

american whitewater

March/April 1999



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Director's Cut

By Rich Bowers

Welcome to a new spring paddling season! Whether you enjoy the excitement of whitewater, the solitude of a wilderness river, or just the feel of a paddle slipping through the current, I hope you have a safe and wonderful year of boating.

I know that some of us have not been able to paddle much during the winter. Regardless of the excuse (lowwater, work, family or that blown dry suit seal we never fixed), now is the time to get out and get on the water.

It's also a good time to remember that the rivers you'll paddle in the coming months are not the same as they were last year. Besides the safety implications — and the need to check for downed trees, changed rapids or rusty skills — this is also true for the conservation and access issues affecting these rivers. Throughout the winter, decisions have been made that will affect you and the rivers you enjoy.

For the most part, the decisions made regarding river access were significant improvements. And while I'm sure new problems, threats and closures will be a

part of 1999, several decisions are worth knowing about:

In December, the New York Supreme Court joined California, Oregon, Montana, and North Carolina in supporting recreational use as a viable establishing principal for navigability on the South Branch of the Moose River. Just as important, the court determined that "in order to circumvent ... occasional obstacles, the right to navigate carries with it the incidental privilege to make use, when absolutely necessary, of the bed and banks, including the right to portage on riparian lands."

Also in New York, a victory against high water closures was made when the Persia Town Court dismissed charges against boaters enjoying a high water run on Cattaraugus Creek.

In Colorado, the District Attorney dismissed a case against two boaters who ran Cheesman Gorge on the South Platte River, and were ticketed when they portaged a metal grate placed by a local landowner. Similar to the decision on the South Moose, which also involved a private sporting flub as landowners, the

case was dismissed because the Colorado Attorney General has written, "it is not a crime to float through private property."

In January, the Grand Canyon National Park announced reductions in the fees that are charged to non-commercial rafters and paddlers (fees are about the same if you have a huge group).

American Whitewater played a major role in each of these decisions, and you can get more detail on them in this edition's access section.

But what does this mean for you? If you're stopped by an irate landowner, can you yell "Don't you know about the New York decision?" I don't recommend it. But it does provide boaters, clubs, and boater organizations like American Whitewater with "persuasive authority" — ammunition in river terms — to change navigability laws in other states. In 1999, we expect to run with these decisions and use them whenever and wherever possible to guarantee river and stream access to paddlers.

Here's to a safe, enjoyable, and legal year of boating! S.Y.O.T.R.

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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 or the editors of this publication.

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Staff

Editor: Bob Gedekoh, Box 228, R.D.#4, Elizabeth, Pa. 15037

Emeritus Editor: Chris Koll

Contributing Editors: John Weld, Pope Barrow, Ambrose Tuscano, Bill Sedivy

Art direction/Graphic design/Production: John K.Victor

Contributing writers: Carla Garrison, Jonathan Katz, Ed Ditto, Lee Belknap, Joe Greiner, Mark White, Bruce Farrenkopf, Nathan Lewis, Brik Miller, John Foss, Paul Tefft, Howard Davidson

Production Assistant: Richard and Teresa Augustin

Advertising Director: Phyllis Horowitz, Box 636, Margaretville, New York 12455 (914) 586-2355

Safety Editor: Charlie Walbridge, 230 Penllyn Pike, Blue Bell, PA 19422; Phone 215-646-0157; fax 215-643-0668; email 73514.1714@compuserve.com.

Conservation and Access Editors: Rich Bowers, Jason Robertson, John Gangemi, 1430 Fenwick Lane, Silver Spring, MD, 20910 Phone (301) 589-9453 Fax (301) 589-6121, email: richb@amwhitewater.org, jason@amwhitewater.org, jgangemi@digisys.net

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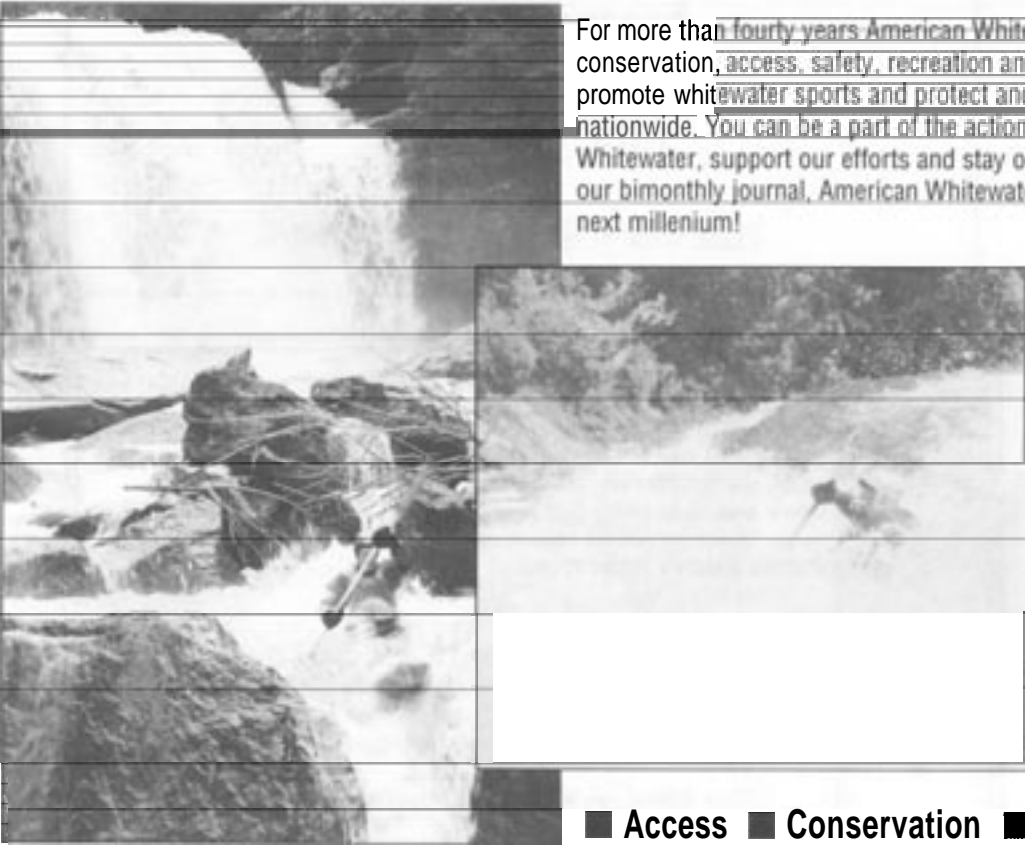
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“Taking the Whoopy with the Do!!!”

Dear Bob:

You've convinced me. (Not that I needed convincing.) I am never going to run the North Fork of the Payette. Not the Top, not the Ladies' Run, and not anything in between. But, man, did I enjoy your derring-do.

Thanks,
April Holladay

Whoopy on the North Fork

Hi Bob,

Great article about the NF of the Payette in the latest AWA! A year and a half ago I went to Idaho for the first time with every intention of running the lower five of the NF. It was running 1400ish. For the first part of the week, we warmed up on the East Fork of the South Fork of the Salmon. Wonderful run. First thing we did was the upper stretch at 128 fpm, according to the guidebook. Just good ol' fun technical creeking. Not unlike what we have here in the SE. The next day we got on the main run of the EF of the SF of the Salmon. Looked like the Ocoee as we set shuttle. It was there that I learned two things about Idaho water. It's a lot bigger than it looks from the road, and Grant (Amaral, guidebook author) rates things conservatively. We started describing rapids as either class 4 or "Idaho class 4." Idaho class 4 usually meant survival, big water boating, for a mortal like myself at least. When we got off the run and drove back to the top we still thought it looked like the Ocoee — from the road. But now we knew better.

From that watershed we moved over to the South Fork of the Payette. En route, we looked again at the North Fork. As for NF, the top few miles scared me to death just looking at it. Some parts of the middle looked manageable. And I could not believe how long the lower rapids were.

On to the South Fork. Class 3 my butt! I was having a hard time calling half mile long exploding wave trains with hidden holes class 3. For the next couple of days we played on the SF and the Middle Fork of the Payette.

But the North Fork was still down the road. And Atlanta to Boise is a long way to drive just to look at rapids. That morning we did the Middle Fork of the Payette, planning on an afternoon run of the North Fork. I was having a less than stellar day.

And when we got to the North Fork, after scouting the bottom again, I left my boat on the truck. Two members of our group, Pete and Gary put in below Hounds Tooth. When

they got to Crunch they scouted, and scouted some more. These are two of the better boaters I know. Pete's resume includes runs in Chile and Ecuador, as well as some of the steepest runs in the SE.

They did not see a line with favorable consequences. And the trucks were there. And the coolers. They called it a day.

Later that afternoon I ran into Chris Bassett. You had recently profiled him in AWA. We started talking about what we had run. He was pretty sure that with my resume of rivers I would have no trouble with the run. By this point I had decided that the NF of the Payette is one of the scariest runs I have ever seen. I passed again.

I have tremendous respect for the people who boat the NF. And even more for those who probed it 20 years ago. Most of those I talk with who have done it say it is no harder than the steep creeks I have run — just different.

I just kept looking at those rapids, at how long they are, and thinking what would happen if I missed my roll. Swim on a creek and it will beat the hell out of you, but there will probably be an eddy within 50 feet (horizontally or vertically). Swim on the North Fork and you will deal with at least a half mile swim, with monster holes the entire way down.... flush drowning comes to mind.

So I'll stick with the steep stuff, the low volume, steep stuff. With every western trip, and every West Virginia trip, I get better at that big water stuff. But I have a long way to go before I do that McCall to Banks thing.

Great Article.
Brad Roberts

North Fork Payette Big Dogs at Play

Dear Bob,

I recently received the latest issue of AWA with the article about the N.F. Payette. I really enjoyed it. I have subscribed to AWA for several years and have never been disappointed with the quality or content. AWA is an excellent organization, I intend to maintain my membership forever.

In 1995 I moved from Idaho to Long Island for a job and my paddling has suffered tremendously. I boat approximately 180 days each year but I do not paddle often; I traded my kayaks in for a 33' lobster boat.

Your article about the N.F. really made me homesick. While I am certainly not a big dog, I know many of them and have run the Lower Five at least 100 times at levels ranging from 800 to 2000 cfs. I used to work for Idaho River Sports and boated the N.F. every day after work. No, I never ran any of the upper stretches. I am a fair paddler, comfortable on the lower, and can make Class 5 moves, but I was not ready to deal with the consequences of a missed line up there. When I move back I will get to it.

I thought you might be interested in some more information about the big dogs. I was there in August '93 or '94 (I cannot remember which) when the N.F. came up to over 6000 cfs. All the dogs came out to run the lower the first day. As you know, Idaho has some great paddlers. What I thought was neat: not the fact that these guys were putting on, but the fact that Lesser and Ammons brought out their old Dancers. Two of the best kayakers in the west left their Pirouettes and Corsicas on the roof — a real testimonial to a classic design. The next day they went and sampled the upper stretches, but I had to work so I was not able to watch.

Another fact about those guys is that they like to play around with slalom boats and a Topo Duo. Some of them slalom boat (yes, glass boats) the lower at levels over 1800 cfs, when they do not feel like tackling the tough stuff. As for the Topo, I know they have sampled sections of the N.F. in it although I cannot say which ones. They have, however, taken one to Big Falls in the fall and run it over and over again. Those boaters like their fun. Mark White could probably fill you in on the Topo as well as female N.F. boaters. I know several, but it is not my place to spread their names around.

Happy Holidays. Maybe I will see you on the Gauley this year.

Sincerely,
Jack Hayden

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Ohiopyle Park Staff Defended

Dear Mr. Gedekoh:

As the park manager of Ohiopyle State Park, I am quite aware of the failure of many of us — employees of the park and park users alike — to communicate clearly and effectively.

I believe that a recent Letter to the Editor titled "The Lower Joke" is an example of what can happen when communications breakdown. The letter painted a pretty dim picture of the park rangers at Ohiopyle, including an admitted "overdramatization."

The incident that precipitated this letter involved parking outside the designated parking area on a very busy day at the park. That area was the mowed helicopter-landing zone used for emergency evacuation in cases of serious injury. The area was not marked, and after reflection, the ranger involved did — on his own — reverse his decision and void the parking tickets he had just issued minutes before. He subsequently recommended that a sign be erected to identify this mowed area as a "Helicopter Landing Zone." This has been accomplished.

The ranger in this case was at the Old Mitchell Parking Area to assist a boater in opening his vehicle after he inadvertently locked his keys inside. This type of assistance by rangers was rendered to visitors 170 times in 1998. Yes, rangers do issue citation and parking tickets, but certainly not to the extent that Ms. Jones leads you to believe. Only two visitors in every 10,000 fell into that category this past season, even given the serious overcrowding that occurs on weekends at this popular park, which draws more than 2 million visitors a year. You do the math.

Rangers also assisted in emergency response to 62 visitors injured on the river, bike trail and elsewhere in the park. Crimes involving theft, D.U.I., and illegal drug use resulted in nine physical arrests within the park by park rangers. These arrests are meant to protect our park visitors. Rangers also took part in search efforts for lost hikers, fought forest fires and investigated vehicle accidents. Many of these ranger activities drew the praise of park visitors, unfortunately, few in writing.

For your general information, the park has heard and answered the request of boaters for a bike trail connection from the Old Mitchell Parking Area. A trail constructed in 1998 will be open in 1999 to allow for a mountain bike shuttle connection to Ohiopyle Borough.

In addition, a drivers shuttle was available on weekends and holidays in 1998 to help the boater who has only one vehicle. The driver parks at Old Mitchell Lot and is returned to Ohiopyle Launch Area on this shuttle van. We hope to have this available again in 1999.

I would hope that Ms. Jones or any of your readers who feel negatively about their experiences at Ohiopyle State Park will choose to take the time to discuss them with me, so that as the park manager, I can deal with these

issues in an effective and timely manner. Feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,
Douglas V. Hoehn
Park Operations Manager

The Joy of Paddling

Dear Editor:

Whitewater sports entered my life at a very critical period. I had just completed my professional training and a depressing lifestyle that included horrific work hours and years of self-deprivation. I had always been interested in outdoor sports but I knew very little about whitewater boating. I was planning to take an extended vacation to Alaska and it only seemed appropriate to buy a used kayak, strap it onto my truck and head for the wilds. My life changed completely. I rediscovered my love for outdoor adventure and was on a path toward happiness. Within a very short time I had become married with children and on a stable career track. Whitewater has become an essential part of my life. It is difficult for family and friends to understand.

Kayaking affords me a very special privilege. It is the most reliable method for achieving what I can only describe as the ecstasy of play. There is a certain exhilaration that I feel when surfing a large wave or stern squirting or riding a hole, etc., that I have been unable to achieve elsewhere with any consistency (untracked powder skiing is an occasional exception). Where else do you hear of adults referring to their favorite "play spots." Whitewater allows us to experience a form of joy usually reserved for children.

Everyone understands the value of exercise. However, I believe that it is a basic human necessity like food, shelter or sex. I think the reason that a lot of people don't get hooked on exercise is that they have not found activities that they find to be really fun. I started playing basketball as a five-year-old and have been playing consistently since then. I can get a great workout without even thinking of it as work. But basketball is fiercely competitive and very rough on the aging body. Also, I can't recall ever yelling "yippee!" after hitting a jump shot.

Rivers are the most beautiful places on earth. Whitewater sports allow us access to very sacred ground. On the river I feel a sense of spirituality that I have not been able to achieve with organized religion or other more traditional means. I am often able to silence my internal dialogue, which is the essence of meditation. When my stress level builds, I know that a few hours on the river for "hydrotherapy" will help.

Whitewater sports also allow a unique opportunity for making friends. Anyone who has been on an extended river/camping trip knows how close a total group of strangers can become after only a few days. Regular paddling partners have often become good friends. Although in some regions the rivers can be crowded and competitive, for the most part

paddlers are a very friendly group who enjoy a sense of connectedness and camaraderie. I am proud to identify with the paddling community.

In this time of especially tragic events in our sport, let's take time for self-examination and celebrate the joy of paddling.

Mark M. Nemeroff

Is Thrill Seeking Selfish?

Your November/December issue just arrived. And, again, there are memories of wonderful people who died in pursuit of their extreme sport activities. I am sure your next issue will bring forth several like pages. It is becoming a new section in the AWA Journal.

In the ongoing debate about the increasing number of fatalities in whitewater boating and other extreme sports a common element is to try and find a reason. The writers suggest that the new boat designs may be one reason; lack of water one year, too much the next is another; and statements that accidents are unavoidable are certainly true! While we all acknowledge that the victims made a personal decision accepting the risk, I'd like to forward one more probable cause.

Our society is becoming more and more a "me first," self-centered population of individuals. Personal expression, including the acceptance of the potentially fatal consequences, is more important than relating this possible outcome to society's needs at large.

I do not want to put any blame on the victims and do not wish to hurt their families and friends. But I would like to call their actions self-centered — perhaps the result of a generation or more of parents putting their kids first, above all else! In other words, the individual desire for their gratification comes first.

How else can the personal quest for survival thrill be understood? Why else would a young father, husband, professional, with a loving family and many friends, even consider that the personal satisfaction of narrow survival during a potentially fatal activity outweighs the need to remain alive — not for himself, but for his family, friends, and society at large!

Just a little food for thought.

Respectfully,
Sigrid Pilgrim
Evanston, Illinois



Surfin's@aol.com

Guidelines for Contributors

Please read this carefully before sending us your articles and photos! This is a volunteer publication, please cooperate and help us out. Do not send us your material without a release - signed by all authors and photographers (attached)!!!

The editorial staff of American Whitewater carefully reviews all material submitted for publication. We are particularly interested in receiving full length feature articles, conservation and club news, special event announcements, articles pertaining to whitewater safety and short, humorous pieces.

Articles should fit our established format; that is, they should be stylistically patterned to fit into our Features, AW Briefs, River Voices, Conservation Currents, Safety Lines, Humor or End Notes sections. Exceptional photographs and whitewater cartoons are also welcomed.

If possible articles should be submitted on a 3" computer cassette. (Word Perfect preferred - others accepted.) Please do not alter the margins or spacing parameters; use the standard default settings. Send a printed copy of the article as well.

Those without access to a work processor may submit their articles typed. Please double space.

Photos may be submitted as slides, black or white prints or color prints. Keep your originals and send us duplicates if possible; we can not guarantee the safe return of your pictures. If you want us to return your pictures, include a self addressed stamped

envelope with your submission. Because we publish in black and white, photos with a lot of contrast work best.

American Whitewater Feature articles should relate to some aspect of whitewater boating. Please do not submit articles pertaining to sea kayaking or flat water. The best features have a definite slant... or theme. They are not merely chronological recountings of river trips.

Open the story with an eye catching lead, perhaps by telling an interesting anecdote. Dialogue should be used to heighten the reader's interest. Don't just tell us about the river... tell us about the people on the river... develop them as characters. Feature articles should not be written in the style of a local club newsletter.

If you are writing about a commonly paddled river, your story should be told from a unique perspective. Articles about difficult, infrequently paddled or exotic rivers are given special consideration. But we are also interested in well written, unusual articles pertaining to class III and IV rivers as well. Feature stories do not have to be about a specific river. Articles about paddling techniques, the river environment and river personalities are also accepted. Pieces that incorporate humor are especially welcome. Open boating and rafting stories are welcome.

Don't be afraid to let your personality shine through and don't be afraid to poke a little fun at yourself... and your paddling partners.

Profanity should be used only when it is

absolutely necessary to effectively tell a story; it is not our intent to intentionally offend our more sensitive members and readers.

Please check all facts carefully, particularly those regarding individuals, government agencies and corporations involved in river access and environmental matters. You are legally responsible for the accuracy of such material. Make sure names are spelled correctly and river gradients and distances are correctly calculated.

Articles will be edited at the discretion of the editors to fit our format, length and style. Expect to see changes in your article. If you don't want us to edit your article, don't send it to us! Because of our deadlines you will not be able to review the editorial changes we make prior to publication.

American Whitewater is non-profit; the editors and contributors to American Whitewater are not reimbursed. On rare occasions, by prearrangement, professional writers receive a small honorarium when they submit stories at our request. Generally, our contributors do not expect payment, since most are members of AW, which is a volunteer conservation and safety organization.

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Stop and Think

Dear Editor:

I've been thinking about this for a long time — years. But recent events have spurred me to write about it here.

Let me start by saying that I really don't want to tell anybody what to run and what not to run. I can only make that decision for myself.

I may "counsel" folks: for example, I've watched someone who was planning to run the Gauley have trouble making precise eddy turns on the Lehigh, and I advised them that based on what I was watching, I thought it was a bad idea. But that's about it.

I don't control other people and I don't want to.

But please, please, please folks: think carefully about your motivations and think about the consequences of your decisions. I'm not asking you to stay home: I'm asking you to THINK. First.

Please don't do hard runs just because everyone else is doing them: few will think less of you if you don't. (And those few may need to reexamine their own priorities.)

Please don't do them because you have testosterone poisoning. (And that applies to women, too).

Please don't paddle hard runs on an off day (and all paddlers have them) — the river will be there when you come back, thanks to the AWA and American Rivers and everybody else who works hard to make it so.

Please consider walking that hard rapid if you're not comfortable running it today... even if you've run it before.

Please don't assume that just because you managed to get through something in one piece that you've mastered it and can move on and up.

Please take into account the fact that your paddling companions (and other people on the river who don't even know you) will try to come after you if you screw up, putting themselves at risk on your behalf.

Please realize that there are a lot of ways to challenge yourself in this sport besides seeking evermore difficult-whitewater. (If you're a kayaker, try learning C-1. If you're an open canoe team, try slalom. And so on.)

Please realize that what happens to you out there can affect everyone else — in the form of regulations and restrictions, which, as much as we might all dislike them, are the inevitable, inexorable response when a sufficient number of things go wrong and attract bureaucratic attention.

Please realize that we will all miss you if you're gone.

I'm growing tired of mourning my friends and heroes, including the ones that I never had a chance to meet. Yes, I recognize that some of that is part of the sport; always has been, always will be. But over the last few years — for whatever reason — it seems to me that we have lost a certain measure of respect for the river. We are now ALL paying the price for that. It's

just not necessary.

Again: I'm not asking or telling anybody to stop. I'm just pleading with all of you to THINK. First.

Rich Kulawiec

Envelope is Torn

Dear Editor:

Those famous or infamous words, "If you're not on the edge you're taking up space!" and "Let's punch the envelope," have come back to haunt us. I write to beg of you all — let's take a break for a year and paddle for fun; step back from the edge. Our collective envelope has a large tear, like a high altitude jet with a hole in it. Our friends are being sucked through.

Let's pause, take a break, let the hole in our universe heal. Please don't sacrifice any more to the river gods.

We have to protect our sport. We have to take control. We do participate in an extreme sport; and most of us are safe.

But there has been an explosion of newcomers to the sport who have advanced in months to levels that took us years to attain. We must accept responsibility, not just for ourselves, but for these newcomers. We must modify our teaching methods so that they will gain experience as well as skill. Bewilling to portage or say, "No, not today," and LIVE with it. Support those who make that decision.

To die doing what you love is noble, but not considerate of those you love. So ask yourself as you stand and stare at that river, "What and who am I willing to give up here? Is the danger really worth it to those that depend on me? Am I going to miss my opportunity to contribute as a member of family and community?"

Start today — let's get through a year

without a death among us. Hold tight to your friends, they may be only passing through. May the river gods look kindly on us.

Godspeed.

Ken Strickland

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Directors

Ric Alesch, President
14262 W. Warren Place
Lakewood, CO 80228
ralesch?worldnet.att.net

Landis Arnold
3170 Eastwood Court
Boulder, CO 80304
andisa@ibm.net

Lee Belknap
1308 Maryland Ave.
Glen Allen, VA 23060
rivergypsy@sprintmail.com

Risa Shimoda Callaway
216 Inverness Way
Easley, SC 29642
risashi@mindspring.com

Tom Christopher
931 Union Street, Rear
Leominster, MA 01453
tchris@tiac.net

Brooke Drury
8224 - 14th Avenue NE
Seattle, WA 98115
lm4rivers@qao.com

Chuck Estes
114 Bay Path Drive
Oak Ridge, TN 37830
estesoak@worldnet.att.net

David Fallside
1700 - 49th Street
Sacramento, CA 95819
fallside@inreach.com

Bob Gedekoh
Box 228, RD 4 Mentor Rd
Elizabeth, PA 15037
obgedek@qicubed.com

Bob Glanville
9385 South Hill Road
Boston, NY 14025
rglanville@qicubed.com

Joe Greiner
7316 Chicora Court
Raleigh, NC 27615
joekayak@worldnet.att.net

Barry Grimes
124 Hilltop Drive
Richmond, KY 40475
bagriml@pop.uky.edu

Jay P.K. Kenney
1675 Larimer, Suite 735
Denver, CO 80202
jaypk@qao.com

Chris Koll
352 Cameco Circle
Liver Pool, NY 13090
ckoll@234qao.com

Sue Langfitt
5 Martin Road
Rye, NY 10580
Slangfitt@gwrr.com

Jeff Leighton
2079 Reliez Valley Road
Lafayette, CA 94549
jeffleighton@prodigy.net

Richard Penny
5050 Glide Drive, #B
Davis, CA 95616-4419
rpenny@friends-of-the-river.org

Joe Pulliam
P.O. Box 1500
Harriman, TN 37748
72002.305@compuserve.com

Ken Ransford
475 Sierra Vista
Carbondale, CO 81623
ransford@csn.net

Jim Scott
3715 Jocelyn Street NW
Washington, DC 20015
scottj@prb.org

Bill Sedivy
Route 5, Box 714F
Clarksburg, WV 26301
sedivy@earthlink.net

Pete Skinner
2 Snyder Road
West Sand Lake, NY 12196
skinnp@qripi.edu

Ron Stewart
P.O. Box 1337
Chattanooga, TN 37401
ron_stewart@baylor.chattanooga.net

Paul Tefft
P.O. Box 4784
Aspen, CO 81611
enviro@qrof.net

Mac Thornton
6467 Wishbone Terrace
Cabin John, MD 20818
potomacgorge@compuserve.com

Barry Tuscano
RD 1, Box 32
Bolivar, PA 15923
Tmri@kiski.net

Charlie Walbridge
Route 1, Box 329F
Bruceeton Mills, WV 26525
CWALQ@compuserve.com

Mark White
2034 E. Hubbard Ave.
Sat Lake City, UT 84108
mark@sa.tlake.org

Si San Wilson
18 White Oak Forest Road
Fairview, NC 28730
76017.3534@compuserve.com

AW STAFF

Rich Bowers
Executive Director
1430 Fenwick Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20910
RichB@amwhitewater.org

Jayne Abbot
Events Manager
450 Ivy Hill Road
Asheville, NC 28787
Jhabbot@qao.com

John Gangemi
Conservation Director
482 Electric Avenue Bigfork,
MT 59911
jgangemi@digisys.net

Jason Robertson
Access Director
1430 Fenwick Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Jason@amwhitewater.org

Phyllis Horowitz
Administrative Director
P.O. Box 636 Margaretville, NY
12455
74663.2104@compuserve.com

AW OFFICERS

President: Ric Alesch
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Purpose

American Whitewater

Our mission is to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.

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

CONSERVATION: AW 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, AW 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, (AW) provides information and education about whitewater rivers, boating safety, technique and equipment.

SAFETY: AW 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 AW Whitewater Safety Code.

EVENTS: AW 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.

AW was incorporated under Missouri non-profit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its principal mailing address at 1430 Fenwick Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301) 589-9453. AW is tax exempt under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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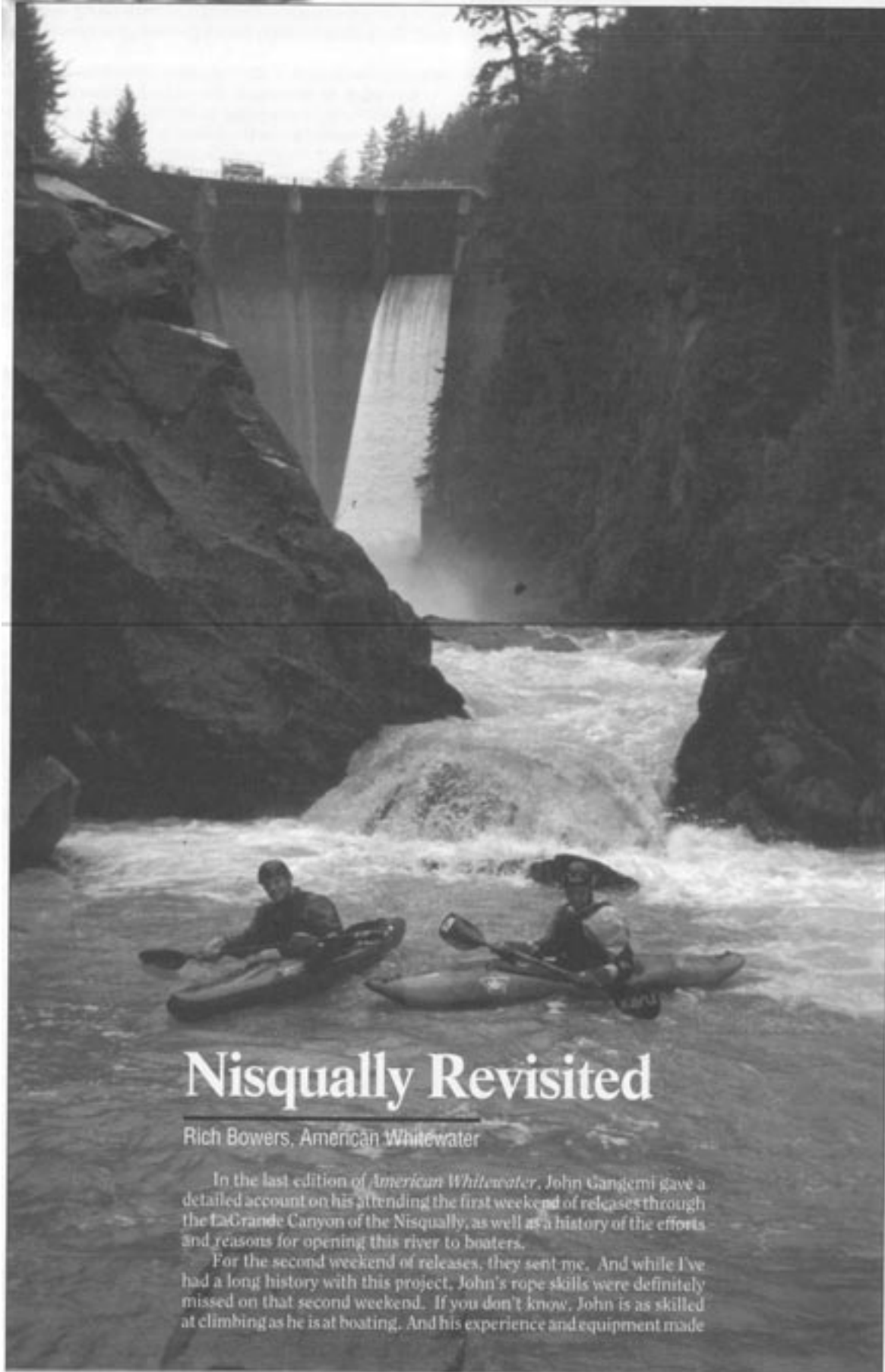
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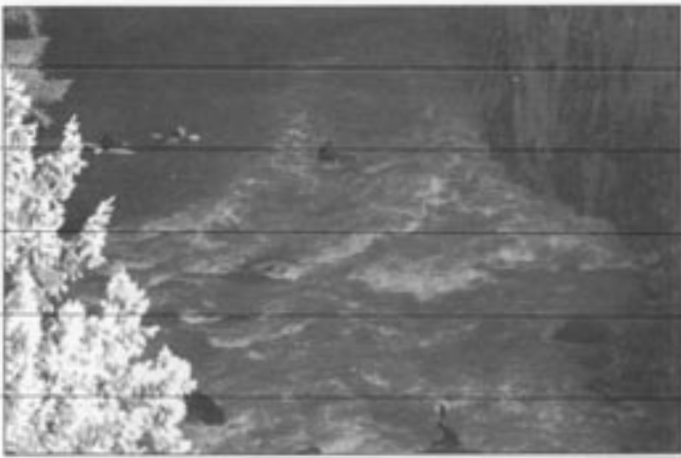


Nisqually Revisited

Rich Bowers, *American Whitewater*

In the last edition of *American Whitewater*, John Gangemi gave a detailed account on his attending the first weekend of releases through the Grande Canyon of the Nisqually, as well as a history of the efforts and reasons for opening this river to boaters.

For the second weekend of releases, they sent me. And while I've had a long history with this project, John's rope skills were definitely missed on that second weekend. If you don't know, John is as skilled at climbing as he is at boating. And his experience and equipment made



Page 15: The first drop
Above: The put-in, Nisqually
Right: Scott Matthews
videotaping the Nisqually

Photos by Rich Bowers



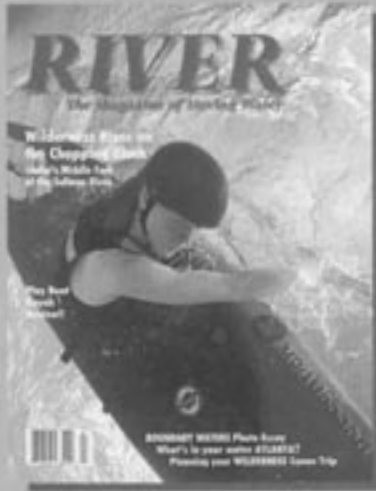
a real difference in descending into the Canyon that first weekend. What I lacked in technical expertise, I made up for with the attitude that "if you have the skills to run the river, you have the skills to get down yourself." To be honest, I think those paddling would rather have had descenders, brakes and carabiners than attitude!

But once on the water, the second release runs though the canyon went more smoothly. Definitely, fewer people showed up. Some were warned off by the difficulty of the put-in and rapids, but more stayed away because of the winter conditions. Both Saturday and Sunday were cold – Northwest cold. In fact, on Saturday the snow level had descended to within a few hundred feet of the put in and the morning was a winter wonderland of snow flurries. Almost all of this turned to rain before making it to river level, but it was grim winter paddling. Twenty minutes up the road, Mount Rainier National Park had four feet of new snow, and some bugged out to snowboard or ski.

But the second weekend also went smoothly because whitewater boaters are quick learners, and as John said in the last issue, they go out of their way to help others.

Self-sufficiency, teamwork, and a quick learning curve are issues that American Whitewater has pushed on every river we have opened. As John mentioned, power companies are usually not convinced and claim that kayaking is inherently dangerous to boaters and potentially to rescue teams. If you need an example of how this works, re-read Pacific Gas and Electric's (PG&E) letter to river managers printed in the last edition.

One of American Whitewater's goals over the years has been to prove this concern to be unfounded. And with results from more than thirty boating studies (ranging from Class II to Class V+) and research of existing liability law (from our research, no one has ever successfully sued over an accident from scheduled releases), Ameri-



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can Whitewater has successfully accomplished this across the country. In Georgia, the Tallulah releases have gotten much easier, and safer, because boaters have learned the lines, are aware of trouble spots, and can paddle with others who have run it before. Impressed by the ability of paddlers to take care of themselves, Tallulah Gorge State Park took a straw poll of boater's emergency experience. They found that one in four boaters on that day were medical doctors, EMT's, or had advanced training in wilderness medical skills.

Similar lessons were apparent on the Nisqually, as boaters who had run the week before quickly set lines, led the way, and shared portage routes and sneaks with others. The video describing the Nisqually run, produced by the Tacoma Power Company, states that liability concerns were their biggest worries throughout the relicensing process. And while liability issues are still worrisome, the power company says that American Whitewater was able to provide answers to their liability questions. We expect the success on the Nisqually, along with our documentation on liability, will be equally useful in opening other rivers including over 200 hundred miles of whitewater in California and even more in the Southeast and Northwest.

