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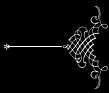
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American Whitewater Journal

May/June 2007 - Volume #47 - Issue #3

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Joe Keck on Clear Creek of the Arkansas.

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Printed on Recycled Paper



Publication Title: American Whitewater
Issue Date: May/June 2007
Statement of Frequency: Published bimonthly
Authorized Organization's Name and Address:
American Whitewater
P.O. Box 1540
Cullowhee, NC 28723

Purpose American Whitewater

River Stewardship: An Integrated Approach

Our mission: "To conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely," is actively pursued through our conservation, access, safety and education efforts under the umbrella of River Stewardship. The only national organization representing the interest of all whitewater paddlers, American Whitewater is the national voice for thousands of individual whitewater enthusiasts, as well as over 100 local paddling club affiliates.

AW's River Stewardship program adheres to the four tenets of our mission statement:

CONSERVATION: AW's professional staff works closely with volunteers and partner organizations to protect the ecological and scenic values of all whitewater rivers. These goals are accomplished through direct participation in public decision-making

processes, grassroots advocacy, coalition building, empowerment of volunteers, public outreach and education, and, when necessary, legal action.

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, encourages equitable and responsible management of whitewater rivers on public lands, and works with government agencies and other river users to achieve these goals.

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 American Whitewater Safety Code.

EDUCATION: AW shares information with the general public and the paddling community regarding whitewater rivers, as well as river recreation, conservation, access, and safety. This is accomplished through our bi-monthly AW Journal, a monthly e-news, americanwhitewater.org, paddling events, educational events, and through direct communication with the press.

Together, AW staff, members, volunteers, and affiliate clubs can achieve our goals of conserving, protecting and restoring America's whitewater resources and enhancing opportunities to safely enjoy these wonderful rivers.

AW was incorporated under Missouri nonprofit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its principal mailing address at PO Box 1540, Cullowhee, NC 28723; phone 1-866-BOAT-4-AW (1-866-262-8429). AW is tax exempt under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service.



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American Whitewater is printed by
The Printing House in Quincy Florida
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The Journey Ahead

New Colorado River Stewardship Director

By Mark Singleton

For over 50 years, American Whitewater's affiliate clubs, volunteers, and partner organizations have been successful in protecting, preserving, and restoring rivers across the nation. Using existing regional programs in the Southeast, Pacific Northwest, and California as a model, we are developing a new regionally focused program for the rivers of Colorado. Our approach will be to build a strong coalition of advocates from diverse perspectives with the long-term goal of affecting water policy and river management at a regional level that will have implications for rivers across the West.

Over the past decade AW has received several requests for assistance from our affiliate clubs, volunteers, and other organizations that we work with in Colorado with an interest in the rivers and watersheds of the state. Given the current health and stability of our organization, we are now in a position to meet this need by developing an aggressive stewardship program in Colorado. Our goal is to more fully integrate the paddling community into the state's environmental issues, while ensuring that Colorado citizens have the right to enjoy rivers first hand.


To this end, American Whitewater is excited to announce that we have hired Nathan Fey as our new Colorado River Stewardship Director. This new position builds on our regional approach, where the AW Stewardship Team is in place to lead, train and support community-based activism representing the interests of boaters and the rivers we care for. Nathan joins the AW River Stewardship Team led by Kevin Colburn (National Director), Thomas O'Keefe (Pacific Northwest Director) and Dave Steindorf (California Director).

