one place. A flume of water was driving into this gap, creating an undercut room-of-doom. I didn't like it, but I couldn't get a very good look at it since we were in a tiny, unstable eddy.

"That's why this rapid is called Hole in the Wall. You sort of make this move from over there, then there's this tongue, and you want to paddle left. Or there's the option, which some people do.... Greg was filling in the details, but I still needed an outline.

I watched him run; where he started and where he ended up. I watched at the angle of his boat, his speed. Did he look scared or confident? I watched Gary, Mason, and Pete. Start left, go towards the right...

Alone now, I coasted irretrievably into the flow, hoping that the correct route would define itself once I could see what was going on. The current took me.

Now I could see what this rapid was about. I saw the tongue, some

curling waves, a big hole at the bottom, the Hole in the Wall lurking against the right bank. A little trickle was sneaking over a ledge on the left. My Eastern Creek reflexes took hold, and I gunned for the little chute, hoping to bypass the whole mess. The theory is, if there's no water, you can't drown. It was also as far as I could possibly get from the Hole in the Wall.

But I screwed up got turned around at the lip, grabbed a boulder, and threw myself down the chute backwards, five feet down into the pool below. I bobbed up. It worked.

My new friends were impressed. "Found a new line there, eh?"

Another pool. Again, I eddied out with Greg.

"This one's called Faceplant," he explained. "I flipped here a few years ago and got some stitches in my face."

I watched. It was a cascade over a trashy ledge. We needed to avoid a big pourover, then wash onto a big pillow, which we could ride out to the right. Total drop, about 10 feet.

"Where do you run it?" I asked Pete, just to be sure.

"Oh, you can sort of start anywhere. Just point to the right."

Many of Robe's rapids cannot be mastered with simple boat placement. Sometimes you need power. You just throw yourself into the fray, fists swinging, and claw your way through.

Pete started down, casually washed up on the pillow, and coasted into the eddy. Shoot. I guess I can do that, too.

I took the right side line. It was pretty shallow — I could see why Greg got beat up. I pitoned in the cascade. A hefty breaking wave piled up at the bottom. I braced into it, hard.

My lower back cramped fiercely. I couldn't move. Fortunately, my line spat me between the hole and the pillow and I coasted into the eddy, teeth clenched.

"I toasted my back," I said, more quietly than I expected. It took them a moment to figure out that all was not well.

With some effort, I crawled out of my boat onto a large rock and stretched out. The canyon walls looked pretty steep, framing a rect-

angle of blue sky.

Pete, Greg, Gary, and Mason bobbed placidly in the eddy, waiting to see if this trip was going to devolve into an epic rescue.

"How does it feel?"

"Real tight."

"Do you think you can paddle?"

"Dunno."

That was enough talk for me. I rested. Mason pointed to the sporty new dimple in my bow. I didn't care, as long as it would still float. I watched the clouds, waiting for the pain to recede.

"I think it's feeling better," I said tentatively. I tried to get up, very slowly, then decided against it.

Greg reached into the back of his boat. "I've got some painkillers."

You do?

"Gary, how much should I give him?"

These guys bring painkillers on their boating trips?

"Four Advil and two Tylenol."

Gary pronounced, drawing upon his years of general practice. Greg produced the prescription from a sandwich baggie.

Soon, my back didn't hurt as much. I climbed back in my boat.

"Tell me about this next one, Greg." Down below our small pool, the river thundered out of sight. I paddled stiffly from eddy to eddy, trying to loosen up as much as I could.

"You sort of go right, then back left, and then there's this rock. You want to boof the rock, either on the right or the left."

Okay, I guess I can do that.

Greg pointed his Quantum downstream and disappeared.

I entered the rapid. The turbulence was relentless. I spun in my little spud, switching from downstream mode to ferry mode as I made my way right. I think I managed to avoid some sort of hole, but things were going too quick to tell. The water angled back left. I followed it, bracing awkwardly into surging reaction waves and small holes.

Holy smokes! There's the rock! I paddled hard for the left corner, boofed into more current. I think I avoided another grinding hole, a memory out of the corner of my eye, but there was no time to look back.

Now what? I was out of **instruction**, but the whitewater rumbled on and out of sight, carrying me with it. I paddled hard straight ahead, not knowing what else to do. I was buried in foam. The water drained out of my helmet and into my face — I couldn't see. I braced against blows from the right, left, left, and a big one from the right. Pure survival instinct. Just when I felt like I'd lost control completely, the water relented. When I could see again I found myself in a pool. I eddied out.

"Does that one have a name?" I asked Gary, who was smiling a **little**. I probably had a pretty silly look on my face.

"Naw, we just kind of lump that one in with Faceplant."

More big drops followed. Z-Turn tumbled down a boulder pile into a big reaction wave.

"Sort of a mandatory roll there," Mason explained, as I blew the water from my nose.

Then Landslide, the biggest and most difficult rapid in Robe, and, fortunately, an easy carry. Mason and Gary pulled out and immediately started carrying down the right bank. I knew I didn't need to look at this one to decide. Boat on shoulder, I surveyed the drop. On the left was a complex route over a seven foot ledge between some tricky boulders, then down through some deep holes and

straight forward ledges. There was a lot of current. It was no low-volume creek move and it dropped nearly 20 feet.

On the right, a thin trickle bubbled down a small tunnel and over an 8 foot ledge.

It sailed into a small pool, then over another easy four foot drop, a three-footer, and that was it. It looked like a nifty, safe sneak. Why was I carrying my boat?

Greg scraped over the edge, **boofing** sideways into the pool. Piece of cake. Pete followed, scratching over the edge. He flipped on landing, rolled quickly, and coasted into the eddy.

"Whew," Mason said.

I looked at him quizzically. "See that spot over there?" he said, pointing to where a small current in the pool washed amiably against an innocent-looking rock wall.

"Yeah..."

"It's a nasty sieve. Look on the other side."

I walked around and looked on the downstream side of the wall. Sure enough, water was thundering out of the base, four feet below the surface of the pool. I've seen some ugly undercuts, but I have never seen one that looked so benign from upstream.

"Steve was the first to go through there," Mason said. "We used to

beach our boats up against that rock for fun. He leaned back one day, and the water caught the back deck of his boat. It sucked him over, and pulled him right out of his sprayskirt. He flushed right under the boulder, boat **and all.**"

Horrifying. Pete had only been about two seconds from the sieve when he rolled up. And he rolled up pretty quick.

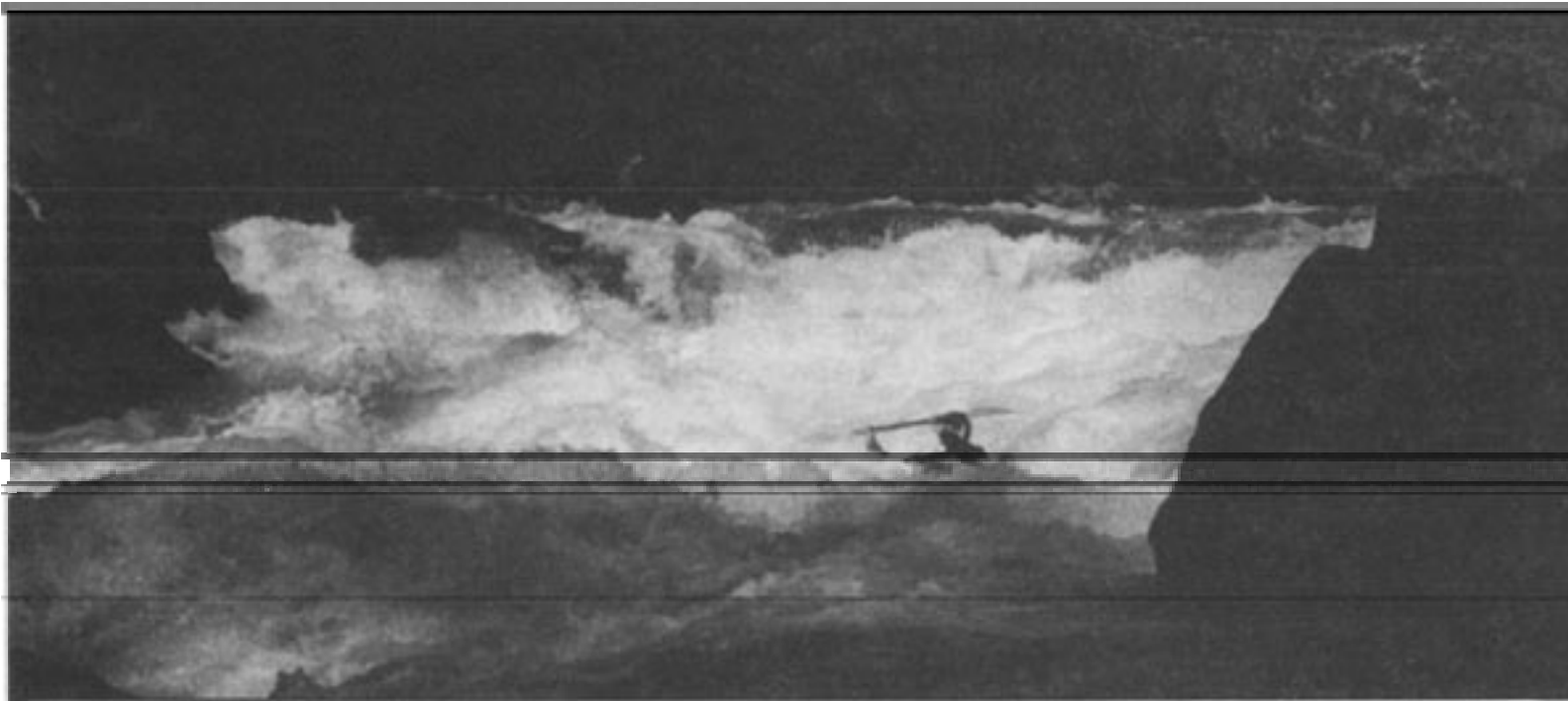
"Greg went in there once and he flushed through, but his paddle never came out. We figure it's still in there."

This Greg? **Our** Greg, sitting in the eddy? Apparently so.

This precipitated a discussion about swimming through rock sieves, a topic that for me had been the stuff of mythology. "Who was the first one to swim that sieve on the Carbon?" A hand went up.

(Since my **first** run, I have learned that Landslide renews itself constantly, as new boulders drop off the cliff into the river. Last summer, the powers-that-bedecided to make a few changes of their own, dynamiting it to make it passable to salmon. I'm sure the act was rationalized as "environmental enhancement". Summer water levels have not given us the chance to evaluate the effects of this policy.

Most boaters, accustomed to changes in this rapid, have adopted a





"let's see **first**" attitude. While we all hope that this rapid has not been destroyed, we figure that, in any case, it's only a matter of time before the **cliff crumbles** a bit more and Nature institutes some changes of her own.)

After a little seal move and a short float we avoided the ugly undercut at Garbage and arrived at Plunge. A four foot ledge that dumped into a bad pourover, Gary, Pete, and Greg paddled hard and punched it. I **boofed** the right side into an eddy — "some kind of creek move". Mason got trashed, cart wheeling for an uncomfortably long time. He made it out. Most would have swam.