So the Nisqually is important from a liability standpoint, and proving what kayaks can do, but why do you want to run it? It's cold, maybe dark, and it has not just a few scouts and portages, but are there positives for paddling? Definitely! It is an absolutely beautiful gorge, it's a river in transition, and its short, two-mile length is



Getting to the river. Photo by Rich Bowers

packed with challenging whitewater. On top of that, every run is like a first descent.


It's definitely not for everyone. If you're not a solid Class V paddler who likes expedition runs, you're better off paddling some of the less technical releases American Whitewater has obtained over the years. But if you want a challenge, the Nisqually is the place to go.

In the next several months, American Whitewater will be working to make future releases a little more "user-friendly." We'll be working with the power company, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), and others to try to switch the runs to a warmer season with longer daylight hours. In the first two weekends, over 75 paddlers ran the Nisqually under difficult conditions. We have proven the value of this river for whitewater, and now we need to find a way to eliminate the problems caused by short days. We can use

your help. If you have boated the Nisqually, or would like to, please write to the FERC (c/o John Gangemi) and tell them why this river is important to you. Explain why boating with longer days (and maybe warmer temperatures) would make this more worthwhile for recreation. You can send the letter to John and he will forward it on. Here's John's address:

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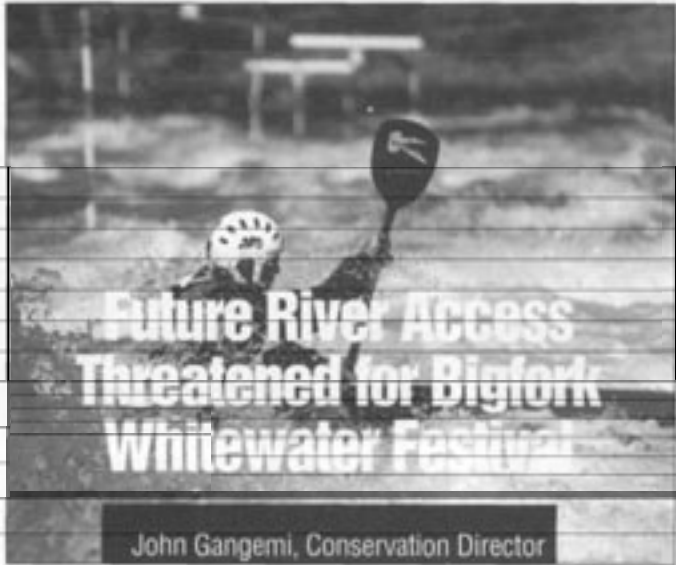
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Boundary Creek Hydro Threat Intensifies

John Gangemi, Conservation Director

Continental Lands filed an application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for a preliminary permit to construct a hydropower project on Boundary Creek in the northern panhandle of Idaho. Conservationists, fishermen and kayakers alike oppose the project, citing irreparable environmental impacts and recreational losses.

FERC is the federal agency that oversees the licensing of private hydropower projects. Preliminary permits grant a hydro-developer the exclusive right to file a license application for the site during the term of the permit. A preliminary permit does not authorize construction of a project. The purpose of the permit is to protect a developer, who is investing time and money to study a potential site, from the risk that another developer will file a competing license application. Preliminary permits, once issued, are valid for three years. The public is given 60 days to comment on a preliminary permit. The comment deadline for the Boundary Creek preliminary permit closed on February 9, 1999. FERC will then decide whether to approve or deny the permit.

Continental Lands is marketing the Boundary Creek hydro project as a clean, renewable energy source. The hydro developer has a tentative contract to sell power to Eugene Water and Electric Board in Eugene, Oregon. In June of 1998, Continental Lands solicited local approval from the Boundary County school board with a promise to earmark 25% of hydro-generation profits for new school construction. In return, Continental Lands requested the school board lobby the Idaho congressional delegation to exempt the Boundary Creek Hydro project from the federal licensing process. Exempted projects do not undergo a rigorous environmental analysis or public review period.

For kayakers, Boundary Creek is a premier creek run offering 10 miles of class IV (V) continuous paddling. Paddlers are venturing with increasing regularity to experience the rapids and remote setting of Boundary Creek. The hydropower project would decrease peak whitewater flows, shorten the paddling season and in some dry years eliminate whitewater paddling altogether. If constructed, the Boundary Creek Hydropower Project would leave a legacy of local impacts all for the sake of exporting power outside the region.

Even if FERC grants Continental Lands the permit there remains additional opportunities for public comment. Stay alert for updates on this project. American Whitewater maintains a web site <www.awa.org> with regular updates on river conservation and access issues across the nation or contact John Gangemi at 406-837-3155, email: <jjgangemi@digisys.net>.

PacifiCorp recently disclosed their intention to sell river lands used for the site of the Bigfork Whitewater Festival on the Swan River in northwest Montana. The lands are part of the Bigfork hydroelectric project operated by PacifiCorp. The Project is currently in the relicensing process.

The land sale will jeopardize river access. Paddlers on the Swan River currently put on and take out via project lands. The project dam obstructs navigation. Paddlers portage the dam via project lands. Furthermore, the Bigfork Whitewater Festival takes place entirely on project lands. This event, often referred to as the Woodstock equivalent of river festivals, due to its central location in the heart of Bigfork, has taken place annually on the infamous Wild Mile of the Swan River since 1976.

PacifiCorp announced their intention to sell the project at the outset of the relicense process. Thus far, no utility companies have showed any interest in this outdated project. The project was constructed in 1903 and produces only 4 megawatts, enough to power approximately 2,000 homes. In light of this lack of an interested hydro buyer, PacifiCorp's realty department divided the project lands, 530 acres, into developable lots.

American Whitewater opposes the sale of project lands associated with the Bigfork facility. The regulations of the Federal Power Act require that private hydropower operators own project lands and grant public access to these lands as mitigation for hydropower impacts. PacifiCorp must first apply to FERC for decommissioning the power project prior to selling any project lands. In the event that PacifiCorp applies for decommissioning, American Whitewater advocates that a conservation easement be attached to project lands insuring river access and future whitewater festivals as well as restricting development.

In the initial scoping comments for the relicense, American Whitewater requested, in part, access improvements, a portage around the dam, and the right to host the Bigfork Whitewater Festival in perpetuity on project lands. American Whitewater is working closely with a diverse group of interested citizens, business owners and agencies in an effort to develop a strategy for preserving the project lands in an undeveloped state.

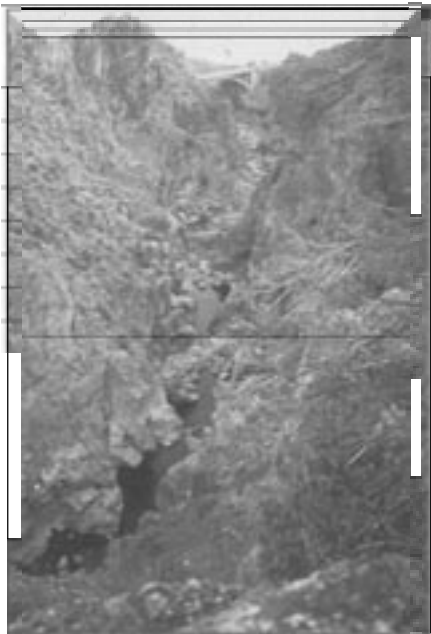
Lastly, PacifiCorp is ignoring necessary recreational studies associated with the relicense process. American Whitewater sharply criticized PacifiCorp's attitude in this relicense, demanding a more thorough review of existing recreational use and assessment of project impacts on recreational opportunities.

For more information contact John Gangemi at (406)837-3155, email: <jjgangemi@digisys.net>.



Dave Friedman getting wet on Boundary Creek

Paddler on the upper slalom course during the Bigfork Whitewater Festival. (photo by Kay Bjork)



View of the Chelan Gorge whitewater opportunities at 500 cfs.

Whitewater Flow Studies proposed for Chelan Hydro Project

John Gangemi, Conservation Director

Chelan Public Utilities District, operator of the Chelan Hydro project in Chelan Washington, agreed to conduct a whitewater feasibility study and controlled flow study in 1999 on the Chelan River as part of their hydropower relicensing effort. Chelan PUD currently diverts 2,000 cfs from the Chelan River, leaving the four-mile gorge bone dry. American Whitewater identified the river channel as a prime whitewater resource. The river drops 400 feet in four miles before the confluence with the Columbia.

The feasibility study will determine the navigability of the gorge, establish a difficulty rating and identify flows for a subsequent controlled flow study. This is a necessary step in the process since non-boaters claim paddling the gorge is not survivable. No one has run this gorge to date. In the controlled flow study, a team of boaters paddles a range of flows to determine minimum and optimum flows for whitewater boating. American Whitewater will pursue a schedule of annual whitewater releases into the gorge if the whitewater feasibility study proves it is navigable.

For more information contact John Gangemi (406)837-3155, <jgangemi@digisys.net>.

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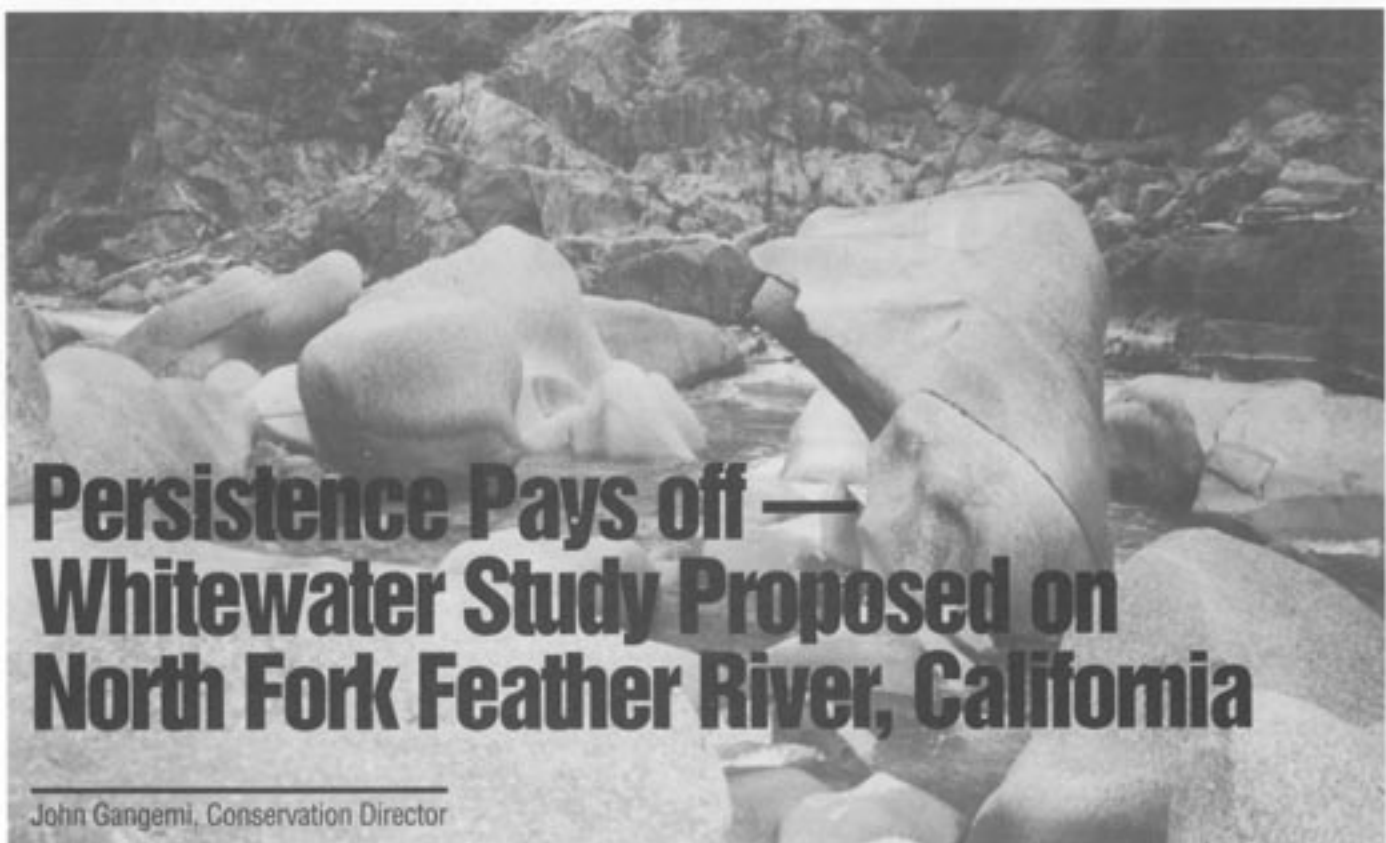
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Persistence Pays off — Whitewater Study Proposed on North Fork Feather River, California

John Gangemi, Conservation Director

Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) has agreed to provide flows for whitewater paddling studies for the Rock Creek and Cresta hydropower projects on the North Fork Feather River. This is a significant step forward given PG&E's previous resistance toward whitewater flows at all of their hydropower projects, and their recent attempt to neutralize American Whitewater's flow restoration efforts on California rivers (see Nov/Dec 1998 journal, p. 20). Persistence and teamwork between the AW staff, Dave Steindorf and Kevin Lewis during relicensing negotiations, eventually lead PG&E to concede the need to conduct whitewater flow studies as part of the process. Hopefully, this signifies PG&E's new attitude region-wide toward whitewater recreation.

In the agreement, PG&E will provide

whitewater flows in the spring of '99, while American Whitewater will provide expertise including boaters, study design and analysis. A team of boaters will paddle a range of flows for each de-watered reach to determine minimum and optimum flows for whitewater recreation. The results of the study will be reported to FERC, along with a recommended annual schedule of releases. Currently, American Whitewater is banking on weekend releases throughout the summer months.

In the presence of regularly scheduled whitewater flows, the North Fork Feather River is likely to become one of the most significant whitewater resources in northern California. The North Fork Feather will attract boaters due to the availability of multiple sections varying in difficulty making for

a weekend destination. The North Feather is also in close proximity to the road for easy access and offers outstanding scenery, camping opportunities and additional activities such as mountain biking and rock climbing.

The Rock Creek section offers nine miles of whitewater, further delineated into three distinct sections. Each section offers unique whitewater opportunities:

Section 1) Rock Creek Dam to Tobin—4 miles of Class III-IV paddling; Section 2) Tobin Section—1.5 miles of Class IV-V; Section 3) below Tobin to Rock Creek—2.5 miles of Class III-IV. The Cresta section offers 5 miles of class III-IV boating.

Above: Kevin Lewis disappearing behind rock sculptures prevalent on the North Fork Feather.

Montana State Legislature Threatens to Obstruct Democracy

John Gangemi, Conservation Director

On November 3rd, 1998, Montanans made history by voting to ban cyanide leach mining. The Montana Legislature, in defiance of the democratic process, is now considering nullifying the November ballot initiative. American Whitewater opposes any efforts by the state legislature to amend or repeal the

citizen initiative. It is insulting for the legislature to override the expressed will of the people.

For boaters, cyanide spills in rivers present a serious health risk. Montana is only the second state to take a strong stand against the mining industry. Last year, Wisconsin

voters passed a mining moratorium bill prohibiting new permits for sulfide mines.

For more information contact Jim Jensen at the Montana Environmental Information Center (406)443-2520 or contact John Gangemi (406)837-3155 or jgangemi@digisys.net.

AMERICAN WHITEWATER'S OPPOSITION TO MEADOW RIVER TRANSMISSION LINE ROUTE CONTINUES

John Gangemi, Conservation Director

American Whitewater continues to fight the re-routed transmission line associated with the pending Summersville hydropower facility on the Gauley River in West Virginia.

The proposed southern transmission line is routed along the Meadow River and Glade Creek corridors. American Whitewater opposes the route change on several grounds: A) the route change was authorized without the required 30-day public notice; B) the route change was not subjected to adequate environmental review; C) alternative routes that would not disfigure the Meadow River and Glade Creek corridors were not thoroughly investigated.

History: In the early 1990's, FERC granted the city of Summersville a hydropower license for the Summersville Dam on the Gauley River in West Virginia. The project requires retrofitting the existing dam outlet for hydropower generation. The FERC license au-

thorized a northern transmission line route roughly paralleling state highway 19. Summersville subsequently abandoned the northern transmission line for a southern route, which FERC approved in 1997, post-license, without undergoing public review. American Whitewater and Mt. Lookout-Mt. Nebo Property Protection Association appealed FERC's decision. The US Court of Appeals (4th Cir.) upheld the approval.

In 1998, FERC issued an order approving the southern transmission line route. American Whitewater petitioned for rehearing on the order. FERC denied the rehearing request, claiming American Whitewater did not have party status in the proceeding. American Whitewater subsequently filed an administrative appeal, which is pending; and for procedural reasons, also filed a judicial appeal with the US Court of Appeals (DC Circuit). The rehearing petition is pending.

For more information contact John Gangemi (406)837-3155, email: jgangemi@digisys.net.



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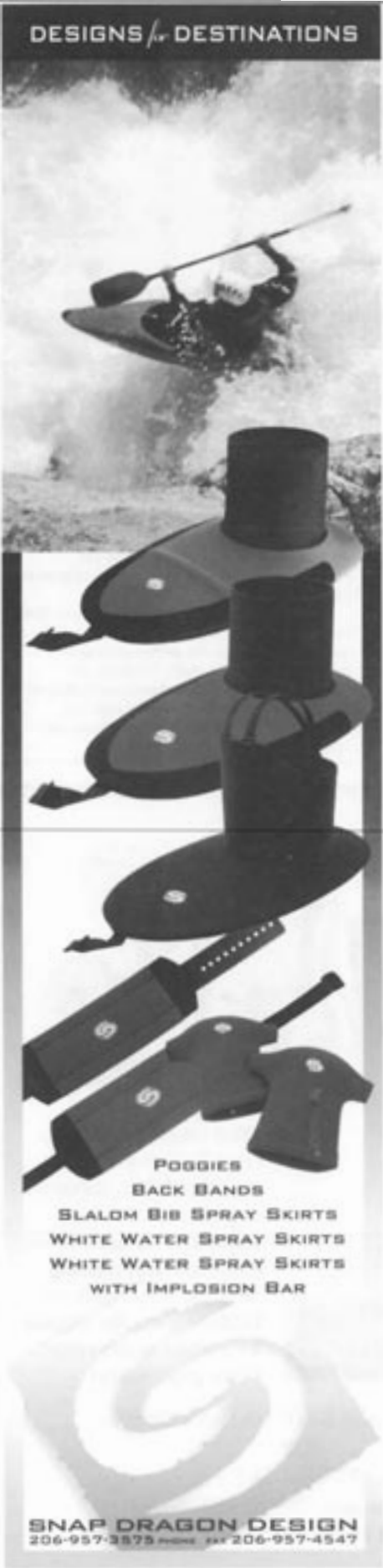
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Relicensing starts for PG&E's Pit 3, 4 and 5 Hydropower Project on the Pit River in northern California

John Gangemi, Conservation Director

PG&E started the initial stage consultation for the relicensing of the Pit 3, 4 and 5 hydropower project. The project comprises three power-generating facilities under a single license. PG&E, uncharacteristic of their previous relicensing efforts, elected to identify issues and develop study plans cooperatively with all interested parties. American Whitewater looks forward to working with this "new and improved" PG&E on the Pit River.

The Pit is one of the few rivers in California capable of offering year round whitewater flows, thus being an important resource for late summer boating in this predominantly rain and snowmelt driven Sierra system. Pacific Gas and Electric, recognizing the hydropower potential of the Pit 70 years ago, began constructing a series of projects diverting water from the river channel to powerhouses. In total, there are 3 FERC licensed hydropower projects on the Pit River, encompassing six dams in the mainstem of the Pit and an additional three projects on tributaries encompassing three dams. These projects de-water or inundate under reservoirs 40 miles of Class II-V whitewater. American Whitewater is actively involved in the relicense process for Pit No. 1, the project furthest upstream on the Pit system. American Whitewater requested regularly scheduled whitewater releases July through September on the reach de-watered by Pit No. 1. Pit Nos. 3, 4 and 5 also de-water significant whitewater resources. Collectively, these relicensings offer an opportunity to restore 40 miles of the Pit River and provide predictable whitewater flows.

For more information contact Kevin Lewis, <klewis@snowcrest.net> (530)221-8722. The US Forest Service also has a web site <<http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/lassen/pit345/>> with regular updates on the relicensing of Pit 3, 4 and 5.

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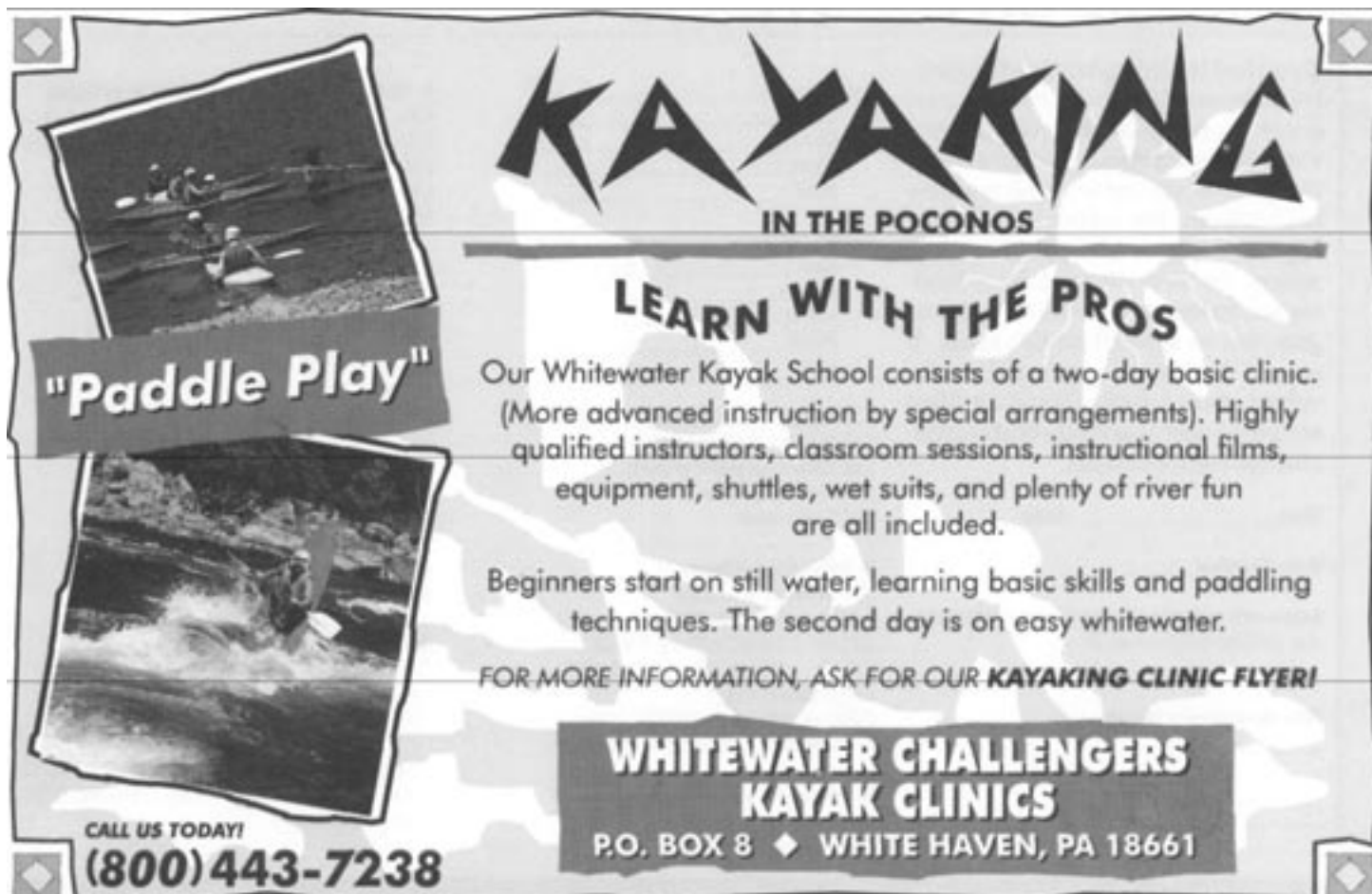
To Apply: Send letter of interest, resume, and references as soon as possible to: Executive Assistant Position, American Whitewater, 1430 Fenwick Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Fax (301) 589-6121 or email: Kate@amwhitewater.org Position to begin May 17, 1999.

Edwards Dam Decommissioning Highlights River Restoration

John Gangemi, Conservation Director

A historic river conservation event occurred on the first day of the 1999 New Year: The canal gates diverting water from Maine's Kennebec River to the Edwards Hydropower facility were closed. This cessation of power generation is the result of a FERC order to decommission the hydro-project. The order itself was a landmark decision. Up until then, FERC had never ordered a project decommissioned against the wishes of the hydro operator. FERC based its decision in part on the severe environmental impacts the hydropower plant and the accompanying Edwards Dam caused on the Kennebec River. The utility industry is now challenging FERC's authority to decommission private hydropower facilities.

Although this section of the Kennebec does not contain whitewater opportunities for paddlers, the ramifications of the FERC decision and canal gate closure extend far beyond the Kennebec. This act symbolizes the future of river conservation as we move into the next millennium. River restoration is not new to American Whitewater. The American Whitewater River Conservation program spends much of its time and budget in restoration efforts. For some of our resource agencies and society at large, restoring rivers is a new concept. Thanks to the Kennebec, our river restoration concept just got a little more acceptable to the mainstream.



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"Patagonia has long distinguished themselves in the outdoor industry as a company with a strong commitment to conservation beyond mere marketing ploys," said John Gangemi, Conservation Director for American Whitewater. "In past years, Patagonia has supported American Whitewater's Conservation Program through company grants."

For Patagonia, designing the American Whitewater Challenge Program is away to actively link the connections between sport and environment. Patagonia believes that in watersports, as well as other outdoor pursuits, where you play is as

important as how and why. Now, Patagonia is making it easy for their patrons to practice environmental advocacy, thus greatly expanding their own stewardship ethic globally.

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Trouble on the Waters

If you had trouble getting to the river, let us know. Use this form to report access problems so that AW can convince legislators and government authorities where and when river access is a problem. If you have met an irate landowner, noticed signs forbidding access, or were stopped by a landowner, barbed wire fence or a locked gate, tell us about it on this form. If several boaters are arrested or involved, only 1 form should be filled out per incident naming a boater available for future contact.

River _____ State _____

Date of incident _____

Access code categories: List below or circle the categories, multiple categories are ok.

Brief description of incident:

Boater contact _____
 Address _____
 City etc. _____
 Phone _____
 email _____

Landowner/Agency/Sheriff contact (if known)
 Name _____
 Address _____
 City etc. _____
 Phone _____
 email _____

1. Trespass. Ticket, warning or arrest for:

- 1.01 Trespass on private property
- 1.02 Trespass on public property
- 1.03 Criminal trespass
- 1.04 Civil trespass

2. Public Access Closure

- 2.01 Denied by federal law
 - 2.01.01 Denied by BLM
 - 2.01.02 Denied by Forest Service
 - 2.01.03 Denied by Nat'l Park Service
- 2.02 Denied by state
- 2.03 Denied by local authority
- 2.04 Denied by administrative edict

3. Injury from man-made obstacles

- 3.01 Barbed wire or fence
- 3.02 Low head dam

4. Obstacles running river, scouting or portaging

- 4.01 Fence or chain on land blocking access
- 4.02 Fence, wire, or tree on river blocking access
- 4.03 Posted no trespassing sign
- 4.04 Vehicle towed, ticketed, or vandalized
- 4.05 Threats or acts of violence

5. Closures: Rivers closed that were once open

- 5.01 Closed by private landowner
- 5.02 Closed by government agency
 - 5.02.01 Federal
 - 5.02.02 State
 - 5.02.03 Local
- 5.03 High water closure

New access fees

- 6.01 Charged by private landowner
- 6.02 Charged by government agency
 - 6.02.01 Federal
 - 6.02.02 State
 - 6.02.03 Local

Dam controlled rivers

- 7.01 Water turned off
- 7.02 Inconsistent flow: too much or too little
- 7.03 No notice of releases

Send to Ken Ransford, 475 Sierra Vista, Carbondale, CO 81623, 970-963-6800, FAX 970-963-6700, ransford@csn.net

Access is a constant struggle. The AW Access Committee needs your help.

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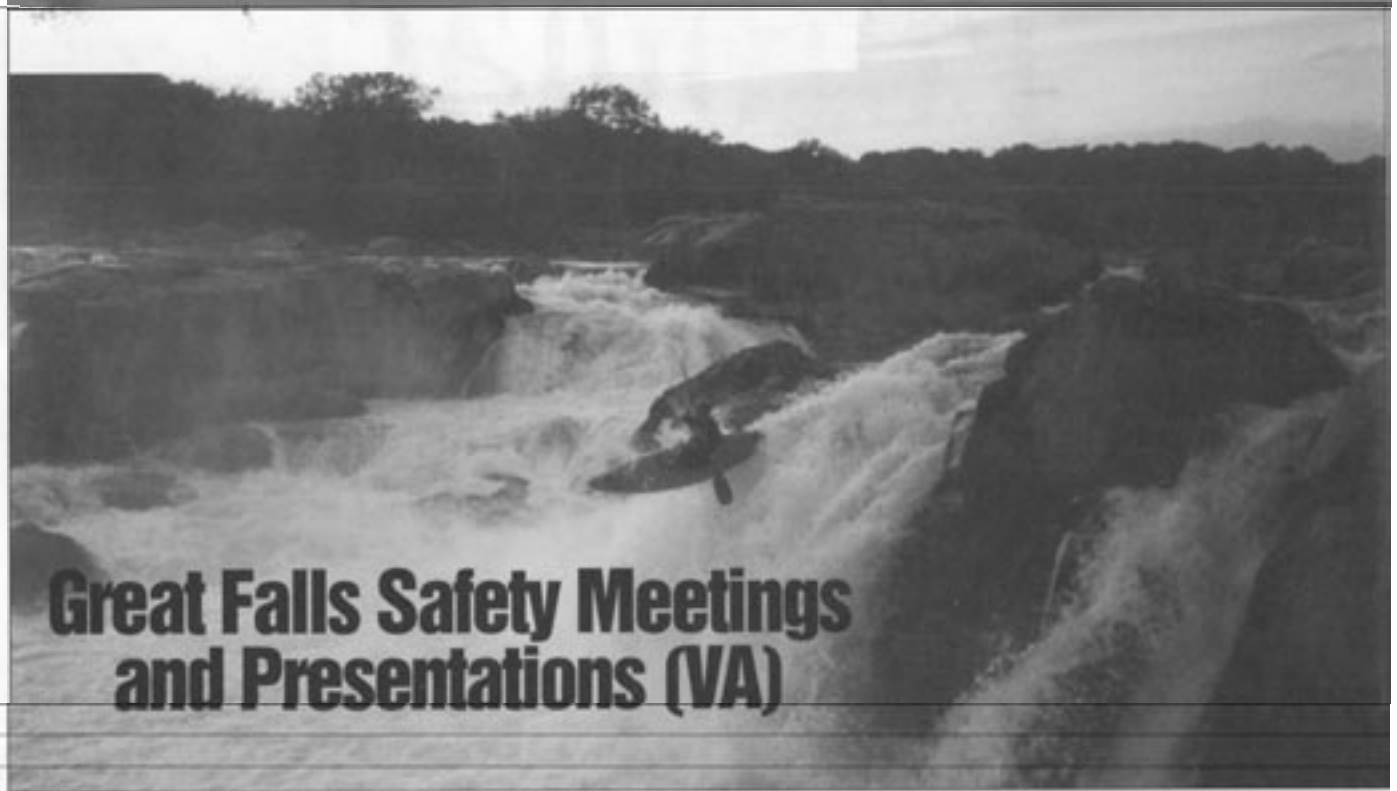


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Great Falls Safety Meetings and Presentations (VA)

Luke Hopkins on Great Falls

Photos & Article by Jason Robertson

We would like to extend our thanks to everyone that made the Great Falls Safety Meeting a success!

Lisa & Dave Collins
Amy Gibson
Eric Johnson
Greg Morrison
Martin Radigan
Jesse Reynolds
Salamander Paddle Gear
Paul Schelp
Steve Taylor
Drew Verdecchia



Great Falls of the Potomac, VA — Though Scott Bristow's drowning over Thanksgiving was tragic, it has brought the rec.boats.paddle community closer and also improved local boater relations with the Park Service. A dedicated group of American Whitewater volunteers met on January 21 with Park Ranger Jesse Reynolds to follow up on several significant safety issues that we observed after Scott's drowning on the Class V(+) Charlie's Hole. Salamander Paddle Gear graciously donated two throw bags for the occasion, which I presented to Ranger Jesse Reynolds and local falls boater Martin Radigan for pulling this meeting together and contributing to the spirit of cooperation between kayakers and park officials that has grown over the last several months. American Whitewater also donated a copy of the new "Whitewater Self Defense" safety video by Kent Ford, Ellen DeCuir and Charlie Walbridge to the Park Service as a way of thanking them for their assistance. During the meeting we discussed many issues, including: a process for holding future meetings; developing standardized hand signals to aid communication between kayakers on the rocks and rangers on the overlooks; designing signs explaining the dangers inherent to running the Falls; changing the restrictions for scouting, portaging, and launching on the Virginia side at high water; and volunteering to increase safety and protect the environment around the park. Park Ranger Jesse Reynolds also made the observation that larger groups of boaters on the falls attract spectators, crowding the overlooks. This comment inspired us to develop a boater's protocol or etiquette encouraging self-imposed limits on the total number of people running the falls to less than 10 at once. We also agreed to encourage our friends not to sunbathe or swim in sight of the crowds or run the falls on Saturday afternoon when the spectator crowds are at their thickest. Please try to abide by these etiquette suggestions. They do not carry the weight of law, but are a gentleman's agreement designed to help foster a cooperative air between the park and the boating community, ensuring our continued ability to run the falls in the future.

High Water Closure Dismissed on Cattaraugus Creek!

By: Jason Robertson

Persia Town Court, NY — In a victory against high water closures, Judge Namlick dismissed disorderly conduct charges against paddlers Dave Gore and Don Shelters, who are members of the Zoar Valley Paddling Club and American Whitewater. The dismissal followed a half-day trial, during which Gore and Shelters were defended by Stream Team attorney Joe Sedita and Ameri-

can Whitewater board member, Bob Glanville, who is also an attorney.

The charges arose out of a June 26, 1998 incident when the defendants kayaked the Cattaraugus Creek Gorge with Bob Glanville at flood following a record rainfall that raised the creek level from 176 cfs to 30,000 cfs in less than four hours.

Gore, Shelters, and Glanville

were given five minutes to leave town after taking out in a public parking lot. However, Shelters and Gore were also cited with disorderly conduct because they had been warned to stay off the creek earlier in the day after an earlier run on the same stretch at somewhat higher water.

In the final analysis, the Judge was persuaded that the conduct of the defendants did

not satisfy the elements of the disorderly conduct statute.

Since we prevailed at trial, there will be no occasion for an appeal for precedential value. However, we are sure that Don and Dave were as happy to see these charges dismissed as we were.

American Whitewater thanks Glanville and Sedita for so ably defending paddler's interests in this case.

Kayaking and Canoeing Determine Navigability in Moose River, NY Case!

By: Carolyn Dick and Bob Glanville

Editor's Note: The New York Court of Appeals has issued a very favorable decision on the navigability issues presented on the Moose River. In brief, the Court recognized the public right to portage, and ruled that recreational boaters have a broad right of navigation on New York's rivers and streams.

Carolyn Dick is an attorney with the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, DC; however, she worked on the original case with the Sierra Club and prepared the following article in January before skipping over the waters to explore Mexico's whitewater. Bob Glanville has been a huge help for American Whitewater (see the Cattaraugus Creek story on this page). He prepared our amicus brief as a Friend of the Court during the appeal.