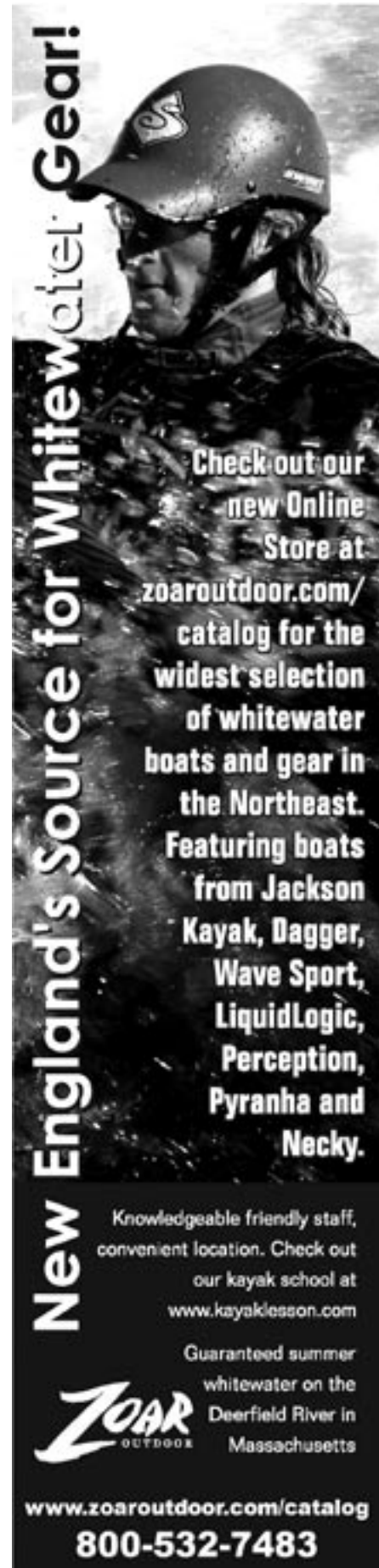
Nathan brings to AW a wealth of knowledge and experience related to protecting and restoring Colorado's whitewater rivers.

Nathan is a fifth generation Coloradoan and has been paddling rivers throughout the state for over 15 years. Nathan has a degree in Environmental Studies and has worked for several years with federal and state agencies, national and statewide non-profits, and local community groups to protect river resources in western Colorado and throughout the state. He is the former Executive Director of the San Miguel Watershed Coalition, and a Core Committee member of the Dolores River Watershed Coalition, both in Southwestern Colorado. He has also served on the Advisory Board of the SW Colorado Program of The Nature Conservancy, and the Colorado Watershed Assembly.

Nathan will assist the paddling community with river conservation and access projects across the state including:

- Statewide Water Supply Initiative (SWSI): Ensure that recreation is fully considered in decision-making.
- River Access Awareness and Education: Enhance river access throughout the state through educating landowners, paddlers, law enforcement, and lawmakers about Colorado's river access laws.
- Conservation Opportunities: Integrate paddlers into environmental issues throughout the state.
- American Whitewater Outreach: Increase public awareness and support of AW and our mission in Colorado.

We're proud to say that Nathan is already hard at work for AW. The presence he gives AW in Colorado will help represent paddlers concerns in current talks to determine, literally, the future of the state's water. For a look at what he's working on, check out page 24 in this issue. Please join with me in welcoming Nathan to the team and supporting our new Colorado River Stewardship Director position. 



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“Mind Over Water”

Adventure, Niagara Falls and “Crazy”

By Doug Ammons

Editor’s Note: What you’re about to read is the first in what we hope will be a regular feature, a new column we’d like to call Mind Over Water. Its creator, Doug Ammons, hardly needs any introduction as a paddler. What many of you may not know is that Dr. Ammons holds his doctorate in psychology. Obviously the world of whitewater paddlesports offers endless examples of fascinating mental processes in action. We hope you’ll enjoy his musings as much as we do. If there’s a specific question you’d like to have Dr. Ammons explore in this space, please send it to: editor@amwhitewater.org.

I think it’s likely all kayakers have been told at some point that they are crazy. It doesn’t matter if you paddle easy rivers and lakes or waterfalls and difficult whitewater, somewhere along the way, somebody will charge you with stepping over the boundaries of good sense. They’ll call you nuts or tell you that you have a death wish.