The canyon eased off, the oppressive dark walls retreating and giving way to forested banks. We cruised through Log Drop and at another, unnamed rapid, stopped to crank some 360s in a friendly little hole. The sun came out. Birds sang. Whooping a particularly agile sequence of spins, it felt like a familiar backyard class **III**.

The canyon necked down again for one last biggie, Conversation.

"You start off with some little class **III** waves," Pete explained, as I scanned the entrance back into the darkness. "Then it narrows, and it's class **IV**s. When the walls widen you want to eddy out on the left. There's a big ledge down below. I'll tell you more about it from the eddy."

I started into the easy waves, **ap**prehensively. The waves got bigger as the canyon narrowed, but it was easily negotiated and I eddied out on the left. The final drop was a horse-shoe-shaped six foot ledge in a little straight-walled grotto.

"Start out on the right, and then look for a tiny spot where the hole isn't so bad. When you see it, paddle back to the left and over the ledge," Pete explained. This all seemed a little vague to me.

"Don't worry, you'll see it," he assured me. *All* I could see was mist and spray spurting up from the unseen hole.

Greg looked at me. "I think I'm going to backender," he said. He peeled out into the current and over the ledge. I couldn't see what happened. Gary went over. Mason disappeared. I watched their placement, the angle of their boats, their speed, the look on their faces. I peeled out into the current, up to the edge of the **un**known.

Pete was right. I saw the opening. I sprinted to press my little boat over the ledge, into the fold where the hole wouldn't keep me. I popped up, upright. Pete dropped over the ledge and coasted up alongside, confident as ever.

We bobbed through some easy **II**'s and **III**'s, the canyon behind us.

"So how do you like Robe?" Pete asked. By now I was oozing painkillers.

"I think it's one of the best rivers I've ever done," I said. Pete grinned and started to practice his handrolls in the sun in the long pools **separat**ing the final **III**'s and **IV**'s before the takeout.

On one hand, Robe is forgiving. Just about every rapid has been run upside down or sans boat, and though it's pretty exciting, it's **reaso**nably safe. But Robe eludes mastery. It's a humbling run. Most runs,

even very hard runs, can eventually be wired. Technical moves become familiar, anxiety dissolves, and the regulars end up hand paddling or experimenting with hero routes. Yet Pete, who runs Robe over a dozen times a year, and is damned good, rarely has a clean run.

"It almost always gets me **some**where. I've flipped in the last rapid," he told me.

The last rapid (someone figured out it's number 42) was a juicy **III-IV** that reenters a mini Canyon. Granite Falls thundered just around the comer.

"Some Easterner will come out here and run Granite someday."

Not this Yankee. It's a surging 30 foot drop into a barbaric hole and a cruel undercut. Perhaps some summer, when the flow trickles down to 300 cfs. Perhaps...never.

The take out was on the left, up a steep bank. Although it would be hard to get out of bed for another week, I had just enough drugs in me to heft my boat up to the canyon's rim, as we slowly made our way back into the daylight and the comforting sounds of **traffic**.

If you are in the Pacific Northwest during the wet season, November to June, and want to give Robe a try, pick up a copy of Jeff Bennett's guidebook at the Northwest Outdoor Center (Seattle) or Pacific Watersports (Tacoma). You can get the levels over the phone from the NOAA Whitewater **hot**line. If the water's up, you'll probably find a Robe regular at the take out. It's about an hour from **Seattle**. ▼

A DEATH ON THE GAULEY

by *Charlie Walbridge*

The Gauley River has been a special place for me since my first trip in 1971. Although the numbers of kayaks and rafts have multiplied far beyond anything that early river runners could have foreseen, the canyon itself remains as exciting and beautiful as ever. This year, distracted by regular weekend releases on the Upper Youghiogheny, I did not get to the Gauley until early October. There clear, sunny late fall weather and vivid fall colors made paddling pure joy.

As we ran through Initiation we saw several paddlers on the right side of the drop. One of the most treacherous spots in the river is located here: a wide crack in an enormous sloping rock buried under a sheet of fast-moving water. The paddlers were holding ropes that disappeared into the crack. They didn't seem to need any help, so my party and I continued downstream.

At Pillow Rock I stood on the scouting rock and watched other boaters show off some impressive skills. Hot kayakers caught small eddies on the left hand side, surfed the large rollers across the river, and launched themselves downstream with pop-ups. A squirt boater paddled deliberately into the pillow, back-ended, and washed over Volkswagen rock before rolling up with a howl of delight.

My run was considerably more conservative! At the bottom of Pillow Rock someone told us that there had been a drowning in Initiation, and that we'd better paddle hard because the water was being turned off! With a few choice words we hustled on downriver.

I know the site of the accident well. A few months after a fatality there in 1982 I descended into the crack at low water. The gap tapers from about five to less than three feet in width and is roughly twelve to fifteen feet deep. A round "chock-rock" about three feet in diameter is

wedged tightly into the crack three-quarters of the way down, near the top. At the usual fall release levels the river runs into this crack like bath water down a drain. Boaters who paddle down the right side are inevitably carried into the slot; their stern gets sucked into the crack and their boat is wrapped, stern-first and vertically, around the chock.

Many narrow escapes have occurred here. Over the years you could often spot a kayak sticking out of this awful place during Gauley season. The danger is described in several guidebooks, but apparently some folks don't take the time to read them.

But I later found out that this was

not, as we initially guessed, a typical case of an ignorant paddler gone astray. The victim, Dave Mills, had been boating the river for decades and knew it extremely well. He was very familiar with the dangers on the right side of Initiation. He was surfing a large wave above the drop when a momentary loss of control sent him flying over towards river right and the water carried him into the crack. His boat became jammed there, so he bailed out. He body-pinned on the chock rock immediately thereafter.

Frantic rescue attempts were to no avail. Initially an air pocket formed, but Dave was too weak to hold onto a rescue line. A member of his party, holding onto a rope, worked his way down to him. Dave by this time was unconscious, so the rescuer tied a rope around one arm. The group then tried to pull him free, but an awkward hauling angle made the effort fruitless.

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Eventually the victim slipped out of his life vest and disappeared into the crack. The rescuers attempted to release the boat, thinking that he might have been trapped against it. It, too, disappeared into the crack, jamming their lines. The following morning his body was found some distance downstream by other boaters.

People will say that surfing a large wave above a dangerous place showed poor judgment. Certainly the penalty for this action was severe, but risk is a matter of degree. The joy of running whitewater lies in handling its pressures with grace and poise. Boaters are constantly taking calculated risks while running or playing drops, paddling near spots in the river which could hurt them.

The potential for injury focuses our mind and spurs our efforts; without some sense of jeopardy the experience would be diminished. It's not unlike driving the two-lane section of Route 19 on the way to the river,

confident that you (and the people coming in the other way at high speeds) are not going to screw up. And, like driving a dangerous road late at night, such decisions are a matter of personal choice.

Rivers are usually forgiving, and the penalty for a mistake is usually nothing more than a beating or a bad swim. But there's always the possibility that something more serious will happen. Years of practice give expert boaters enormous confidence. Riding a powerful river can make paddlers feel like "the master of disaster": invulnerable; unstoppable.


But they must never lose respect for the power of whitewater. Paddlers playing waves and holes in difficult rapids can be propelled across the width of the rapid into places that they had never dreamed of going. Most of the time a boater can scramble their way to safety, but not always.

This accident brought back memories of the death of Bob Taylor in 1977. He was one of East Coast's

strongest kayakers and the last person any of us expected to die on the river. Because he lived in Charleston, the Gauley was his home river and he paddled it often. He was an aggressive playboater who surfed waves and holes in the midst of the biggest drops.

The trouble started when he got stuck in the lower hole while working the third drop of Lost Paddle. He had been playing the upper hole moments earlier, and, although well-conditioned, he did not have the strength to hang on. He was forced to swim. Confident that he could reach shore he waved off rescuers. But he was more exhausted than he realized. The river carried him into the far left chute in the upper part of Tumblehome and shoved him beneath an undercut rock. It took his group an hour just to locate his body.

Some people say that there is no "real" class V on the Gauley. I think they are mistaken. Today's boaters have a quarter century of experience to draw on. Lines have been found



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which take paddlers quickly and cleanly through the biggest drops. "First timers" now usually enter a rapid close on the heels of an expert leader, or with precise instructions on what to expect. The river is used by dozens of **outfitters** who are equipped with walkie-talkies to summon help. Access points abound.

Contrast this with the situation in 1971, when a dozen boaters faced a seldom-run river in a rugged 26-mile canyon with only one access point. The trip seemed more formidable then, but at the same river levels, **little** has changed. Strip away the years of experience and the drops would, once again, seem formidable.

I understand that our knowledge and skill has made the rapids seem easier. Some were never really as hard as we thought. After twenty-two years of looking, I finally ran Iron Ring. The clean left-to-right line most boaters use today is far better than the far right one that the "pioneers" picked out twenty years ago.

We used to think that Sweets Falls possessed a "terminal" hole. We can read the water better now, and can see that the drop is relatively straightforward. Neither of these former "class VI" are truly any harder than the other big drops on the river, once you know the line.

Yet the history of all the major rapids on the Gauley is peppered with narrow escapes. River runners let their guard down at their peril.

One of these almost-tragedies happened the week following Dave Mills' death. A kayaker flipped in the second drop of Lost Paddle, hit his head, and did not roll up or bail out. His helmet floated free. The group pushed the victim to shore between drops three and four, wrestled him out of his boat, and began mouth to mouth resuscitation.

Although his face and hands were blue and gray, the rescuers miraculously brought him back. A helicopter, summoned by an outter, carried him out of the gorge and to a Charleston hospital, where he remained for a week. I'm happy to report that he's back home now, with no ill effects.

Better gear and training may make paddling seem easier, but I

wish that the "no Class V" people could see the Gauley again for the first time. The initial run an individual makes on any river is always more stressful and demanding. I feel that "first time" experience is most truly indicative of a river's actual difficulty. More knowledge and better access makes the Gauley seem easier to manage; and watching a boater slide down a drop they've run dozens of times makes it look simple. But with the exception of Iron Ring and Sweet's Falls, which early boaters simply had not figured out, the rapids are unchanged. And so I stand by the old ratings.

If these deaths teach us anything it is that we must never, ever underestimate the power and intensity of the rivers we run. We must remem-

ber the hazards which wait to catch those who fail to pay attention or show the proper respect. Our joy at being on the water in these unique and special places must be tempered with constant vigilance, or the river will reach out and once again teach us a lesson.

What happened to Dave and Bob could happen to any of us when our familiarity with powerful rapids breeds a casual inattention to their dangers.

I am currently preparing my annual accident report. Please send accounts of accidents or near-misses to me at 230 Penllyn Pike, Penllyn, Pa. 19422. Newsletter clippings or club newsletter articles are fine. On near-miss reports, I will leave out the victim's names if you wish. ▼

CHARLIE WALBRIDGE ANSWERS JOE GREINER

Response to Letter to Editor (Jan-Feb Issue)

Joe Greiner is one of the East's most experienced paddlers and I respect his judgment tremendously. But I remember running the Gauley without the help of someone who had been down it many times and had worked out the best lines on every drop. Having Joe or someone like him along lowers the difficulty of any river, but those who screw up will find that the rapids are still plenty nasty.