The Good News

New York's highest court held that "evidence of [a] river's capacity for recreational use is in line with the traditional test of navigability...." in the case Adirondack League Club, Inc. v. Sierra Club, et al (decided December 17, 1998).

In other words, a river doesn't have to be commercially useful to be navigable; if a river supports recreational use, it can be found "navigable in fact" by law, meaning we can boat it — even if it passes through private property. Under New York law, a river that is navigable in fact is subject to a "navigational servitude" — a public easement allowing folks to boat rivers (and portage to the extent necessary) even if the adjoining bed and banks are pri-

vately owned.

The Bad News

Although the court found that a river capable of being used for recreation may also be navigable in fact, the court held that more evidence was necessary to determine whether the South Branch of the Moose River was navigable in fact. So the litigants have to go to trial, instead of having the court rule on the facts before it in an abbreviated process called "summary judgment" — in which a court can review facts if they are not at issue and make a ruling without having a full-blown trial. Notably, one Court of Appeals judge dissented the decision not to pass judgement, suggesting the court should have found in favor of the defendant boaters.

New York's test of navigability requires the river be "navigable in its natural or unimproved condition," therefore the boaters in this case must prove that the South Branch is navigable without the aids of dams or other artificial improvements. This point is relevant since dams were used to aid in logging operations in the first half of this century when the river was navigable under an older interpretation of New York's navigability law. The defendants will now have to show that boaters do not require dams for navigability by

demonstrating that the dams merely enhanced a flow that was, by itself, sufficient.

The Story

On June 15, 1991, four canoeists and a kayaker set out to paddle the secluded run in the Adirondacks. They began and ended their trip on state-owned land, paddling 13 miles through property belonging to the Adirondack League Club. The Club is a private organization that owns approximately 56,000 acres within the Adirondacks, which it maintains for the exclusive use of its members.

Prior to taking the trip, the boaters informed the Club of their intentions.

Knowing the boaters were coming, and apparently with the intention of bringing a lawsuit, the club recruited a crew of at least 10 people to track the trip. The boaters were watched, photographed, sound recorded, videotaped, and even tracked by a plane that was communicating with the ground crew via radio.

The ALC sued the individual boaters for trespassing and the Sierra Club for sponsoring the trip. The case eventually wound its way up to the Court of Appeals, and now, with the understanding that recreational use can establish navigability will return to the lower court for trial.

New York's Test of Navigability

Water law varies between states. So though this case reflects the law in New York, it has limited precedential value elsewhere. Still, other states can point to the increasing number of cases around the nation that have defined navigability based on a recreational standard, and this case may set the legal standard for navigability in the Northeast.

New York's test for navigability has traditionally focussed on the commercial use of a river, since rivers have been used historically as commercial highways for the transportation of goods. However, another component of the navigability test has been the use of rivers for travel, or for floating craft for reasons other than commercial enterprise. And, as commercial traffic has shifted from rivers to roads, river use has become increasingly recreational. The New York Court of Appeals decision clarifies that if the natural flow of a river supports either commercial or recreational use, it is navigable in fact and the public has the right to paddle it.

New York also recognizes the right to portage rapids and obstructions. The courts have stated that it is not "essential to the easement, that the capacity of the stream... should be continuous, or, in other words, that its ordinary state, at all seasons of the year, should be such as to make it navigable." The courts have found that a river can be navigable as a whole even if certain sections are clearly non-navigable and must be portaged (epitomizing this point is a case involving the Niagara River – found navigable despite the famous falls). Portaging, then, is incidental to the right of navigation. As the lower court stated, "the public's right to navigate includes the use of the bed of the

river or stream to detour around natural obstructions and to portage if necessary."

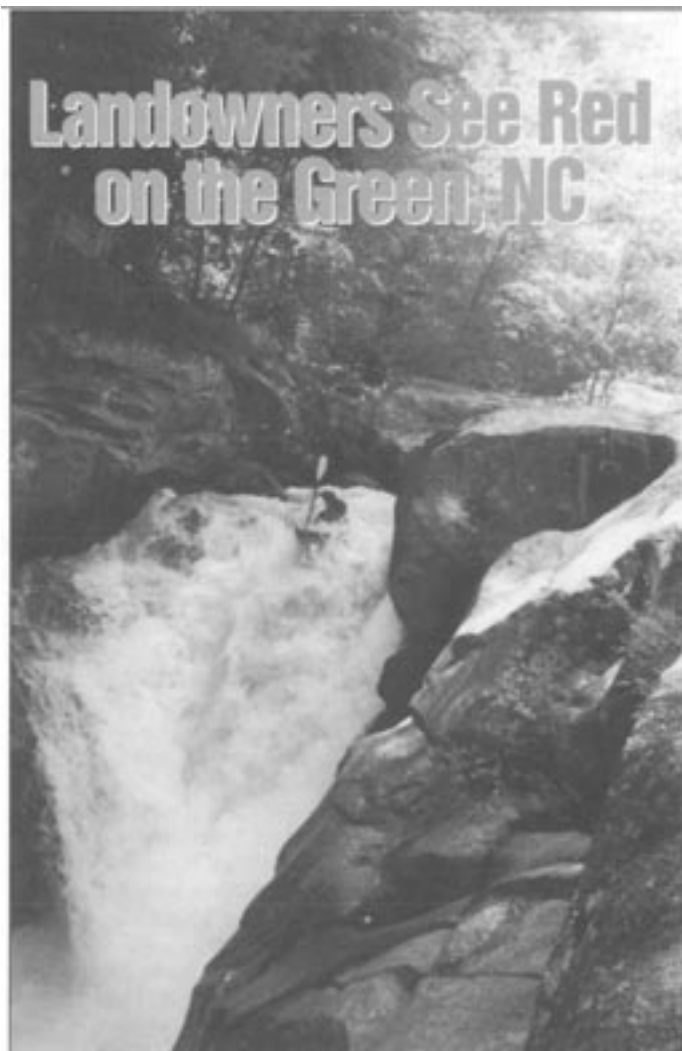
The Court of Appeals agreed, observing that, "the right to navigate carries with it the incidental privilege to make use, when absolutely necessary, of the bed and banks, including the right to portage on riparian lands... On the other hand, any use of private river beds or banks that is not strictly incidental to the right to navigate gives rise to an action for trespass."

Furthermore, the courts recognize variations in seasonal flows and have determined that if there are enough periods of high water or of navigable capacity to make the river useful for commercial or recreational endeavors, then the river is navigable under the New York test. Although the courts haven't given any real guidance on how many months a river must be "navigable in fact" to be navigable by law, one case held that if it was only navigable two months out of the year, the river was NOT navigable in fact.

The Happy Ending

So New York's highest court firmly held that a river's navigability can be established with recreational use. That's great news for New York's boaters and even for those in other states, to the extent they can use this case as persuasive authority.

If you have questions about this case, or are involved in a similar one, you can contact Carolyn Dick to discuss it at dick.carolyn@epamail.epa.gov or American Whitewater at Access@amwhitewater.org.



Luke Hopkins spanking the Monkey. Green River, NC

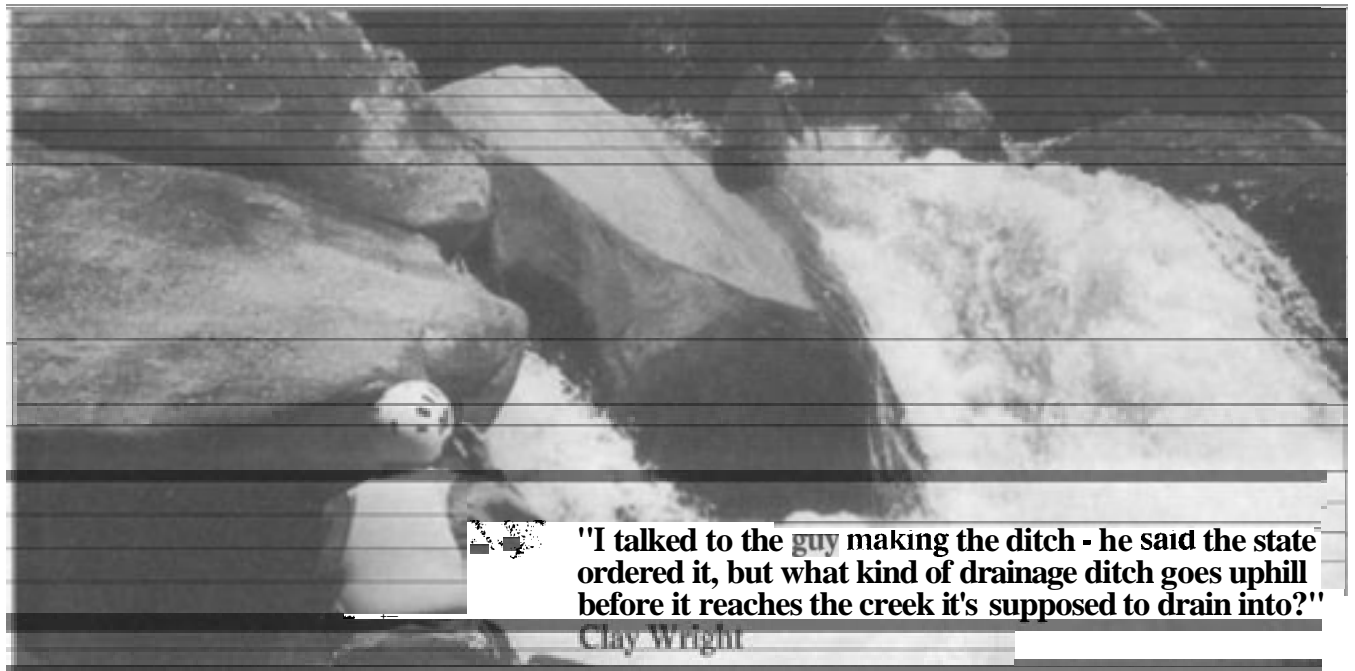
Photos & Article by Jason Robertson

The Green River in North Carolina is a lot harder to run these days. The rapids aren't changing; however, access is becoming a nightmare.

A local family has tried to have Gallimore Road abandoned by the County; tried to gate off access with saw horses; posted No Trespassing and No Parking signs; asked the State to tow vehicles; and has even inspired someone to dig a drainage ditch of Grand Canyon-size depth through the public parking area, cutting off the legal parking spaces on Gallimore Road.

Boaters, fishermen, hikers, hunters, and photographers use this parking area to access the Green River. Advanced and intermediate boaters take-out at the mouth of Big Hungry Creek and hike up to the parking lot after paddling the Class III-IV section from the Tuxedo Dam during the summer, while hair boaters put-in and paddle the legendary Class V(+) Green River Narrows below the trail.

The State's man on the ground, Management Biologist Dan Hayes, was unaware of the ditch when I spoke with him in January; however, he said that the Wildlife Resource Commission clearly owns two of the parking spaces at the end of the road and that the ditch shouldn't cut across them.



"I talked to the guy making the ditch - he said the state ordered it, but what kind of drainage ditch goes uphill before it reaches the creek it's supposed to drain into?"
 Clay Wright

Cary Plato seeing a little Sunshine. Green River, NC

In addition, the local Game Warden, Rick Stone, says that his Captain, Travis Whitson, has asked the State to add 10-12 additional parking spaces on their property at the top of the trail.

Sentiment is divided between the family, and boaters and neighbors. Most of the locals are very agreeable, and have even sought to encourage boaters by offering shuttles, keeping American Whitewater up to date on the issue, and allowing kayakers to park on their own property though it is further away, making a long hike longer.

If you, as a boater, are as serious about wanting public access to the Green River as Clay Wright, Chris Bell, Risa Calloway, Susan Wilson, Philip Curry (Lotus), Leland Davis (Green River Race organizer), Jim Clark (President of Perception), Spencer Cooke (Orosi Rep), Jason Darby, Daniel Delavergne, Chris Parker, Cleo Smith, Brad Moulton, Eric Young, Milt Aitken, Ed Chapman, Alex Zendel, Scott Sullivan, and Susan Oehler, then get in touch and get involved!

At the very least, WRITE A LETTER to Don Hayes and Captain Whitson explaining your interest and listing ALL of the activities and reasons you would like the State to add parking at the end of Gallimore Road. Explain whether you are, or have been, a resident of North Carolina, and indicate if you have a hunting or fishing license since the sale of these licenses helps to fund the NC Wildlife Resources commission, which purchases these properties and provides these public access points.

You should also be sure to ask for the State's assistance in helping

the public ensure that Gallimore Road (S.R. 1956) is not abandoned to the local landowners by the NC- DOT. If this road is abandoned by the State, we can abandon all hope of using the parking area and of getting to the trail head without trespassing!

Contact:
 Don Hayes
 Management Biologist, Districts 7 & 8
 NC Wildlife Resources Commission
 2085 Murray Road
 State Road, NC 28676

Captain Travis Whitson
 NC Wildlife Resources Commission
 Wildlife Management
 PO Box 1771
 Bryson City, 28713

Ed Green, Supervisor
 NC-DOT
 693 Mountain Road
 Hendersonville. NC 28731

Deliver us from Fees on the Chattooga

By Jason Robertson

Rangers in the Andrew Pickens District in the Sumter National Forest have proposed collecting parking fees from visitors along the Chattooga River corridor in 1999. As fee programs go, the one on the Chattooga is fair and based on public comment; however it continues an alarming trend of charging Americans an incidental tax for the privilege of visiting public lands.

The \$3.00 daily parking fee seems reasonable. However, American Whitewater has asked the Forest Service to sell \$15 annual permits

that could be used throughout all Fee Demo areas in the region.

For more information contact:
 Michael B. Crane, Acting District Ranger
 USDA Forest Service
 112 Andrew Pickens Circle
 Mountain Rest, SC 29664
 864-638-9568

Boaters Win Major Changes in Grand Canyon Fees!

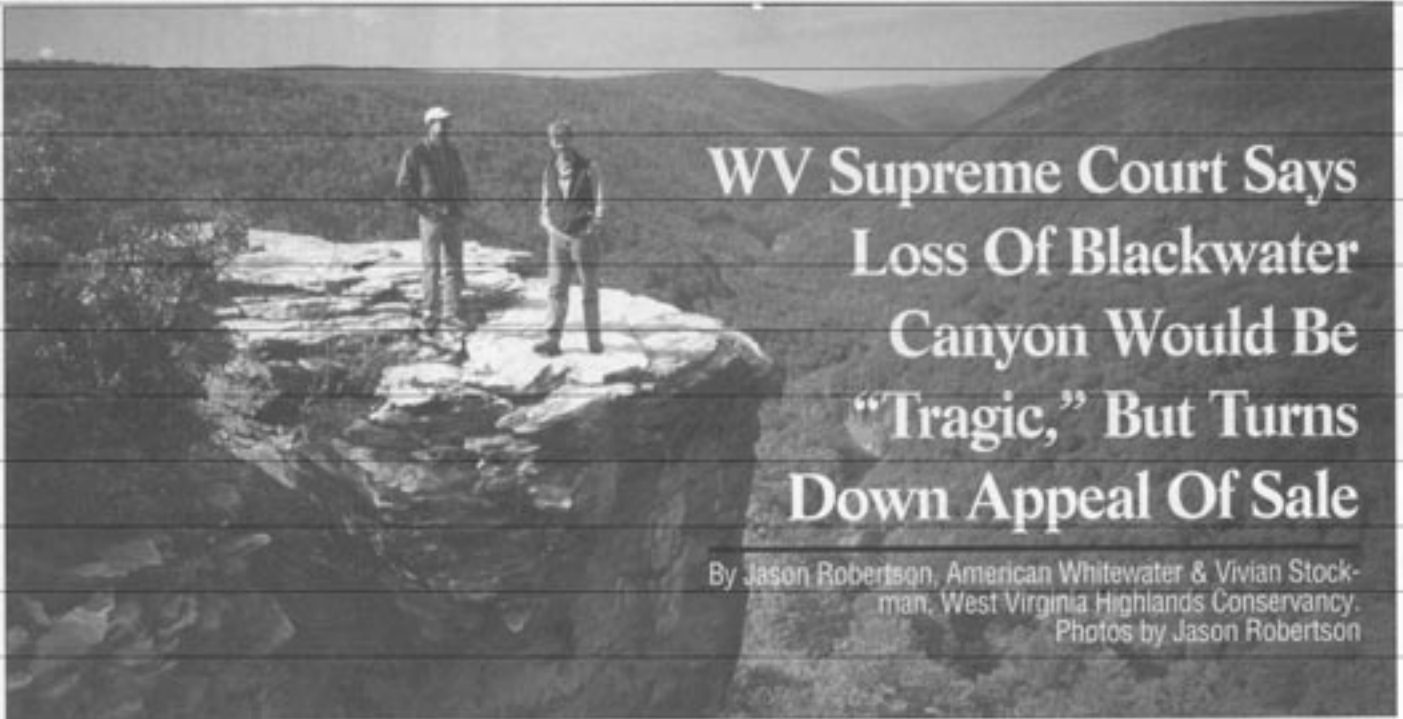
Photos & Article by Jason Robertson

American Whitewater, Grand Canyon Private Boaters Association (GCPBA), Grand Canyon River Guides, and the National Parks and Conservation Association have forced the National Park Service to revise its fee structure for private boaters visiting the Grand Canyon.

On January 11, the Grand Canyon National Park announced major changes in the fees that are charged to non-commercial visitors to the river. Private boaters will now pay a flat \$100 per person charge under Congressional Fee Demonstration authority. This is an important first step in acknowledging the importance of private boating access to the Grand Canyon. This victory comes as a direct result of work by the boating community in demonstrating the arbitrary and confusing nature of the former fee system.

The park increased the fees in the Canyon from approximately \$130 per trip to as much as \$1,600 per trip regardless of group size. Then in 1997, American Whitewater's Rich Hoffman provided testimony to Hansen's Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands. Hoffman successfully argued that the fees were overly complex, created a hardship on the park visitors, and were being collected under an inappropriate legislative authority. As a direct result of our testimony, Congress directed the National Park Service to readdress the fee collection practices in the Grand Canyon.

The revised fees aren't perfect; but they are a significant improvement over the former fee structure.



WV Supreme Court Says Loss Of Blackwater Canyon Would Be "Tragic," But Turns Down Appeal Of Sale

By Jason Robertson, American Whitewater & Vivian Stockman, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. Photos by Jason Robertson

CHARLESTON — West Virginia's Supreme Court of Appeals commented that the Blackwater Canyon deserves protection, but refused to overturn a Public Service Commission (PSC) ruling about the Canyon. The ruling stated that the PSC was not required to intervene in Allegheny Power Systems' (APS) sale of the canyon to a logging company.

While the Supreme Court decision, handed down on Wednesday, Dec. 16, means the sale of the canyon will not be revisited, the ruling did say, "If the natural integrity of the Blackwater River Canyon is destroyed, it will be a tragedy for the people of West Virginia."

"We are glad the Supreme Court recognizes the special qualities that make the Canyon so important to the people of West Virginia," said Vivian Stockman, a member of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy's Blackwater Canyon Project.

sold by APS's wholly owned subsidiary, West Virginia Power and Transmission Co., and should therefore have been subject to PSC review.

Since the decision was passed down in December, negotiations on an American Whitewater supported land swap between the Forest Service and AWP have taken a turn for the worse. The Forest Service appraised the property at a reduced rate over AWP's own appraisal. John Crites, AWP's owner, stated in an interview in the Charleston Gazette that "he was offended by a Forest Service appraisal that was 'millions of dollars' less than what his company expected to get for its canyon land."

The collapse of negotiations between the Forest Service and AWP, and failure of the lawsuit over the sale has left the environmental community pursuing a variety of other options to curtail logging

in the canyon. These options range from suits under the Endangered Species Act over the flying squirrel, Cheat Mountain Salamander, Indiana bat, and northern water shrew to requests that the National Park Service condemn the land and establish a Blackwater Canyon National Park. Frank Young, president of the Conservancy said, "We feel that the Canyon is far too precious both as rare habitat and as a cultural resource to be logged and developed. There are plenty of places to cut timber and build condominiums without turning the Blackwater Canyon into a wasteland of timber haul roads and commercial skylines."

American Whitewater's primary concern is for protecting the entire watershed; however we are also working to protect the river corridor and river access points to this classic whitewater run. We remain committed to working with the Forest Service and Allegheny Wood Products to resolve this thorny issue. Stay tuned for rapid changes in the status of public access to the Blackwater.

For more information contact the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy at www.wvhighlandsconservancy.org, or write to American Whitewater at Access@amwhitewater.org.

The ruling said: "It is unfortunate that state government has not taken a more active role in the stewardship of our environment by developing both law and public policy that takes environmental concerns into account; that environmental organizations were not more aggressive in seeking to purchase and preserve this land at an earlier point in time; and that West Virginia Power did not show more corporate responsibility by selling the land to environmentalists for purposes of preservation notwithstanding the realization of reduced profits."

The Supreme Court case considered whether the PSC, the agency that regulates public utilities, should have reviewed the sale of 3,000 acres in Blackwater Canyon to Allegheny Wood Products (AWP). Both the PSC and APS argued that the utility's landholding company was not a public utility and therefore not subject to PSC regulations. Under West Virginia law, whenever a public utility wants to sell any of its assets, the PSC must determine if that sale is in the public interest.

The appellants, including the Conservancy and the West Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club, West Virginia Wildlife Federation, Chuck Merritt and James M. Sconyers, argued that the Canyon property was



John's Creek



Race Revived

By Liz Garland

Wilderness Adventure, Eagle Landing in New Castle, Virginia will be hosting a John's Creek downriver race at noon on Sunday, April 11th.

It has been several years since a race has been held on this favorite southwest Virginia creek. This year's race will celebrate and contribute to the efforts protecting access for the growing number of paddlers that visit John's Creek. A pre-race party will be held at the Wilderness Adventure camp in Craig County. For more information contact Rob Scarfe at (800) 782-0779 or mscarfe@vt.edu. Be sure to read your next issue of American Whitewater for more race details and for a John's Creek Access Fund update.

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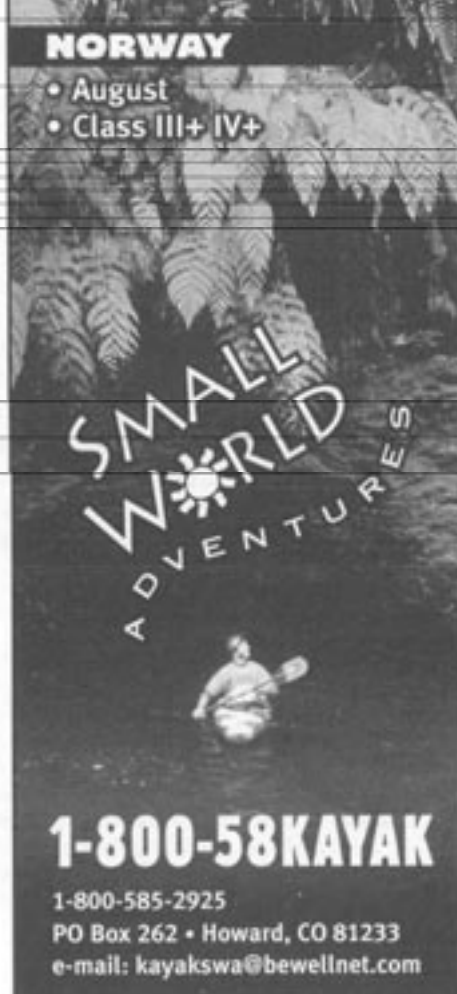
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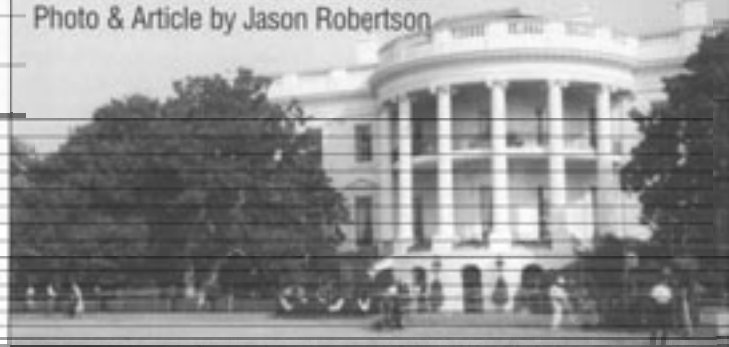


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The State of the Union and Forthcoming Wilderness Legislation in 1999

Photo & Article by Jason Robertson



When President Clinton delivered his State of the Union Speech in January, he boldly announced the Clinton-Gore proposal for a \$1 billion Lands Legacy Initiative. If approved, this would be the largest one-year investment ever in the protection of America's land resources.

In addition, the President called on Congress to extend permanent wilderness protection to more than 5 million acres within 17 national parks and monuments. In the words of the White House, this initiative "charts a new conservation vision for the 21st century, preserving irreplaceable pieces of our natural legacy within easy reach of every citizen."

Interestingly, the President's words imply a right of widespread public access to wilderness areas, which strengthens American Whitewater's proposal for boater access to Yellowstone. However, in a disappointing move, the President neglected to include or recommend wilderness protection for the Grand Canyon. The omission of the Grand Canyon leaves the boating community and National Park Service without any guidance from the Clinton Administration as to its proposed wilderness status, and leaves the management of the Canyon in limbo for at least one more year.

The Park Service's spin is that the Grand Canyon wilderness proposal has never been forwarded to Congress, whereas the other 17 elements included in Clinton's proposal were previously submitted by President's Nixon, Ford, and Carter during the 1970s, but have never been voted on by Congress. This distinction is important since the Congressional members cannot nominate areas for wilderness status without the President's recommendation under the Wilderness Act. Therefore, the best that the boating and environmental communities can hope for this year is a clear Park recommendation for wilderness under the Colorado River Management Plan, which would require strict management of the Park from rim to rim as wilderness until the President formally recommends its nomination to Congress.

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By Jayne H. Abbot, Events Manager

Fall and winter has been busy here at the events office as the schedule became a moving target not easy to nail down. With some fancy footwork and numerous tacks placed on strategic dates, the schedule has been set and you'll find it here in this issue. If you look at some other more flashy magazine schedules you will note that some event dates don't exactly correspond. The journal and our web sites (www.awa.org and www.nowr.org) will always have the most up to date event scheduling information. We are your source for whitewater events, so be sure to keep your membership current and you'll never be left at the river bank all psyched for a party to find yourself a week late and a dollar short.

Some key event dates to note. The Ocoee Rodeo has swung full circle back to a spring date of May 21-23 and will be held 100% on the Upper Ocoee. Volunteers are needed quickly! If you are interested, call 828-645-5299. A new race has been added to the Cascades series to benefit American Whitewater's access efforts at Johns Creek in Virginia.

Freestyle Pulse

X-Games, hungry corporate sponsors, TV coverage, Olympics... If you are anywhere near the pulse of freestyle (rodeo) paddling you may have heard these tantalizing words being spoken more and more frequently as the pace of this emerging sport moves up another notch in the word of sports. The American Whitewater events office has been flooded this fall and winter with email and calls about corporate sponsors eyeing the sport, including a Canadian company throwing big bucks into organizing a rodeo on the Ottawa in October that will pay big cash prizes. Word is that the ESPN X-Games executives are eyeing rodeo for inclusion in these cutting edge games. Athletes and other interested parties are talking to the Olympic committee to find out the chances of becoming an exhibition sport as early as the 2000 Sydney Olympics. The appeal of freestyle rodeo captured the 1998 Gorge Games television audiences so much so that it's expected to be a highlight of the 1999 games. All this is enough to make ones head spin, cartwheel, splitwheel, do a loop, ender for joy...

NOWR continues to formalize and build a structure to house this emerging sport. The USFKC (United States Freestyle Kayak Committee) has been working closely with NOWR

to update the judging criteria for 1999 and design the point series and the first ever North American Cup championship. A brief overview of the rules is included in this issue. For a full copy of the judging rules, formats and scoring, contact the events office or check the NOWR web site.

NOWR Point Series Championship and North American Cup

The championship series and North American Cup apply only to NOWR registered Pro/Elite (aka Expert/Pro) classes in K-1 men, K-1 Women, C-1 and Junior. Athletes must be registered with NOWR to qualify for championship awards and designation. Please note that some events will require registration in NOWR in order to participate in their highest level class (ex. Potomac Festival). Registration forms are located in this issue. Registration deadline is June 7, 1999. Full details on the point series and North American Cup can be obtained at the NOWR web site or by calling the events office. For 1999, the championship series point system will change somewhat. There will be twelve pointed events, that is twelve events where Pro/Elite (aka Expert/Pro) competitors can earn points. These events are: Kern, Gillman, New, Maupin, Bob's Coosa, Ocoee, Potomac, Fibark, Animas, Wausau and Ottawa. The competitor's top five event points earned will be added to determine their standings in the series. This system levels the playing field so that any competitor who can make it to five events has an opportunity to win the series if they place high consistently instead of the competitor who makes it to the most events winning the series. Points will be awarded at each event as in 1999, i.e., based upon the size of the class.

The North American Cup is an exciting new series that will crown the North American Champion in the K-1 men, K-1 women, C-1 and Junior classes. The events in the cup are the Ocoee Rodeo, Animas River Days and Wausau Rodeo. To qualify, athletes must compete at two of the three events with the Wausau event being mandatory. Points will

be earned at each event as earned in the NOWR Point Series, i.e., based upon class size. The champions will be crowned at the Wausau event. Speaking of Wausau, this should be a really hot event. In addition to the rodeo, a jazz and blues festival will be cranking all weekend within walking distance of the freestyle site.

Team Trials

All you wannabe world freestyle competitors take note that team trial dates have been set and organizers corralled (see events schedule). Two important deadlines to note for registration: East Coast trials due by April 25, 1999/West Coast trials due by May 25, 1999. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** To receive prerequisites and registration information, contact the organizers of the events as shown on the schedule.

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1999 SCHEDULE OF RIVER EVENTS

Come join American Whitewater in 1999 as we celebrate whitewater rivers across country through our world famous festivals, races and rodeos. Hope to see you there!

AMERICAN WHITEWATER EVENTS

National Paddling Film Festival – East	February 26-27	Lexington, KY	Barry Grimes	606-623-9067	bagriml@pop.uky.edu
Stoney Creek Rendezvous	April 10-11	Johnstown, PA	Steve Podratsky	814-266-9744	mantonik@surfshop.net
Sacandaga Festival	July 17	Hadley, NY	John Duncan	518-696-5710	soc@whitewaterusa.com
Black River Festival	July 24-25	Watertown, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397	cko11234@aol.com
Deerfield Festival	July 31	Charlemont, MA	Mike Coleman	781-646-6744	colemanm@beaconarch.com
"Don't call this a Festival River Rendezvous"/September 4-6	1 Relfort, NY/Beaver River I	Chris Koll	315-652-8397	ckoll1234@aol.com	
Gauley Festival	September 25	Summersville, WV	Phyllis Horowitz	914-586-2355	whiteh2o@catskill.net
Russell Fork Rendezvous	October 1-3	Haysi, VA	Brent Austin	606-278-2011	surfin@kymtnnet.org
Moose River Festival	October 16	Old Forge, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397	cko11234@aol.com

AMERICAN WHITEWATER CASCADE SERIES

a series of American Whitewater premier level races from mild(er) to wilder held across the country

Johns Creek Race	April 11	New Castle, VA	Rob Scarfe	800-782-0779	mscarfe@vt.edu
Canyon Creek Race	May 6	Clark County, WA	Keith Jensen	503-285-0464	aldercreek@aol.com
Potomac Great Falls Race	June 5-6	Great Falls, VA	Chris Cook	202-965-1917	ccindc@patriot.net
Black River Race	July 24	Watertown, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397	ckoll1234@aol.com
Upper Yough Race	July 29	Friendsville, MD	Jess Whittemore	301-746-5389	
Gore Canyon Downriver Race	August 21-22	Kremmling, CO	Paul Tefft	970-923-3955	enviro@rof.net
Russell Fork Race	October 2	Haysi, VA	Brent Austin	606-278-2011	surfin@kymtnnet.org
Gauley River Race	October 4	Summersville, WV	Donnie Hudspeth	304-658-5015	
Moose River Race	October 16	Old Forge, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397	ckoll1234@aol.com

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF WHITEWATER RODEOS (NOWR) CIRCUIT

Kern River Festival	April 16-18	Kernville, CA	Linda Ivins	805-871-6790	kernnow@aol.com
Gillman Falls Rodeo	April 17	Old Town, ME	John Miligan	207-827-6111	otoymca@aol.com
New River Rodeo	April 23-25	McCoy, VA	1 Roanoke Co. Pks/Rec	540-387-6078 x281	bsgrinia@co.roanoke.va.us
Merced River Rodeo	CANCELLED	due to local permitting issues/Susan Scheufele		408-459-7978	susans@eng.sun.com
Oregon Cup	(May 1-9)				
Maupin Daze	May 1-2	Maupin, OR	Dave Slover	541-395-2201	allstar@teleport.com
Oregon Surf Off	May 4	Pacific City, OR	Dave Slover	541-395-2201	allstar@teleport.com
Canyon Creek Downriver Race	May 6	Clark County, WA	Keith Jensen	503-285-0464	aldercreek@aol.com
Sunset Falls or The Wheel Rodeo	May 7	Clark County, WA	Keith Jensen	503-285-0464	aldercreek@aol.com
Bob's Hole Rodeo	May 8-9	Estacada, OR	Keith Jensen	503-285-0464	aldercreek@aol.com
Coosa River Whitewater Festival	May 14-16	Wetumpka, AL	Lonnie Carden	334-272-0952	
Bigfork Whitewater Festival	May 15-16	Bigfork, MT	Derreck Thomson	406-862-4926	
Ocoee Rodeo	May 21-23	Ducktown, TN	Jayne Abbot	828-645-5299	JHAbbot@aol.com
Piananskis Whitewater Rodeo	May 29-30	Calgary, AB	Mark Taylor	800-656-8288	rmcp@info-pages.com
Jackson Hole Rodeo	May 29-30	1 Jackson Hole, WY	/ Aaron Pruzan / 307-733-2471		JacksonHoleKayak@wyoming.com
Potomac Whitewater Festival	June 5-6	Great Falls, VA	Chris Cook	202-965-1917	ccindc@patriot.net
Clear Creek Festival (exhibition freestyle)	June 5-6	Golden, CO	Chuck Cremer	303-277-0133	
Boulder Rodeo	June 12-13	Boulder, CO	Kevin Sloan	303-931-3029	
Headwater Championship/FIBARK	June 17-20	Salida, CO	Susie Dempsey	719-539-4686	zusan@bewellnet.com
Animas River Days	June 25-27	Durango, CO	Nancy Wiley	970-259-3893	info@riversports.com
Skyfest	June 26-27	Index, WA	Randolph Pierce	206-789-0444	pierce3@eskimo.com

Gorge Games – WW Rodeo	July 11	Hood River, OR	John Trujillo (Tree) 541-386-4286	tree@gorge.net
Derby Creek Rodeo	CANCELLED - no local organizer			
Wausau Whitewater Rodeo	August 28-29	Wausau, WI	Julie Walraven 715-845-5664	design@dwave.net
Ottawa River Rodeo	September 4-6	Bryson, QB I Paul Sevcik / 416-222-2223 /	paul@equinoxadventures.com	
Outer Banks Surf/Kayak Rodeo	October 1-3	Nags Head, NC	Pam Malec 252-441-6800	pam@khsports.com

(Animas, Ocoee and Wausau comprise the **North American Cup** competition within the NOWR event schedule.

(Kern, Gillman, New, Maupin, Bob's, Coosa, Ocoee, Potomac, Fibark, Animas, Wausau and Ottawa are events at which NOWR registered Pro/Elite athletes can earn points towards the 1999 NOWR Point Series Championship. Athletes top five event points earned will be counted to determine champion.