What people consider insane is a question of their comfort zone and whether they are willing to step outside it. To do an adventure sport, you have to enjoy stepping up to the limits of your experience and looking over the edge—hopefully with enough care that you don’t go too far before you realize it. Everybody has different appetites for newness and weighs consequences differently, so there’s no magical edge of sanity that everybody can agree on. What might seem quite do-able and even fun to you might sound perfectly insane to others. It’s worth remembering, too, that no matter how well you think you have a new stunt figured out, things don’t necessarily turn out the way you expect.

In any case, the next time somebody calls you the “C” word and shakes his head, have some ammunition ready. Here are some

counterexamples of certifiable nut cases to trot out and, in comparison to them, even the wildest kayaker will look conservative. We’re sane, I swear!

The history of Niagara Falls is about as colorful as anyplace in whitewater annals, and many great stories come from it. The escarpment that makes the falls is a beautiful dark basalt layer about 160 feet tall. The river runs strong and wide there, plummeting over the edge in a massive cataract that has inspired people for centuries.

If the falls are big, the dreams of some people are even bigger. There are the legendary stories, most of them true, of the guy or gal in a wooden barrel washing over the edge and disappearing into the frothing base of the plunge pool. Most have been killed, but a surprising number of them have actually made it, which is amazing if you consider the hazards of falling 160 feet—that’s 16 stories—with thousands of tons of water piling down on top of you.

There have been broken wrists and legs, concussions, bruising, and a great many people have washed out dead. Others had their barrels smashed but their bodies were never found. When you stand there and look at that mighty waterfall, the question naturally arises: what on earth could they have been thinking? It sounds like the proverbial suicidal stunt. How could you really think that you could do this sort of thing and live?

Anybody who has ever jumped off a 50 or 60-foot bridge into the water knows that you hit really hard. You can get your shoes blown off, or your feet badly bruised, even when you land right. If you hit wrong, you’ll pay dearly for it. For the excitable or those with a screw or two loose, it’s fun, but after a couple of time, I guarantee you start thinking seriously about the sanity of the thing.

Professional high divers sometimes dive

from over a hundred feet and more. And once, a friend of mine from high school by the name of Shawn jumped off a cliff that turned out to be almost 200 feet high. It was an impulsive jump into a cool and invitingly deep pool, but he hadn’t really intended on doing something so, well, crazy. His pal, whose name was Jet, tried to stop him, but Shawn had jumped off of every sort of bridge and cliff into rivers and lakes, he was a gymnast, rock climber and kayaker, and probably missed his calling as a stuntman for James Bond films. In any case, he had a good claim to knowing what he was doing. “I was clear as a bell before I jumped,” he told me years later. “I knew I could make it.”

He was off and flying before he questioned himself, rapidly shrinking to ant-like size as Jet watched in horror. He finally hit perfectly, but surfaced face down doing the dead man’s float. By the time Jet was able to climb down to the pool, Shawn had dragged himself out of the water and was staggering down the trail, white as a sheet and bleeding from both ears and his nose. However, Shawn then proved himself totally sane by asking three simple questions.

“Where am I?”

“You’re in Hawaii,” replied Jet.

“Do I have any money?” asked Shawn.

“Yes you have money,” replied Jet.

And after a few seconds thinking these answers over, Shawn asked a critical question that separates the sane from the insane: “Why did I jump?”

“I don’t know,” Jet said, “but let’s get to a hospital quick.”

I’d like to point out that clearly Shawn was fully rational even in his badly concussed state. He wasn’t mentally unbalanced, he just made an impulsive decision.

Fortunately, he was one tough guy.

The hospital scene that followed is also informative about the separation between your normal decision that turns out badly, and full-bore craziness. Jet sat in the emergency room for some time as the doctor looked Shawn over. Finally, the doctor emerged with a grave look on his face.

“Is he okay?” asked Jet.

“Yes,” said the doctor, “but I’d like to ask you a question.” He looked thoughtfully at Jet for a few moments, then leaned forward and asked in a low voice, “Does your friend have any ... psychiatric problems?”