Climbing, like paddlesport, has progressed. Skills have grown, and the limits have been pushed back. Yet the climber's rating scale has remained remarkably consistent over the years. The 5.6 climbs that were pioneered in the Shawangunks in the 40's and 50's, while they no longer represent the cutting edge of the sport, are still rated the same.

The Class 3 and 4 "scrambles" of the 30's and 40's were actually slightly harder than similarly-rated routes today! This did not limit the ability of the next generation, who followed with chalk, sticky shoes, and improved fitness, to use their incredible gymnastic abilities to expand the envelope. But climbers recognized that the Scale of Difficulty is not just for top athletes, and that the

bottom half is extremely useful to more casual users who need the distinctions between the lower grades.

Joe's right about one thing **consistency**, not numbers, is what's **important**. But if the Gauley becomes class IV, and the Yough "merely" a Class III, and Nantahala Falls becomes Class II, then everything below it is class I or less. This makes the system useless for the tens of thousands of people for who spend their time on easier rivers.

What we do must work for novices as well as experts. I feel that the push on the system should be up, not down. ▼

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• Achilles • Momentum • Sotar

The next "first", a 'gonna' run. Some undone river that's as fetching as the last "first". It's a fun part of paddling—the talk, the vicarious dissecting of dream streams. Part of the learning process. Violets Lock paddlers talk about the Lower Yough. Lower Yough paddlers talk about the Cheat.

On Columbus Day, in mid-take-out-talk-about, a "Stunoedent" (Stunoedent is the feminine form of "Canoedent", which is registered and copy written with a government agency that has lots of initials) made the comment that if her skills and progress permit, she would like to paddle the Lower Yough some day.

She'd heard so much about it and, "Harvey Keck said the Lower is really a class II run, except for a couple of spots."

"This Harvey Keck must be some Paddler", I said.

"Oh, he is. He does the Lower Yough just about every weekend."

"Is he an open boater?"



by Greg Mallet-Prevost

"A kayaker I think..... I really don't know him all that well. I met him down at the Anglers Inn parking lot."

"Has he ever seen you paddle?"

"I don't think so.... maybe."

"**Look**", I said, "With all due respect to Harvey Keck, I think it would be a good idea for you to read Ed Groves (et al) Appalachian WW II book, the part about the Lower Yough, and just treat that as true. Ed's spent a thousand years paddling and rating rivers around here; he's not trying to impress anyone. He rates it a class III+ run... and I promise you the river hasn't changed all that much since Harvey bought his first paddle... or the fall of the Roman Empire that matter."

"Harvey said those book ratings are old fashioned. That new equipment and paddling techniques have dropped most rivers about a class."

"Well, there may be something to argue in that, but I don't think it's a safe idea to change the recipe just because the chef gets a new spatula."

"Those ratings were written for first time go-downers, folks in duckies and old guys in Grummans... as well as home creek paddlers with

modern gear and honed skills. Ratings describe the river, not the paddler. And rivers don't change much."

"Let me ask you something", I said, "Can you make a **Marnier Soufflés?**"

"Not a chance. Egg whites and I are incompatible, unless they're boiled or fried."

"How about a Hollandaise Sauce?"

"I can make a Hollandaise... At least I now **how** to make Hollandaise. Usually I overheat it, add the butter too fast or do something that makes it separate out. As a matter of fact, if I'm doing a Command Performance Eggs Benedict, I just use a **Knoor** mix."

"Suppose you made Eggs Benedict every weekend, assuming you didn't die of **hardening** of the arteries. Could you get the Hollandaise down pat?"

"Piece of cake", She said.

"Well.... The Lower Yough is a lot like Hollandaise. The first few times you do it, it's tough. It's a class III+, no kidding, no stuff river. And you need a recipe, feel, touch and help to get down. If you do it every weekend it's a piece of cake."

"But it's still a class III+ **river!**" Keep in mind that Escoffier tossed a separated Hollandaise now and then, and he invented the stuff.. or was that Peach Melba?"

"Anyway, the next time you see Harvey, ask him what it was like the first time he made Eggs **Benedict.**"▼



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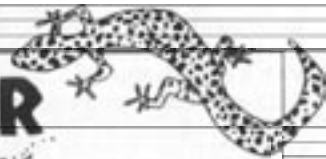
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TENTATIVE 1995 USCKT SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

(as of Oct. 1, 1994)

February

2-3 - Sprint High Performance Team Trials, San Diego, Calif.

March

7-14-Pan American Games (Sprint), Mar del Plata, Argentina

25-26 - USOF South Slalom Team Trials, Nantahala River, Bryson City, N.C.

April

15-16 - USOF West Slalom Team Trials, Seattle, Wash.

18-23 - Champion International Canoe/Kayak Knockout, Lufkin, Texas

22-23 - USOF North Slalom Team Trials, South Bend, Ind.

29-30 - USOF East Slalom Team Trials, Snyder's Mill, N.H.

May

6-7 - Whitewater Slalom Junior Team Trials, Zoar Gap, Mass.

13-14 USCKT Whitewater Slalom Team Whitewater Series Race #1, Trials, Ocoee River, Tenn.

20 - USCKT Whitewater Shootout, Pigeon River, Newport, Tenn.

29 - Champion International Whitewater Series Race #1, Eagle River, Vail Valley, Colo.

June

3 - Champion International Whitewater Series Race #2, Animas River, Durango, Colo.

10-11 - USCKT Flatwater Sprint Junior Team Trials, Green Lake, Seaffle, Wash.

10 - Champion International Whitewater Series Race #3, St. Louis River, Carlton, Minn.

27 - Pre-Olympic Regatta (Sprint), Lake Sidney Lanier, Gainesville, Ga. (through July 2)

28 - Slalom World Cup #1, Prague, Czech Republic

July

2 - Slalom World Cup #2, Tacen, Slovenia

9 - World Cup #3, Mezzana, Italy

16 -27 - Slalom Junior World Championships, Yamanashi, Japan

21-30 - U.S. Olympic Festival '95, Denver, Colo. (Sprint competition July 26-27, Boulder, Colo.; slalom competition July 30, Boulder, Colo.)

August

TBA - Slalom Junior/Masters Nationals, site TBA

3-5 - Ocoee Challenge (Slalom), Ocoee River, Tenn.

6 - Slalom World Cup #4, Ocoee River, Tenn.

15-20 - Flatwater Sprint World Championships, Duisburg, Germany

22-26 - USCKT Sprint National Championships, Green Lake, Seattle, Wash.

24 - Slalom and Wildwater World Championships, Nottingham, England (through Sept. 3)

September

15 - 16 - NationsBank Whitewater National Championships, Nashville, Tenn.

Kayaking enthusiast Smookler dead at 76

by Martha Jackson
Daily Mail Staff

Originally printed January 5, 1995

Idair Smookler of South Charleston, the matriarch of kayakers in West Virginia, died Saturday at home. She was 76.

Smookler died in her sleep, said longtime friend Karen Hazlett Hash of St. Albans. Hash said Smookler worked Friday at her part-time job as a reference librarian for the Kanawha County Public Library, a job she took at about age 65 when she retired from Union Carbide.

Smookler took her latest kayaking trip this summer, and last summer visited Glacier Bay in Alaska to kayak and observe marine life.

She was born in Wilmington, Del.,

where she went to college. She then worked for the government in Washington, D.C.

Smookler canoed a lot in the Georgetown area, Hash said. She was a member of both Coastal Canoeists and Canoe Cruisers while in Washington.

Smookler came to the Kanawha Valley in the late 1950s to interview for a job with Union Carbide, and it while here spotted the Elk River.

"It struck me how much fun it would be to go boating," she said in a Daily Mail interview earlier this year.

Smookler got the job at Union Carbide as a librarian in research and development at the Tech Center.

In 1965 she joined the West Virginia Wildwater Association as a founding member. She was treasurer of the group for 29 years.

"Before then I didn't even know what whitewater was," she said.

She found out — and avidly took to the local version "boating."

Smookler began to collect kayaks

and loaned her equipment when others kayakers needed it. She annually coordinated the July kayak trip down the New River for National Youth Science campers.

She also worked as a kayak instructor and set up sessions at the pool at the West Virginia Rehabilitation Center at Institute to teach kayak rolling.

Smookler was often accompanied on her canoe trips by her dog Goldie, part golden retriever. A lover of animals, she had another dog and two cats as well.

"She definitely didn't have any fear of whitewater," said Hash, who went on some river trips with Smookler.

"She had a lot more guts than I had."

Smookler was also active as a volunteer for Hopice, United Way and First Presbyterian Church.

Surviving: Three nieces.

A memorial service will be held at a later date. **Barlow-Bonsall Funeral Home** is in charge of arrangements. ▼

BOTTOM MOOSE FESTIVAL/ RELEASES SLATED



The 1995 release schedule for New York's Bottom Moose will closely resemble the format of the successful 1994 season.

During October of 1994 more than 150 paddlers from seven states and two provinces took advantage of the annual releases, negotiated by the AWA with Tug Hill Hydro, on this classic class 5 run in the Adirondack mountains. On several of the weekends, a record 50 boaters a day descended the Bottom Moose.

The number was even more impressive considering that an unusually dry October resulted in flows lower than previously thought to be optimal. But according to AWA Bottom Moose coordinator Chris Koll, the low water didn't seem to diminish the enthusiasm of visiting boaters.

"We used to think that a level of 3.2 feet was pretty minimal," Koll said, "but it turned out that some challenging new lines opened up at low water and most the new people thought that 2.7 and 2.8 was the way the river always looked. Everyone seemed to have a great time.

"Of course, last year's low water was something of an anomaly and I expect the water will be back around 4 feet during the upcoming season. If people come back and run the same lines without looking—I don't know if they'll be having as much fun," Koll chuckled.

A simplified release schedule made the Moose more accessible last season. A similar program featuring two-day weekend releases in the spring and fall and a three-day holiday release over Columbus Day weekend has been planned for 1995.

As in the past, Bottom Moose paddlers must sign in at the Agers Falls project site near Lyonsdale, NY prior to paddling. Sign-in starts at 10 a.m.

Preliminary plans are also being formulated for a Moose River Festival to be staged in early October. According to Koll, the Moose during October could be a magnet for paddlers of all skill levels.

"Because of drawdowns of reservoirs way upstream, the Moose is typically flowing around four feet in early October," Koll said. "That means not only do you have great levels for the hard stuff on the Bottom section—but you have adequate flows for the class 3-4 Lower Moose and the class 2-3 Middle Moose, located not far upstream."

"There just aren't many rivers with dependable flows in October that feature separate class 5, class 3-4 and class 2-3 sections, all within a 25-mile stretch of river."

Details of the Moose River Festival will be released later in the spring. For more information regarding Bottom Moose releases, contact Chris Koll at (315) 475-7499 days and (315) 682-8397 evenings. ▼

The 1995 schedule will be:

Sunday, April 16
Sunday, April 23
Sunday, April 30
Saturday, May 6
Sunday, May 7
Saturday, May 13
Sunday, May 14
Saturday, May 20
Sunday, May 21
Sunday, May 28

Sunday, June 4
Sunday, October 1
Saturday, October 7
Saturday, October 8
Saturday, October 14
Sunday, October 15
Saturday, October 21
Sunday, October 22
Saturday, October 28
Sunday, October 29

Blackadar's Biography a Real Treat

A review by Doug Ammons

Never Turn Back: The Life of Whitewater Pioneer Walt Blackadar. Rob Watters, Great Rift Press. 1994. Pages 293. \$14.95

Kayakers and outdoorspeople are in for a treat. Author Ron Watters has succeeded in bringing to life the irrepressible Dr. Walt Blackadar, whose whitewater feats, charisma, and no holds barred approach to living make a great story.