OTHER EVENTS

Tallulah Festival	April 3 / Tallulah, GA / Mary Beth Bundrick / 706-754-4318				tallulahfalls@georgiamountains.com
High Country Trip	The Crown				
Watauga Gorge	Race and Rodeo (exp/pro)	April 10-11	Watauga County, NC	Dates may change	
<i>due to fluctuating water levels, check with</i>					
Nolichucky Rodeo (adv/exp)		April 17-18	Erwin, TN	organizers before attending.	
	Contacts:		Spencer Cooke	828-297-1257	
			Clem Newbold	828-295-4441	
South Yuba Gathering	April 24-25	California	Dave Good	530-265-9653	wolfcreek@gv.net
Cheat River Festival and Race	April 30-May 2	Albright, WV	Kerry Manier	304-329-3621	foc@cheat.org
1st Annual James River Rodeo	CANCELLED Richmond, VA				
2nd Annual Festival on the French Broad River	May 21-23	Asheville, NC	Chris Donochod	1828-236-1209	
East Coast Team Trials	May 29-30 / Rock Island, TN	Christie Dobson / 423-756-9861 / christiechic@mindspring.com			
Willow River Paddlefest	June 18-20	Prince George, BC	Rick Brine	250-964-7400	
West Coast Team Trials	July 24-25	Eugene, OR	Brian Tooley 1541-334-0696 / btooley@compuserve.com		
Kootenay Whitewater Festival	July 30-Aug 1	Castlegar, BC	Gerry Harrmon	250-362-7259	
American River Festival	September 11-12	Placerville, CA	Larry Goral	530-621-1224	
Export – A Whitewater Rodeo Challenge /	October 9-10 / Bryson, QR	Paul Sevcik / 416-222-2223 / equinox@globalsewe.net			
World Freestyle Championship	Dec. 1-5	Rotorua, New Zealand	Andi Uhl (No phone calls please)	NZFKC@clear.net.nz	

Schedule subject to change. Updates provided bi-monthly in American Whitewater and as soon as possible to www.awa.org

National Organization of Whitewater Rodeos 1999 Judging

The following is a brief overview of the 1999 NOWR judging rules for Pro/Elite (aka Expert/Pro) freestyle K-1M, K-1W, K-1J, OC-1 and C-1 classes. NOWR events that are NOT pointed events are strongly encouraged to follow these rules as closely as possible but are not required to fulfill every detail. Other

classes may be judged using these rules or they may be modified.

classes may be judged using these rules or they may be modified.

Rodeo Competition Format

There are 4 official hole-riding competition options. Option 4, the 1999 World Championship format is the most recommended for Pro/Elite classes at NOWR pointed events. Option 1, 2 and 3 are acceptable alternatives for lower level classes or at non-pointed events. Option 4 is highly recommended for Pro/Elite classes as it will help prepare our athletes for 1999 world-level competition.

- 1) Option 1: two 60-second rides
- 2) Option 2: free-for-all format
- 3) Option 3: three 60-second rides
- 4) Option 4: four 30-second rides with 30-second single elimination rides in the finals

Judges

There are six judges: one scribe is assigned to every judge. Every judge must view the NOWR Judging Video and be well-versed in freestyle kayak moves prior to the event.

E v e n t s

Juniors

Juniors are defined as 18 or under. If the paddler turns nineteen during the competition year (Jan 1 to Dec 31) they will not be considered a junior and must enter adult classes.

Judging Criteria

Competitors are judged in three areas: technical, style and variety. Competitors perform different moves and receive techni-

cal scores based on difficulty for the moves performed. After each ride, the competitor receives a style score which reflects their boat control, timing, rhythm, artistic impression and choreography. Competitors also receive variety multipliers that increase their technical/style scores. Multipliers are added for every different move they perform from a list of variety moves. In order to receive a high score, competitors must per-

form different moves.

The application of variety is the biggest change in the judging for 1999. There will no longer be deductions for not performing a certain number of moves but rather multipliers to increase your score and encourage a wide variety of moves.

NOWR A 999 Registration Form Point Series Championship/North American Cup

Applies to Pro/Elite (aka Expert/Pro) competitors only
you must register to qualify for either/both championships

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Class (check one only) Men's K-1 Women's K-1 C-1 Junior *

Birthdate _____ Age _____

Your sponsors: _____

Are you an American Whitewater member? Yes No

What do you like about NOWR? Where can we improve? Your suggestions and comments are welcome!

(Yes, I'd like to volunteer at _____ event. Please send me information on how I can help.

Please enclose \$20.00 NOWR registration fee or \$40.00 to register and become an American Whitewater member for a \$5.00 discount (Juniors pay \$30.00 for combined American Whitewater membership and NOWR registration). Applies to new members only. Renewals not accepted. Make checks payable to American Whitewater/NOWR and return to:

Jayne H. Abbot
American Whitewater Events Office
450 Ivy Hill Rd
Weaverville, NG 28787

Registration due by June 7, 1999

*Juniors are defined as 18 or under. If the paddler turns nineteen during the competition year (Jan 1 to Dec 31) they will not be considered a junior and must enter adult classes.

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PHOTO: CHUCK

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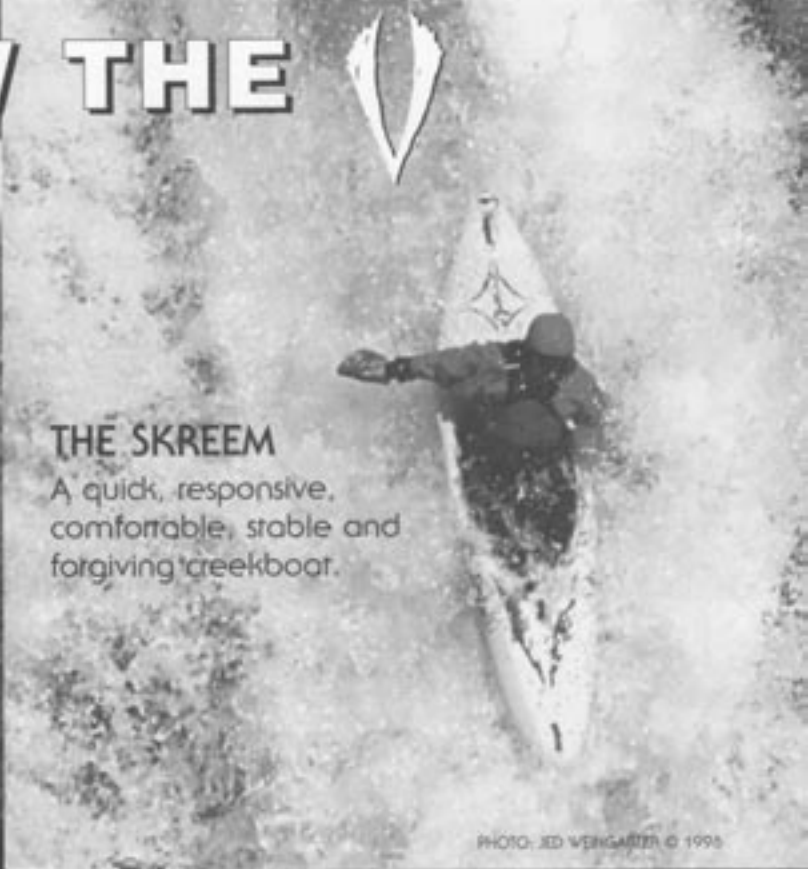


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An aerial photograph of a terraced landscape, likely a rice paddy field, with a dense forested valley in the foreground and a river or stream winding through it. The terraces are visible as a series of stepped, light-colored areas on the hillsides.

KARNALI KNOWLEDGE

*The Journal of Whit Deschner
Compiled and edited by Bill Harzia*



Left: The walk into the Karnali, the wheel would never have been invented in Nepal!

Above: No Wheels! In fact the only thing that does go around are holes like this one! Both photos by Whit Deschner.

Recently, with the discovery of Whit Deschner's "journal" in the trunk of a 62 lavender Cadillac Coup de Ville, new light has been shed on the "Gnarly Karnali" trip led by Peter Knowles. (See footnote 1) As for the word "journal," this term here must be regarded in its broadest form, for, in actuality, the journal was a wad of notes scribbled on the backs of old lottery tickets, unpaid bills and traffic violations. Obviously, at some point, Deschner intended to write an article on the trip. We can only surmise that he was struck with one of the bouts of procrastination that he so often and tragically struggled against.

Although in no way does Deschner paint a comprehensive picture of the trip, we can easily reconstruct the flavor of events. Exactly why Peter Knowles invited the American Deschner on—an expedition that was, with the exception of Rob Lesser, all British—is unclear—but if Knowles was expecting Deschner to accurately document the descent, he was grossly mistaken.

[Entry date: Probably sometime in late August]

Weighing the pros against the cons I suspect this proposed Karnali trip is a con job. Supposed to be a small excursion ("...ideal group size is probably about 12"); old dog kayakers to be kicked around by nothing worse than the lower Karnali. ("It cuts through and drains most of the Far West of Nepal—the wild west as it's known.") It's to be the tenth anniversary of the first length-long descent. (See footnote 2) Suspiciously, besides Slime, none of the original party has signed up for this anniversary—Slime, however, is able to make it, since not only is he organizing it, the trip is also covering his expenses.

[Entry date: Sometime later in late August]

Don't know if I can tolerate the three known members of the trip (See footnote 3). And god knows, assuming others are friends or even associated with these, a new definitive definition of trouble brews.

KARNALI KNOWLEDGE

[Entry date: Sometime in September, late in the day]

Extortion began today. Carol (See footnote 4) answered the phone and immediately I heard advanced stages of trouble. "Dave Manby?... Are you in the U.S.?" Frantically I began pantomiming in the background, lip-synching the words: "I'm not here. You don't know where I am. Gone away for an indefinite period." Carol, however, disregarded my pleas, and covering the receiver, said, "It's OK, he's in England."

I like Dave Manby, that isn't the problem. Some of my best friends are Dave Manbys, but... Carol handed me the phone and Dave said, "Slime says you're coming to Nepal."

"Slime says wrong."

"That's funny, he says you are. I wasn't coming either until he promised me you were so I signed up too."

(This was worse than Gerry's presence on the trip. Hangovers go away; the anarchy Dave creates is permanent.)

"I can't come," I explained, "I'm not in shape."

[Later]

Really, I'm not in shape for this trip. The last real river I've seen was six years ago running the Grand Canyon. Since then I've run a local creek in flood — a fifteen minute excursion. I've even ignored Idaho — just a few hours away! To fly to Nepal doesn't make a nickel's sense.

[Probably the next day]

Turning on my tap I received a divine message: Frog anatomies issued from my faucet. Deciding to evict all intruders from my cistern, I got more than I bargained for. Floating in the water was a dead ground squirrel. I won't go into detail about what stage of dead it was, but after I was through being sick, I thought, "All this time I've been drinking this water and have lived! Why, I can travel anywhere in the world!"

Called Slime.

"Slime," I said, "Count me in! (Here, sounds of hands rubbing together could be heard.) You wouldn't believe the training I've been doing for this trip!"

[Later in the week but early in the day]

Phone rang again today, and a slice of the past began speaking on the other end. I'm not sure what extortion was used on him but it was Rob Lesser, and despite his severe character flaw (See footnote 5), he told me he was joining the trip.

Rob suggested we travel together but quickly our opinions on how to get to Nepal differed. Rob — living in Boise — suggested flying out of Vancouver, B.C. I — living three hours from Boise — wanted to know what was wrong with leaving from Boise.

"Two hundred dollars," Rob said.

"So let me get this straight." I said, "We drive fifteen hours and leave the U.S. just to get a flight that returns us to the U.S. — so we can leave the U.S. once more, thus saving two hundred clams. It doesn't make sense."

"Exactly."

Which wasn't exactly at all. When I got to the bottom of this puzzle, it turned out the travel agent in Vancouver had an exceptionally sexy voice.

[If any other notes exist before Deschner traveled to Nepal they have yet to be found. Strangely, Deschner abruptly rejoins his narrative by describing the Annapurna Hotel. Most likely he was suffering with delusions from the twenty-six air hours traveled from Vancouver.]

Oct 25

The Annapurna Hotel is as fine a luxury hotel as you can find anywhere in the world! There are pressed linen sheets! Air conditioning! Clean hot and cold running water! And room service at the click of the fingers!

We didn't stay there.

We didn't even stay in a flea-cursed, cold water flop-house.

Instead, we were given a four hour, three beer layover before departing, along with ten others, on an eighteen hour bus ride to the western neverlands of Nepal. Gerry, as it turns out, can't make the trip, but wanting to make himself missed, has seen to it that half the trip's supplies carry the label, "RUM."

Oct 26

Not a bad bus ride after all, despite the chicken that some idiot plucked in the back of the bus where a major portion of the expedition's gear was stashed. Taking a flying leap in my sleeping bag I landed neatly in the middle of it, where I nested for the night — almost comfortably, if it hadn't been for the chicken feathers. All night long, just as I was slipping from consciousness, I'd inhale a feather and gag back awake. Only at first light did I discover that it wasn't a chicken that had been plucked after all. It was a goose, whose feathers had shortly before belonged to my spanking-new but recently-ripped sleeping bag.

Arrived at Surkhet, staging point of the trip and home of Nepal's recent typhoid outbreak. The bus-face our ride gave us to get here is nothing compared to that of the other members of the party who have come from Delhi. Their faces are hideously contorted from the large quantities of alcohol that had to be swallowed just to endure their journey. At one point the trip was so bad one of the members leapt — or fell — or was possibly pushed — from the moving bus. Fortunately, the member was under the influence, otherwise they might have hurt themselves. (See footnote 6)

There are eleven kayakers and twelve rafters — not counting the guides. Impression of kayakers' communal character: Living on a farm I'm used to talking to animals but never — as with this herd — have they ever talked back to me. There is Andy Middleton, Guy Baker, Ian Sherington, Andy Knight, Chris Nicole, Marcus Bailie, George Woods, Dave Manby, Slime and Rob Lesser.



In the "tiger woods". Photo by Whit Deschner.

Oct 27

From Surkhet bussed to a ridge above the Karnali, where Slime helped hiring porters: If hands were tied behind his back he'd be illiterate in Nepali. Several hours later arrived at the river. It was too late to put on, but thanks to the toilet that was erected far downstream, we got a good preview of the next day's run.

This evening sipped a 1949 Krug champagne followed by a 1985 DRC Montrachet which washed down a lobster mousse dahl bat. After dinner we had five gallons of May, 1997 Kukuri Rum cut ruthlessly with fruit juice – the effects of which were unilaterally evident. No one could remember each other's name, and when memories totally failed, the group began swearing in song that they'd play the wild rover no more. Other traditional British Isle ballads were sung like "American Pie" and "Ventura Highway."

Oct 28

In the morning, major problem addressed; the kayaks. A majority of the boats looked like kayaks, only they were smaller. Obviously, they'd been shrunk going through airport x-ray machines. What bothered me, though, is no one else seemed to notice – nor did they care. Quickly, I snagged one of the larger-sized kayaks but, much to my astonishment, almost everyone else preferred the smaller boats! Nor did they give a stuff about the manufacturing defect of the paddles. Instead of being 90% feathered or no degrees unfeathered, these blades are twisted at arbitrary angles in between, giving both the combined effects of catching wind and the user tendinitis.

After putting on the river I felt quite secure in my choice of a larger boat because everyone in the small kayaks was having trouble with their eddy turns. The water wasn't huge but it was big and as hard as these small boat boaters tried to make a normal turn, their kayaks reared onto their haunches and went spinning vertically out of control down the eddy line. Turning into eddies, I felt pretty smug at my groomed control and ability to keep my boat on a flat plane. Then someone sidled up to me and in the manner of regarding Rip Van Winkle waking and said, "Huh! The old Duffek stroke. I haven't seen one of those in years!"

OK! So I've never been in the mainstream of boating to watch its trends – which would also shelter me from asking embarrassing questions such as: Who makes a Dagger! (See footnote 7) – but my abundance of out-of-it hardly explains the next puzzle. The average hang-dog age of these old dogs hung in the mid-forties. I reckoned that being communally older, this pack wouldn't be so foolish as to drop into large holes and surf pounding waves – and here they are doing just that in tiny boats with smiles on their faces. I mean when I was younger I always used to think such behavior was bravery – but really what I was suffering from was an overdose of hormones. Is someone slipping testosterone in the rum punch?

That night (after a salmon papillate dahl bat complemented with a bottle of Chateau D'Yquem) I made an effort to find out. After a gallant but losing struggle with the September 1997 Kukuri rum (it was a bit "young") and fruit punch melange, I conclude that this is not a river trip, but a drinking excursion with a kayak problem.

KARNALI KNOWLEDGE

Oct 29

The punch has not effected my willingness to have my body subjected to mother nature's industrial-sized washing machines—as it has continued to do so on the others. Why they insist on such foolery remains a mystery to me. Rob Lesser, possibly the oldest of the bunch, seems to be getting the wettest. Fortunately, his total wardrobe is made of Capilene and he dries out quickly. (See footnote 8)

Tonight, for dinner, we had glazed shallots along with a drought-stricken chicken carefully diced in the dark by a dull machete. The pieces were then liberally seasoned with the national spice — sand—and dunked in dahl bat. This, along side a bottle of 1961 Chateau Latour, followed by 2 gallons of June 1997 Kukuri Rum exquisitely blended with fruit punch and iodine.

As I headed for my tent, Guy Baker warned me to bring all shoes into the tent at night.

"Thieves?" I asked pensively.

"No," he answered. "There's too many video cameras around." (See footnote 9)

Oct 30

Concerning this river — Since I've flown all the way to Nepal to boat and in the meantime, for years, have ignored Idaho, I'll say this for the Karnali: It sure reminds me of Idaho.

Then again, Idaho is not lush green as this is in the end of October, nor does one boat in Idaho the first week of November without donning both heavy-duty cold—and bulletproof—gear, thanks to all the enthusiastic, but inbred, hunters. Nor is Idaho known for fine food and alcohol — not like what was enjoyed this evening: a bottle of 1945 Haut Brion which absolutely flattered the navarin of lamb drenched in dahl bat, which in turn was flushed down and out with a fresh five gallon jerry can of rackshee, locally born that very afternoon and delicately supersaturated into a quart of fruit juice.

Oct 31

The other item worthy of mention and missing from Idaho's agenda are the Karnali's huge monsoon bred beaches. Nor standing on them this morning did the locals look like Idahoans. They look far smarter (See footnote 10) and in fact brilliant when Andy Knight dressed them in the river gear he manufactures and took pictures. However, confusion spread across their faces when he took his gear back again. Good thing he hasn't started selling bikinis.

Tonight had Oysters Rockefeller with a "Barbie" dahl bat followed by a baked Alaska along with Havana cigars and an Armagnac brandy, perfectly thinned in detol soap water. Spoke this evening with George Woods, but due to his accident it was hard to understand him. (See footnote 11)

Oct 32

Today encountered several rapids bigger than the rest. As I scouted the biggest of these bigs I was overcome with melancholy, for suddenly I began to think of my wife and kids. (See footnote 12) Meanwhile, at these drops, I overheard Slime, father of Nepal

whitewater guidebooks, muttering such phrases as, "...vague recollection of this one but it seems to have changed location," or, "that couldn't be a new drop but I sure don't remember..." Then his voice would trail off into utter confusion. Diligently, he jotted down descriptions to update his new edition.

Once, his notebook fell open in front of me and I read several of the passages: Look for beach with woman and three water buffalo on it; run drop center. Men will be chopping down tree on left just before this rapid.

This evening had a bottle of either 1974 Moet and Chandon or a recent vintage of Mad Dog 20/20 — I couldn't distinguish which because the label had washed off the bottle. Have to admit it didn't do much for the Boeuf Bourbonnais. However, this could have been due to the chefs' overenthusiastic use of Nepali spice. (See footnote 13) If they don't stop this practice we'll soon all develop gizzards.

[Several days later, probably November around 11 PM.]

River has slowed, rapids have diminished and the valley has widened. In the years that have intervened since Slime's first trip, forests have been replaced with houses and terraces — a trend, Slime blames on the internet. People can now move from the crime-ridden cities out into a rural setting and conduct all their business from a computer.

Still, the diminishing habitat has not explained the lack of birds. I've seen more monkeys than birds — perhaps the monkeys ate them. So far I've noted exactly three species of birds, and this in a country that boasts 500 species. Not a good batting average. Then again, there haven't been many insects either. Life, I suppose, is never easy. Either a riot of birds annoys you awake while you lay in your tent with the insect netting securely zipped, or you suffer through long silent periods of boredom while having nothing to itch. Fortunately, the one insect that we have seen are walking sticks. These little arthropods have proved invaluable for lighting fires when kindling is not available.

Saving the best for last — had a bottle of 1985 Romanee Conti tonight. Served with omelets dahl bat Rothschild, it was a marriage of tastes made in nirvana — a marriage however quickly destroyed by some fool who went and accidentally mixed rackshee in the dish water, which they accidentally mistook for fruit punch. I've never smelled a more pleasant sewer gas. Naturally, the muse of this beverage was not surprising as everyone began surmising the origin of Slime's name.

[Here Deschner records many Irish, Nepali, Scottish, British versions of the story. Even Dave Manby, who had actually been at the name's inception — but was too oiled to realize the importance of the occasion — tried conjuring up what he believed he might have heard that infamous night. The stories ranged from an outer worldly illegal kryptonite-like substances, to cockneyslang to... (See footnote 14) The reader may get a flavor of the content from the following acronyms Deschner recorded:]

- Swamp Living Insidious Microscopic Evangelist
- Single Loner Invites Memorable Experience
- Sexy Lover Invites Mating Elephants
- Superb Leader Inspires Magnificent Expeditions

[Sometime even later in 1997]

Entered the Terai (passing under a Japanese-designed futuristic bridge that looked desperately in need of a modern city) and floated into Giardia National Park, staying in the Tiger Tops tent camp— and a woods where the tigers were. A “tiger woods,” if you will. Here at last I saw some more birdies and a couple of eagles. Among the birdies — and I’m not making these names up— were: the rusty-cheeked scimitar babbler, the common babbler (not to be confused with the human ones), blue bearded bee-eater, red vented bulbul, orange-bellied chloropsis, red wattled lapwing, black-gorgetted laughing thrush, purple-rumped sunbird, flower pecker, brain fever bird, see see, did he do it, lesser racket tailed drongo, blossom-headed parakeet, and the stone and rock chats — although these last two require an ornithologist with a background in geology to distinguish the difference.

In the evening, a guide led us through the forest and kept telling us to be quiet. But I couldn’t figure out why we needed to be quiet to see animal tracks. At last, our silence paid off when we came across what he said was a dragon track.

“Dragon?” I exclaimed.

“Yes Dragon. This one is where tiger was dragon its prey.”

But we never did see any tigers; no one ever does because the grass is too damn long and even riding on elephants we couldn’t rise above it. Basically, what the place could use is a good lawn mower — that, or they should hire a person in a bullet-proof vest to carry a stick with a tiger’s tail on it and walk through the grass.

The next day and beyond the tiger woods the guide escorted us to a developing village, where we saw all sorts of developing dogs. Ironically, it wasn’t them that kept us up at night but the barking deer. And it was in this village where our guide explained to us how in the monsoons the villagers “go phishing.”

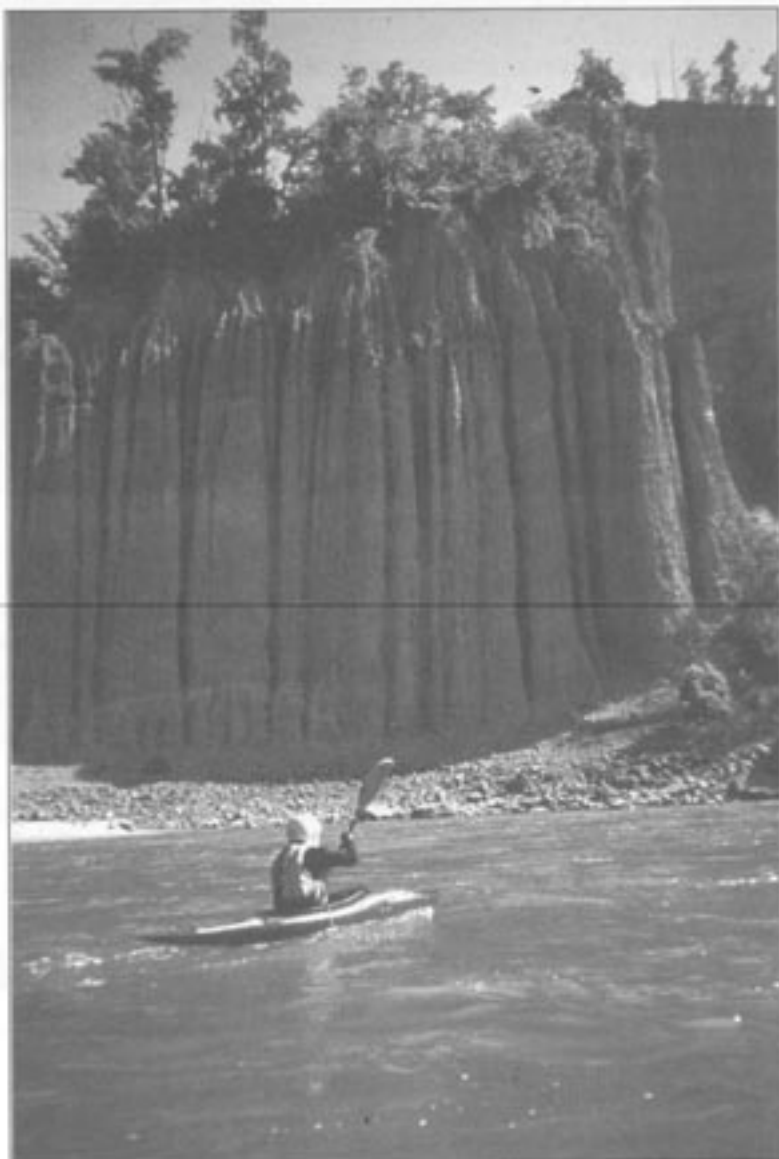
“Go what?” we asked in shocked unison.

“Phish.”

“Where?”

“They phish all over the place.”

[This is the last “entry” of Deschner’s journal. Other records indicate that shortly after — probably minutes — the trip quickly dissolved. Evidently, over the course of the float, the trip’s toilet crew had become so efficient, that they kept habitually filling in the lodge’s pre-dug toilet



A not so typical scene on the Karnali. Photo by Whit Deschner.

pits, and the management got fed up. As a result the group in its entirety was evicted. What happened to them afterwards is unknown.]

Footnotes

1. Or, as he was known in shady boating circles, Green Slime.
2. Here Deschner is mistaken, since the dead had been descending the Karnali for years. Being yet another feeder stream to the Ganges, bodies are often buried along and sometimes tossed into it. So technically, the trip was the tenth anniversary of live people running the Karnali. And, to be spotlessly correct, this was the tenth anniversary of live people voluntarily running the Karnali. Deschner admits later, that he was out of control in some of the drops, and probably became the first living person to involuntarily run parts of the Karnali.

KARNALI KNOWLEDGE

3. Here Deschner is referring to Peter Knowles, Marcus Baile and Gerry Moffat. Marcus, in Pakistan, constantly put the trip in peril by insisting on taking pictures of highly sensitive strategic military structures (see "Travels With a Kayak," Eddie Tern Press, 1997). Gerry Moffat, at the time, was considered the Typhoid Mary of Hangovers. Deschner suffered immensely from unfortunate chance encounters with Gerry in five different countries. As it turned out, Gerry could not make the Karnali trip.
4. Deschner's other significant girlfriend.
5. Deschner is referring to Lesser liking John Denver.
6. Here Deschner is just kidding. Actually, the incident could have been far worse; they could have been in a plane.
7. A Wave Sport, you numbskull.
8. A common belief in its day. "Capilene" a supposedly miracle fabric was made of recycled atomic waste. It didn't actually dry, but rather made the wearer warm, thus thinking they were dry.
9. Here Baker is alluding to a tragic incident on the Indus where his group had to bivouac with a shortage of tents and Baker was forced to share his tent with the expedition's lone female. Unfortunately, the woman's shoes were filmed outside the tent—a detail that did not go unnoticed by several of his girlfriends back in England.
10. Here Deschner is making fun of the British colloquialism "smart" which he thought was really dumb.
11. This most certainly is a mistake since Deschner never was a good speller. Most likely he meant "accent." George Woods was Scottish.
12. An extremely strange comment, for Deschner did not have a wife or kids. He hated kids.
13. Or as they say in Nepal, "Too many kooks spoil the brothel."
14. Send \$500 in a brown paper bag to Bill Harzia, HCR 88 Box 169, Baker OR 97814, and I'll send you all the details in an unmarked and confidential envelope.
Whit Deschner is the author of Travels in a Kayak, a humorous account of his life on... and in...the water.

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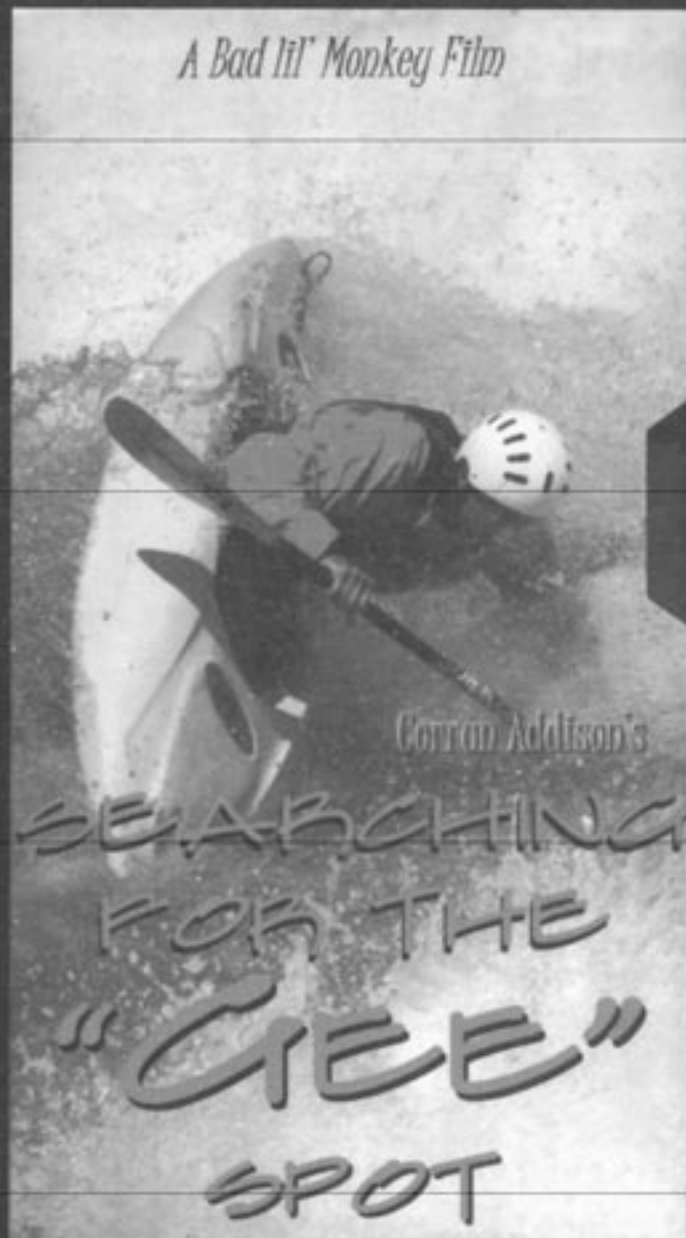
by Whit Deschner

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You've all heard of the Gee spot...

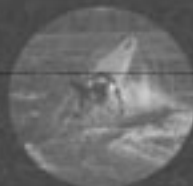
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Take note all you rodeo fans, the Ocoee Rodeo date has moved from October to May 21-23. The event will be held on the Upper Ocoee course and will feature all your favorite competitions: freestyle rodeo, free riding (aka Freestyle through a Rapid) and a head-to-head downriver race. All weekend long there will be booths from all the major manufacturers, food, entertainment and a demo pool sponsored by the Atlanta Center for Excellence.

Come picnic by the shores, try your hand at kayaking in the demo pool and see top competitors from all over the country. Fun for the whole family.

Preregistration deadline: Postmarked no later than May 12
No registration the day of competition

Thursday, May 20

- 6:00pm - 10:00pm Registration (site to be determined)

Friday, May 21

- 9:00am - 5:00pm Pro/Elite preliminaries for K-1, C-1 and OC-1 at Smiley 6:00pm - 10:00pm FINAL registration (site to be determined)

Saturday, May 22

- 9:00am - 5:00pm Intermediate, Advanced and Junior preliminaries at Smiley
- Free Riding competition on Upper Ocoee course
- Head-to-head Downriver race
- 7:00pm - 12:00 midnight Festival/party with live music, dinner, huge silent auction and raffle (\$5.00 per person)

Sunday, May 23

- 10:00am - 4:00pm Finals for all classes at Smiley
- 4:00pm Awards

The course will be closed to private boaters during competition times.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

For more registration, general event information and how to volunteer contact Jayne Abbot, Events Manager at 828-645-5299 or JHAbbot@aol.com. Information can also be found on the NOWR web site at www.nowr.org.



Martians in the Rough

By Jason Robertson
Photos by Hans Haucke

Part 1:

Dust coats the ground. There's at least an inch of the powder on the trail and it smokes and billows with every step. We're space-suited aliens treading deliberately like Armstrong, planting that first footprint on the moon. The four of us are making slow progress through this foreign landscape, looking as strange and threatening as Martians come to prey in the valley.

“El rio, el Rio Grande es mas lejos y abajo de aqui.” He pauses at my bad Spanish, sounding the words in his head and translating them into his native Chintopec tongue where dog is perro and perro is si.

It's my third winter exploring Mexico with Tom McEwan and Eric Brooks. We're thinking that this year will be epic, although El Niño isn't working in our favor. The rain clouds that have absorbed the United States seem to have sucked all of the moisture from the south: rivers here are low. Mind you, I'm not complaining. The experience is worth the journey and the adventure is in the going, but another foot of water and we'd be in Fat City. Stomp... puff... stomp... puff.... A faint clatter of grit rolls down the mountain side.

Three old, brown-clad men are behind us, moving at our pace. They lead a pair of scrawny cows while four Mexican-style gimp dogs do the shuffle-scut step at our every glance. The old man in the lead asks where we're headed. I just shake my head and say, "El no, el Rio Grande es mas lejos y abajo de aqui." He pauses at my bad Spanish, sounding the words in his head and translating them into his native Chintopec tongue, where dog is perro and perro is si. He asks, "Por los pesces?" I'm stumbling along through the dirt wondering how I'm gonna' get my boat four thousand feet down the mountain, to the valley below but I take the time to answer. "No. No somos pescadores. Mi amigos y yo vamos por los cascades en el valle. Vamos a la puente in Matumba." His friends are smiling back at me and laughing. One is shaking his gaping, silver-toothed, reed-covered head. He doesn't understand the allure of the river or comprehend what we could want there besides fish. But the first



Martians in the Rough

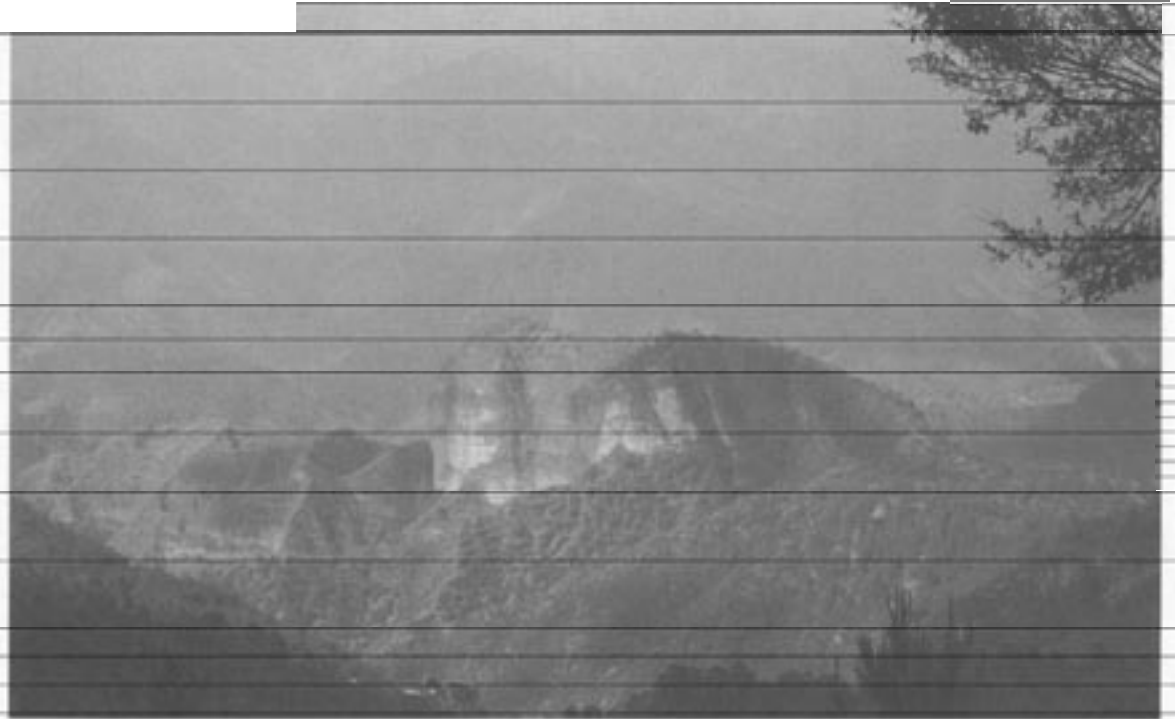
man is again quick to speak. As they pass us by he tells me that it's only two Mexican hours to the river. I pass my Freefall to the other shoulder, which isn't quite so sore from carrying 90-pounds of boat and gear down this rut of a road. Poof... stomp... poof... shift.