Taken aback, Jet answered, “No, none at all.”

“He hasn’t indicated any wish to, uh, kill himself?”

Shocked, Jet blurted out, “God no, we just didn’t think the cliff was so high.”

Well, it turned out that cliff Shawn had jumped off of was regularly used by suicidal people and quite a number had been blown by the wind directly into the cliff as they fell. It had been a calm day when Shawn jumped. He landed perfectly and survived. He is a happy and successful businessman to this very day. Chalk it up as a bad decision, teetering on the verge of folly or madness, but with the important difference that he survived it.

So let us get back to Niagara Falls and those who decided it was a perfectly sane thing to float over. You have to tip your hats to those who took the plunge and came out alive at the bottom. Impulsively jumping into a barrel and flying over the edge of the falls, a la Shawn’s jump, is maybe an understandable decision for a strong, adventuresome young man or woman. But meticulously planning a feat that turns out to be one’s final exit from

this life is either very dumb, or nuts.

Maybe it’s the natural bent most of us have toward the macabre, the spectacle of weirdness and certain horrific ends, but when you get right down to it the failures at Niagara are what are most impressive. A miraculous success may inspire wonder, but a disastrous and spectacular failure is where the action is. So here are a few of those “almost-made-it” runs that separate us from the true eccentric nuts. These guys are beyond the pale, smack dab in the middle of weirdness and, in a word, crazy.

The physics of falling 160 feet is pretty simple; you learn it in your first physics course. The basics are summed up in two simple equations. For the less mathematically minded, what these equations amount to is that the farther you fall, the faster you go until you reach terminal velocity. There, at about 120 miles per hour, the air resistance slowing you down exactly offsets the acceleration from gravity speeding you up.

When you fall 160 feet, you don’t quite make it to terminal velocity, but you are moving faster than Gramma’s old Ford—about 70 mph by the time you reach the bottom. When you’re in a river, you also are falling with all that water at your back and, when a gallon of water falls 160 feet, its impact is not unlike the crack of a big masonry brick heaved off a 16-story building. The water may not

be quite as hard, but in a river there’s a lot of it. The Niagara River has 50,000 to 100,000 cubic feet per second pounding over the falls, and each cubic foot of water weighs in at about 40 pounds. That’s three million pounds per second, or about 1500 tons coming down and hitting the bottom at 70 miles per hour. It’s hard to fathom that power. Imagine 50,000 sacks of Eco-Compost raining down on your head every second, a bulldozer falling on top of you with every tick of the clock, or a cement parking garage collapsing every 20 seconds.

Our heroes are not daunted by such thoughts. In fact, they are convinced that they know exactly what to do about the hazards. One sign of the touched is that they never dwell on the negative. It either never occurs to them, or maybe they deny it outright, but more likely, they think they have figured some way to finagle around any problems. Confidence is theirs; they are right and do not fear. And that is how they so blithely and confidently cross the divide to meet their undoing.

A number of people have gone off the falls in wooden barrels. Elvin XX was the first, and was grappled out of the frothing waters below the falls by a boatman, and suffered only a broken arm and ribs. Others followed, some successful and many not.

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“Mind Over Water”

One, Josuha Williams, thought he had it iced. He reckoned that the main problems were having the barrel break in the impact and then drowning, or else being pummeled under in the backwash and running out of air before floating free. So he constructed a bombproof steel container weighing nearly a ton that could withstand the force of the falls. He heavily padded the inside—no broken barrel and no broken bones for him. To top it off, he solved the problem of being held under water by installing several tanks of compressed air in the capsule. He rationed that a six-hour air supply would be plenty.

The fateful day came. Full of confidence, Mr. Williams had himself sealed in the capsule and was pushed into the river above the falls. Over he went as the onlookers shuddered and some cheered. His metal craft disappeared at the bottom ... and didn't come up. Well, no matter. After all, he had that six-hour air supply.