Readers will laugh out loud at hilarious anecdotes revealing the sparkle in Blackadar's eye, whether inviting 40 kayakers on an early run of the Grand Canyon, doctoring Evel Knievel in the Snake River Canyon after Knievel's rocket motorcycle failed, shooting cans out of the air with a .44, or playing Buck Rogers during an improbable and

dramatic helicopter rescue of a fellow kayaker. And these are just the tidbits.

For those whose paddling memories don't go back 15 or 20 years, Walt Blackadar ushered in the acceptance and growth of kayaking as an adventure sport. He lived and breathed whitewater, exploring many runs in the west, and at the height of his career in the early 1970's, he made several very impressive first descents, including Devil's Canyon of the Susitna River in Alaska and an amazing solo run down the Alesk River.

Blackadar was a central figure in

several widely seen American Sportsman episodes and Roger Brown's movie, *The Edge*. His helpfulness to others, enthusiasm for the outdoors and thirst for challenge were instrumental in developing the sport. While his energy and aggressiveness—even showboat nature—rubbed some people the wrong way, others loved him for it, and no one could remain neutral.

Watters describes this all with humor and perceptiveness, drawing from a large number of interviews with contemporaries of Blackadar whose names are synonymous with an era of big water adventure: Rob Lesser, Fletcher Anderson, Cully Erdman, Eric Evans, Roger Hazelwood, Ron Frye, Roger Brown, Kay Swanson, to name a few. This gives immediacy, depth, and humor to the narrative, whether in the backcountry of Idaho, the depths of the Grand Canyon, the wilds of Alaska, or at home in Salmon.

Gravity.
Unlock
the
Mystery



Key word: Thrill. Photo: Steve Smith

Dream
Extreme

WORLD'S BEST



Key word: Thrill. Photo: Steve Smith

Everybody has their say as the chapters roll by, and the reader gets a clear idea of the strong friendship and respect felt for the man; as well as some harsh differences of opinion.

There's plenty of Blackadar's wilder side, most of which is exceptionally entertaining. But the book contains much more. Watters captures a surprising tenderness and depth to Blackadar, which makes the book much more than a mere collection of exciting tales. Care is taken to elucidate Blackadar's personal side: his role as a doctor and surgeon in the small town of Salmon, his willingness to speak out for the protection of his beloved Idaho wilderness and rivers, and his response to the death of a young companion. This grief, in the end, made him perhaps too sensitive to his own mortality.

Watters places Blackadar into the history of Idaho's environmentalism, emphasizing his participation in the political battle to create the River of No Return Wilderness, as well as many other smaller baffles.

But first and foremost the book is about the place of whitewater kayaking in Blackadar's life. Those of us who began kayaking after Blackadar's untimely death in 1978 now are granted a chance to appreciate one of the true pioneers of the sport, someone whose story is still bigger than life.

I guarantee you'll come away from this book with laughter, a **thoughtful** respect for Blackadar, and a contagious sense that life is worth living to the fullest.

Order a copy at your local bookstore, or call 1-800-585-6857. It is also available from Great Rift Press, 1135 E. Bonneville, Pocatello, ID 83201. Paperback price is **\$14.95.**▼



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NORTH BRANCH POTOMAC RELEASES SLATED

by Ed Gertler

The Corps of Engineers has tentatively consented to schedule four weekends of recreational water releases from Jennings Randolph Dam (aka Bloomington Dam) on the North Branch Potomac River.

The dates will be as follows: April 15, 16, 29, 30 and May 13, 14, 27, 28. Flow will be about 1,000 cfs.

We expect to have at least seven hours of water each day from 9 am to 4 pm. But in the event of a dry spring, either flow volume or duration of discharge could be cut back. For that reason paddlers are advised to confirm the releases a day beforehand by calling the Corps of Engineers Baltimore District **Hotline** (410-962-7687), the U.S. Weather Bureau River Forecast Center (703-260-0305), or the Canoe Cruisers Association **Hotline** (301-656-2586).

Also, be aware that in the event of unusually wet weather, which might force the Corps to release more than 1,000 cfs, the Corps would officially state that the release is "canceled". This does not mean that the dam is shut off. It just means that because more than 1,000 cfs is being released, the Corps is disavowing themselves of liability for anyone getting in trouble on the river. (The Corp believes that flows greater than 1000 cfs may be dangerous.)

The North Branch is located in western Maryland, along the West Virginia border, near the Savage River, site of the 1989 World Whitewater Championships. The water release breathes life into a six and a half-mile stretch of Class 2 and 3 whitewater set in a remote and scenic gorge. Comparable to the Lehigh, Casselman, or Nantahala, this is the sort of stream that novice and intermediates will enjoy as a downriver run and more advanced paddlers will enjoy as a playground.

If you are unfamiliar with this river, its shuttle route, etc., just show up at Bloomington, Maryland on any release morning and look for cars with boats. There will be plenty of them,

and someone will be glad to adopt you.

Here are a few additional pointers. These releases are the product of over twelve years of persistent hounding and politicking by a coalition of the American Canoe Association, River and Trail Outfitters, and Cheat River Outfitters, and more recently, the Mineral County West Virginia Development Authority. Mineral County is sponsoring these releases (which means the Corps has palmed off legal and financial responsibility on these nice people). So we cannot urge you strongly enough to go down to nearby Keyser, West Virginia and patronize their restaurants, stores, gas stations, etc. And let your identity as boaters be known.

Only if we prove to be an economic asset to the community can we look forward to their ongoing support. This and your participation in these releases can hopefully lead to continued releases and more of them.

If you desire more information on Mineral County facilities, give a call to the Chamber of Commerce at 304-788-2513. Also, campgrounds are located near the Randolph Dam (probably available for May releases) and at Big Run State Park in Maryland. Unfortunately, the Corps has insisted on passing on their extra costs to the users. Paddlers can anticipate a \$2.00 access charge to use the **Barnum** put-in. Also, Westvaco has posted most land at Bloomington.

While we have so far had no problems taking out at the mouth of the Savage, be prepared for the possibility of Westvaco enforcing their warnings and please do not give the security guards a hard time. An alternate take-out is just upstream of the stone arch railroad bridge in Bloomington, with parking up at the school parking lot in town.

Finally, note that the popular parking lot in front of the two-story brick building is private property. Please take care not to block the driveway or do anything else to offend this company's very tolerant owner. Have a great trip.▼

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New England Cup Series Slated

by Jamie McEwan

Last year's New England Cup Series attracted more than 130 participants, who competed for trophies at a challenging new race site. This year's series promises to be even better. Is there anywhere else in this hemisphere where so many top races can be packed into one month?

There have been a few changes in the rules this year. Now, in order for a class to qualify for New England Cup trophies, there must be at least three participants in each of the "counting" number of races, i.e. four in slalom, three in wildwater. So twist your friends' arms and get them out there.

Also, those who race in two or fewer races in slalom, or one in wildwater, will not receive an overall ranking in the series. Classes offered will include **K-1**, **K-1W**, **C-1** and **C-2** for both expert and junior (born after 1977) paddlers. There must be at least three boats in each of four slalom or three wildwater races to form a class. Classes in **C-1W** and **C-2M** will be offered if there is sufficient interest. Awards will be given for each race,

with the New England Cup awards given at the final event.

The New England Cup Series is as follows:

April 1	White River Wildwater
April 8	Mascoma Slalom
April 9	Mascoma Wildwater
April 15	Thoreau's Portage Slalom
April 22	Miller's Wildwater
April 22	T'ville Slalom
April 23	T'ville Wildwater
	FINAL
April 23	Rattlesnake Slalom
April 30	Snyder's Mill Slalom
	FINAL

A packet of information and entry forms will be sent to all New England NSWC members and to entrants in any of last year's races. Others may obtain packets from Peggy Mitchell, R.D.#2, Box 922, Canaan, New Hampshire 03741.V

Youth Instruction Symposia Planned

The Second Annual Symposium for Youth Instruction will be sponsored this year by Perception, Inc. at two sites: the Nantahala Outdoor Center in Bryson City, North Carolina (March 3-5); and the Manor Camp in Potomac, Maryland (March 10-12).

The Symposium is open to all school, camp and community based paddlesports instructors, including those interested in a program start-up.

"Our speakers come from a variety of backgrounds and are all excited about this second annual event," says Risa Shimoda Callaway, coordinator for the Symposium.

Speakers at one or both sites will include Gordon Black, Head Instructor at NOC; Tom Long, Cascade Kayak School of Boise Idaho; Peter Kennedy, Executive Director of Adventure Quest in Woodstock, Vermont; and Mark Moore, Instructor at the St. Alban's School Voyager Program.

Those interested in attending should contact Perception at (803) 859-7518.V

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BOATING BLUES

by Peter Cogan

'Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off-then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can.'

-Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

This week, I heard the same thing from three friends at work: "Pete, how's it going? You look a little down."
"I'm doing OK, thanks," I say. Yeah, I'm doing alright.

Well, I'm not doing alright, and I figured out why exactly ten minutes ago when I was talking to my boating buddy Bob on the phone. The last time I was with Bob we were surfing big waves, small waves, violent waves, you-name-it waves all over the Kennebec River in Maine. Big Mama, Hawaii 5-0, The Monster, Rocket Ferry...we love the Bec. So now, after he gets off the phone, he's going to a ski & skate sale; I'm going mountain biking with some non-boaters.

"Bob, I'm depressed; I need to paddle. I'm unhappy this time every year. I can't figure it out. And then I finally get it-no more boating."

"I wish you would explain this to my girlfriend," he said.