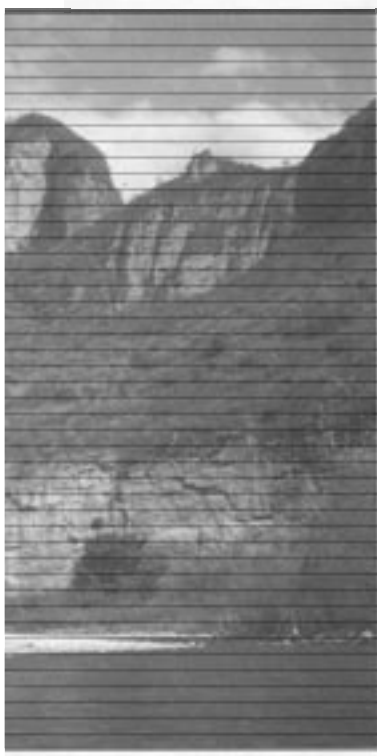
We're hiking into the canyon from the town of San Juan Quiontopec. It's our first exploration of Oaxaca, and we've been having problems getting started. The van's water pump is frizzed so it knocks out after four thousand vertical feet or one hour, whichever comes first. Each time it overheats we've got to wait another hour for it to cool. Finally we just give up and hop on a packed bus at dusk in an unknown town North of la Ciudad de Oaxaca. We stand in the aisle for three hours while the bus works its way up and down the mountain. Around 11 p.m. we roll into

Quiontopec.

Stretching our arms, we squeeze out of the bus only to find that we will be charged extra for help unloading our boats – help we never actually get. We seek dinner and a floor, somewhere distant from the dogs and the voices in this poor, beautiful town. Brooks is pointed to Celia's house by wracked brown hands and we quickly discover that she is the same woman that Marc was sitting next to on the bus. Soon we're settled in her dining room watching the '98 Olympics. Celia sends her daughter out into the night for cold refrescas and while she's gone we see from four different camera angles the agony of a Japanese skater as



Martians in the Rough



he falls and breaks his arm. Later, we feast on blue corn tortillas, eggs, ham, and chorizo. After dinner Celia kicks her son's barracho friends out of the house for a little quiet and offers us her childrens' beds. We're so tired that we're asleep instantly. That night I dream of my girlfriend back in the States. She's a lovely southern figure of hospitality and warmth, but as I reach out to her I'm awakened by exploding fireworks. Mountain-strong kids are tossing lit shotgun shells into the air for this madrigal Saint's day.

We pay only 190 pesos (\$21 US) for dinner, breakfast and bedding for the four of us. I'm wondering what kind of magic Brooks wrought on this poor woman, because the man across the street is asking 300 pesos just for a ride to the river. In our stubbornness we turn down his offer. So we're trudging

along two hours later, staring at the dirt and stamping with a POOF! Poof and... a clatter. My boat falls to the cactus-bit ground. I look tiredly at the river more than two thousand feet below, wondering how much longer this death march can last.

We get to the river four hours after leaving town. It would have been a thirty-minute truck ride if we hadn't been so stingy. Now that I've made it on my own, however, I accept that this was a necessary part of the adventure.

I'm laying on my boat, raised up off the dry cow pies and petrified dog piles, talking to the three old men again. Only they don't look quite so old now; I'm the one that's bushed and shagged on the ground, desperately sucking water out of a bottle. I watch with beggar's eyes as they feast on enchiladas. Eventually I trade some stale gorp for a little bit of Mexican roulette.

The river is low. There are less than 300 cfs. flowing over a wide gravel bar that looks like glacial till. **As** I observe this, Hans, Brooks, and Marc stumble in one at a time, carrying personal hurts and mental scars as well as the rest of their gear.

Meanwhile, the hard, old men get up and thank us for the gorp. They head back up the canyon having spent an entire day bringing their cows down for a little water. I watch the big, red beast on the left as it ambles back up road, grateful that I won't have to be making the return journey myself. I'd rather hike down to this virtually dry riverbed, even if it proves unnavigable and thick with rocks.

Brooks, Marc, and I sit looking at each other. Hans is off

my boat, raised up off the dry cow pies and petrified dog piles, talking to the three old men again.

Martians in the Rough



doing his own thing in the brush. We shake our heads in this hot noontime shade. Later, Hans walks up and sits beside us as we're wearily kicking holes in the dirt with our heels. Brooks speak up and asks us to choose for ourselves whether we're gonna head down this Rio Grande or hitch back to the town and the bus service. To a man we say, "No. We're here, and we're going." So we don our gear and start to float, paddle and drag our boats down riffles and shoals.

We round the first bend and we're in another world. The Sonoran-red desert rides boldly down thousand-foot sandstone walls to the very shore where we're basking and marveling at saguaro and vultures and micro climates that, veiled by the rays of the sun, are

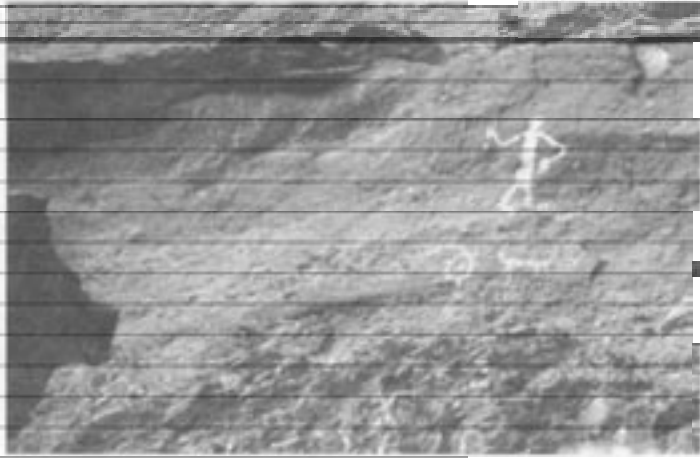
alternately hidden and revealed behind every ancient, vein-like bend of this warm, motherly river.

After the first three hours of wending our way through floatable pebble fields, we reach a wall with a high arching buttress and a recent rock slide, above which I spy a petroglyph of a man and a dog and a sun. I'm still somewhat delirious with fatigue and the heat, but the cool clear water has been treating me well. Brooks clambers out of his boat and up the boulders to the base of the carving. As he is filming we suddenly realize as one, that this slide is millennia older than we had realized. I feel smaller than a mite, resting under the red canyon's gaze, submerged in a dish below the wide, bushy brow of the Earth.

We camp an hour down-river and rise early in the wind-free dawn to pack our boats. That morning we set out for the mapped canyon that, when we reach it, necks down in a burrowing cleft carving its way toward the womb of the world. We've heard that a man named Ed Culp tried to paddle this canyon with his kids about six months earlier. He came



rti Ma ans in the Rough



down in the rainy season with a couple of inflatable kayaks and got pushed up the canyon walls by floodwaters. When he didn't meet his kin at the takeout, they called in the Mexican government, who called in the military, who pulled off a successful helicopter search and rescue. Though we have clouds on the horizon, there's no chance of flood in our future. Some six hours after breaking camp we reach that slit in Mother Earth's flesh that we'd seen on the map – our hard won reward for four hours of hiking and 10 hours of flat water madness.

Validation Falls: This twelve-foot vertical bowl validates the time we've spent looking at the map and gives us cause to return in the future. The next three hours are as grueling as the last six, if somewhat more enjoyable. We plunge headlong and blind down boulder-choked whitewater, guessing what routes are clear and free



Martians in the Rough



of obstruction. Our arms and hearts are pumping steadily as we twist through a 15-foot wide gorge. We pick lines based on intuition and metamorphic knowledge of rocks, sneaking glimpses of water beyond each bouldery drop. We get into a rhythm of running the rapids without pause, leapfrogging eddies, trading the lead, and intuiting the cleanest lines. Of course it is this style of boating that leads to a situation requiring Brooks to work a miracle group-rescue in a wide-eyed, laughing fit of poor judgement.

Toward late afternoon the canyon opens up. We're still high-strung, but now I'm tired and ready to get off the river by dark. A quick inventory of our remaining food— two packages of instant hot cocoa and a salt-crusted handful of nuts — lends us extra incentive to make it to the takeout before sundown. We're paddling hard as ever before, covering over thirty-nine kilometers in one marathon day. I'm pushing my body's limits, hoping to find Tom and Sarah waiting at the takeout. Of course, the only thing we know about our destination is that it is a bridge near Matumba, somewhere downstream. Brooks and I round another potential last bend only to come on a death's-grin low-head dam. As we slide over its dry concrete flanks I wonder how much farther it can be to the bridge. The sun is barely glimmering above the peaks and we seem to remember calculating that the takeout is only eight kilometers from the dam. Luckily, we catch Tom in dramatic fashion, just as the full moon begins its ascent into the twilight. The perfect ending to an exhausting day. Later, we recall our first descent of the Rio Grande Norte in Oaxaca with nostalgic memories of its absorbing beauty and engaging whitewater. I remember the one-plus days on the river fondly and don't hesitate to call it the most fantastically beautiful place that I have ever seen. Hands down.

Part II:

That night we retire to Oaxaca's Zocalo for a good meal. We keep our eyes on some street urchins with chins grayed in dust and blackened in soot. They're working a circuit and pinching folk with dreams of a better tomorrow.

As we're relaxing at our meals, Matt appears with dirt streaming off his back, scarred and bloody from bushwhacking. He has spent the past two days in the Eastern ranges trying to forge a path to our next intended river. After braving snakes, hunting lost food, exploring steep, vine-choked places and repelling a dozen waterfalls on a throw rope, he reports that the river is not suitable — not enough water, too many deadfalls, and impossible access.

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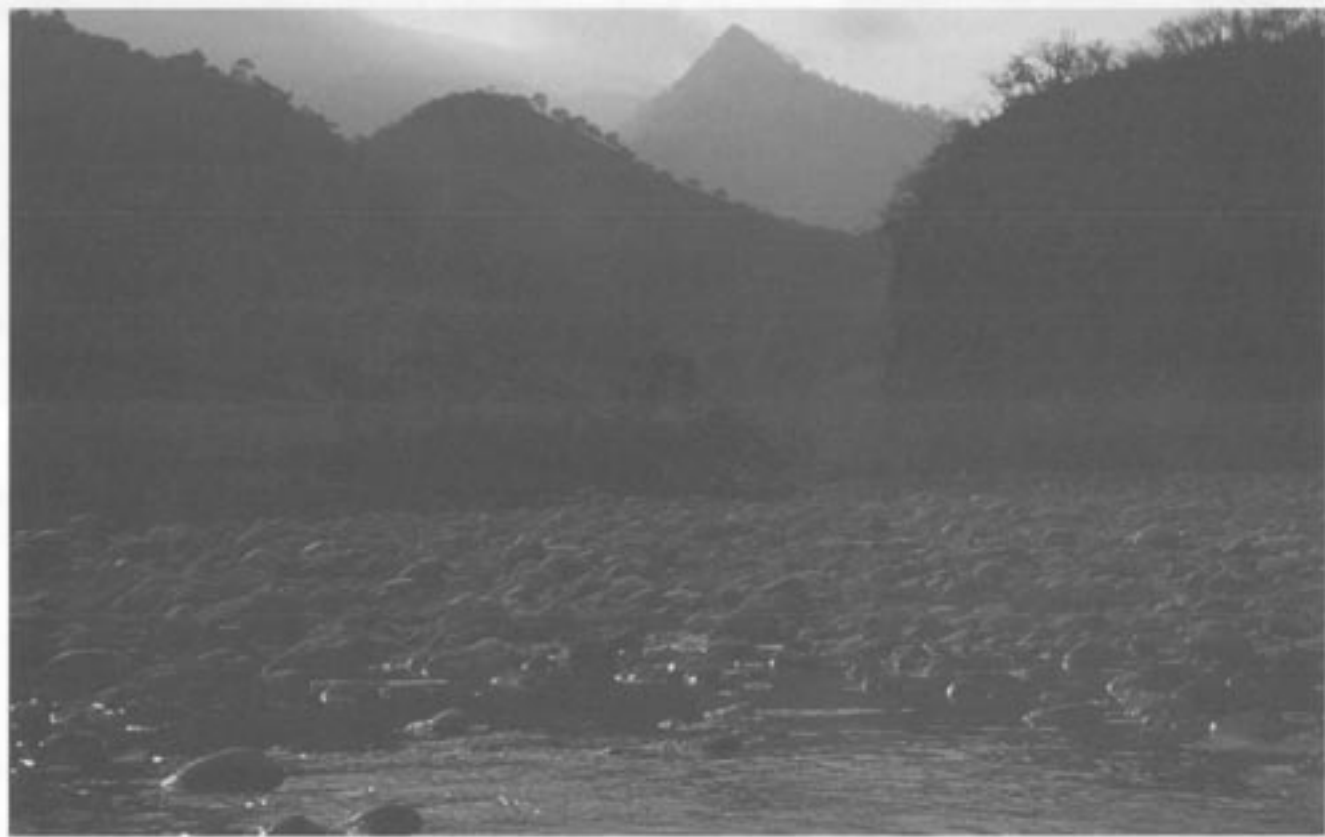
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Suddenly, Tom's T-Canyon folds up over him and I catch a glimpse of his helmet plunging forward as the boat's stern whips up, pressing toward the bow in a tragically beautiful fan of rainbow dewdrops.

The next day Brooks and Tom scatter by bus, looking for water on the Eastern slopes of the Sierras. Traveling in different directions they check for water at our mapped put-ins, and return to Oaxaca. Brooks finds water in his river, and Tom discovers an enticing run to test ourselves on another year.

Three days later we're ready to roll again, though the van's ailment is still a mystery to the mechanic. The river Brooks finds is the Rio Cajones, an ideal map-scouted river with an average gradient of 120 to 150 feet per mile, an accessible put-in and an easy takeout. We leave Oaxaca at five in the morning on the 90-mile drive to the river. Five hours later we wind through town and crawl down the switchbacks to the river.

The first signs aren't good — another sedimentary riffle run with less than 250 cfs. Thinking the river is too low and boring, we're surprised by the first significant rapid. I pick a line boofing right toward a wall with a left-flushing landing pad. I slip my line perfectly, but find a rock at the base when I probe with my boat on the landing. The others boof left and have no real problems. Two quick drops later we're in the meat of the canyon, negotiating slots between car-sized boulders.

Suddenly Tom's T-Canyon folds up over him and I catch a glimpse of his helmet plunging forward as the boat's stern whips up pressing toward the bow in a tragically

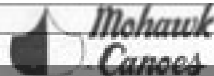
Twenty minutes later I'm kicking up dust in clouds of poof-and-stomp again with no end in sight.

beautiful fan of rainbow dewdrops. I exit my boat in a hurry and grab a rope while Brooks sets the video down in a split-second. Moments later a paddle pops to the surface followed by Tom calling out that he's lost his thigh braces. We are more concerned with his safety. As we grab his gear, he shouts over the roaring of the water, telling us that he's fine.

With Tom's boat repaired, we plunge down another kilometer of Class IV whitewater before coming across an old arching stone bridge. We begin to wonder if it's the takeout. No one had looked at the maps too carefully, though now that they're back with Matt in the van we are wishing that we had. We spy a young Indian heading up the path and Brooks beats up to the trail and asks in his best Spanish whether there's another bridge down-river. The man says that there's not, so we get out of our boats and start hiking up— straight up.

Twenty minutes later I'm kicking up dust in clouds of poof-and-stomp again with no end in sight. One hour more and we're heading back toward the water as the trail winds wickedly, cutting back down and losing more than half our hard-earned elevation before climbing again. We've been following an awesome white river 1,000 feet below for three hours before we

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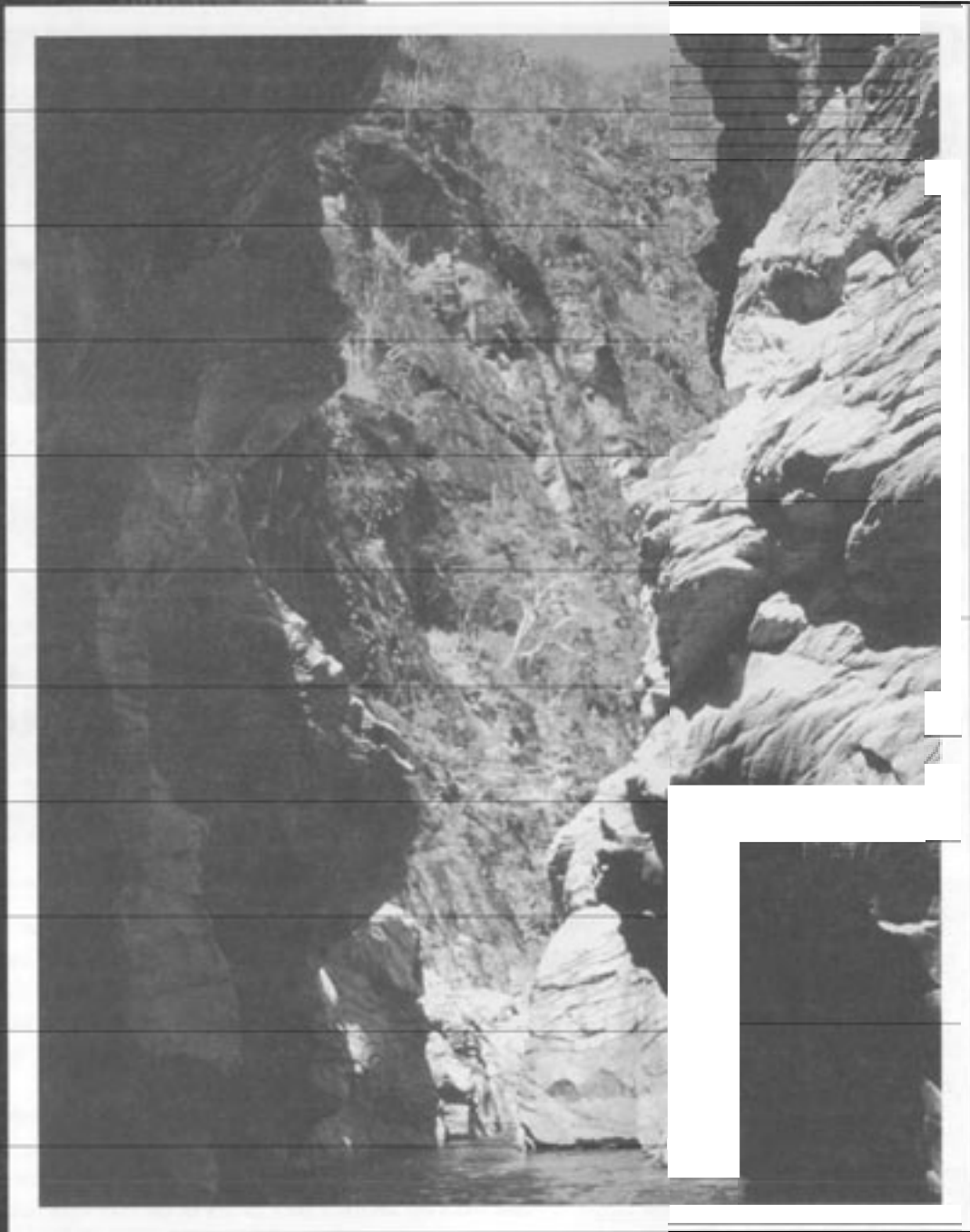
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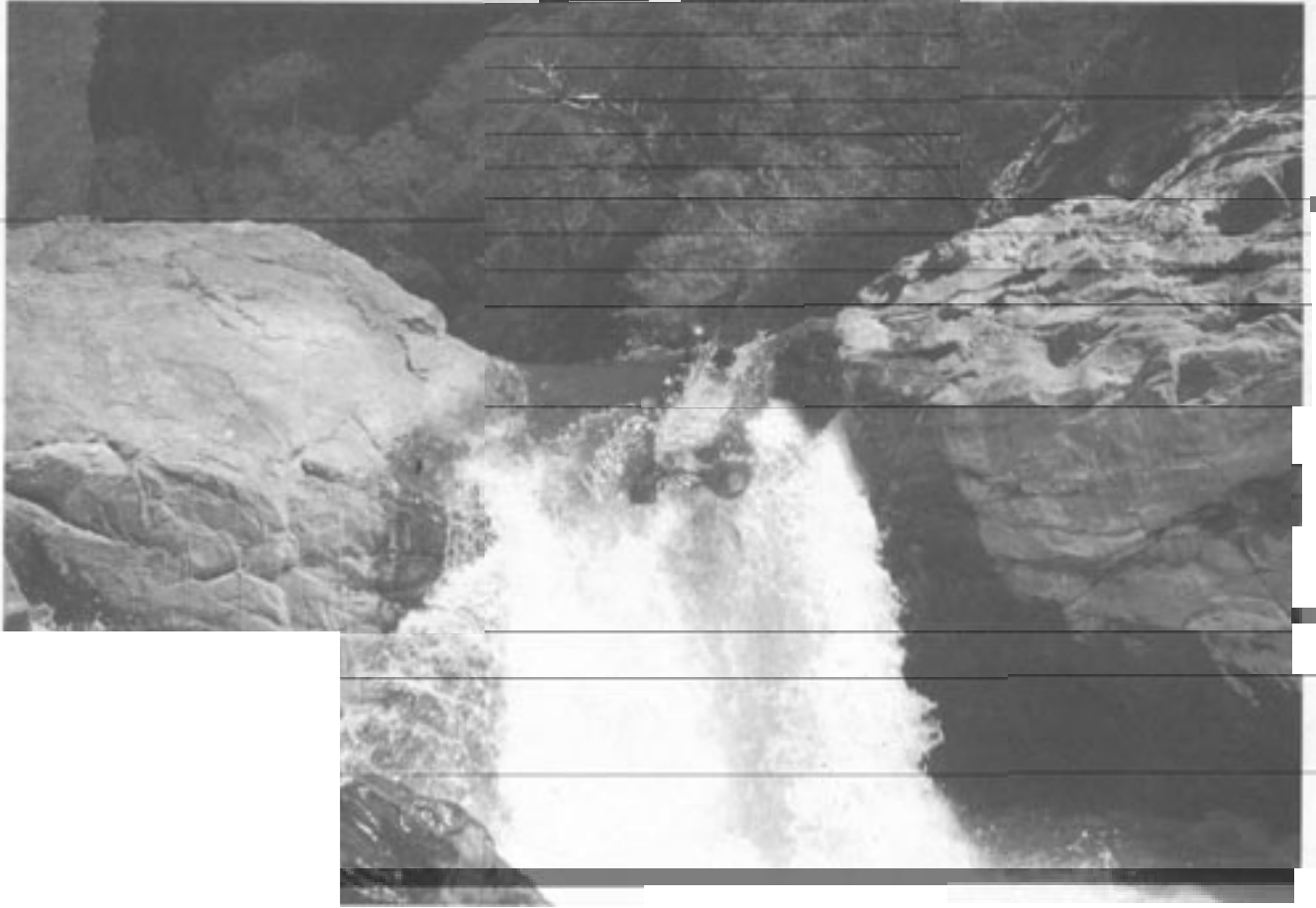
SPCS	LENGTH	BEAM	DEPTH	WEIGHT	MATERIAL	SOLO LIST*	FACTORY DIRECT
RODEO	10'6"	28.5"	16.5"	42 LBS	8-84	\$450	\$337.50
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XL 13	13'2"	30"	15.5"	56 LBS	ROYALEX	\$920	\$690.00
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SHAMAN	12'2"	28.5"	15.5"	40 LBS	ROYALEX	\$325	\$243.75

Martians in the Rough



first glimpse our target-town and check ourselves at this cosmic joke. Another hour-and-a-half and we're one mile out from the street lights. Our energy disappears with the sun and we ditch the boats in a freshly hoed field. Unencumbered, we tear out for the beacons in the distance, snatching paddle-picked green oranges for their juice.

As we follow the deep-rutted track upward, we watch the hovels on either side of the road become white-walled cement structures decorated with Coke and Fanta signs — the definitive signs of civilization in Mexico. The first folks



We are being
shaken and poked
and backed into the

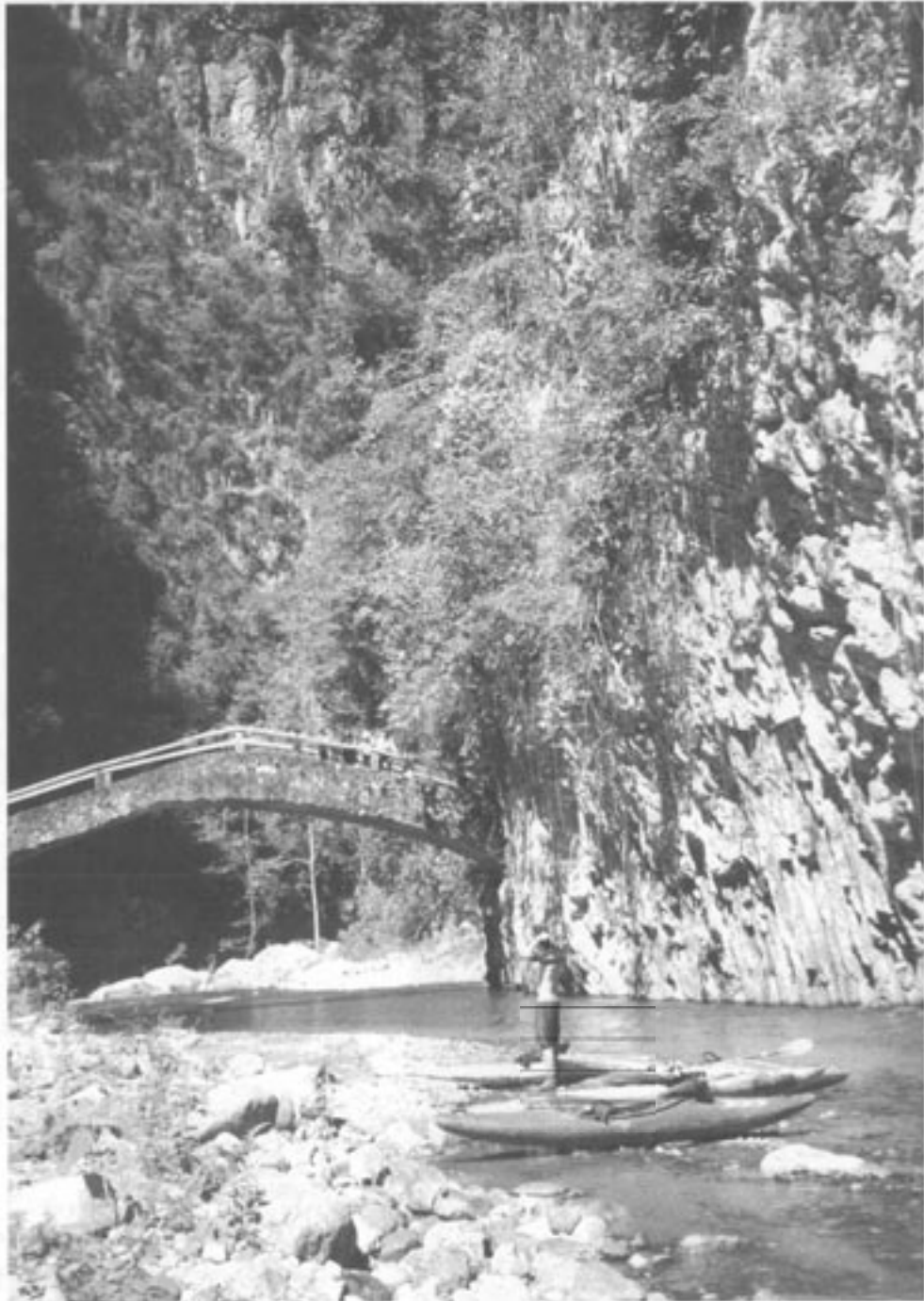
who will talk to us are sitting on a wall supping mescal under an unguarded bulb. They point us to the main road and store, and we're off into the black again. As we march among a noisy throng like Pied Pipers, with a laughing herd of brown-eyed children in tow, I can't help but think that we're just a handful of Martians lost in the rough.

We're still walking when we come across a man wearing filthy brown pants who stands in the midst of a small crowd speaking in tongues. **As** we approach, he falls face-first into the dirt without another part of his body ever touching the ground. He stands up stiffly and there's blood and dust all over his face. He starts hollering in Mixtec and some other language before he plunges over and does another face-plant. Watching this I begin to realize that this isn't a good situation. Our balance-impaired friend isn't the only one who's been drinking heavily, and in the chaotic night Tom is having trouble finding the right road. The crowd of men begins to close in on us near the store. We are escorted down the street to the little shop, feeling even more acutely out of place in our neoprene and polypropylene as we step into the light. One old man is cursing us and the world and I hear more harsh English from this Indian's mouth than I've ever heard. We are being shaken and poked and backed into the tiny store. One man asks for my green

Martians in the Rough

card and another tells us to get back to the reservation, rattling his machete.

The yelling gradually quiets to hoarse drunken rumblings and much shaking of heads and the first old man with the machete is making us sing Viva Mexico. I swear that I'll never again find myself in a Mexican backwater after dark without a car. Time passes and tempers cool. It turns out the old men think we've beaten up the other guy who was doing all the bleeding. When it all becomes clear we buy these aged Indian men pastel M&Ms



and pass them among the crowd, buying friends.

Eventually, we get directions and start hiking down the right road. A dark-haired teenager rides up on his bike and our conversation is accompanied by his screeching brakes. Our final destination is five miles down this winding road where we'll meet Matt at the real takeout.

Tom's talking stars, Sarah's talking English, and Marc and Brooks are joking about Machete-Man. Finally we come across some Mexican youths who are willing to drive us the rest of the way for twenty dollars. We have to put some pressure on Tom to make him agree to spend his money, but soon we are climbing into the back of a pickup where, for the first time all day, we can relax.

Part III:

The next day, reunited with the van we head back to the put-in. I've set aside this day to drive and rest, and Matt has taken my boat. After I drop off the crew I drive back to the river and give everyone I see a lift. Before long the van is full and there are Mexicans hanging out of the windows and riding on the roof. The worst thing that I have to contend with is a cow standing in the middle of the road on a blind switchback. I manage to stop a good four feet off as it ambles away, unconcerned. Julio, the old Mexican who owns the beast introduces himself and, when he discovers that I'm going to the

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river wants to meet me there and share lunch. An hour later, after I've bathed myself in the river, Julio shows up with his cows and we sit in the shade of the van sharing gorp and tamales, both of us happy for the change in diet. I give him a watch with a cracked lens that my friend Alex had left as worthless in our room in Veracruz.

After lunch I start hiking upstream, but as soon as I reach the old bridge pylons a quarter mile up I see the whole gang come paddling around a curve in the river. I wade out in the current and hop on back of Brooks' boat as he passes and hold on tight through some good little rapids. He tells me crazy tales of how the river goes around a bend and gets sucked out of sight by a whirlpool for a hundred feet and how Tom got his boat stuck in an undercut for awhile.

Brooks said the river was a keeper, solid IV, so we've added it to our list along with the Tomate, Santa Maria and Verde. Because of our takeout misadventure the day before we hadn't had the chance to fully explore the river, which reminded us of the steeper sections of the Upper Yough. Now we know that there's more river out there and we have plans to add another 20 miles to this run next year. With the Cajones in the bag we spend all night driving out of the canyon. We're delayed by van troubles and mystery roads and finally camp out by a Pemex gas station outside of La Ciudad de Oaxaca. We sleep in a construction site and the new day

opens to a roar of buses and blue-white police cars, black leather boots and Aretha Franklin playing over the scaffolding.

That afternoon we split Oaxaca, stopping at the closest thing to a fast food joint in Valle Nacionales. It's really just a converted garage with a bunch of roasters on the street. We take two golden chickens for the road.

The last day of the trip finds us heading to Veracruz for Carnival. We have a great time drinking and throwing confetti-filled eggs at gaudy revelers. Finally, we crash on a windy stretch of beach for four hours of much-needed sleep.

This morning I've just said good bye to new and old friends and now I'm flying out of the

country. Staring out the window, mindless and numb, I catch a glimpse of Pico steaming and puffing ash high into the air. Puff... poof... puff... poof. "Mexico has worked its magic on me again," I think to myself as it disappears in a drifting cloud of smoke.

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FAREWELL

By Steve Stratman

Crammed in the crack of a rock, stuck under a log, sulkily awaiting a blast of spring flood, or the drain of a summer drought, lies my paddle, its bright yellow poggies still faithfully clutching the shaft. Nearby, strewn along the river bottom, themselves similarly entrapped, lie countless other paddles scattered like bones outside a cave. There are hundreds of them by now, hunkered down, patiently waiting for their deliverance.

TO

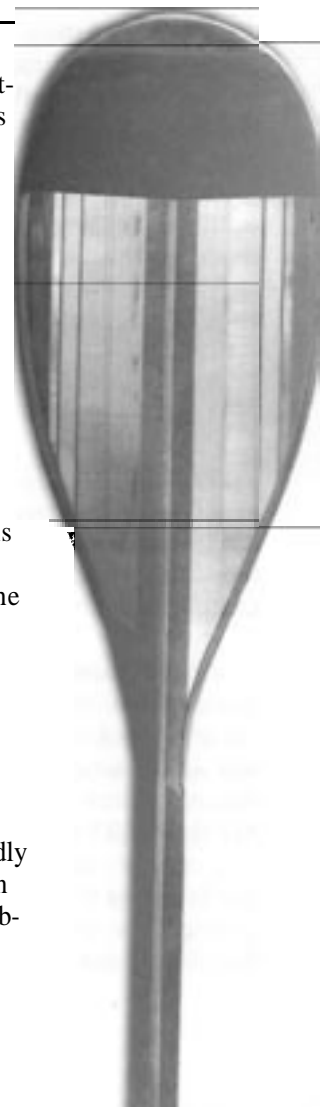
That's how I picture it anyway.

Somewhere about twelve feet past the first drop of Fin Falls on the lower St. Louis I learned how quickly I could abandon all my precious worldly possessions — my smart, red playboat, my cleverly embellished paddle, my “specialized” water bottle and my handy throw rope, all traded wholesale in a split second for one fleeting chance to save myself. Boat gone. Fine. Paddle gone. Good riddance. Booties please be gone. Your friction is sucking me off this rock wall.