Four days later his capsule appeared, bobbing in the swirling waters below the falls. They opened it and there he was. Not a broken bone. All his limbs were intact; he had easily survived the fall. As the clock ticked past six hours with him pinned to the bottom in his one-ton capsule, he had had plenty of time to contemplate the one critical error in his calculations.

Another guy had it all figured out too. His solution to the padding was to rig up an elastic harness that fit under his arms and around his waist and feet. Suspended within his specially built barrel, he would be impervious to broken limbs. Mindful of the hazards of heavy steel capsules, he wanted a light but strong wooden barrel that would easily float. He also had another idea to avoid tumbling out of control. After falling 160 feet, it's much better to land upright on one's feet, as it were, to minimize the impact. Hitting sideways could easily destroy the barrel and also beat you against the side, breaking your


bones or killing you, as was the fate of so many intrepid Niagara barrelers. So, for these and perhaps other reasons he thought it was better to stay upright, and for that he needed ballast in the bottom of the barrel. There are many ways to have ballast. You can load the bottom with rocks or lead or you could do what he did, which was to strap an anvil to his feet.

He was sealed into his barrel and went over the edge, certain of his plan's success. The barrel fell straight and true, 160 feet to the roiling water below. It quickly came out of the backwash and was found shortly afterwards. The bottom was blown out. When curious rescuers peered inside the remaining shell all they found were two arms, secured into the harness. Neither the anvil nor the armless body was ever recovered.

And barrelers don't have a lock on the best attempts. In 1985, as reported by the Darwin Awards committee, a daredevil named Robert constructed a homemade rocket-parachute contraption and rode a jet ski over the falls at full throttle. He planned to ignite the rocket to shoot him away from the falls, then open the parachute. He envisioned himself landing softly in the river below, raising his hands in triumph before the astonished tourists as he was fished out by the *Maid o' the Mist* tour boat. It was an awesome plan and almost everything worked. He shot down the little rapids above the falls at breakneck speed, chattering along over the waves working hard to keep the jetski on course.

Just imagine the noise and excitement as you roar along! You're totally committed and every nerve tingles. Adrenaline shoots through your body. You've never felt more alert! You crank the throttle wide open and the power of the engine drives you toward the yawning chasm! The edge looms closer and closer—this is it—until you shoot off the falls and fly through space toward the horizon, gravity suddenly

suspended below you as the jetski falls behind. However, reaching back to ignite his rocket, Robert found it wet. It failed to ignite and his parachute didn't deploy. The tourists were very impressed. Bystanders said his body was recovered from the river below by the *Maid o' the Mist* staff.

Craziness comes in degrees. For the sake of perspective though, it's helpful to compare the sane things we kayakers do to the crazy things people who are really out of it do. We can rest easy, assured that we're not like them. After all, we've got it all figured out, don't we? 

Doug Ammons has been a world-class whitewater kayaker and a member of American Whitewater since the mid-1980s. He has done first descents around the world and done seven major TV documentary films on various of these descents, including two for National Geographic. He recently published a book of river stories, The Laugh of the Water Nymph, which was called, "One of the best outdoor books of the year" by the National Outdoor Book Awards. Ammons has a Ph.D. in psychology and works as an editor for two large, international psychology journals. He currently resides in Missoula, Montana with his wife and five children.

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Safety First

Essential Medical Skills for Whitewater Boaters

By Jack Ditty, MD

Your friend screams in pain as you approach him. He's sitting on a midstream boulder a few hundred yards above Tomko Falls on the Upper Blackwater. It's running about 450 cfs today, a good powerful level. His arm is held in an awkward pose, and the joint is obviously deformed. You look up at the surrounding canyon walls. The hike out from here sucks.

"What happened?"

"I flipped, my paddle blade caught on something, I pulled forward and my arm just gave out. It feels like it's out of place."