New England boating (definition: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont,

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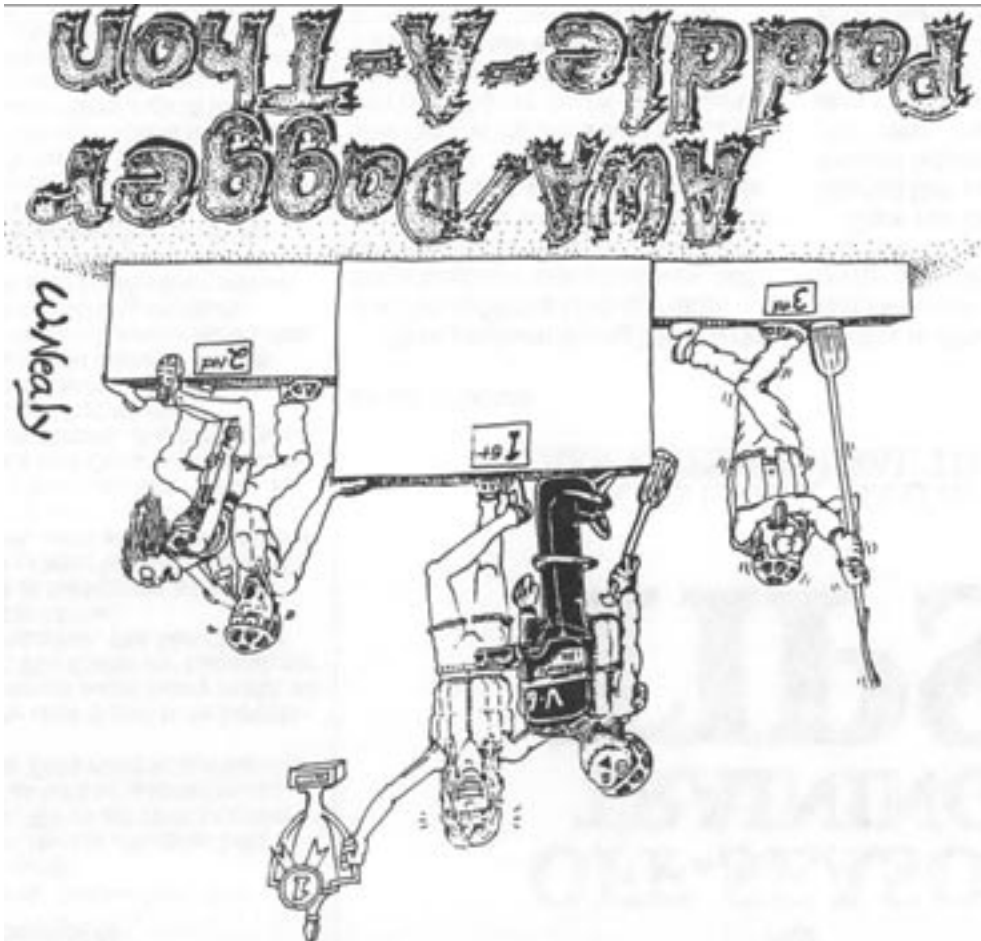
•AWA, PO Box 85, Phoenicia, NY 12464 or phone (914) 688-5569

For official rules and entry forms, contact:

- Three highest earning individual participants will be Grand Prize recipients.
- Receive your prizes!
- Collect sponsor proceeds and submit to AWA by July 31, 1995
- Log your river time on the official entry form
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 - THIRD GRAND PRIZE:** Schlegel Duralene Canoe or Kayak Paddle from Headwaters
 - INDIVIDUAL PRIZES:** AWA/Dagger Paddl-a-thon T-shirts
- AWA label pins and AWA License plate frames



Win prizes and raise money for AWA



■■■■■■■■■■
continued from page 64

Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York) is fantastic.

We've got the big rivers and the steep creeks. We've got rivers turned into sewers as well as isolated mountain streams. Dam release and natural flow.

But by the time it gets to be November, unless we get some heavy rains, we got nothing. The Kennebec disconnects its 800 flow number. The Deerfield is done. So is the Moose.

The West (a nightmare with 300 boaters, but at least it's water) is past. It's dry. If you want to see true desperation, ask some New Englanders where they paddled in November. "Yeah, we drove 8 hours into Canada. Cold as hell, class 5-6. Jack pinned, Jim broached..." blah, blah, blah. Desperate.

So we spend more time on those other pursuits that make life worthwhile- meeting non-boaters; seeing family; hanging out with co-workers; checking the gear for the next season. Skates and snowboards and skis and snowshoes. Spending time with our wives and children.

Every November I realize - mostly Friday and Saturday nights, because I'm not driving with a good friend to a river-that I don't have a girlfriend again. No wonder I'm depressed.

And we discover that all this other stuff is just other stuff. These are *not* the things that totally rock us. We re-discover that one of the very few pure pleasures in life - time after time after time; in rain, snow, sleet, and sun - is loading our boats onto our rigs, taking all that gear for another weekend of **boomin'** and **zoomin'**, backing out of the drives, and heading to the river with our friends.

Our friends - those folks we see almost every weekend from April to September. The ones who share the long and short drives to any river within a 400 mile radius. Who know what it's like to run the beefy and not so beefy drops, surf the big waves, ride and get clobbered in the big holes.

Who dragged you off the rock when you broached, gave you the high ten after an extended surf on a sweet wave or after a dynamic move that no one else seemed to get... who shared with you the thrill, beauty and respect of whitewater.

These are the friends whose bonds with you are so deep and tight you don't even have to talk about it.

I gonna start **crying**. ▼

EDITOR'S NOTE: Peter Cogan is the President of the Canoe Club of Boston. When not boating, he teaches English in Southern Vermont. (Cheer up Peter. It's Spring!)

OFF-SEASON TRAINING TIPS

HOUSEHAIR BOATIN': CLASS V RESIDENTIAL THRILLS

by Gary Rempe

Have you been acting like a jerk? Are you suffering from dry skin, proprioceptive hallucinations, and an unquenchable appetite for alcohol and kinky sex? Do you find yourself bathing or showering for times longer than you would feel comfortable discussing in public? If so, then you're suffering the tell-tale signs of whitewater withdrawal. No doubt your rivers are either too low or too frozen to run. But don't fret, my friend. Now there's a cure!

That's right. With a little work you can transform your home into an outstanding class 5 run. The hell with your local piss-creeks. Polish enders, back surfing, playing in mega holes, falls, chutes, ledges; it's all waiting for you, right in your own home! So peel your disgustingly "hair" less body off the couch and listen up.

First and foremost, househair **boatin'** isn't for wimps and it isn't for nature lovers. You househair boat for only one reason...you love and miss getting totally trashed! Take one of the sport's pioneers, long-time househair boater Jackass "The Needle" Hosehammer. He earned his nickname when a sewing needle mutilated his left eye during a seal launch off a "harder than it looks" 4 decker bookshelf. As Jackass says " @%& *#no#&#*spineless &#&#&#@\$@# worms @#*\$&\$\$&& househair boatin'!"

Another important point is that househair **boatin'** requires at least two participants. Angry spouses

finding it difficult to cope with paddlers who are home all the time work really well. Other adrenalin starved whitewater junkies fit the bill, too.

Once you decide you "need" to get trashed like you've never been trashed before and have put together your team, you can then begin to plan your first amazing run. What follows is a "classic" househair run Jackass put together to help you with your planning.

TOILET TERROR

As one observer noted, "Toilet Terror is like being trapped upside down in a whirlpool with porcelain cliffs on every side." Here's how you and a buddy can experience this thrill.

Rapidly drink six **bottles** of beer each to adjust your brains to make the experience more disorienting. If six beers sounds like a lot, remember, the great thing about drinking and Toilet Terror is you can always take out and flush if your ride becomes to gnarly- and you have to puke.

Next, shave a circular bald spot on the back of your heads so you can firmly attach a toilet plunger. Grab a bucket of ice, some small pieces of wood, a stop watch, a ten gallon plastic bucket, a plunger, and head for the bathroom. Place the ten gallon bucket above the toilet and run a hose so that the toilet will flush for several minutes.

Now wet plunger and firmly attach it to the head of your buddy.

Have him kneel in front of toilet and talk to him casually. When he's totally unprepared, thrust his head into the toilet and flush. Set your watch and gradually add the ice and sticks while pushing your buddy's head up and down in the toilet. When your buddy signals (using the standard middle finger) that he's ready to bail, dump in the rest of the ice and plunge him even harder for just a couple seconds longer. Remember, it's your job to make sure he gets totally trashed!

Now, pull him out, stand him up rapidly for a great head rush, and then throw him back on the floor. High fives and on to your turn!

**WHIRLPOOL
ENTANGLEMENT
SIMULATION (WES)**

It's nice to follow Toilet Terror with WES. After your buddy gets up off the floor, put him in a boat and make him knuckle his way through the house and out to the backyard. When he arrives, toss him in a kayak

that has been suspended from a tree with ropes to the bow and stern.

Now turn the boat round and round until it's wound tightly. Then let it rip! Grab your throw rope and half way through the ride toss a wad of it to your buddy. See if he can deal with it? Whoever can untangle the most rope in the shortest time without getting strangled scores big points!

**nEVEReNDINGeNDER
uNTILyOUpUKE**

Next, start swinging the same boat back and forth and, using pulleys, raising and lowering first one end and then the other. This will simulate the greatest back to back enders of your life. See who can do the most enders and belches at the same time without "hurling".

**PICKUP TRUCK
SIDESURFING**

Next head for the driveway. Have a pickup truck with a snowblade waiting, place your kayak parallel in

front of the blade. Climb into the boat with helmet and life jacket. Safety is important! If it's winter and there's ice on the road, you're in for a nice ride. If it's summer, however, and you have to surf grass, be prepared for an ordeal.

Speed is the name of the game in Pickup Truck Sidesurfing. The record stands at 87 mph. The key is to keep a cool head and your up-pavement edge high! If there's enough snow on the road to create a pillow on your "wave", you can spin until the cows come home! After 40 or so miles it's time to head back.

THE CLASS 6 NERVE JOB

On the way back home drop your buddy off at a major intersection and make him knuckle his way across a busy road while in his boat. If he exits, his run is automatically disqualified. It's a heck of a sight to watch the best househair boaters knuckle with just one hand and drink beer with the other... while crossing a class VI-four lane expressway!

**ATTENTION:
FEDERAL EMPLOYEES
AWA is CFC #0839**

Contributions to AWA through the Combined Federal Campaign are dedicated totally to AWA's aggressive whitewater conservation activities. (Please do not use the CFC to renew your AWA membership.)

THANKS for your support



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Wave Sport Announces Youth Support Program for 1995

For several years Wave Sport, Inc. has provided support and equipment to a large number of junior paddlers at the request of clubs, camps, schools, coaches, and parents. Some of these young people have gone on to become instructors, coaches, and internationally competitive athletes. Recognizing that youth programs are the future of whitewater boating, Wave Sport is donating a minimum of 3% of their 1994 gross revenues to youth programs.

During 1995 Wave Sport will also expand support to youth oriented kayaking programs by donating kayaks via the National Organization of Whitewater Rodeos. The overall expert K1 winner of each freestyle event will present a Wave Sport Kayak to the youth program of their choice.

For more information contact David Gilmore at (303) 736-0080.v



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1996 Olympic Slalom Tickets To Go On Sale

In July of 1996 the world will be looking at a river—the Ocoee, which originates in a hollow of the Blue Ridge Mountains, where Tennessee, North Carolina and Georgia meet. To the Cherokee, who first inhabited the region, "Ocoee" means "Place of the River People." And in 1996 that is what it will be, as 45,000 whitewater fans congregated to watch the 1996 Olympic Slalom Canoe/Kayak Competition.

Ticketing information for the Olympic Slalom Canoe/Kayak Competition, as well as for the 550+ other Olympic events, will be published in a 48 page book to be distributed nationally on May 1, 1995. The Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games will not begin processing orders until June 30, so that everyone will have a fair shot at getting tickets. If by June 30 there is more demand for tickets for an individual event than there are available tickets, a lottery system will be initiated. Call (404) 224-1996 for additional ticketing information.

Approximately 14,000 tickets will be made available for each day of the 1996 Olympic Slalom Canoe/Kayak Competition to be held July 26, 27 and 28.