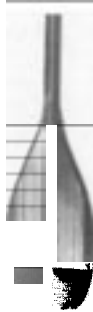
PADDLES

It happened at the end of a great day, as is the wont of most predicaments. Chris Ringsven, Alan Faust and I had hooked up with Paul Everson and a couple of Duluthrans (mysterious residents of Duluth, MN) before wending our way down the upper St. Louis. It was October 31st, the sky was crystal blue and a big moon brooded overhead. One thing would have made the day better — if it had been a Monday and I had called in sick to work. (I never lied before I started paddling.)

We had made fairly short work of the upper section before putting in below the Thompson dam. As I was getting in my boat I watched Paul calmly boof a 20 foot drop in a little canyon just upstream. Funny, I didn't ever remember seeing that yawning drop before, my subconscious apparently keeping it at bay, safe and soundly blacked out. It knows I have enough things to worry about, like if my helmet is on backwards, or if I have forgotten to put anything on under my spray skirt. My problems are simple, albeit numerous.



Well, I ran it all after that, from above the 210 bridge all the way to swinging bridge. I even got through a rapid we call Octopus—a tangled and painful looking crease (which I portaged) that splits off at the bottom in a couple class IV directions. Just before swinging bridge I loitered, nervously circling an eddy above a spiteful little drop. Alan got sucked into it a few weeks before. It recirculated him seven times, holding him under for up to 45 seconds between breaths (according to some not-very-helpful park goers watching from the bridge). Being a sensitive guy, I didn't want to remind him about that, he being in the eddy right there beside me, circling nervously.



fore SUDDENLY REARING ITS FOUL RAZOR-SHARP TALONS STRIKING UPWARD!

Um, well, you get the point.

Let's get it straight right now, I'm no hair boater. But I didn't sense any coiled waxy tendrils nearby either. I was just having fun and I didn't want it to stop. Ha! There it is, I said it! I WAS JUST HAVING FUN AND I DIDN'T WANT IT TO STOP! So, with my comfort zone lying crumpled in a heap somewhere along the bank upstream I got back in my boat and dug in to the task at hand.

NO SURRENDER. AL BOAT-SUCKING MISHAPS HERE,
HOWEVER, I DIDN'T DUG OVER IT JUST FINE,
AND MERELY MERRILY FLOATED OUR WAY TO FINN
FALLS.

Earlier in the season I walked everything on this section, clucking all the way. Well, I'm lying, I didn't walk everything that day. At Octopus I took the far river-left side. By "far" river left I mean the path along the bank. Here, with my then unsullied, day-old Pyranha Blade perched bravely on my shoulder, I gallantly picked my way through a class IV portage. Rounding the bend into the final ravine, I suddenly found myself toppling head first down a pile of surly, bad-intentioned rocks, my proud boat pushing me downward and reducing my poor big toe to a throbbing, purple mess. So, this section of class IV portage I tumbled, not walked. Never mind that, however. I learned some time ago to be humble, for it speeds the healing process.

So comes the meat of the story, this being the story and me being the meat.

Hunkered down on a rock above Fin Falls we had a wide-angle view of the river as it tumbled over drops, hidden pourovers, surging holes, and a surplus of sharp, pointy, ill-humored, scrapey looking hard things — a 'fer piece of Class V water.

It wasn't vanity that pushed me on. Vanity has already pummeled me hard. In fact it pummeled my shoulder right out of the socket in a hole on the Vermillion a year and a half ago. I learned then and there in the emergency room that exuberance and potential talent is only a thin veil for bad skills. All I got for my troubles was a fresh outlook on life, a year of rehab and a \$600 hospital bill. Yes, vanity skulked along the river bottom amongst the debris that day, leering at me, mocking me from below. Its coiled waxy tendrils flexing and twitching, its cavernous eyes gleaming, be-

I inched toward the horizon line and struck out toward the edge of the drop. It plopped me down in a flush of water and scooted me away left. I got a little wider than I expected, up against a fin of rock but I was still OK. Next, I took a funnel of water back down to the main flow. From there it was an eight or nine foot slide into a, pesky sort of deep... thing...

It was cold in the deep thing.

I wondered why it was so cold in the deep thing. I thought at first it was because I was so deep in the deep thing. I also noticed there were no bubbles in this part of the deep thing and that the deep thing was very quiet. I suddenly realized that although I was very deep in the deep thing, I was very cold because my boat was filling up very quickly with water. Ruefully, I came to the conclusion that whenever you pair up a very wimpy garden-variety type of spray skirt against a very pesky sort of deep thing, the deep thing will always prevail. Also, just as dogs luuuuvvv trucks, deep things luuuuww low-volume playboats. So, pride aside, I dug into the next task at hand, this being survival.

Oddly, as I breached the surface I noticed that I preferred the quietness of the deep thing to the cacophony of my new situation. I knew full well I couldn't navigate a rapid like this in a boat full of water, but I also knew that swimming it would be unthinkable foul and painful, if not tragic. The canyon wall loomed up in front of me and I began to wash past it. I had only a few feet left before this pillow of water swept into the main current. So, I ditched my paddle directly and pushed out from my boat. The bow, full of water, ended, forcing me up against the wall. My fingers raked

along the stone as the current began to sweep me towards the first gnashing pour-over.

"I do not want to swim this," I thought. I felt doomed. The rock wall slipped past my clawed fingers, while my boat bobbed, ownerless and forgotten, behind me. My feet caught the pull of the rapid, delivering me ever closer to that baleful rock, which was mocking and beckoning me with its lurid, twisted grin.

Suddenly, my cold benumbed fingers found a hold. "A miracle," I reckoned. Slowing just enough, I clamped another hold with my other hand. "Providence," I increduled (You make up your own verbs, and I'll make up mine. It's my article). However, my new hope began to erode as I tried to wrest my feet from the current. My body was dragging down in the water and the current sucked hungrily at my booties and spray skirt. Every time I tried to gain some sort of foothold, it would pry me away from the wall. My fingers, although now totally numb from the 40 degree water, were still plenty useful as hooks on my rock holds, but my forearms were cramping and I began to tire. I figured it was only a matter of time before I would have to relent to the river.

ever slack was left in the steel plate, and one by one he got the rivets off and made it home for dinner.

Well, I thought, even if I had a rivet gun it would be of no use to me here. I would have chucked it with the paddle! You think you could have given me a better anecdote than that, Dad. But I did become and remain very calm, my mind cleared, and my attention was drawn to my right leg. Instead of scraping around for a foothold I crooked my knee and moved it about two inches upstream. There, sticking out about two inches is what I'll refer to from here on as THE KNOB OF LIFE. It came willingly and offered its full cooperation, destined from birth within a glacier a couple of million years ago, and weathered through the ages, to become my soul mate and champion.

I got the hell off of it faster than you could say igneous metamorphic.

With the knob of life under my knee I scaled the wall like an ant. Atop a rock I waved to Paul and stuck my fingers from both hands in my mouth. As Alan clambered up a small path, I howled, "Thhuffig phuthip thngggbvp! Flung thel luffinstuf!" Well, it didn't make any sense to him either

I LOOKED DOWNSTREAM AND SAW PAUL ON THE OTHER SIDE, BESIDE HIMSELF WITH WORRY AND A THROW ROPE IN HIS HAND.

I looked upstream and saw Alan, picking his way across the escarpment but much too far away to save me. Here I was, stuck on the rock like a tree frog, and I figured if there was to be any saving done, I would have to do it.

It was at this time that a moment of clarity crept over me. I remembered a cassette my dad gave me last year when I was having a difficult time rehabbing my shoulder. It was a true story about a guy who worked as some type of engineer on these giant ocean freighters as they were docked in port. One day he had managed to rivet himself into a small crawl space deep in the bowels of a ship near the outer hull. He had only space enough to lie there; it was cold, dark, and worst of all, the end of the day before a 4-day weekend. No one knew he was there and there would be no one to help him until work resumed the next week.

He freaked out and died, of course. No, just kidding. He collected his thoughts and cleared his mind, opening himself up to whatever divine inspiration or thought might come his way. He refused to panic; it wasn't even an option. Slowly it came to him to work the rivets free by using what-

but it was exciting. I took my fingers out of my mouth and right behind them came a thick stream of profanity. Although curiously poetic, the only real words of substance were — fingers, can't feel, cold, hurts, hurts, hurts, and so on. I stuck my fingers back in my mouth and we set off to extricate my boat and go home.

Thanks to Paul, Chris, and the two guys from Duluth (Jay and a fella named Holiday, I forgot his first name (you know who you are) for saving my boat and to Alan for sticking with me. If I had swam that rapid I know they would have done everything they could to get me out. At least I picked my partners well. Paul put it to me eloquently later: "What the hell were you doing out there in that little boat? And get a better sprayskirt, ya numbskull!" Well, it was something like that anyway.

The moral of my little story is: never bring a rivet gun to a gunfight... Get the proper gear and use it wisely, And if you do screw up, reach deep down inside and don't lose your cool. And, oh yeah, swear a lot afterward, it makes ya feel better.

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Making Waves

By Karen Grosskreutz

His face expressionless,
relaxed, as he holds

sunlight
Leverette's

hearted

In his inflatable sit-on-top kayak, Will Leverette ferries smoothly to the edge of the hole. He slips in gracefully at the corner. As his students look on, Leverette leans comfortably downstream, his sinewy arms ready for a low brace if necessary. His face is expressionless, his body relaxed, as he holds a controlled surf. Only the sunlight glinting off of Leverette's sunglasses—giving him seemingly sparkling eyes—hints at his lighthearted demeanor.

Will eases into the sweet spot at the corner of the hole. At the seam, the water sucks his stern down into the foam. With a reverse sweep on the right and a forward sweep on the left, he pulls off a 360. His students study his technique, knowing they will be next. As he attempts another rotation, Leverette's craft flips upstream. He surfaces and floats away from the hole. After a few more spins, his boat follows him.

Knowing that Will has been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, his students charge after his floating form, but before they can reach him he has righted the inflatable and hoisted himself back on top it. He cheers on a few students in their attempts at surfing (a couple resulting in yard sales. Back in the hole, Leverette sizes up the sweet spot and tries another 360. This time he nails it. He allows a hint of a grin to congratulate himself

Making Waves

"The river was running at 3.2 [over three times the normal water level]."

Will Leverette is paddling spawn. His grandfather, Frank Bell, has a rapid named for him on the French Broad River. His mother, Pat Bell, along with Ray Eaton is credited with the first descent of the Nantahala River in 1945. Will himself is also a pioneer. He was given his first paddle when he was three years old and learned how to paddle at Camp High Rocks, a summer camp then owned by his aunt, Jane Williams. As a camper, Will was a part of the first group descent of the Nolichucky River in 1971. "We paddled 17 foot Grummans with gigantic truck inner-tubes blown up in the middle and tied in [for flotation]," recalls Leverette.

"The river was running at 3.2. My partner and I swamped several times, but we never flipped." It was at High Rocks that Will chose teaching over competition and decided to make his living outdoors. "When I told my family, 'I'm going to make a living paddling,' they kind of laughed and said 'Oh, he'll grow out of it.'" By the time Leverette was in college, he was running Camp High Rocks' paddling program.

Leverette came to Warren Wilson College in Asheville, NC, as a student in 1975. He studied history and environmental management and worked 15 hours each week to clean up the Swannanoa river, which runs through campus. "I was working with a fat Hawaiian kid. [My boss] gave us a flat-bottomed John Boat [an old fishing boat] and a couple of flathead shovels for paddles," laughed Will. On their first run, he and his assistant narrowly dodged several strainers and eventually



capsized. "After that I demanded a canoe," said Leverette.

After college Will spent seven and a half years working at Camp Woodson, a wilderness therapy program. He overhauled the program, gave the ideology a facelift, and promptly moved West. After a season as a ski instructor, Will went to Salt Lake City to find the best raft guiding company. "I didn't want to go through their training. I'd been doing this my whole life," said Leverette. "[The owner of Holiday River Expeditions] gave me a challenge he thought impossible. If I could get a Utah Guide Level 1 License, I could miss staff training," said Will. "I don't know if there was a new worker there or if he just looked at my experience... but while they were all training, I was climbing in Yosemite," Leverette said with a grin.

During this time Will worked as a safety inspector for World Wide Outfitters and Guides (WVOG). "It was the greatest job I've ever had," said Leverette. WVOG paid him to travel all over the West and check out outfitters by participating in expeditions.

Then, just when Nill's life seemed to be where he wanted it, the fingertips on his left hand began to tingle. First, he would notice it when he had physically taxed his body. Less than a year later in 1991, after a hard run on the beach, Will became blind in one eye. He went to a neurologist in Salt Lake City, and at 34, Leverette was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is an autoimmune disorder that slowly short-wires communication along the spine. The body attacks itself, destroying the

Making Waves



"Life wasn't great,
but I could paddle

said Leverette

myelin sheath around the spinal cord and nerves. Plaques also form on the brain and the resulting scar tissue blocks signals between the brain and body. The two different kinds of MS are progressive and relapsing-remitting. Leverette has the latter, which develops more slowly.

At first, MS didn't affect Leverette much. But when he would overtax his body, his symptoms would return. "Every time it happened, one of my parents came out West to care for me. It was hard on them. I was being selfish," said Will. When Multiple Sclerosis stole his balance, Leverette saw no point in staying out West. "Besides, I was missing home," said Leverette. He made arrangements to return to North Carolina. Once home, he planned to kill himself.

Will rationalized that dying in North Carolina would be easier on his parents, and on himself. He shared his sentiments with a longtime friend, Pat Patton, whom he describes as "kind of a witch doctor, chiropractor." Patton's response to Leverette convinced him to "try a few tricks before he ended it all." So in the summer of 1992, Leverette began a radical three week diet, wherein he eliminated everything that feeds mold, fungus, and bacteria—including sugar, sweets, vinegar, and dairy. With a refined diet and a lot of vitamin supplements, Will was able to live almost symptom-free.

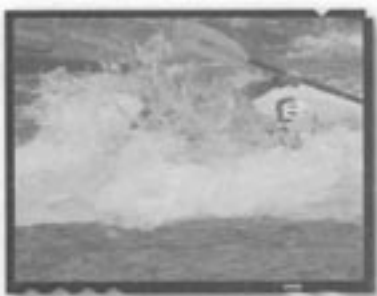
Several years after moving back to North Carolina, Leverette's soul was still "yearning and aching for time in the woods." To get outdoors again, he began paddling an inflatable ducky that a friend had given him. Compared

with the canoes and kayaks Will used to paddle, the ducky provided more stability and a cleaner getaway should he flip. "Life wasn't great, but I could paddle again," said Leverette. Thinking back on his earlier plan, Will said, "[Suicide] just wasn't me. It wasn't something I could sink my teeth into. I felt like I had something more to give."

Today Leverette is giving something more at Warren Wilson College. Warren Wilson's paddling program has undergone dramatic change since Leverette's arrival in 1996. The team has won all five of the intercollegiate races entered since then. Warren Wilson was also chronicled as one of the nation's "Top Paddling Colleges" in the September/October issue of *Paddler Magazine*. Perhaps Leverette's contribution to the team can best be explained by the Lao-Tzu quote, "A leader is best when people barely know that he exists... When his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will all say, 'We did this ourselves.'"

The first thing Leverette did was restructure the program. "I realized that I couldn't do it by myself. I wanted to duplicate myself and delegate more of the responsibility," said Will. So he organized a network of student coaches. Students who coach beginners in canoeing and kayaking, in turn have an opportunity to receive coaching by Olympic paddlers at the Nantahala Outdoor Center, thanks to Leverette. He also helped arrange academic credit for student coaching. He encourages students to develop their teaching skills and has helped organize an annual Outdoor Leadership Work Fair so

Making Waves



"After 35 years of paddling, I'm still

that his students can make a living paddling, as he has. Also, Leverette regularly takes weekend trips with the students. The fact that the students are learning and improving pleases Will almost as much as the students themselves. "It's not altruistic," said Leverette.

Since his initial change in diet, Leverette has tried several treatments for Multiple Sclerosis, both traditional and alternative. Though no longer on a restrictive diet, he continues to take vitamin supplements. For almost four years, Leverette has also been taking bovine myelin, an old Chinese remedy. During this time he hasn't had any exacerbations.

Less frequently, Leverette uses bee stings placed on acupuncture points along his spine for extra energy (yes, the man is a beekeeper, too). "I trap the bees in a glass jar using honey for bait. I have a spray bottle filled with water that I use to spray their wings. Once their wings are wet, they can't fly. Then I'll ask one of my roommates to put them on my back with tweezers," explained Leverette. He uses this technique when his energy is low or when he knows that he'll need a lot of energy for an activity, such as paddling the North Fork of the French Broad or Section IV of the Chattooga River.

Leverette paddles a high-performance inflatable kayak now. It's smaller and more versatile than a ducky, but still more stable and easier to exit than a kayak. Sometimes for difficult terrain, he carries two adjustable trekking poles to help him navigate. But Leverette rarely needs assistance on the water. He has encountered some prejudice because of his inflatable boat. "People see a ducky, so they see a tourist. But they're starting to notice," said Leverette. He is a very aggressive paddler and plays in most of the same spots as decked kayakers. Leverette said, "I figure if I don't flip, I'm not learning."

Of Multiple Sclerosis, Leverette said "[It] has been the best thing that has ever happened to me and the worst. I deeply miss having the ability to move freely through the mountains." Yet Will has taken his paddling to higher and deeper levels. "After 35 years of paddling, I'm still learning. It has meant a lot to me emotionally to be able to dance in the outdoors again. I feel like I'm wealthy beyond measure. I enjoy life. I savor life."

Today, Will Leverette runs the East coast branch office of the World Wide Outfitter and Guide Association, yet another successful creation of his own. In addition, he does risk management consulting at the University of North Carolina at Asheville and at Warren Wilson.

Fifth Annual

Cheat River Festival

May 1st

Downriver
Cheat Canyon Race

Friday, April 30



Albright, West Virginia

The Festival is held at the scenic confluence of Muddy Creek and the Cheat River, where an Indian village once thrived. A wide arc of booths surrounds the once quiet field like a wagon ring; in one corner the children's area is full of games, the focus tent teaches of the glories and perils of the watershed, the vendors peddle their wares and take in the river air. At the silent auction, deals abound. 'Round the stage are crowds of revelers, swaying to infectious rhythms. There is no better way to spend the day than at the 1999 Cheat River Festival. And in the morning, the river awaits.

Attention Boaters!

The Fifth Annual Cheat Downriver Race, known as the "Cheat River Massacre-ence", kicks off the weekend on Friday evening, April 30th, with a mass start. Registration is \$20 and is from 1pm to 4pm on Friday at the Festival Site. The mass start begins at 5:00pm sharp. Expert paddlers will compete head to head through 12 miles of the wildest rapids on the rugged Cheat canyon! For more information call FOC at (304) 329-3621 or e-mail to : foc@cheat.org.

Reference the musical talent at the festival: "A wide range of both local and regional talent....folk, bluegrass, celtic, country, acoustic rock, and rock-n-roll music from the best entertainers around!"

Gates at the Fest open at 1:00 Great Music from 2:00 until Midnight (at least 5 different bands) Silent Auction, Whitewater Bazaar, Good Food

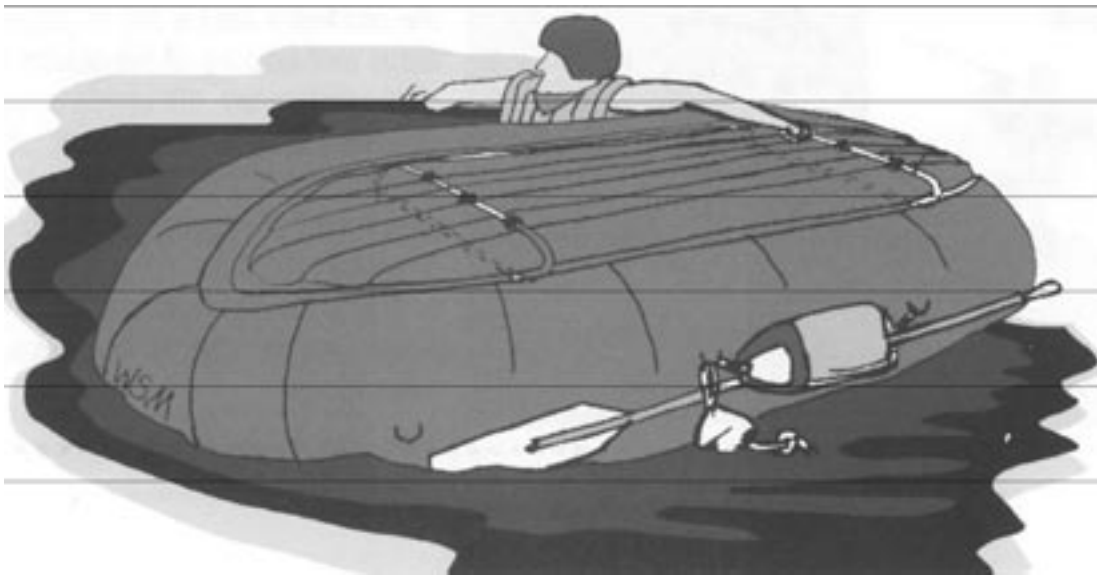
And all for the best of causes; a clean and healthy Cheat watershed.

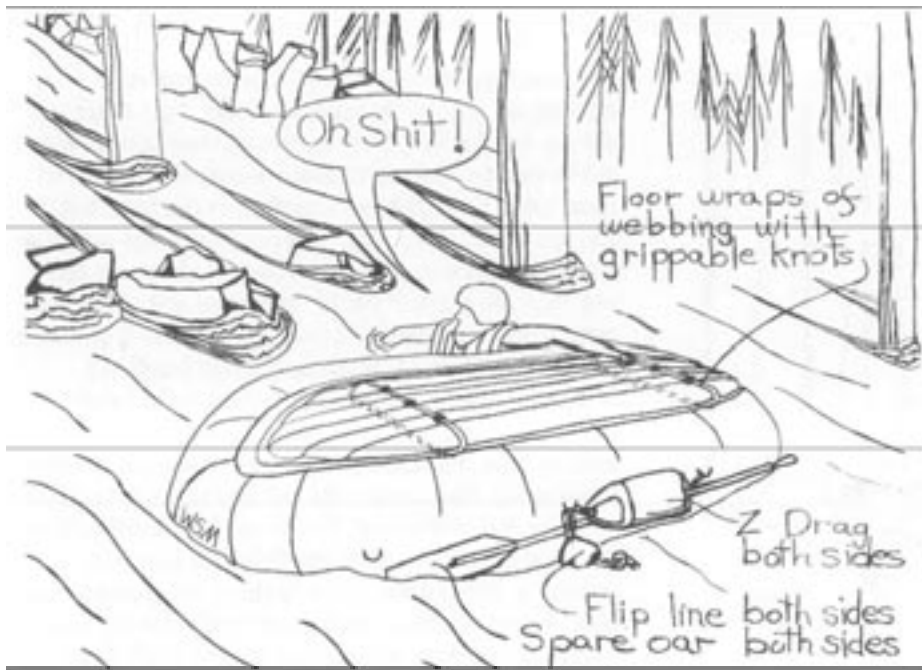
Upside down and alone?

A few self-rescue tips for rafters

Story and Illustrations W. Scott Morris

Raft flips tend to be messy affairs — swimmers and gear all over the place and a big, upside down boat careening downstream with all the grace of a dead hippopotamus.





Often, the raft has to be chased down by several other boaters and herded into an eddy before it is righted. But it is possible for a prepared boater to self-rescue a raft and flip it alone, even a loaded oar rig.

Being able to self-rescue provides a major advantage over assisted rescues and is valuable not only for solo boaters, but also for sweep boaters, whose companions may not even notice a flip, and in difficult whitewater where everyone else is trying to cope with their own problems.

My own interest in this issue comes from a habit of doing solo raft trips, often on isolated, wilderness rivers where self-rescue is the only option. I have flipped three times, twice on solo trips, and these experiences taught me several things I'd like to share.

Before detailing these events, which might make my boating career look like a series of major mishaps, let me note that I am experienced at this game. Since 1982, I've done about 35 major solo trips on western rivers. These trips average about a week in length, and when possible, I pick a river I've never seen before. Consequently, my first trips down the Grand Canyon, Cataract Canyon, Main and Middle Salmon, Rogue, Snake, Upper and Middle Owyhee, Jarbidge/Bruneau

and Selway have been solo.

Boating alone on difficult, unfamiliar whitewater usually inspires caution. There is no one to impress and no one to help out if things go wrong. You face your challenges with little more than wide eyes and an uncertain future. So, I am cautious and prepare carefully for my solo trips.

For many years I ran my solo rafting adventures without flips or major problems; but I like challenges and I knew that it would only be a matter of time before I ran into trouble on one of my adventures. In the end, though, it took about 15 years of pushing my limits before I felt that I had the skills, experience and self-assurance I need to get out of serious trouble.

WIDOWMAKER, OWYHEE RIVER, OREGON

On April 1, 1996 I traded in my 12.5-foot tub-floor raft for a new, 13-foot self-bailer. Four days later I was on my way north for an 85-mile solo trip on the Upper and Middle Owyhee, a remote and spectacular canyon that cradles several big Class IV rapids and one Class V named Widowmaker. The

flow rate was over 5,000 cfs on the Rome gauge.

In preparing for this trip, I considered gluing flat, webbing handles to the bottom of my new boat to help me get on top of it if it flipped. I had equipped my old raft with these safety devices but had never had to use them. Other rafters told me, however, that it was relatively easy to pull yourself onto a self-bailer by getting a grip on the webbing that laces the floors to the tubes. So, I decided to take my chances.

But I didn't take chances with my rescue gear. Early in my boating career, I kept a bag of rope and miscellaneous hardware stashed in my boat for emergency use. Then I heard the story of an Arizona boater who flipped his raft on a solo trip in the Lower Grand Canyon in November 1991. His rescue gear was apparently inside his upside-down boat and he lost the whole rig before he was able to retrieve it. After five days of surviving on grasshoppers, he was plucked from the canyon by helicopter. It wasn't until I heard this story that I really thought about the details of trying to retrieve my rescue gear from under a flipped raft. Even once you got the boat to shore, which could be an adventure in itself, getting at the rescue gear could be difficult in cold, muddy water, and impossible in shallow water or fast current. Ditto in a wrap situation. While it is sometimes possible to remove a frame and gear from a flipped or pinned raft, this is often harder than it sounds.

So, after considerable thought, I decided that outboard bags of rescue gear, one on each side of the boat, would be a good fix. I put together two complete Z drag kits in sturdy dry bags, and strapped them to D rings on either side of the boat. These came with on the Owyhee.

Ah, the Owyhee... exhilarating runs on big Class IV rapids during the first four days gave me just the overconfidence I needed to attempt Widowmaker, which climaxes in a huge, horrible, keeper hole. To make a long story short, I was a little off line



as I ran through the drop and got sucked back into the hole and flipped under the eight-foot pourover. After clawing my way up an oar to the boat, I got stuck under the raft for five or six minutes as the falling river did its best to beat me to death and drown me at the same time. I was not recirculating in the hole, but, I was stuck under the boat, directly under the falls that seemed like it was pouring 20 tons of water per second over me without pause. The noise and vibrations were truly catastrophic, a ceaseless smashing violence that was way beyond anything I'd ever imagined.

Finally, the boat popped out of the hole. I was badly dazed and not quite sure whether or not I was dead or alive, but I did have enough presence of mind to swim out from under the raft and attempt to climb onto the top of the boat. This proved to be difficult as the webbing that secured the floor was laced too tightly to offer a good grip and there was nothing further up to grab. Also, the boat started crashing into rocks. One of the oars snapped off, and while I was careful to stay on the upstream side of the boat, the current tried to suck me back under when I hit a rock that stopped the raft. I have never seen this particular hazard mentioned in the literature, but in fast water it would be easy to get dragged under a broached boat and pinned against whatever had stopped the raft.

In this case, the boat slid off the boulder before I got totally sucked under. And, I was eventually able to get on top of the boat by putting my foot on the remaining oarlock and using it as a step.

Although getting up onto the flipped raft was a great relief, I was far from being safe. Each time I collided with a rock, the impact tried to throw me off the slippery boat. Between collisions I was able to get one of the spare oars from the side of the boat and attempt paddling to shore. This also proved difficult. Upside-down boats, with oars, seats and gear hanging down into the current, go pretty much where the river wants to take them. Also, trying to paddle with a nine-foot oar while kneeling on the slick floor is awkward and inefficient.

After several attempts I finally made it into a calm eddy against a broken cliff. I collapsed with exhaustion and the euphoria of just being alive. Still, I had to right the boat.

In this particular spot, I probably could have recovered my rescue gear from inside my boat by diving underneath. But with the water muddy and cold I was grateful for the accessible rescue bags that spared me from this chore. By using a chock stone in a crack about 10 feet over the river, I was able to anchor a Z drag and right the boat. But on week long trips like this one, my boat and supplies weighed about 450 pounds. It took a 6:1 ratio arrangement using three

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pulleys and a lot of work to finally get the raft right side up.

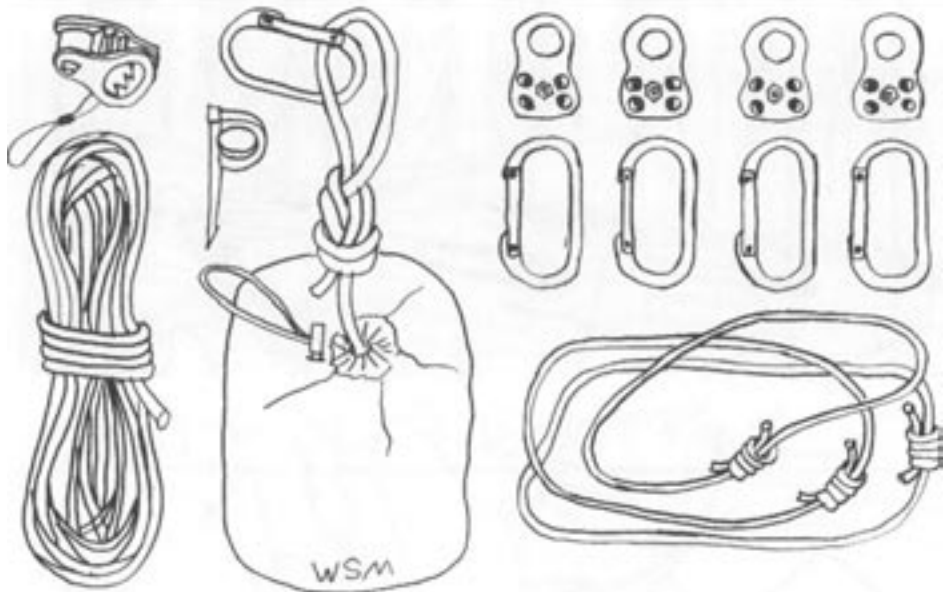
That flip, although it almost cost me my life, reassured me that self-rescue in a raft is indeed possible with the right preparations. I did resolve, however, to outfit my raft with two webbing straps tied around the inflated floor — one forward and one aft, and with a few knots tied in to provide for a grip.

Other rafters who have used these floor wraps often voice concern that they may get caught on a rock or tree limb and hang the boat up in a difficult spot. To address this issue, I wrap the webbing tightly all the way around the self-bailing floor and knot it to itself on the outside so that I can cut the webbing from inside, if necessary. In three seasons of using this system, however, I have never had to do this. It should be noted that tub floor rafts will be distorted by webbing run tightly under the floor from D rings. For these rafts it is best to glue flat webbing handles to the floor in strategic locations. I've used these handles on old boats for 10 years and they have never given me any trouble.

TUNNEL FALLS, COLORADO RIVER, COLORADO

My second big flip was in a nasty drop called Tunnel Falls in Gore Canyon of the Upper Colorado just a few months after my Owyhee trip. Some kayaker friends had invited me to join them with my oar rig, probably suspecting they would finally see me get a good thrashing. Fortunately, there is a big pool below this falls, so the carnage wasn't quite what they'd been hoping for. Also, my floor wraps worked beautifully — I was up on the boat in seconds.

For some reason, I always thought I



could right my "empty" boat myself using the standard 12-foot flip lines that stay in little stuff sacks on either side of the boat. Once on top of an overturned raft, you simply pull out one of the lines and, while standing on the opposite tube, lean back as you pull on the line and flip the boat on top of you. Now, one person can usually flip an empty paddle raft in this manner, but as I discovered below the falls, righting an overturned oar rig, with frame, oars, spare oars, med kit, repair kit, etc., is much more difficult. I had to get help from a friend. This emphasized the need for rescue bags with Z drag equipment on all solo trips with an oar rig, even without the weight of overnight gear.

HOLY SMOKES, SELWAY RIVER, IDAHO

My third and hopefully last flip happened during a solo trip on Idaho's Selway River. It was May 30, 1997, and hot, rainy weather was bringing down an immense volume of fresh snowmelt. The gauge at Paradise was pushing 7 feet and rising fast.

The first long set of rapids, only a few miles below the put-in are gener-

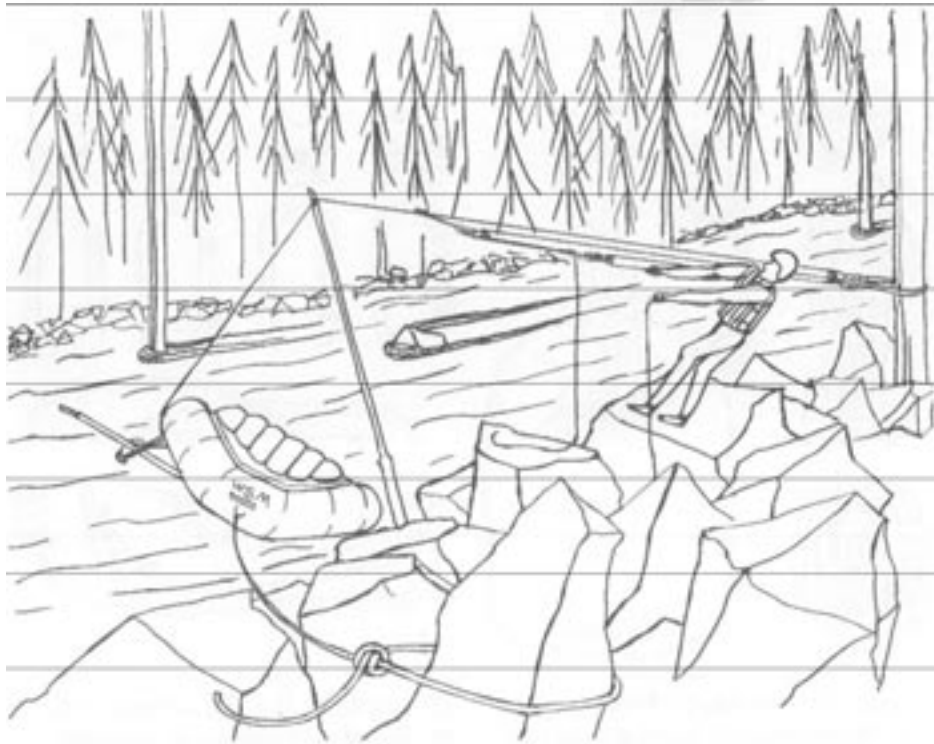
ally easy Class II or III, so people tell me. But at very high water the steep gradient turns it into a big, fast, Class IV. Toward the end of this stretch, in a rapid named Holy Smokes, I was in the wrong place at the wrong time and a surging wave caught me sideways and flipped me.

I surfaced on the downstream side of the boat and saw that I was headed for the right shoreline. I had just a few seconds to react before I slammed into the rocks. The boat, no doubt, would run me over, perhaps catching my chin on the frame and yanking my head clear off, helmet and all.

This would have been a good time to reflect on the advice and warnings of Linda King and the Selway rangers. They told me not to go — the river was much too high. They reminded me that I didn't know the river and implied that going solo under these conditions was really dumb. What would I do if I flipped?

Of course, I ignored them.