What do you do? Push him into the river to put him out of his misery? No, his car is at the take out and only he knows where he stashed the keys. You decide to stay and help. Is his shoulder dislocated, or is it fractured? Is it safe to try to put it back in place? If so, how do you do it?

The Class V river environment can be a mean teacher, but paddlers can get hurt on almost any river. If you paddle consistently, you're going to see injuries on the river. Most trips are uneventful except for some scraped knuckles or a few moments of breathlessness as you go for the unintentional rodeo hole ride. But the unfortunate reality is that you might eventually see shoulder dislocations, facial lacerations, hypothermia, and even drowning. When these things happen in the bottom of a deep wilderness canyon, with miles of rapids between you and the nearest road access, help seems very far away. You must have some basic skills to get you out of trouble.

This article describes the bare minimum medical knowledge that all paddlers should learn. After reading this article, you're not done. You should go online and find the nearest Wilderness First Aid, or even better Wilderness First Responder course to practice and fully understand

these skills. Add to that a river rescue or swiftwater rescue course, and you should feel much better prepared for the bad times that might lie ahead. Don't worry about getting "certified" unless you need it for your resume. It's more important just to know the skills. Do you want to stand around and watch while your friend suffers, or do you want to be able to help fix the problem?

Hypothermia

Know how to prevent hypothermia and recognize its signs and symptoms. Sluggishness, fatigue, poor decision-making, lack of coordination, and shivering are some of the early symptoms. In worse cases, victims can become unconscious or have cardiac arrhythmias. Treatment includes removal of wet clothing, getting out of the offending environment, and re-warming with whatever means available (campfire, body heat, warm blankets, warm fluids if patient is conscious, etc.). Hypothermia patients that are unconscious should be handled very gently to avoid causing a sudden change in cardiac rhythm.

Shoulder dislocations

Shoulder dislocations are probably the most common serious injury among paddlers. Quick assessment and treatment (reduction) can save a lot of grief and help prevent a long-term functional deficit or damage to the joint. Usually the victim is incapacitated from the pain and lack of mobility, and reducing the dislocation will make them feel better and allow them to walk out of the river with much less difficulty. Anterior shoulder dislocations occur when the arm is forcefully pulled out and away from the body, usually in the setting of an overextended high brace. When an injury occurs in this way, the patient has exam findings consistent with anterior dislocation, and you are far from a medical facility, it is probably a good idea to attempt reduction. If the mechanism of injury is direct forceful trauma to the shoulder, such as hitting a rock with the shoulder while upside down, and there is

significant bruising and swelling over the joint, then the bones may be fractured rather than dislocated. This is an important distinction, because significant fractures of the shoulder should not be manipulated before x-ray evaluation. Physical exam findings that suggest anterior dislocation include a fullness or bulging anterior to the joint, an empty joint socket, and the inability to bring the arm in close to the body. Most of the time, the victim can definitively tell you the shoulder feels dislocated. It's important to check the entire arm and hand for sensory deficits or signs of poor blood flow prior to and after any reduction attempts. Reduction should not be attempted in the field if you don't know how, or if the patient has suffered other serious injuries such as head, chest, abdomen, or spinal trauma.

There are several methods of reduction, all requiring more formal training and practice. I will describe only one here, but it's important to know several (sometimes your first attempt fails and you will need to try a different method). Find a nice flat table rock about four feet off the ground, and have the patient lie down on their stomach (prone), with the affected arm hanging towards the ground. Apply slow, steady traction on the arm, towards the ground, while encouraging the patient to relax their shoulder muscles as much as possible. As traction is applied, grasp the outside edge of the patient's shoulder blade (scapula), and gently push it towards their spine (medially). Most of the time, this method of traction and scapular manipulation will reduce the shoulder. You should feel and maybe hear a "clunk" as it goes back into place, and the patient will immediately know that it is fixed. After reduction, avoid any further sudden movements to the shoulder. It's probably best to place it in a sling and walk off the river with assistance.