Those interested in volunteering for events on the Ocoee should write to the Tennessee Ocoee Development Agency, Rt 1 Box 1996, Benton, TN 37307-1996. ▼



Photos by Robert Harrison

95 Whitewater Open Canoe Downriver Championships

June 20-22.... Youghiogeny River.... Pennsylvania

The Ohio Pyle Section of the Youghiogeny River will play host to the Whitewater Open Canoe Downriver Championships this year on June 20-22. The race is being cosponsored by the ACA and Riversport School of Paddling.

At the projected level of 2.5 feet the **Yough** presents a balance of technical difficulty, safety and fun.

The Sprint course will be on the famous Loop, which contains six major class III+ rapids in one mile. The Downriver course will include the Loop and six additional miles of river... referred to as the Lower **Yough** in most guide books. There are a dozen major rapids and another dozen minor ones on this course.

Portages are optional and should be scouted in advance.

Classes will include: premier, any age, either sex; senior, age 25 or older; master, age 40 or older; mixed, one man and one woman; century, total age of 100; junior, 18 years or less; cadet, 16 years or less; and youth, 10-14 years of age.

ACA event membership and insurance will be included in the entry fee. Details are available from the WWOC Downriver Nationals c/o Riversport, 213 **Yough** Street, Confluence, PA. 15424 or (814) 395-5744.

To volunteer to help with the event contact Bob Ruppel at Riversport or George Stockman at (517) 351-2134.

95 Kern River Festival Announced

The Kern River is home to one of the oldest kayak competitions in the country. This year the 31st Annual Kayak Races will be held as part of the Kern Festival. Three days of competition will begin with slalom clinics on Friday, April 14th. The slalom clinic fee is \$20.00. Clinic enrollment is being limited to ensure personalized attention.

Downriver races, a whitewater rodeo and the TJ Slalom Classic will also be featured. The entry fee is \$12 before April 13 and \$20 after April 13. The fee entitles competitors to enter as many events as they wish. Each competitor will also receive a **raffle** ticket for a new kayak. Novice boaters are encouraged to participate. Events take place at the **Kernville** Riverside Park, which will also play host to demonstrations and displays of new whitewater equipment.

A dinner dance and auction will be held Saturday night at Ewing's restaurant. Tickers are \$12. Proceeds from the event will go to the Kern River Alliance, a newly formed advocacy group.

For more information contact John Seals at (619) 376-4644. ▼



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Confessions of a PADDLE-A-THON Recidivist or HEY, We're Talking FREE DAGGER BOAT HERE!

Kim and Russel Groh enjoying their NEW Dagger Dimension at Bulls Falls on the Shenandoah. In 1994 Russel selected a cascade for his Grand Prize. Photo by Chip Groh

By Russell Groh

When I first joined the AWA two years ago, I received an entry form for the AWA/Dagger Paddle-a-Thon with my first issue of AMERICAN WHITEWATER. "What a great idea!" I thought, "but how am I going to find time to do this?" It sounded too much like work.

Little did I realize at the time, but I would be the First Grand Prize winner in both 1993 and 1994 and add two great Dagger boats to my stable. You see, I'm not one that really feels comfortable soliciting money from people I don't know, especially for a cause most people outside the whitewater boating community don't understand.

Eventually I decided to give it a try (I was going to be paddling during the month of June anyway). And as it turned out, people were very interested in helping to sponsor me.

The point is — it doesn't really matter how many people sponsor you or

how much money you collect, just get off your butt and do it.

When I found out that I earned the most money and won the Grand Prize in 1993, I was surprised to learn that only 14 people had participated in this great fundraiser. What a sad statistic considering the AWA has well over 3000 members!

So with the 1995 AWA/Dagger Paddle-a-Thon just around the corner in June, now is the time to start planning your attack. Remember, there have to be a few people you know that conned you to buying their kid's Girl Scout cookies this year! ▼



Shine up a river near you during National River Cleanup Week

May 13 - 21, 1995

Call 1-615-524-4814

to register your river or for the location of a cleanup near you.

Supported nationally by America Outdoors, American Canoe Association, American Rivers, American Whitewater Affiliation, National Association of Canoe Liverys and Outfitters, National Paddlesports Association, and Ohiopyle Prints with support from the National Park Service, USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Reclamation.

Coordinated nationally by America Outdoors.

1994 HONOR ROLL

AWA applauds its members, Affiliates and friends for strongly supporting our conservation and access efforts through the Whitewater Defense Project during 1994. You allow us to raise our sights and substantially beef up our goals. Thanks!

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Another good prospect is small businesses that you patronize, especially paddling shops or outdoor outfitters. (Thank you Brad at Springriver!)

Another good way to light a fire under you is to challenge a friend or paddling buddy in your club and see who can come up with the most money per hour or the most hours on the water. You'd be amazed what a little rivalry can do for your totals! Just ask my brother.

Another good tip is to remind contributors that their donation is tax deductible. You should also approach people with the angle that you're helping the environment by raising money for river conservation.

But regardless of how you decide to proceed, be warned — my brother and I will probably both need new boats by the end of the summer. So watch out!!

(Editor's Note: See how you can participate in the 1995 AWA/Dagger Paddle-A-Thon elsewhere in this issue, or call the AWA Executive Office at (914) 688-5569 to request your entry materials. Besides all the super prizes individuals can win, Affiliate Clubs are eligible to receive 25% of the cash raised by their participating members!)

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The Amu Darya Incident

PART II of III

Order Lenin, Side of Hash



by Jonathan Katz

*[Author's note:
In the summer of 1994 Dr. Theodore
"Bam Bam" McBride shut down the
McBride-Omaha chemical factory on the
banks of the Deerfield and took a group
of his closest associates on a RaftFriends
paddling vacation to Russia, to run Asian
whitewater with the legendary Soviet
boater Dimitri Vasilevitch Ubenko. What
follows is the story of that trip, pieced
together from the shattered memories of
the survivors.]*

McBride heard Omaha's Fox whistle at the same time Chopper's distress call came through the radio. "Raft 2 capsized in that keeper. Three sturgeon and a beluga swimming your way."

McBride lined his kayak up on the center of the wave train in front of him and looked for someplace to eddy. Down below he could see Rachel, surfing an eight footer. Big waves! Big fun! He was sick and tired of rescuing Russians. This was a safe, open rapid. Let 'em swim!

At the bottom he tucked himself into the right shore and checked in with Chopper. He and Omaha each had one rafter, and Raft 3 had picked up one. Now McBride could see the last Russian bobbing and thrashing in the wave train he just ran, being chased by his capsized raft. The swimmer, on river right, was his. McBride ferried out into the tail waves and the Russian caught his bow loop.

He was coughing and his eyes were terrified. McBride told him to slide

along the deck and catch the stern loop, but the kid spoke no English. He wasn't letting go, either. McBride wrestled him to shore and turned to watch Rachel bulldoze the inverted raft. A couple of the Russians had stayed with it, and they were trying to right it with a flip line. With the heavy bales of cargo hanging upside down in the nets this was almost impossible and for the fiftieth time since the trip started McBride cursed out Dimitri Ubenko.

The cargo was a complete surprise. They had breakfasted on horrible Russian porridge made with raw milk and beet sugar, strong cheese, heavy black bread and gallons of American coffee to kill their hangovers. McBride rejected the offers of blood sausage, sauerkraut and hashish and took his first look at the rafts. Each consisted of three big truck inner tubes wrapped in nylon fabric, lashed to aluminum frames. They looked solid and well used. They would self-bail, the lashings were strong nylon braid, and there were plenty of places for six paddlers and a guide to hang on. Then Dimitri showed up with the kids from the Russian Youth League summer camp, big, muscular youngsters, the sons of the elite. Each pair carried between them a two foot cube wrapped in white plastic. The cubes weighed a ton, and there were nine of them. The boys put one into the middle of each innertube, packed their provisions and gear around them, and covered them with nets.

McBride took Dimitri aside. "What the hell is in those? Don't you think you'll overload those rafts?"

Dimitri grinned. "Trade goods, McBride. For fun and profit!" He took a swig from a hip flask, lit a Camel. "Trinkets. Ax heads. Mirrors and beads! For natives. You'll see tonight."

But the bales made the rafts top heavy, and the arrogant young Russians swam hard and often. Dimitri pushed the trip fast, scouting nothing, barely giving the bedraggled young rafters a chance to catch their breath before slamming them into the next rapid. Nobody had been badly hurt, but the pounding whitewater, boulders and ledges took the starch out of the boys and filled McBride with misgivings. This was the "class 4" section, and he knew the water got bigger and harder till it climaxed at Stalingrad, the Class Six monster they had come halfway around the world to run. These boys could die in Stalingrad, and McBride was not happy.

They ran fifteen miles of river and made camp on a beach. The mountains rose behind them and a trail led away into the foothills. Dinner was sausage, borscht, black bread and vodka. After supper, with a few sharp commands, Dimitri marshalled the boys and they picked up their heavy bales and staggered up the trail, led by Vasily, Dimitri's giant father. Before he left Dimitri pulled a switchblade and cut a slit in the last bale. He spread open the plastic lips of the incision he'd made, drew out a flat object and tossed it to McBride. It was a magazine, with a stiff white cover bearing red Cyrillic writing, sealed with a red wax and ribbon seal.

McBride handled it delicately. The paper was a luxurious heavy cream. "What does it mean?" he called to Dimitri.

"Soviet Porn Today," Dimitri replied. "Take look."

McBride broke the seal. The magazine was full color, no advertising. It contained a complete, graphic collection of hard core pornographic photos, an illustrated atlas of sex. Beautiful women. Beautiful men. Men and



women together, one on one, two on one, three in one. Men and men. Women and women. Every color of the rainbow. Animals. Vegetables. Even minerals: carved stone phalluses, benwa balls. And not an 800 number in sight. McBride was astonished. It was like nothing he'd ever seen before. Finally his eyes unlocked from the steamy pages.

"All those bales?" he asked.

"Five thousand copies," Dimitri replied.

"Why? Who would possibly want them out here?"

"They are very valuable, McBride. Afghan government is Muslim fundamentalist. Denies pornography to indigenous people, so they lust for it. There is huge demand. Natives pay fortune for single copy."

"Afghan government? You mean we're smuggling it in?"

"Please, McBride. Is technicality, nothing more. Besides, it's in already."

"In?" McBride gasped, "You mean . . ."

"River is border, McBride. Left bank, Russia. Right bank, Afghanistan. It's in. All the way in."

"What if we get caught?"

Dimitri grinned and drew his finger across his throat. "If we get caught, you die, American. We leave now. Back in morning."

McBride, dumbfounded, watched Ubenko and his young, struggling bearers disappear up the gloomy trail into the mountains, carrying their load of smut. I am not a crook, he thought, then corrected himself. I am an international porn smuggler and a Russian agent. He shook his head. I am just a boater, stuck in a hole on the river of life. He was trying to decide whether this defense would work in an Afghan tribal court when Omaha staggered over. He was pig-drunk on vodka.

"Soviet Poon Today", damn fine magazine, damn fine," Omaha burped. "Don't speak a word of Russian, understand the whole damn thing. Gotta get me some, for souvenirs. You seen Yvonne?"

"No. And we **gotta** do something about those kids. Dimitri'll drown them all."