If anything, the warnings only upped the lure of this beautiful wilderness river. Also, I had just scored back-to-back permits on the Snake, Selway and Middle Fork of the Salmon. My mind was in the fast lane and I was ready to rock and roll. I didn't even begin to realize how much trouble I might get into until, on the way to the



put-in, I asked how other trips had fared that season and the rangers told me there had been no other trips. In the 14 days since the permit season had begun, every trip had cancelled. Every one. And the water was rising.

But I didn't have time to reflect. I was up to my neck in about 7,000 cfs of ice water, being swept along very quickly, straight toward the rocks. There was one small standing wave between me and the shallows, and as I passed through it, I used its lift and the floor wrap to help pull myself up onto the boat. A second later, the boat smashed into the rocks, snapping off one of my oars, and bounced back into the current out of control. As the boat picked up momentum and crashed into more rocks, I tried to formulate a plan.

Clearly, the strategy I used on the Owyhee, grabbing a spare oar and paddling to shore, wasn't going to work here. The speed and power of the river was truly scary, and, I hadn't seen an eddy yet. So for a time, I just hung on to the floor wraps, spread eagle and face down, and continued to lurch through holes and spin off rocks. Finally, I decided that the only way to save myself was to jump the next time I hit shore. With a rope, I might save

the boat, too.

After a bit, I managed to pull out the 12-foot flip lines and decided that the next time I hit shore I'd jump for it, holding the flip line on whatever side of the boat was closest to shore. The lines were too short to be much good in this situation and I knew I'd probably lose the boat. But I didn't care. Boat or no boat, the vision of clinging to this raft like Ahab on the back of the white whale was totally terrifying. I wanted out.

The current pushed me again to the right bank, and I got up and jumped as the boat hit shore. I landed on my feet and immediately wrapped the short flip line around a rock. But the momentum of the boat and the force of the river behind it flipped the rock into the hissing current. This slowed the boat for a bit, but it picked up speed quickly. I chased the raft across the rocks to a Ponderosa tree growing out of the water. About this time I noticed a loop of stern line washed against the shore, grabbed it, and lashed it around the tree just as the boat was about to carry me back into the river.

I finally got the boat secured, then sat down on the bank and started vomiting.

Righting the raft wasn't easy, but with a 6:1 Z drag and an oar blade planted in the rocks to provide angle, I finally flipped the boat.

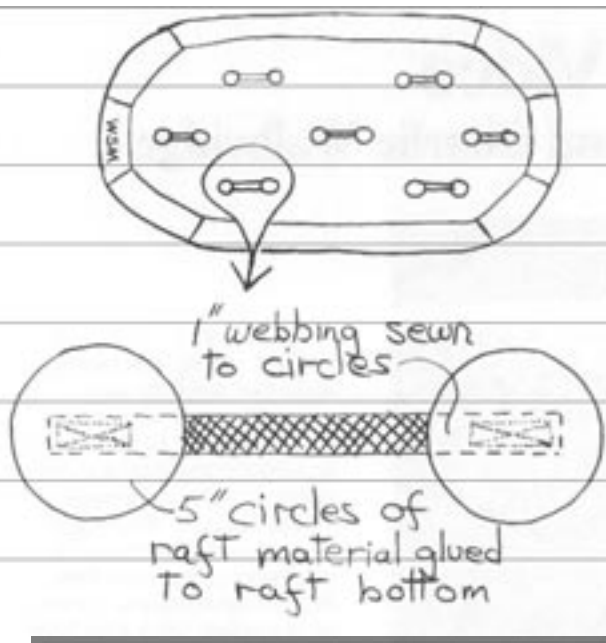
As expected, I had several repairs to make, but, after two hours or so I was back on the water — spooked, and looking for a good campsite from which to watch the water go down.

I finally found a good camp next to the Shearer airstrip at Mile 13 and waited. But the river just kept rising. Two days later, Mike Doris from McCall Air Taxi landed at the strip to drop off a ranch hand and, knowing I would miss my Middle Fork permit if I waited any longer, I flew out in his Cessna.

The two day wait by the river gave me time to think about this mishap and what I might do in the future to better cope with flips in fast, continuous whitewater. The answer was a longer line. If I'd had a longer line when I jumped for shore, I would have had enough time to wrap it around a good anchor. Although a throw line in a stuff sack could be clipped to the outside of a tube for this purpose, it would seem best to always carry a small throw line on your life vest, so that it would always be available.



Eight tips for self rescue



On solo trips now I carry a packet of survival gear in a pocket sewn onto the back of my life jacket. Included in this pocket is a 40-foot throw line of 3/8-inch spectra that can be removed quickly with one hand. There is a carabiner attached to the free end so that I can clip onto the floor webbing or floor wrap and jump with the bag in hand. This way I would take only as much line with me as necessary.

I think this jump with the line strategy is probably the best hope for self-rescuing a flipped raft in fast, pushy rivers, where riding the boat to shore is clearly safer than swimming. But it is dangerous — you may have to jump into some nasty stuff as the boat slams into shore or a strainer. Also, be sure not to let the rope tangle around your body, as you might be dragged into the river. When possible, you should ride the raft to safety, or, forget the boat and save yourself.

Looking back on my two self-rescues, I have to admit that I was in deep trouble both times. On the Owyhee I survived only because my boat finally ejected from the hole, which was pure chance.

On the other hand, I am a firm believer in reality, and the reality of both situations was that I did self-rescue successfully despite very difficult circumstances. Looking back, I find that encouraging.

- 1 Install floor wraps of rope or webbing on the self-bailing floor of your raft. Tie knots that you can grip into the webbing in order to help pull yourself onto the top of your overturned boat. Secure the wraps in such a way that they can be cut from the inside if they ever get caught on a rock or log. On tub style floors, glue flat webbing onto the floor for use as handles.
- 2 If you flip, stay with the boat and immediately climb on top. Use your judgement here. There may be times when it makes sense to swim for shore and try and recover the boat downstream. Factors to consider here include how difficult it might be to catch your boat, how bad downstream hazards look and whether there is a trail or other way out of the canyon.
- 3 If you are forced to swim with a raft in fast water, stay to one side, not downstream or upstream. Get on top as soon as possible.
- 4 Once in flat water and on top of the raft, grab a spare oar from the side of the raft and paddle to shore. In some cases, swimming to shore with a line might work as well.
- 5 Keep a throw line on your life jacket with a carabiner on the free end. This can be clipped to the boat and you can jump to shore with the bag, if necessary.
- 6 Keep two full sets of Z drag equipment in bags strapped to the outside of the raft tubes
- 7 Carry a good repair kit and plenty of spare parts, especially oars and oarlocks, which tend to get ripped off after flips.
- 8 Carry basic survival gear on your life jacket, especially when boating alone. Include fire making materials, a space blanket, a light tube tent, a signal mirror, whistle, baggies and water treatment tablets. Also, have some idea of the route you might take to hike out.

Whitewater Self Defense

Making the Video

An interview with Kent Ford and Charlie Walbridge

Kent Ford is an internationally known whitewater author and video producer. His background includes twenty years of international whitewater racing and coaching, combined with extensive experience as a canoe and kayak instructor. His videos and books on paddlesports have influenced over half a million river runners.



Charlie Walbridge has been studying, writing, and teaching about river safety for over twenty-five years. He literally "wrote the book" on river safety as author of countless accident reports and the "Whitewater Rescue Manual." As an equipment designer and one of the originators of the ACA's River Rescue training course, he has a lot of practical safety knowledge to share.

AW caught up with them to talk about their new video release, *Whitewater Self Defense*.

AW: How did this video come about?

Charlie: I've wanted to make a safety video emphasizing rescue skills for a long time, but I know my limitations. Covering the subject well is not good enough; it needs to be done in a fast-paced and entertaining way. That takes special skills. I've known Kent Ford since my racing days and have gotten many tips and insights from his canoe and kayak training videos. I suggested the idea of safety video a few years ago, and when he lined up the support we needed I helped him develop the script.

Kent: The timing was right for Performance Video, which specializes in whitewater instruction, to move into the safety area. Paddlers nowadays learn very quickly and I've been concerned that their training in whitewater rescue lags behind their boat handling skills. Many kayakers advance to difficult, unforgiving rapids before they ever personally encounter a river emergency. At the same time, recent accidents have made whitewater boaters aware of just how important safety and rescue skills are.

AW: So what does the video cover?

Kent: Our emphasis is "everyday" river safety and rescue skills that every whitewater paddler should know. It begins with a standard kayaker's "safety talk" and moves quickly to a range of simple, yet effective, river rescue skills. It spans a daunting range of topics including hazard recognition, self-rescue by swimming and wading, how to use throw ropes and rescue life vests, techniques for recovering pinned boats without complex haul systems, and a real-world look at strategies for entrapment rescue.

Charlie: This video has the best coverage on self rescue that I've seen anywhere, and the section on how to use rescue life vests is really thorough. Kent consulted with dozens of people throughout the country to make sure that the presentations were as clear and accurate as they could be. It's packed with useful information.

AW: How can a video help paddlers?

Charlie: Every paddler who runs white water should know basic safety and rescue skills, none of which are hard to learn. Some people won't take a class or read a book, but they will watch a video. While there's no substitute for hands-on training, you'll get a lot out of seeing the best ways to deal with common river mishaps. If you watch it a few times, you're sure to retain most of it.

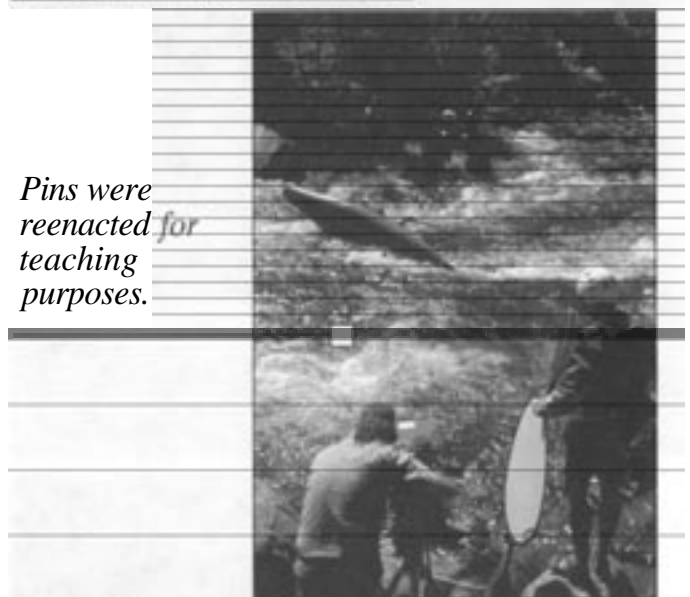
Kent: Charlie wanted a video with very little fluff and lots of hard skills. I think we accomplished that. (Laughs) We put so much information in this video that most people will have to watch it several times to get it all. Beginners will find the first few minutes to be a good introduction to river safety while experienced paddlers can use it to review the things they need to know. We broke the video into clearly defined sections that stand alone, so they can be easily integrated into kayak instructional programs.

AW: What was the hardest part of this project?

Kent: Our greatest challenge was to understand the audience so we could speak to them effectively. It would have been easy to do a beginner's safety tape, but we wanted to address the needs of intermediate and advanced paddlers as well. We also wanted to avoid using a heavy handed message



Kent Ford and John Davis discussing the next shot.



Pins were reenacted for teaching purposes.



Kent Ford coaches one of the volunteering assistants, while John Davis checks audio quality.

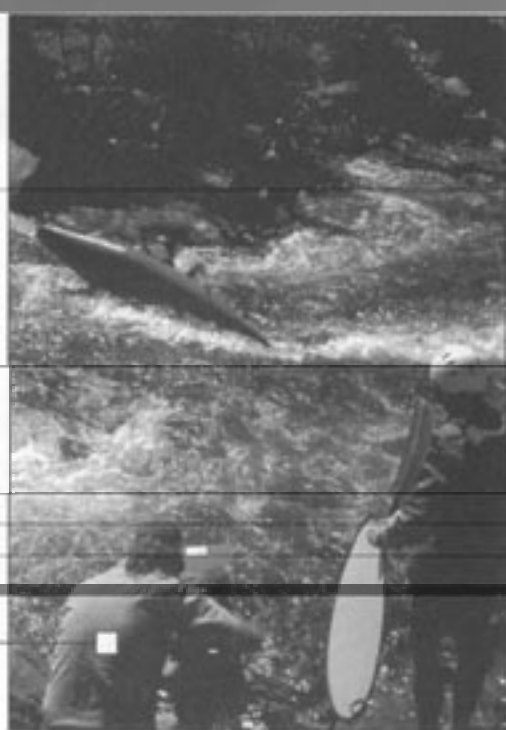
Fine tuning the camera



Rope throws are always right on target in the movies



Action... camera



or a condescending tone, either of which could bore or alienate our audience. We opted instead for a softer approach that's geared to the way most people paddle.

AW: What do you mean by "a soft approach"?

Kent: For example, some people expect a safety video to be pretty rigid about the gear people use. I felt more people would hear our message if we were less dogmatic. For example, the paddlers you see in the video don't always wear rescue life vests and full coverage helmets, or paddle high-volume creek boats. A few of them aren't wearing shoes. We leave lots of room for personal responsibility and informed choice in this and other areas. Some people won't like it. I'll be interested to see the discussion it provokes.

Q. What about the people who say that "testosterone poisoning" among younger paddlers is responsible for the increase in accidents?

Charlie: The kind of mistakes that cause problems for paddlers aren't limited to any age group. River paddlers have to stay alert all the time. In my opinion, the main reason for the increased accidents is that more paddlers are running rivers than ever before. More significant, the number of boaters attempting Class V rapids has skyrocketed in the last five years. While the outer limits of paddling are becoming more dangerous, because of improved equipment and training, Class III-IV is probably safer than ever for the average paddler. We hope this video will help.

Kent: Frankly, the accidents don't just point to the youngsters. I've lost way too many friends, "old school" peers of mine, to draw that sort of conclusion. Besides, I was there once. But when I was 19 people had much more conservative ideas about where the limits were. I'm sure that the wild cutting edge of paddling, which I define as Class V or VI, will always appeal to some people. And the media loves that. But I want to spread the message that Class III-IV boating is really awesome fun and far less risky.

AW: How did you get the swimming shots?

Kent: John Davis, my business partner, does the camera work. He's a paddler and has a good eye for capturing the nuances of the sport. And he has enough insurance to be willing to sit in a raft with an unprotected \$60,000 camera. (Laugh) And a willingness to spend way too much time designing graphics on the computer. To allow those on or in the river to speak on camera, we waterproofed a \$1,000 wireless microphone using ziplock bags and condoms. We lost a couple of mikes anyway, but we got what we wanted on tape.

AW: How about the scarier scenarios. Some of them look quite real.

Kent: The credit for this goes to the many strong boaters who volunteered to assist us. Jeff Snyder, Rob Dobson, and Mike Mather allowed us to set up some really nasty looking scenarios on the Gauley without taking unnecessary risks. Corey Nielsen and Shane Benedict from Perception pitched in on the Arkansas to give us the feel of a well honed group. They also did some swims and rescues that were quite impressive. Folks like Bob Hathcock and Gordon Black at NOC spent lots of time at swimming Nantahala Falls and deliberately screwing up with rescue vests. They got pretty beat up, but it was worth it.

Charlie: Some of these setups made me nervous at first. Often I'd be the person on shore calling a halt to the filming so I could check our safety backup. But from our debriefings, I'd say only one or two scenes stretched our comfort levels. There are probably about ten more scenes that look scary, but that's more the result of clever camera angles and good acting. If you look carefully you can see hints of this in the video.

Kent: We wanted our instruction to look real, without frightening anyone away from the sport. But if it frightens people from running water that's beyond their ability, that would be fine with me.

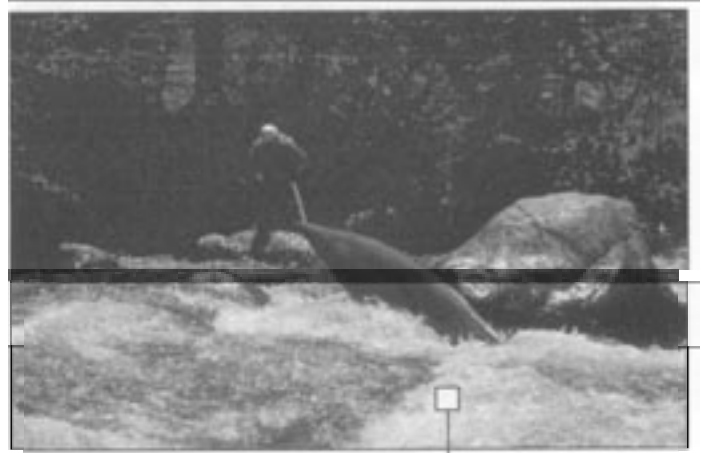
AW: What was it like to work with each other?

Kent: Although I've had a good bit of river rescue training, I learned some things from Charlie. But the challenge wasn't so much the content as it was figuring out how to communicate it well. We had some lively discussions about how much depth we could go into and how best to show the skills on tape. That's harder than it looks!

Charlie: Kent was great to work with, but it wasn't just the two of us. Ellen DeCuir brought a tremendous amount of experience with her, and she has a great on-camera presence. John Davis, the cameraman, is careful and patient – even after a long day of filming. We often had intense four-way discussions about how to get a scene "just right". I had lots of fun working with everyone.

AW: How did you get all the support for this project?

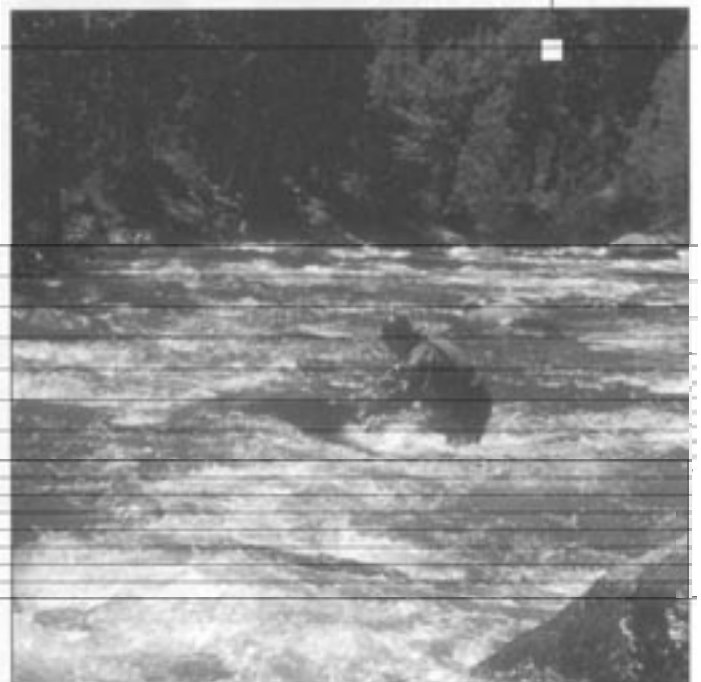
Charlie: Most of the people you'll see in the video are ordinary paddlers. We approached people on the river and asked them to help. Usually I would teach them the skills they needed to know, then the cameras would roll. Sometimes they already knew what to do. Several people unselfishly gave us several days of volunteer time.



Throwing a boat into a pinning situation.



Shooting one of the many pin scenarios.





Several frightening scenarios were staged. This one required Kent Ford to get stuffed under a tree. The boat was sawed in half to allow realism.

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Kent: Safety is one issue that gets everyone, even competing companies, working together. We had strong backing from both the American Canoe Association and American Whitewater. Companies like Perception, Dagger, Werner Paddles, REI, Prijon, the Nantahala Outdoor Center, Paddler, Voyageur, and Adventure Medical Kits all offered real financial help. Without their assistance the video could not have been filmed. We also got lots of assistance and cooperation from outfitting shops, rafting companies, and managing agencies. They all want to make the river a safer place.

Whitewater Self Defense costs \$29.95. It's available from American Whitewater, your local paddling store, and leading catalog houses. For more information call Performance Videos at 888-259-5805.



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Kayak Accident Toll Grows in Late 1998

By Charlie Walbridge

Although falling water levels normally force paddlers to cut back their activities in the second half of the year, during the last six months of 1998 the whitewater death toll continued to rise. Since July 6th, nine kayak, three canoe, and five rafting fatalities have been reported to the American Whitewater safety committee. Most of these reports were taken off the Internet at rec.boats.paddle, and I thank all of our correspondents, especially Kevin Sulewski, for taking the time to surf the net and forward this material. Several of these narratives are sketchy, and I invite anyone with more information to contact me or Safety Chair Lee Belknap directly.

Kayaking Accidents

The nine kayak accidents described here give us a total of 25 for the year, the most ever reported to AW. Although not all river accidents are reported to us, the records for whitewater kayaking fatalities are pretty complete. Five of the U.S. fatalities involve skilled boaters running class V rapids, reflecting increased activity at the upper limits of our sport. Six occurred outside North America; two on expeditions. As with most accidents in Class V water, the difficulty of the water was itself is the cause, and small lapses in boat control can result in tragedy. Anyone attempting rapids of this magnitude must take this into account

On July 6th John Foss, 45, was on the fourth day of an exploratory trip down Peru's Hullabamba River. The river, flowing at 6,000 cfs in a very remote canyon, contains a mix of class IV, V, and VI rapids. Foss, a veteran expedition paddler and a long-time supporter of American Whitewater, scouted a short, steep drop. He told the group that the rapid contained some big holes, but none looked like keepers. The others in the group ran first, expecting to meet him at the bottom. But when Foss ran the drop he hit a big hole and disappeared. His boat, paddle, and other gear were never found, suggesting some sort of underwater entrapment. When Foss did not appear, his friends searched the area before moving a short distance downstream to make camp. Although they hoped Foss had gotten ahead of the group somehow, they never saw him again. The body was discovered by fishermen some weeks later

The North Fork of the Payette is a well-known roadside Class V run in southern Idaho. Its rapids are steep, violent, and surprisingly shallow. Flips carry with them a serious risk of head injuries. Vince Thompson, who maintains an Idaho Rivers web site, reported that in the afternoon of July 12th the river was running at 1700 cfs, a moderate flow. A group of six kayakers, four of whom had never run the river before, put in above Jacob's Ladder, arguably the most difficult rapid on the river. Lucas Turner, 26, broached on a rock, spun around, and flipped. He flushed through Taffy Puller (the bottom of Jacob's Ladder) upside down and was last seen alive swimming at the top of the Golf Course. (The next large rapid, directly below Jacob's Ladder.) The party could not locate him until they were driving back up to the site, when they saw his body among some rocks on the river right shore. CPR failed to revive him.

Further investigation revealed that a hard blow to the right temple probably caused his death. There is no way that a stunned or unconscious paddler could survive a swim in the North Fork, and this injury might have proven fatal on its own. Turner's helmet was a popular lightweight plastic model. This accident reminds us of the need for heavy, full coverage helmets when running class V.

The Tsangpo River in Southeastern Tibet flows through what may be the deepest canyon on earth. The stretch between Pei and Medong is one of the great remaining whitewater challenges on this planet. On September 24, 1998 a 12-man expedition organized by Wick Walker assembled in Kathmandu to begin the trek to the river. Jamie McEwan, one of the river team members, reported that they found the river running at over 30,000 cfs, far more than the 5000-15,000 cfs they had hoped for. However, the team was encouraged to hear that the water had been dropping steadily for weeks. The group took four days to warm up on the easier, more accessible 18 mile stretch from Pei to Gayla. After some discussion the group decided to continue cautiously downstream, carrying 15 days of provisions. They planned to work the edges of the rapids, staying out of the main flow, running what they could and carrying the rest. If it turned into "boat assisted hiking", so be it! During this time the Land Crew would trek into the gorge to meet them. They would also provide limited emergency backup.

On October 16 the group paused at the top of a big rapid to scout. Doug Gordon, 41, a former U.S. Team member with several expeditions to his credit, elected to run an 8' ledge near shore while others set safety. The boat failed to clear the hydraulic and flipped. Gordon missed two roll attempts and was pushed towards the middle of the river. Still upside down, he was sucked towards the main flow in the center of the river and washed into a series of terminal hydraulics. For the next four days the land and river crews, after communicating by satellite phone, assisted by native hunters, searched the river downstream. They found no sign of Gordon or his gear. On October 20th the search was called off. The group notified authorities and began an arduous 7-day hike back to civilization.

The rec.boats.paddle network was shocked on November 28th to hear that Scott Bristow, a regular contributor to this popular on-line forum, died while running Great Falls of the Potomac near Washington, DC. This Class V+ drop is several hundred yards wide, and there are a number of different routes. The river was running at 2.8', a low flow considered ideal for

running Great Falls. Bristow drove up from Atlanta with two friends to meet some locals he'd met on line. On Friday he met David McIntosh, an experienced falls runner who would later reported the accident to rec.boats.paddle. Afterscouting they successfully ran several lines on the Maryland side.

On Saturday another experienced Great Falls boater joined them. After warming up below the falls, they prepared to run the Maryland side. They ran the top drop, Pummel, and eddied out above the Z-Turn. Bristow, running fourth, apparently missed his line, spun around, and dropped into Charlie's Hole backwards. This is a nasty pour over which has forced swimmers into rocksieves at the bottom of the river. A few years ago Charlie Crowley, the hole's namesake, was forced to escape by swimming down to the riverbed and crawling out hand-over-hand along the bottom. Bristow was trapped and beaten by the hole and forced to swim. His companions eddied out, and ran up the rocks alongside the drop with throw ropes. They never saw him again. His boat and paddle washed out, but he did not. As of this date Bristow's body has not been found.

Bristow was the first kayaker to die in the Great Falls area since the Park opened in the late 60s. For many years activity centered on Class III Mather Gorge just downstream. Great Falls was first paddled in the mid- 70s, and in the past few years the number of runs has increased dramatically. Experienced falls runners speculate that Scott got off line by being back-surfed in an upstream hole or by going to the wrong side of a small rock in the approach. Efforts to get back on line may have caused him to spin out. Such small errors can have serious consequences in very difficult whitewater. Local paddlers had long speculated that someone was going to get killed eventually, and they hope that this accident will cause fast rising boaters to think twice before tackling drops of this seriousness.

Long time AW director Chris Koll reported a bizarre accident that occurred on the Lower Moose River this past November 30th. The river was running 3.7, a low level which changes the classic class IV-V rapids on this run into technical Class III+. At this level, the tricky diagonal holes at the entrance to Roostertail are capable of flipping even the most experienced

kayakers. Martin Parkinson, 45, flipped in this drop and was swimming between two boulders when his sprayskirt caught on a projecting underwater rock. It held him under the frigid 35-degree water so that he could not reach the surface easily. His group was unable to reach him, so they sent for help. Rescue squads arrived at about the same time as a second group from Rochester, N.Y. They were able to reach the Parkinson and free him, although one person reported that they could not cut the Kevlar composite sprayskirt with a sharp knife.

When I started paddling in the 70s we used shock-corded sprayskirts which "puckered up" when they popped off the rim and stayed close to your body. But these did not attach securely to modern keyhole cockpits, so other designs were developed. Modern sprayskirts have a much broader profile in the water and can catch the current. I've always felt this posed some snag risk, but have no idea how to eliminate it. I'm sure this accident will increase our awareness of this potential problem.

The Raven Fork River is a Class IV stream falling out of Smoky Mountain National Park in

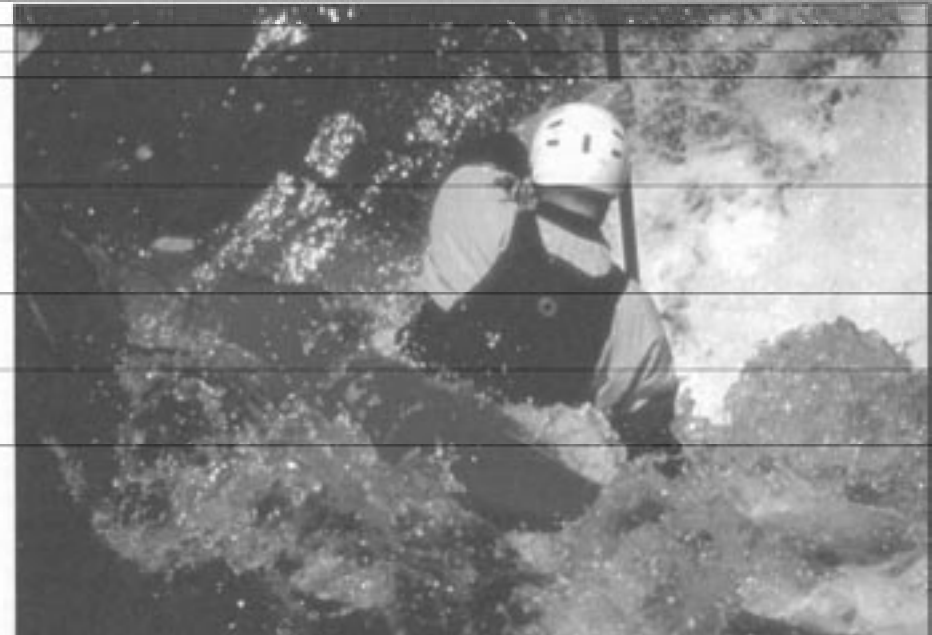


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Johnny Kern deep testing pour Bow Falls, N. Yuba River

Western North Carolina. On December 27th two kayakers approached "Crack-in-the-Rock", a blind drop with a known strainer in the chute. Chris McLaughlin, who was on the trip and authored an account on [rec.boats.paddle](#), notes that the log was easily avoided, but that the route was not clear from the top. Ed Green, his companion, elected to run first, without scouting. He became badly pinned. McLaughlin attempted a rescue, but was unable to help his friend alone. Green disappeared underwater after a brief struggle.

His girlfriend, who was following them along the road, saw what was happening and went for help. Five minutes later Cherokee Fire and Rescue arrived. It took six trained men to free Green's boat. They were able to get a pulse, but he had been under too long and died the next day. McLaughlin speculates that Green decided not to scout because the air temperature was in the 30s and they were near the takeout. We have all been tempted to take similar shortcuts; let's think about this the next time we're confronted with a similar decision.

The wide Susquehanna River in Eastern Maryland is not really whitewater, but the current can be fast and the water cold. The Baltimore Sun reported that on December 29th two friends put into the river at 7:00 PM just south of Connewing Dam for an evening of rockfishing. The pair dropped an anchor from the cockpit at the center of the boat, causing it to flip. The river, channeled by an island, is still over 200 yards wide here. The two were quickly separated by the current. The survivor, clinging to the boat, was washed into a rocky area where he screamed for help for almost an hour. Later he made it to shore and called 911. Christopher Fedor, 25, drowned. Neither man wore PFD's or protective clothing. Two life vests were found in the boat as required by state law. The survivor blamed the power company for raising the river level and swamping the boat, but anchoring small boats is tricky and their technique was incorrect. The current alone could have caused the capsizing.

We have received two very sketchy reports from [rec.boats.paddle](#). A kayaker drowned in the Capilano River in British Columbia, Canada in November after encountering a "whirlpool", which in a newspaper article can mean almost anything. In December, Kayaker Dan Dixon apparently flipped and swam on the Quijos River in Ecuador right above a must-make eddy. He was carried into an unrunnable canyon where he drowned. Any readers of American Whitewater who know more about these incidents are encouraged to contact the Safety Committee with more information.

Canoeing Accidents

Canoe accidents usually, but not always, involve inexperienced paddlers on easy to moderate whitewater. This year's reports will bear this out. American Whitewater is interested in all moving water accidents regardless of difficulty, and readers are encouraged to forward newspaper clippings or other accounts to us

East Tennessee's Lower Ocoee River was the site of fatality on August 8th. A Chattanooga Times article reported that an open canoeist flipped at Tablesaw Rapid. The paddler, who friends say was a very experienced riverman, bailed out and swam. A rope was thrown, but he did not grab hold. He barely made it to shore before he collapsed. His partner, a doctor, began treatment immediately. The victim was transported to a hospital in Chattanooga where he died the next day. The autopsy revealed that a brain aneurysm, not related to the river, was the cause of death. His name is being withheld at his family's request.

The Saluda River near Columbia, SC has been the site of a very successful whitewater rodeo. Scott Broam reported to [rec.boats.paddle](#) that the river level on September 12th was 4000 cfs, forming big-water Class III+ rapids. That afternoon, after the rodeo competition had finished, a tandem open canoe flipped in Stacy's Ledge, about 150 yards above the Millrace, and washed downstream. The Columbia State reported that one man swam to shore safely. The other, Richard Cribbs, 50, became entangled in line tied into the canoe. Kayakers made frantic efforts to rescue him without success. His life vest slipped off, and he disappeared from view. Divers recovered the body four days later.

The third canoe accident occurred on the Colorado River between Silt and Rifle, Colorado on December 26th. Jim Githens reported via email that two duck hunters launched a canoe at 1:00 PM. The air temperature that day was in the high 20s, and eddies and flat water stretches were beginning to ice over. Both men were dressed in heavy insulated clothing and boots and chose to carry, rather than wear, their life vests. After capsizing in a Class I riffle, the two men wasted precious time trying to retrieve their gear. One man was able to remove his coat, but the victim, Mike Aaberg, could not. His partner attempted to help him; both men reached shore, but Aaberg was too weak to climb out of the river. His partner crawled up the 1-70 embankment and flagged a car. He was semiconscious when rescued, and it was not until he reached the hospital in Rifle that authorities realized that there was a second man in the water. It was then, 50 minutes after the capsizing, that rescue squads were notified.

Rafting Accidents

There were five rafting fatalities in four separate incidents during this period, including a double fatality in the hard-hit state of California. Two commercial trips and two private trips were involved.

On July 10th a commercial rafting guest drowned on the Arkansas River, 6.5 miles north of Buena Vista, Colorado. CWA Safety Chair Roger Lynn reports that the river was running 2660, a medium-high level. The accident occurred at 2:40 PM, about 10 minutes below the railroad bridge put-in. The river is very fast and turbulent here, making boat based rescue very difficult. The first boat in a three boat trip hit a large wave and capsized, throwing everyone into the water. The guide got on top of the flipped raft and pulled several passengers out of the river. The second boat rescued two others and a third guest self-rescued by swimming to shore. The victim, a 48 year-old man, was the last to be recovered. He was not breathing, so guides initiated CPR and called for help. Arkansas Headwaters river rangers and sheriff's officers were called, and the victim was transported to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead.

On July 12th American Creek in Katmai National Park near King Salmon, Alaska was running high and fast following recent rains. Slim Ray reported that a raft containing a number of prominent Alabama lawyers and politicians was caught by overhanging branches and flipped. All but one person made it to shore. Gary Aildridge, 48, a former Alabama State Senator, was swept down river and is presumed dead. Fog and high water hampered immediate efforts to recover his body.

On August 1st nine rafters from Edwards Air Force Base made a fatal error while running a Class IV-V stretch of Upper Kern River in Southern California. AW's John Gangemi reported that the river level was moderate, about 1000 cfs. Observers felt that the rented raft was pretty big for the run, and noted that the group was not wearing helmets despite the difficulty of the rapids downstream. Rangers also felt the raft was overloaded and attempted to warn the group. When it was clear that they intended to go regardless, they were also warned to carry Salmon Falls, a Class V+ rapid that outfitters normally portage. Despite these efforts, the raft blundered into Salmon Falls and flipped, throwing everyone into the river. Remarkably, most of the rafters washed through the big drop. Two people, Ralph Cheverine, 26, and Michelle Lopez, 27, disappeared. Two life vest and a single shoe belonging to Lopez appeared at the bottom, still closed, suggesting an underwater entrapment. Cheverine's body was recovered that day, but a week later Lopez's body was still missing.

Slim Ray reported a fatality on Tennessee's Upper Ocoee River. This run is similar to the Lower Ocoee (Class III+, with one IV) except that these rapids contain some hidden boulder sieves. This is the first year of full commercial operations on this stretch; 19 releases were scheduled. On August 22 a commercial raft hit aboulder sideways near the Blue Hole, throwing three guests into the river. Two were recovered quickly, but a third, Bruce Richards, 30, was stuffed into a pothole and held under water for about 5 minutes. Guides eventually pulled him free and started CPR. He was transported to a Chattanooga hospital by EMS personnel, where he died the next day.

American Whitewater will continue to gather accident reports in the future so that all paddlers can learn from them. We can't do this without your help; even with the Internet we need people to forward the information to us. Newspaper clippings, club newsletter write-ups, and personal narratives are welcome. Please send reports to Charlie Walbridge, AW Safety Editor, 230 Penllyn Pike, Blue Bell, PA 19422; Phone 215-646-0157; email cwal@compusewe.com.



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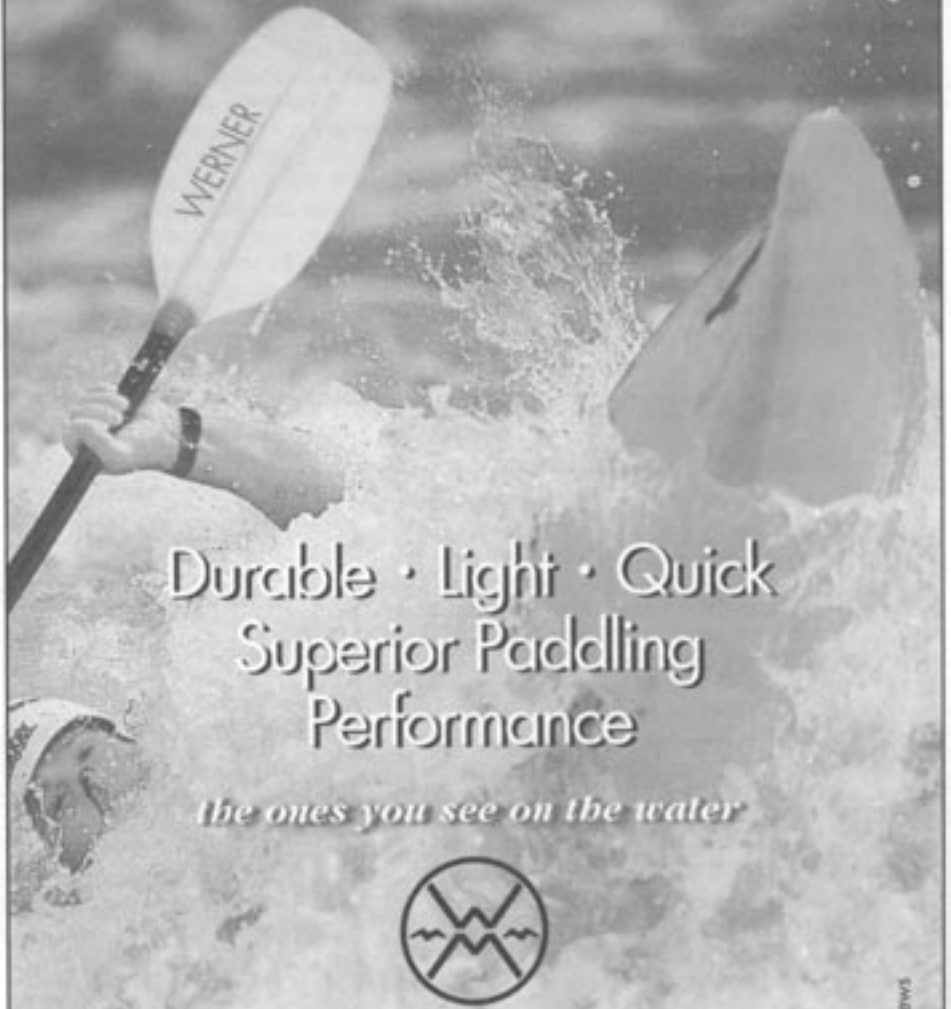
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Photo: Rick Matthews

The True First Descent of a Jokulhlaup

Back in olden times, in the late 1970s, when practically every descent was a first, and when there was no need for a First Descent Committee of the AWA, Meyer Rubin (A.K.A. Dr. Kayak) completed the run on the Skeidara River in Iceland from the jolukhlaup of the Grimsvotn. His report, reprinted here from the Canoe Cruisers Association of Washington DC. Newsletter, chronicles his adventure and should have served as a guide to Bill Hay (Life and Death in the Grimsvotn Caldera, *American Whitewater*, Nov/Dec 1998, pg.77). Dr. Kayak's well-known humility and humbleness has prevented him from advertising this feat to a wider audience and so he excuses Bill Hay from any inadvertent claims of firstness.

Meyer Rubin
Dr. Kayak

Editors note: You might remember Dr. Kayak's article on the Love Canal Race in American Whitewater, May/June 1981, when the journal was pocket sized.

Dr. Kayak's Account Reprinted Running a Jokulhlaup

I don't care how many wild rivers you've paddled, you still get that dry lump in your throat, that feeling that your knees have been replaced by jelly, every time you put onto a raging river. If your pulse rate and adrenaline flow don't increase, maybe you should think about trying a different sport, like hang gliding (as John Dirst does). I certainly had those feelings as I viewed the Skeidara River in Iceland that March morning three years back and would probably have quit if I hadn't gone to all that trouble getting there.

I had arrived in the town of Skaftafell in SE Iceland the day before, after having been alerted by a friend on the Icelandic Geological Survey that the volcano Grimsvotn in the Vatnajokull (jokull means glacier in Icelandic) was ready to blow. (The tiltmeters and seismic recorders predicted an immediate eruption.) In fact, the Skeidara was running high and muddy even a week before. The result of melting of the glacier at its base by the heat of the rising lava. That's what causes a jokulhlaup (a glacial run), a subglacial volcano erupts, melts enormous amounts of water and, finally, water and icebergs in unbelievable volume sweep over the

countryside, destroying roads, bridges and telephone lines. That's why this part of Iceland will never have a complete highway system. The jokulhlaups of 1934 and 1938 and one back in 1918 had flows of 50,000 and 200,000 cubic meters per second; compare that to the puny 10,000 meters per second of the Amazon, the world's largest river.

And that's why I was shaking, seeing this fantastic powerful flow roaring past, which made my preparatory runs of the Cheat, the New, the Yough in flood and the Colorado seem like child's play. Mud, stones, sand, ice and debris tumbled by in disorganized jumbles.

John Sweet used to say, "If you scout too long, you'll lose your nerve." So I slid into my kayak, fastened the skirt, and pushed off. It's a good thing large discharges don't move by laminar straight-line flow, but lose speed and force in swirling turbulent flow, with boils, whirlpools, and eddies to take up the energy. But, as it was, all I could do was keep my stern from passing my bow. Large blocks of ice the size of ships followed by blocks the size of boats tore down at galloping-horse speed. The roar was deafening, what with the volcanic vents

breaking through the ice, forming huge pillars and lines of flames, adding to the angry growl of the river. My skirt was heavy from the falling ash and my helmet was continually pelted by the falling lapilli of volcanic bombs. These distractions increased the difficulty of staying upright and avoiding obstacles. Fortunately, Iceland doesn't have trees, or the run would have been impossible. It was 20 kilometers down the sandur (outwash plain) to the ocean and I made it in about 2 hours. Time flew by, but my aching arms told me I had just about gone my limit in the ice cold water, bracing and pulling out of suck-holes the like of which even Jimmy Stuart would have trouble describing.

I'm glad I did the jokulhlaup, but I'm glad I never have to do it again. I never told anybody about this exploit, not because of modesty, which isn't one of my particularly strong virtues, but for fear that if I did, the trip schedule chairman of the CCA would ask me to lead the icebreaker trip down the Potomac. And my fingers and tootsies get sooo cold. So don't you tell, ya hear!

Meyer Rubin

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The Poster

By Ken Strickland

I don't quite know how long the poster had been hidden away in that basement desk—certainly several years. It was rolled, enclosed in a cover, and like new when my daughter discovered it.

"May I open this?" she asked.

"Certainly," I answered, not giving it a second thought.

Several days passed before I noticed it hanging from the wall in her room. My gosh, what an incredible photograph, I thought. It pictured a kayaker popping up and out of a drop

located in some wild gorge in Mexico. His bright red boat and yellow paddle jacket shined against the backdrop of an enormous, multi-plumed waterfall, formed where a tributary plunged from the cliffs high above the river. What a exceedingly beautiful and wild place that must be, I said to myself. And then I began to think about the photograph...and moreover, the paddler.

There is a race of giants among us. They are few in number and come from around the globe. They are the Hillarays, Norgays and

Messners of our sport. They seek out the Everests and K2s of whitewater. Their's is an ethos that few of us fully understand—even those of us who do push the limits and sometimes stand on the edge. These giants are compelled to enter those ineffable realms where the natural conditions are so outrageous and overwhelming that few of us can even imagine. Do I envy them? Certainly, but in a vicarious way. Do I admire them? Immensely.

As my gaze returned to the poster, I looked at the beautiful rainbow that framed the paddler. Certainly it was the radiant product of the mixing of spray and sunlight in this primeval place, but in my mind's eye I saw... an aura.

Editors note: The photo in question was taken at Tamul Falls on the Santa Maria river in Mexico. The paddler was the late Doug Gordon, who died recently on a Himalayan expedition.

Blackness on Bald Rock Serendipity

By Davison Collins

Bald Rock Canyon is the hardest section of the Middle Fork of the Feather River in Northern California. It contains numerous class V to V+ drops and one mandatory portage—Atom Bomb Falls. The run itself is only about 7 miles, but it is usually done in 2 days owing to its remoteness, the amount of scouting it requires and a long paddle out on a reservoir. I planned to paddle it for the first time with a companion who also had never been there, and to rendezvous part way down the river with a friend of mine,

Norwood, and his buddy, who had put on the day before. We were to meet them at Atom Bomb Falls. This meeting had been pre-established.

Just before I was to leave my paddling companion, John, called informing me that, after further consideration, he wasn't going: "I don't feel comfortable going down there with someone who doesn't know the lines," he explained with resolution. I've never understood this concern, because, for me, scouting and deciding upon a line to run is an

integral part of class V—the cerebral part. The rest is visceral. It's like yin and yang. I hate being told which line to run, although on a practical level it makes sense. But running class V is far from practical, especially alone.

Well, that left me with no paddling partner, no way to notify Norwood that I couldn't make it and no time to find someone else to join me (I did try). You see, Bald Rock is no ordinary run; it's one of the classics in California, which translates to one of the best runs in the world. Lars Holbeck, author of *Sierra Nevada Whitewater*, had personally recommended it to me as a "must do". Further, it has a small window of runnability and I had very few days off. Screw it, I thought: I'm going in there solo.

While driving Thursday night I thought nostalgically about my days as a transient kayaker: days of sunshine, whitewater and cold beer, followed by nights of dead sleep on some sandy beach by a river. Lately my life lacked the excitement and constant renewal of the river life. I was drying up in a monotonous, meaningless void. I understood on an elementary level what I was driving toward that night, but I grasped for practicality in the darkness.

John's absence had cemented the depth of my venture. Part of me missed his light nature—his goofy smile and laugh—but I couldn't shake

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the heavy feeling that this challenge was necessary. So I embraced the feeling. I convinced myself that doing this alone was what my deserted core required. I was hungry again.

With this feeling came the remembrance of the promise I had made, the promise I was about to break.

It was in Honduras 2 years ago when I made it. While paddling a steep class V creek with some friends, all expert paddlers, I ran into some sobering trouble. We arrived at the put in and the crux after an arduous grunt through the jungle. There it gushed, a double waterfall: the first one about a 15 foot drop with terrifying recirculation at the bottom, followed immediately by a 25-footer. I missed my boof off the first, but managed to avoid the hole at the bottom, ending up in a swirly excuse for an eddy. I was trapped between an overhung smooth granite wall, the deadly hole and the second waterfall.

I was terrified to say the least. But I managed to fend off panic in the horrifying hour which ensued, managed to stay calm in that violent prison, surrounded by dread. I managed this because I was also surrounded by my friends. They moved in quickly. All their years of experience as raft guides and kayakers synergized fluidly in that moment. From their first movements I knew that they would retrieve me from that whitewater purgatory; I knew that I would be buying the drinks that night at Expatriates.

That incident marked the first time in my kayaking career where I had actually needed a rescue. So I made the promise then: no more kayaking alone.

I woke at 6:30 and the first thought that ran through my head was "Don't do this." I considered this thought while lying stiffly in the back of my black truck. Self-doubt. That's all it was. I rose abruptly in a tidal wave of confidence and commenced my 3 Cs: coffee, cereal, crap. Then the ritual of donning the gear began. As much as I dislike the metaphor of war when discussing one's relationship to the river—I much prefer to imagine myself making love to the river—I felt like a soldier dressing for battle. I accepted this feeling and with it, accepted the worst scenario, even though my supreme confidence muffled all cries that the worst would greet me. I slipped on my elbow pads and helmet and shouldered my boat. I slid into the river, helmet still unbuckled, sprayskirt not yet secured, casual signs that this was just going to be another ecstatic day on the river.

The game had begun. I paddled easily through the first mile of class II and III. Then came the first class V. It showed its crooked teeth like an enemy's sneer. I caught the last possible eddy and peered over. Here we go... Immediately I was knocked off line and spun backwards, a quick sweep and I was sideways. Crunch, plastic hitting granite, a quick twist in my back and all my movement ceased. Pinned sideways. I instinctively started wiggling my

hips, quickly freeing myself. Ouch. Okay, the first rapid wasn't pretty, but at least I stayed upright. Just some nasty sparring. Time to pull it back together.

The second class V followed like a female dog. Two ugly holes with no clear route: an imperative boof to clear the hole on the right. Stroke, stroke, boof! Instant resistance and rolling, rolling, rolling... I had to get vertical if I wanted to escape without swimming. A quick pry on about the tenth barrel roll and I was ejected. After spending nearly a minute in that bitch, I paddled frantically into an eddy at the bottom of the rapid to rest and empty my boat.

I looked at my watch: 9:30. I'd barely gone a mile and a half, which meant I had about 2 more to go to reach Nonwood at Mom Bomb Falls. And I had to meet him at 11:00. My tunnel vision widened for the first time that morning. I noticed the teleological weave of Manzanita and granite, felt the depth of the canyon, the minuteness of my being. I was drifting, and with the drifting came fear.

Refocused, I got back in my boat, gripping my paddle shaft like a good friend's hand and started stroking. The momentum felt reassuring. Nothing could slow me down now. Nothing. The next class V went smoothly, and my confidence soared inordinately.

Then I came upon the congested conglomeration of fat-headed granite boulders. And I mean phat! It looked like Stonehenge after a crew of anarchists had finished an explosives drill. Time to scout.

There were a myriad of channels and I didn't have time to scout them all. My watch read 10:15 and there was still no sign of Norwood. So I headed to the left and got out on a flat boulder between two channels. I surveyed my two options. To the very left there was a fifteen-foot waterfall which was framed on one side by the left bank, a smooth vertical wall of granite. It looked all right, but I wasn't sure about the depth and the water didn't flow from the pool at the bottom.

Then I surveyed the right. A double drop. I couldn't see what was after that, but it appeared that I could catch an eddy around the corner and survey the scene more thoroughly. The second boof seemed easy enough, but the first looked like it might cause some difficulty. Most of the water ran into a crevice to the left of the landing. This crevice was formed by two monolithic boulders coming together in a V.

It didn't look like a situation I couldn't handle. If I got shoved in there I would be able to push myself out without too much effort. I convinced myself of this with light brevity and decided to go for it. A closer inspection of this crevice might have revealed the insidious trap

awaiting me, but my hindsight is blurry on this point.

Back in my boat I lined up and started stroking. Just another boof, I thought, as I planted my last stroke and lunged my hips forward, the final thrust before orgasm. I landed and planted my first stroke in the new water. Too slow. The water yanked me from behind and dragged me into the crack. I had my fun with Bald Rock, now she was about to have hers. I instantly palmed the smooth granite on each side of me and pushed towards the second drop, flexing muscles I didn't even know existed while wiggling my hips to avoid the water's clutch.

I must have dipped an edge too far, though, and when I tried to lift it the Bernoulli Effect took over. Water began to sweep over my entire deck causing me to sink slowly at first, then slurp: my chest was covered. The last thought before I went under was, this could be it.

I pulled my skirt immediately and was quickly separated from my boat as I sank swiftly, down the dark, lubricated flume. No thoughts, undivided blackness. Then I was up again, just in time to take a breath before being stuffed violently beneath an undercut house rock. My next thought: find the light.



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I looked around desperately as I felt the pressure in my ears increase. Avice on my head tightened steadily. I was going deeper. This was alarming, but it allowed me to figure out which direction was up. I looked up: light, dear light—hallelujah for sunshine, for if it had been a cloudy day...?

Once I spotted the sacred luminescence every ounce of my will, my matter, focused on reaching it. I clung to the smooth granite, slowing the downward momentum; I kicked at the rock trying to push myself up, up to the glow. Suddenly my momentum shifted as a converging current embraced me. I was on my way up. I gasped for breath upon this second resurfacing. I was not going under again.

But I was going down the river. In front of me loomed a bony class V, a skeleton, no flesh. I saw the eddy above it like I had seen the light underneath the boulder and I swam for all I was worth toward it. But by this time I wasn't worth much more than a rag doll. My torso cleared the eddy line and I grabbed for a rock, but the river wasn't through with me yet. She tugged at my kicking legs. I grasped for some solid object. But there was only water. Only water and my life.

The skeletal descent began. Then there were rocks. They pulverized my legs like meat tenderizers as I bounced brutally down the terrible drop. All the river needed was a little piece of foot to wedge, then she'd have me in the perfect position, then she'd snap my tibia like a cheap toy and hold me down for the count.

Finally I was deposited in the pool below—flotsam. Which wasn't so bad; I was happy to play this relaxing role. Before I had time to relax, my paddle floated by and I made a lunge for it. As I grabbed it she grabbed me—a shrewd, materialistic trap. I threw the paddle like a javelin towards river left and swam hard for a boulder in front of me. I knew then that if I missed this rock my chances for survival were going to drop exponentially.

I had expended all my adrenaline and exhaustion was knocking at my core like anesthesia. I hugged the rock and pulled myself up, kicking off her deadly grip. From the other side of the rock I could see the 15 foot drop I had just missed tumbling over. It pounded onto jagged, broken teeth.

I just sat there and breathed and breathed some more. Alucid thought flashed: I could sit on this rock and breathe forever. That's what I decided to do. Then I began to laugh. It was good to laugh. It caused me to inhale more oxygen it warmed my cold body. I'm not sure how long I sat there and breathed and laughed, but long enough to have drowned several times. Suddenly my kayak surfaced about 20 feet upstream and floated right into my now outstretched hand. Was I dreaming? No, but I was still alone, more so than ever before.

After reaching shore I shouldered my boat and started walking. It felt new to walk, like learning to walk for the first time, except suddenly. I was ready to do some substantial walking. Then an ape-like figure emerged before me. He too was walking. I've never been so happy to see a complete stranger. Even before I shook his warm, massive hand, I felt as though I knew him.

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The FLIP

By Serena Dennis

It wasn't going to be a beautiful day, but it would prove to be exciting. Clouds were building in the sky and the water was icy cold. Laura and I kept telling each other we were crazy, yet we stuck it out and went in the inflatable kayaks. It was pure joy. The whole world seemed perfect.

All the boats pulled over in a side eddy. People pulled out cameras and were taking pictures. Slowly, one by one, boat by boat pulled into the current. Soon it was only Laura and me. We nodded to each other and joined the current.

I was very casual, not taking strong strokes. Suddenly I was against a rock wall, the current pushing against me. Water started to pour in. I was sucked out of the boat and swept into the current.

The cold is indescribable. It hits your whole body at once. I was waving my arms and legs, fighting the current, looking around. I called out to Laura and grabbed onto her boat. Get to shore, I said. Somehow she managed it. I am sure I was a very awkward burden.

My feet struck land and I stumbled out of the water. I collapsed on the sand and sat there with my head in my hands, blubbing. I took a couple deep breaths, then stood up.

Laura and I both got back in the boats and pushed off. She said something about not riding in the kayaks after this. In a very determined voice I told her that if you fall off the horse you get back on. It only took a couple strokes, then, once more, my boat was against a rock face. This time it happened faster. In seconds I was once again in the cold water.

My mind called out NO! I didn't want to be here. Not again. I was thrown against the rocks. I struggled and was out in the current once again. Somewhere behind me was Laura. I didn't think about screaming, I just did. Loud, yelling burst of voice. I kept screaming, "Daddy! Daddy!" All I wanted was the cold to go away. The cold that was taking over my whole body.

I felt something behind me, the two kayak paddles were there. Dim points of color in a swirl of brown. With my right hand I grabbed them both. Then the blue kayak was there. I wrapped one of my arms around the tube and hung on.

The water was shallow. There were rocks beneath me. I kept telling myself to keep my feet pointed downstream. I saw Emily up ahead on shore, waving her arms. Laura was to my left, downstream.

Mom was wading out in the current, yelling. She told Laura to stand up and walk to shore. I knew I should, but I could not move. I could not understand why mom wasn't grabbing me. I was floating by and she was only yelling. She grabbed the boat. My arm was on it, but the current was pulling me and my arm started to slip. My arm was hurting. I wanted to be somewhere else.

Then Mom grabbed me and pulled me ashore. My feet stumbled onto solid ground. I stood there, shaking and blubbing. Mom took off my life jacket, then stripped me of clothes. People pitched in, Jen gave me her sweats, Geneva her sweater. Mom gave me her wool sweater, but I was not to know all that till later.

The clothes felt dry and strange. Many people were around me, comforting me. Sometimes I was crying, sometimes shivering, mostly whimpering. Things were happening around me, but my mind seemed empty.

Mom said I was to ride in Richard's boat. I followed Laura like a dog does his master. I stared at the ground, noting the sand with the smooth gray river rocks. Little tufts of green plants making their way up in the dry ground.

Then we climbed aboard the boat. I got as high as I could. Suddenly there was a figure running up the beach. After some seconds I realized it was Dad. I ran to him and he held me for a bit. We went back to the boat and shoved off.

Rob was telling how he and his son had fallen in. There was much talking, but I was not there. My mind was far away.

The power of the river had shocked me. I had been swept along like a stick. The river had treated me no different than a stick. The cold had overpowered me, made me completely defenseless. I had just been another stick, floating along in the never ending current. No different, no less.

Editor's note: Serena Dennis is 14 years old and lives in Mountain Ranch, Ca. She has rafted whitewater rivers in the west with her family all her life. All previous river trips had been surrounded by a feeling of excitement that was blessed with continued security and safety. The following experience occurred during the high water/snow melt of early June 1998, on the East Carson River in California

Briefs



Craig Tiller descends State Line Falls, Watauga River. Photo by Carl Stearns.



Craig Tiller descends State Line Falls, Watauga River. Photo by Carl Stearns.



Matthew Lee descends State Line Falls, Watauga River. Photo by Carl Stearns



Spring creeking, racing, & playing in the North Carolina-Tennessee high country

By Clem Newbold, Sanay Smith, & Spencer Cooke

When the spring rains hit and the ice melts, we hope to find you truckin' on down to the High Country near Boone, North Carolina to do some serious end-throwing and drop-dropping. April is always a great time to test these waters, and it's going to be even better this year when the Edge Of The World kayak shop hosts the High Country Triple Crown on the Watauga and Nolichucky.

Jonathan Campbell. Photo by Biff Farrell



"Psycho" Dave Simpson, Photo by Biff Farrell

This year's Triple Crown, derived from last year's Watauga Gorge Race, will include the Watauga Race, a Watauga Rodeo, a rodeo on the Nolichucky River, and a dedication ceremony for American Whitewater's Horine Memorial River Takeout on the Watauga. The Watauga events are for Expert and Pro boaters only, while the Nolichucky Rodeo will have classes for Intermediate and Advanced boaters, as well as Experts.

The 1999 Triple Crown will be dedicated to the memory of Shenwood Horine. Shenwood was a longtime Watauga Gorge Paddler who won first place in the race division in 1998. As the Nov/Dec issue of American Whitewater recognized, Shenwood was a well-regarded and loved paddler who was instrumental in finding the new takeout property on the Watauga. The Watauga award ceremony will include a dedication of the American Whitewater's Watauga Gorge takeout in Shenwood's memory.

We hope that all of last year's competitors return, as well as more newbies and women. The Watauga events will be held on April 10-11 and the Nolichucky events on April 17-18. Edge Of The World is the primary event promoter and will be providing many prizes. Several other companies, including Riot, Patagonia, Lotus Designs, and Orosi will also be supporting this grassroots event.

In order to give the athletes, the event, and our sport a little push, first place winners in all Expert & Pro divisions will receive cash prizes. Since this is one of the first competitions of the season, boaters will have a chance to hone their skills for the rodeo team trials in May. The sponsors for the Watauga and the Nolichucky events will provide a shuttle, as well as a post-event party with food, music, and awards.

We are keeping our fingers crossed for the best water levels since we are depending on natural flow for the two rodeo events. For the Watauga Race the water can be as low as 175 cfs and as high as 875 cfs. Any level above 600 and 975 cfs would be considered highwater, moving the starting point for the race to the pool below Hydro. This would cut a mile off the three-mile race. The race will end just after the 15-foot State Line Falls, regardless of water level. Spectators may watch from the State Line Falls point. Both the Watauga Race and Rodeo should have plenty of access and room for spectators, photographers, and other media.

The Watauga Rodeo will likely go on regardless of water level. Between 190 cfs and 450 cfs the rodeo will be held at Hydro. If the water level does not cooperate, there are other holes or rapids in which to freestyle. Hydro is a rather unique hydraulic where paddlers can perform new and as-yet-not-invented moves of



Maggie Everett descends State Line Falls, Watauga River. Photo by Carl Stearns



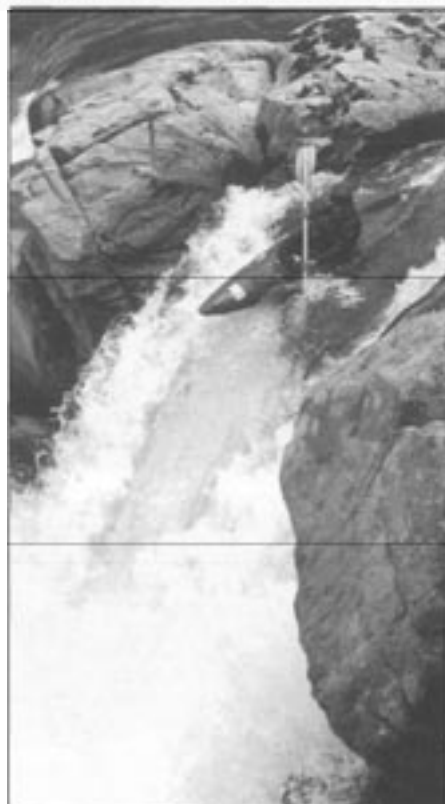
Jason Arnold descends State Line Falls, Watauga River. Photo by Carl Stearns

proved it wasn't as fierce as previously thought. Thus blossomed the idea for the Hydro Rodeo. A quick comparison: Hydro is similar to Christmas Tree Hole at the New River Rodeo, but cleaner and easier to exit.

The second weekend of the Triple Crown will be held on the Nolichucky. The location of the end throwing, head spinning extravaganza will depend on the water level. With low-low water (between 450 to 900 cfs), the rodeo will be at Big Rocks Hole, below the Nolichucky Gorge between Erwin and Johnson City, TN. At



Craig Tiller. Photo by Biff Farrell



Brian Knight, Race Winner. Photo by Biff Farrell

the intentional and unintentional varieties. Located of the way down the Watauga with good road access, Hydro is particularly good for throwing cartwheels in either direction, split wheels, vertical blasts, cross grain cartwheels, loops, pirouettes, wave wheels coming in, mysteries out, and so forth.

Hydro was long thought to be unplayable and a must-avoid hole at any level. Then, one day, hard-core Watauga veteran Dave (not "Psycho") Simpson decided to take the plunge and drop in voluntarily. After emerging unscathed from the hole numerous times, Dave

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Spencer Cooke at Big Rocks on the Nolichucky. Photo by Raymond Cotton

Potomac Release for 1999 Announced

By Ed Gertler

The following weekends have been tentatively set for releases from Jennings Randolph Dam (aka Bloomington Dam) on the North Branch Potomac:

April 17, 18

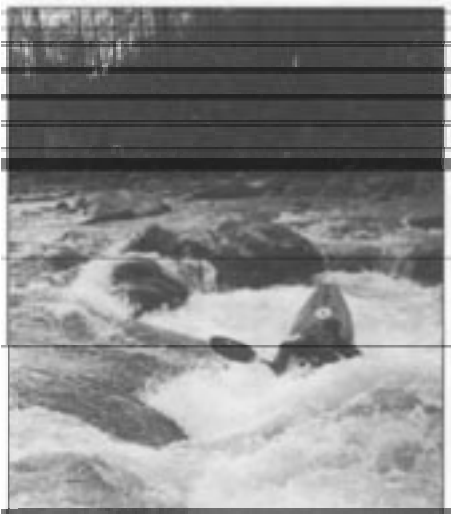
May 1, 2

May 15, 16

May 29, 30

Expect releases of 850-1000 cfs each day from 9 am to 4 p.m.. Keep in mind that a dry spring could result in cutbacks or cancellation and, with the low state of the reservoir from the 1998 drought, conditions this year are particularly uncertain. Always call beforehand at 410-962-7687 or check the Corps web site at <http://nab71.nab-wc.usace.army.mil/>.

Once again, our most important message to those who use these releases is to remember that the popular parking lot at the takeout, in front of the two-story brick building, is on private property. Please take care not to block the driveway to the back of the building (even just to unload for a minute), not to change clothes in the open, or not to do anything else to offend the tolerant owner, or the caretaker who lives out back in the trailer (where we have no business being). Poor behavior by some in 1997 almost cost us the use of the lot. So be on your best behavior and watch over the other guy too.



Raymond Cotton at Big Rocks on the Nolichucky. Photo by Spencer Cooke

Spring and Fall Releases on Bottom Moose

Although New York's Bottom Moose River is best known for its popular fall season of water releases that attract boaters from across the east, a full schedule of spring releases provides paddlers with optimal water levels and less crowded conditions.

The spring season features releases on Sunday, April 18; Sunday, April 25; Sunday, May 2; Saturday and Sunday, May 8-9; Saturday and Sunday, May 15-16; Saturday and Sunday, May 22-23; Saturday and Sunday, May 29-30; and Sunday, June 6.

Water levels in April and early May are usually higher than fall flows and the weather and water temperatures are generally more hospitable. Surprisingly, despite more favorable paddling conditions, the Bottom Moose usually sees far less pressure from boaters during the spring season.

"Boaters have more options in the spring when other rivers are running," said Bottom Moose coordinator Chris Koll. "But the best time to run the Bottom Moose—both in terms of optimal water levels and warm weather—is in the spring."

Boaters who prefer to boat the Bottom Moose during the traditional fall release season will find a full schedule of dates in the autumn including Sunday, October 3; Saturday and Sunday, October 9-10; Saturday and Sunday, October 16-17; Saturday and Sunday, October 23-24; and Saturday, October 30.

The annual Bottom Moose Festival is tentatively scheduled for the weekend of October 16-17.

1000 to 2000 cfs, the Expert / Pro rodeo will be at the second ledge of Quarter Mile and the Intermediate / Advanced rodeo will be at Jaws. If the water level is above 2000 cfs, there are a couple of nice options within the first mile of the gorge. One issue for this event is access for non-boating spectators, if the rodeo is not at Big Rocks Hole. At any of the other locations, non-boating spectators will have to be rafted across the river (to avoid walking over the railroad bridge and troubles with the Forest Service).

Makesure to show up early and to stay after the events to get in some paddling. There are a lot of local places to creek and play within thirty or forty minutes of the Watauga and Nolichucky. Check out the Elk and Doe rivers, or shoot down to the Green Narrows for some intense dam-released creeking. Other fun creeks in the area include the Wilson, Laurel, Beech, Upper Buckeye, Boone Fork and Winklers.

Contact Spencer Cooke (828-297-1257) or Clem Newbold (828-295-4441) for more details, information, or preregistration regarding the High Country Triple Crown.

Missouri Slalom Race Announced

The Missouri Whitewater Association is having its 32nd annual slalom and downriver race March 20 & 21 on the St. Francis River. The contact person is: Dave Kovar (314)752-4028e-mail wahookovar@aol.com.

.....

Lynn Clark, of Greenhouse Productions drowns in kayaking accident on the Ottawa River, Sunday, Feb. 7

I just wanted to send a note to you all on behalf on the NPFF. We wanted to acknowledge to everyone that Lynn was a gifted film maker who has contributed significantly over the past few years to the National Paddling Film Festival. She submitted and had accepted her most recent work "Significant Consequences: The Image of Paddling From Both Sides of the Lens" for the 1999 NPFF competition. The synopsis Lynn wrote of this film, which is to be included in the 99 NPFF program, now unfortunately, bears an even greater meaning with news of her death. She wrote:

"A gripping editorial/documentary that looks at whitewater paddling in 1998, the increased deaths of paddlers, river accidents and the documentation of this. Includes a spellbinding segment of a near death experience of a kayaker in Western Quebec. The video is meant to be both enlightening and thought provoking. The tone is sincere and quite somber."

In entering "Significant Consequences" Lynn was continuing her long and generous relationship with the National Paddling Film Festival. By donating her talented work to be shown in the competitions, Lynn was successful in providing NPFF audiences and other viewers of her videos an insightful paddler's perspective of our sport. Lynn's talented video entries directly enabled the NPFF to generate much needed conservation funds towards the preservation of the rivers and waterways we all love.

Some of the other informative, innovative and entertaining entries Lynn, and her company, Greenhouse Productions have contributed to the NPFF competitions over the past nine years include:

- 1998 "Dancing With The River"
- 1997 "Kayaks and Coconuts: A Paddling Odyssey in Honduras and Guatemala"
- 1995 Ottawa Dragon Boat Festival
- 1995 Underwhelmed
- 1994 Hymn of the Big Wheel
- 1992 Whitewater Baptism
- 1992 White Magic
- 1991 Just a Step to the Left
- 1991 Current Events

Lynn was an artist of great depth and considerable talent who will be dearly missed by those of us serving with the NPFF. The film committee has unanimously agreed that the 1999 National Paddling Film Festival shall be celebrated and dedicated in honor of her memory.

Barry Grimes, 1999 NPFF Coordinator 124 Hilltop Dr.
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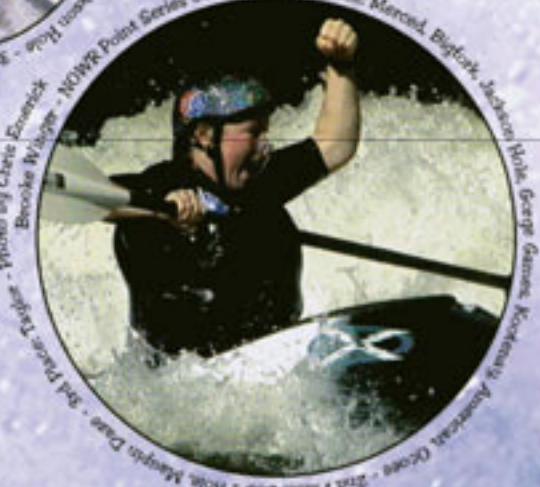
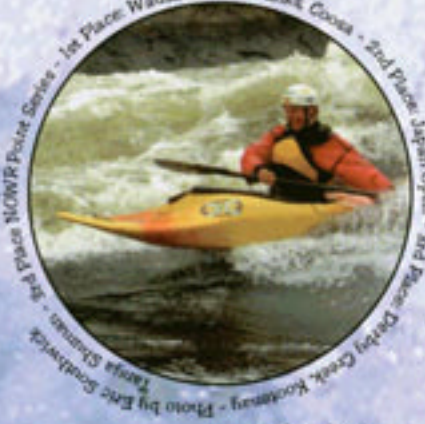
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