"**Naw**. He's getting rid of the magazines tonight. Rafts'll run better empty. They'll do fine. Now where the hell is Yvonne? Magazine gave me some ideas."

In the morning McBride saw that Omaha was wrong. Dimitri's boys looked exhausted, but they were loading the nets in the rafts again, with new cargo, dozens of small brown balls. McBride approached Dimitri. "What the hell are those?"

Dimitri tossed him one. It was the size of a softball, sticky and organic. The smell was pungent, exotic yet fa-

miliar. McBride turned it over, saw the embossed gold seal in the surface, the writing in an alphabet he could not recognize.

"Yak dung," Dimitri said, grinning, and turned away.

But Omaha explained.

"Afghanistaniopiated hashish. Best in the world. Cures hangovers. Want some?" He broke off a small piece and chewed it slowly, savoring the flavor. "Dimitri swapped his magazines for a ton of it. We're taking it downriver."

"The hell we are."

Omaha grinned at him. His eyes were blood red, and his mind was elsewhere. "Now is this a raft trip or what?" he asked, and bit into the hash ball like an apple.

McBride glared angrily at Dimitri Ubenko, expedition leader, river guide: first he smuggles filthy magazines, then he trades them for a ton of dope. McBride felt flushed, as though his expedition were spiralling down the toilet. He found Chopper and the rest of his party huddled round a morning campfire, washing cheese, sausage and black bread down with gallons of coffee. He grumbled. They listened, but did not comfort or reassure.

"There's twenty of them, and only eight of us," said Gunsmith, who could count.

"**And** they've got the guns, and four of us are girls," said Chopper, who was not known for political correctness.

"It would take weeks to walk out of here, even if I knew where we were," said Arden, pointing to the hulking, jagged peaks on the horizon. "No way am I helping Omaha schlep his canoe over those mountains."

"**We** can't just leave these kids, not after we spent all day yesterday rescuing them," said Rachel. "It wouldn't be right to save them yesterday and let them die today."

"Dimitri will kill them," McBride lamented, "Hell. He'll drown us all."

"There's no choice," said Chopper.

"We'll have to paddle down the river with Dimitri's hash, and let him lead us through Stalingrad. We'll get to the takeout eventually, and if we haven't gotten killed on the river or busted for drugs we'll be able to go home. We can **always** pull out if we come to a bridge."

McBride was resigned. "No bridges out here. Dimitri burned them all. **At** least we have enough dope to keep Omaha happy."

"Yeah," said Yvonne. "If he eats a cannonball of hash a day he can live for a year. Might even gain some weight."

Their conversation was disrupted by the crack of pistol fire coming from the river. Dimitri was firing at vodka bottles he'd stood up on stones by the riverbank. He had an automatic in each hand. As they watched, Omaha shambled over. "Lemme try that

piece," he said. Dimitri handed one over, a Makarov nine millimeter. Omaha hefted it, then aimed **carefully** at a baffle and squeezed the trigger. The bullet slammed into the rock next to the bottle. He shot again, same result.

"You too loaded to hit anything, American," Dimitri chided.

"Damn Commie gun, shoots extreme left. Anybody got a screwdriver?"

Rachel handed Omaha a Swiss army knife and he tinkered with the sights of the pistol for a moment. He aimed again, and **fired**. The bottle shattered in a shower of glass fragments. Then he turned to Dimitri.

"Thousand bucks U. S. says I can shoot better than you."

"You have no money, Omaha. You already owe me," Ubenko said, reminding Omaha that the Americans had agreed at the airport to forfeit their equipment to Ubenko at the end of the run, to pay for gas for the expedition's shuffle. Then the swarthy Russian turned and leered at Omaha's girlfriend. He spoke again. "But . . . I will bet grand against night with Yvonne."

To Omaha these were not fighting words, but a business proposition.

"Don't you dare, Kenny," the tall blonde said, but Omaha stuck his hand out to the Russian.

"Deal," he said, and they shook hands.

Rachel got **furious**. "You can't **bet** her, Omaha. You don't **own** her. She's not cattle. Where are your morals?"

"I turned them in at the border, with my American money," Omaha said, and started to laugh hysterically. His eyes were bloodshot pink from the hash he'd eaten.

Yvonne turned to Rachel. "I'm not worried. Kenny can shoot, and Dimitri's cute. I'll be fine either way."

Rachel just stared at her. Had the woman no pride?

Ubenko picked up a bottle and started to walk down the stone beach to set a target, but Omaha stopped him. He gestured to Dimitri's vodka bottle, then turned his back on him and spoke. "Throw it over the river as far and as high as you can, and yell when its at the top of the arc."

Dimitri shook his head. "You crazy. Never make shot like that."

"Just do it."

Dimitri cocked **his** arm and threw the bottle high and far over the rushing waters of the Amu Darya. Omaha whirled and fired the Makarov one handed. High over the river the bottle exploded. Dimitri flinched. Yvonne smiled.

"Is trick. Do again." The Russian said.

"Double the bet."

"**Two** thousand for two nights."

"One night. And **if** I hit it again you owe **me** three G's—one for the first



one and two for now."

"She worth three thousand?"

"You decide."

Ubenko took a long, slow look at Yvonne, who was wearing California surfer baggies over blue polypropylene and looked like the Blue Ridge Highway: deep canyons, big mountains, dangerous curves. Rachel watched, horrified, as the two men shook hands again. Omaha turned his back. Dimitri gripped the bottle by the neck and pegged it low and far. He threw it straight into the morning sun, and screamed too late. Omaha spun, staring sundazzled, shooting low. **BLAM! SMASH!** Two for two.

Omaha tossed up a bottle for Ubenko, but it was no contest. Dimitri fired three wild shots before the bottle splashed into the river, bobbing unbroken.

"Pay me," Omaha said.

"I'll take it off your tab," the Russian mumbled, staring at Yvonne. Omaha bristled, but McBride intervened. "Easy Ken, we'll settle up later."

"Don't forget, you bet my body so that's my money," Yvonne said to Omaha.

"To hell with it," Omaha said.

"Let's go paddling."

The mood of the expedition was subdued as it broke camp and boarded canoes, kayaks and rafts for the journey deeper into the awesome canyon. Half a mile downstream they hit the day's first big rapids. The rafts all came through upright. The Russian boys were more coordinated at the paddles now, and McBride thought the new cargo of hash balls floated a little better than the bales of porn magazines they had carried yesterday.

McBride studied the river. It ran fast and cold and deep, maybe 7500 cfs, through the massive granite boulders that littered the bottom of the steepening ravine. Above them the canyon walls grew higher and higher. Plant life was sparse and gnarled; they saw no game at all. They kept hitting these big, heavy wave trains studded with boulders and ribbed with ledge, Class Four water, maybe four-plus in spots, big but not technical and not overwhelming. Why had he come halfway around the world for this?

Halfway around the world, to smuggle dope and smut into a backward, hostile country to line the pockets of a soulless, evil Russian pirate? Halfway around the world to eat bad food and run the Afghan equivalent of New River Gorge? Then he remembered Stalingrad, the lurid descriptions, the single blurred, tantalizing photo, the horror stories; five rafts in, two out, bodies still missing, a demented crossbreed of Niagara Gorge and the Narrows of the Green. Today, Ubenko had said. Late today. McBride would scout today, decide tonight, paddle or portage tomorrow. Bam Bam

McBride had not carried a rapid from fear in eleven years. He thought again of Stalingrad: perhaps he was due to take a walk.

Lunch was black bread and borscht, eaten quickly without pistol practice, and bad jokes about deep holes. Then back to the boats. But as they paddled through the afternoon the rapids grew easier, flatter, separated by longer and longer stretches of quickwater, then flat water, till the river flattened completely, a long, narrow, still lake at the bottom of the immense, unclimbable canyon. They paddled a mile of stillwater. Omaha got cranky, frustrated.

"So where is this mother rapid, Ubenko? I didn't miss it, did I?"

But Ubenko said nothing. Instead he lifted a finger to his lips, cocked his head, listening for a long moment.

"Is there," he said, in a still and deadly tone.

Omaha saw nothing but flat water disappearing around a bend in the canyon ahead. He strained his ears. Maybe, maybe in the distance he could hear a whisper of the river.

Round the bend there was no doubt. Still the flatwater stretched ahead but now he could hear the deep rumble of the rapid. Then they all could. One more turn, then a small rocky beach on river right, a roar of falling water and one horizon line, sharp as a knife. Ubenko motioned them over. They beached boats and took a look.

The ledge was an eight footer, which led instantly to a twelve footer, and a boat length beyond, a twenty foot drop onto a pile of jagged boulders. Below that the river simply fell away, careening downhill through a narrow, twisted jumble of rock in an insane, churning mess of white foam which continued nonstop for two hundred yards and disappeared around the bend. **Stalingrad.**

McBride took one long look and shook his head. Class Seven. Not runnable. Suicide.

He turned to Dimitri, spread his hands in a gesture of defeat. The Russian pointed at the boulder pile at the base of the falls and yelled, "The Anvil." Then he indicated the the foam pile below, and yelled again, "The Dancing Bear."

Rachel walked up next to him, coolly. "What's around the corner?" she asked.

"A mile of the same," Dimitri replied.

"Then what?"

"Avalanche."

Dimitri turned toward the Russian boys who were clustered together, staring at the rapid in horror. He took them a short way down the beach, shouting at them in Russian over the roar of the rapid. McBride, Omaha and company stood still, gazing at the white hell below. McBride spoke.

"No way. The triple drop will kill us, and if it doesn't we'll die in the boulder sieve below."

Rachel disagreed, "There's one clean slot through the triple drop, on river left. Its narrow and offset but we can do it."

"Yeah? Then what?" Chopper asked. "We've got a lottery chance of making it in kayaks. Those rafts full of hash are going to get hammered."

"Nobody in his right mind would even think of swimming there," said McBride. "I say we walk, scout around the corner, put in down below."

"How you going to walk?" Chopper demanded. "Do you see a trail? I don't see any **goddam** trail. And we're not climbing out of this canyon. We're trapped. That bastard Ubenko trapped us. We either sit here and rot or run that rapid."

Omaha said nothing. He stood, staring at the rapid, drooling. God knows what he's thinking, McBride thought, but he'd rather not.

Suddenly they heard a scream from upriver, and turned. Twenty yards away Ubenko was shouting at one of the Russians. His face was red as borscht. His pistol was in his hand, and pointed directly at the cowering boy's crotch. Rachel ran toward him, followed by McBride and the others. She ran straight up to Ubenko and started yelling at him in Russian. He turned, lowered the pistol, his mouth open in surprise.

Rachel stared at him, spoke in English now. "You can't shoot someone because they want to portage Stalingrad. That's murder."

Ubenko waved the gun at the boy, who stood frozen. "Wrong, Rachel. Out here, I'm king. Either he paddles, or I turn him into a eunuch and leave him for the owls."

Ubenko's black eyes grew hard and menacing. Nobody moved. McBride knew Rachel could crush Ubenko's larynx with her heel before he could pull the trigger. But would she? Please??

Suddenly Chopper grabbed McBride and Rachel and threw them to the ground, landing on top of them. Fifty yards upriver, something exploded.

"Grenade!" Chopper screamed. "Get to the rocks!" A second explosion, ten yards closer, and McBride crawled frantically for cover away from the shore. From above machine gun fire raked the beach.

McBride's party dove behind the cover of a huge boulder. The fire from the ambush raked one of the rafts and stopped. So far nobody had been hit. Up the beach McBride could see the Russian boys lying on their bellies in the rocks. Chopper spoke.

"They have good fire discipline but they can't hit anything. Kenny, can you pin them down with the pistols? We can get to the boats and go. If we stay here they'll circle behind us on



the edge of the cliff and cut us to pieces."

"We'll die in Stalingrad anyway. We can't **run** that **rapid** blind." McBride said.

"Yes we can. Just follow me," said Rachel.

"And those boys in the rafts?"

"They'll have to take their chances. Here, they have no chance."

"Go when you hear me start firing," said Omaha. He jumped up from cover and took off down the beach at a dead run. Machine gun fire crackled at him, wide left. He dove for cover in **Ubenko's** position.

McBride spoke to the others. "As soon as he starts shooting, skirt up and go. We'll follow Rachel's line and try to eddy out around the bend and regroup. Watch for swimmers." The others nodded.

Suddenly they heard the snap of pistol fire from Omaha's position. They sprinted for their boats, sprayskirts flopping, paddles banging on the rocks, shoving off as Omaha kept firing the Makarovs behind them. McBride got to his boat, pushed off into the still water above the ledge, then noticed the bullet holes in the bow. He was going to sink! He looked up at Rachel paddling hard for the lip of the horizon line, saw her boat disappear over the ledge. Behind him he heard the machine **gun** open up again, and the pop! pop! pop! of Omaha returning fire. He turned, saw Chopper's boat and the raft with Gunsmith and the women close behind. Then he turned his eyes front, gave three hard paddle strokes, and followed Rachel's line over the brink of the falls.

McBride was a Class Five kayaker, a competent, elegant, fearless boater with years of experience. But he'd never paddled a bullet riddled kayak under fire before, and he'd never seen a rapid like Stalingrad before. As he went over the lip of the first ledge he was crazed and hyperventilating with terror. His bow slammed into deep water and popped to the surface just as he saw Rachel boof off the ledge over the second drop at a hard left angle. He tried to match the angle, tried to follow, and plummeted blind into the pool. Clean again. And again he saw Rachel angle hard left and drive over the brink of the falls. The thought of dropping into that awful boulder pile almost froze him. Then he saw and heard the giant splat! as Gunsmith's raft smacked into the water beside him. Gunsmith screamed "Go Bam Bam!" and he went, launching himself into space.

McBride's bow grazed a boulder at the bottom of the falls, twisting his boat sideways, and the hole sucked him over and down. He tried to roll and windowshaded. And again. The river tore at his paddle, his body, his boat, tried to rip him out of the cockpit,

sucked him deep. Then suddenly he shot nearly vertical airborne. Ender of Life! He sensed his chance, threw all his weight forward, and landed upright on the boil line. Frantically his paddle slapped the water. Then he was free of that awful grip and, knowing it, he looked up. Ahead of him loomed a huge pillowed rock. He leaned and braced hard, bounced high off the pillow, slammed into a boulder on his right and capsized. He rolled up in time to catch a glimpse of Rachel's green dragon kayak rocketing into a tiny slot between two jagged monoliths. A huge, solid wave of freezing water slammed into his face, tearing off his noseplugs. And another.

Now he realized that his boat was bow-down in the water and logy from the flooding through the bullet holes. Grimly he fought the kayak through the rapid, into the slot Rachel shown him. And he realized in instant horror that the slot was a V-trap, too small for his body. On pure instinct he took a huge breath and capsized. Underwater he could feel his boat banging into the sides of the boulders. Too tight to roll! He hung upside down, waiting as his boat banged off the rocky sides of the slot. Suddenly, his bow jammed! He could feel the water rushing past him, over and under his hull. Panic speared him. Out now! his body screamed. Air! Sky! Life!

With all his will he forced the thoughts of the grab loop out of his mind and thrust his paddle against the rock wall of his prison and strained. Suddenly his bow popped free. With the last of his strength he set up his paddle and snapped his hips. Upright! And he gasped for air in the blessed gleaming sky and slammed his bow across an eddyline.

He'd caught a one-boat eddy in the right center of the river. Six feet from his bow the river roared down the chasm. The water in the eddy bounced and surged and sucked him toward the boulder ahead. He'd get mashed up there. Then he saw the Russian raft. It flashed by, inverted, followed by a cluster of swimmers. Chase now! He backpaddled once, took two fast, powerful strokes and drove his sodden bow into the eddy wall. It bit, whirling him around and dragging him back into the maelstrom. He followed the swimmers down, through the huge reaction waves and insane crosscurrents of Stalingrad Gorge.

As the swimmers rocketed downriver he saw the big eddy on his left and went for it. As he aimed for the eddy he saw Rachel there ahead of him. She popped her skirt and stood upright in her kayak, balancing against the surge of the river. Suddenly she bent double and reached into her boat, coming up with a throw bag in each hand. She shook a long loop of rope out of one bag and tossed it over a boulder. She passed the loop around

her waist and stuck the bag in her teeth. Then she shook out the other rope and split it, coiling half and leaving half in the bag.

As the swimmers passed her she threw first the coiled rope. It hit the trailing Russian in the **head**. Then, in a double underhand toss, she threw the bags at two more Russians as they washed downriver toward the rapids below. Long throws, dead on target. In less than ten seconds she had lines on three swimmers. Leaning hard into the static line around her waist, she played them like fish into the boiling eddies along the left shore. McBride sat in the eddy, and panted and shook with fear.

Swiftly Rachel restuffed the bags, tucked them into her kayak and paddled over to the twitching McBride.

"I have to dump my boat," he said, indicating the bullet holes. They beached him and dumped him. He was half **full**. Rachel produced a roll of duct **tape**, patched his bow in less than a **minute**.

"We have to go. Now," she said. "Gunsmith's raft is pinned on a rock above Avalanche."

Avalanche. He'd heard that before. From the Russian? "What's Avalanche?" he asked.

"Sixty foot waterfall."

They plunged out into the rapids. Suddenly the view cleared and McBride could see Gunsmith's raft. It was pinned hard midriver. Chopper had a line on it from the left shore. The passengers were hanging on. He could see Yvonne's blonde hair as she worked her way to the left end of the raft, and Arden, and Moose and PT. Then he eddied left next to Chopper and it hit him: they were all down safe. All except Ken Omaha. For all he knew Ken could be lying on the beach at the scout above Stalingrad, gut-shot or a prisoner of war.

Standing next to Chopper he saw the danger. The raft was pinned solidly, three boat lengths above the waterfall. Avalanche was not quite vertical, a 75 degree slope disappearing into the roaring mist below. Its face looked jagged and horrible.

"We'll get lines on our rafters and take them off one at a time," said Rachel. Then I'll try to pop the raft free. If we can't budge it I'll deflate the bow tube. That should help us pull it off."

They were getting ready to bring Arden across on Chopper's rope when Yvonne shouted and pointed upstream. On the right side of the river a Russian raft had slid around the corner. It was packed with passengers and spun out of control in the current, heading for the edge of Avalanche. Nobody was steering the raft and it was doomed. As it spun toward the brink of the waterfall McBride could hear the Russians **screaming**. ▼

Hallo Deek Gedekoh Bob

Much news since Carla last write. Much so to tell. Carla and Sasquatch plenty busy here in **Sierra Nest of Love**.

But I forget not **American Whitewater**. I say Carla, "Time you send Gedekoh Bob magazine story. Line of dead has come."

But Carla not want to write. She not want to cook. Not want to clean. And Carla plenty cranky now. Oh, Gedekoh Bob, how she changed! Soon I tell why.

Carla make me write. I do my best. Learning I am still human lingo. Learning I am crazy human spelling and grammar. Hard learning, too. Human lingo not make much sense. Bigfoot talk better. Make more sense.

I tell Carla when I write I make many mistakes. She say, "No matter. Kayakers reading rag never know **difference!**"

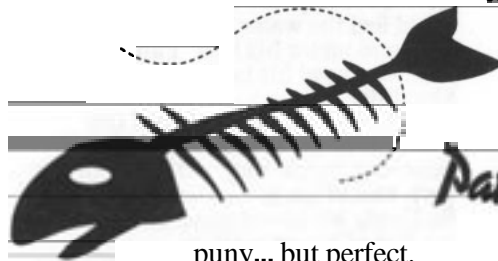
So, goes here. Reason Carla so cranky is this. Baby Bigfoot pop out of her just one moon ago! Baby puny like human... 16 pound... but, oh, Carla make awful noise when Baby pop out! Make my ears hurt.

Doctor scream too when Baby pop out. Scream and run! Nurse **run** too! Lucky I there, hiding under bed. Lucky I there to chew through cord.

Later Doctor tell Carla he never seen baby like ours. Never see baby so "Special". I so proud!

Oh, Gedekoh Bob, Baby of Carla and me is Special! Baby maybe

Waaaaaa



Patook Grotok-Garrison

puny... but perfect. Smart like Carla and pretty like me. Good teeth. Strong jaw. Much hair.

Very much hair.

Baby boy? Baby girl? Know not. Too much hair to tell. So no name yet. No matter... Baby of Bigfoot and Carla is best baby ever!

But, oh, makes much noise. Noise all night. Screech like owl. Roar like panther. Howl like wolf. Make ears hurt. Carla putting plugs in ears. Then she sleep. I not sleep. Much.

And baby eating always. Never get enough. Always wanting more. Growing fast big.

Makes puddles.

And poops too.

All time poops. Crib smell like poops. Cave smell like poops. All of Sierras smell like poops!!!

Carla dunk in river to wash off poops. Big surprise! Baby love water! Baby swimming good! Not mind cold.

Already catching fish! Someday will be greatest kayaker ever! Carla

and I teach. See you will.

I watch Baby much now. Carla back in kayak. *All* of time, Carla back in boat.

She say, "My part done. Now your turn."

Off then she goes. Leave me with howling, pooping Perfect Baby! Oh, Gedekoh Bob, sometimes think I am luckiest Bigfoot in world wide whole. Sometimes not so sure.

Sometimes want I to be in kayak, too. On big river, floating far away from howling, pooping perfect Bigfoot Baby. Me on shame.

Must go now. Baby howling. Smell poops.

Please come you visit and see **Special** Baby. It not bite... much.

Maybe you watch and I go boat with Carla. Not for long. Week or two.

Please come. Soon.

On the river will see.

Hey Bob,

Patook really has a way with words, don't you agree? His style sort of reminds me of George Will.

He's really a great dad, too. That's fortunate, since taking care of this rug rat is proving to be a bit more **difficult** than I anticipated.

Our new baby really is perfect. But even a perfect baby can be a real pain in the ass!

We still can't come up with a suitable name. I don't think we're going to be able to tell the sex for a while. So we need a moniker that can swing either way. Why don't we ask our readers for suggestions? We might even offer a prize for the best name.

Perhaps the opportunity to take care of the **little** buggler for the next four or five years! (Only kidding!)

Well. I'm off to the river. I'll stay in touch.

Carla Garrison-Grotok



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INTREPID 17	17'3"

NOVA 16	16'
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SOLO 13	13'



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