Wound care

Open wounds should be flushed with the cleanest water available, unless you're boating in a sewer. Then use direct pressure (sometimes for 15 minutes or more) to stop bleeding. Many wounds on the river

can be temporarily closed with tape or steri-strips, then bandaged and splinted. Benzoin (it comes in little packets) can be used to prep the skin and make the tape stick better. This should at least be good enough for the few hours it takes to get off the river. I recently used steri-strips to close a gaping facial laceration on my forehead, and it held long enough to paddle off the river and get home. Once you get back to civilization, make sure to get proper treatment and irrigation for the wound.

Improvised splinting

Splints can be improvised from almost anything; the idea is just to provide stability and protection to an unstable bone or joint. You can use paddles, airbags, minicell foam, or sticks. Samsplints are malleable foam and metal that can be formed into almost any splint shape needed. If someone has a bad limb deformity, no pulse in the extremity, or a pale or dusky color to the extremity, it may need to be set back in its proper position before the splint is applied. Make sure they can't bite, kick, or punch you while you perform this maneuver. Splints can be taped, tied, or wrapped in place; just make sure you still have a good pulse and functioning fingers or toes on the affected limb after the splint is finished. If not, it may need to be loosened. Fractures to the femur, hip, and pelvis are likely going to require litter evacuation.

Head and spine injury

Not much you can do to fix these on the river. Signs of a bad head injury include brief or extended loss of consciousness, seizure, confusion, impaired concentration or repetitive questioning, and persistent vomiting. If someone has these symptoms, they should get off the water as soon as possible and have direct close supervision during evacuation to a medical facility. Do not leave them alone.

Spinal injuries are always problematic in the river environment. High-risk injuries require full immobilization and litter evacuation, which is a horrible amount of



River rescue and medical kit contents.

photos by Jack Ditty

work. If someone has a bad fall, a serious head injury, or a wrenching injury to the neck or back, and complains of pain in this area, ask about loss of function (lack of sensation or motor weakness) in the arms or legs. Check for spinal tenderness along the entire spine. Be careful to avoid any further twisting or bending of the back or neck.

For neck injuries, if a person has clear consciousness (no serious concussion or intoxication), no midline vertebral tenderness, no other distracting painful injuries (like an arm bent in half), no loss of function in the arms and legs, and no severe pain with range of motion, it's probably okay to let them walk or paddle out, rather than perform full litter immobilization.

Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is a common killer of people in outdoor activities, usually occurring after a bee sting. Symptoms are sudden itching, skin rash (hives), swelling of the mouth or throat, difficulty breathing, wheezing, and in severe cases loss of consciousness, shock, and death. Treatment is immediate

intramuscular injection of epinephrine (EpiPen), followed by oral Benadryl, and steroids. I usually carry all 3 of these in my rescue kit (they don't add much weight).

Common medical conditions

Pain, nausea, and diarrhea can be uncomfortable, and just a few simple pills can help you get off the river. Motrin or Tylenol are all that I recommend for pain on the river. Stronger meds can be a hassle to get and can impair people's ability to function. Also, depending on who you paddle with, the pills may disappear before you get to the river. Imodium works well, but you shouldn't take if you have bloody stool. Zofran is very expensive, but a great drug for nausea, and doesn't cause drowsiness like the less expensive Phenergan.

Hypoglycemia can occur in diabetics who miss a meal or take too much insulin. It is a common thing, which can be deadly, but is easily treated with glucose. Heart attacks are the most common killer of adults in the wilderness, and happen on the river just like anywhere else. If someone over

Safety First

the age of 30 has unexplained chest pain, not caused by trauma, it's probably a good idea to give them aspirin.

Leptospirosis and waterborne illness

Sometimes you get sick after you get home. Giardia and cryptosporidium are organisms from freshwater that can cause nausea and diarrhea, sometimes for weeks. Usually this is more of an annoyance than a life-threatening problem, but think about it if you're sick for more than a few days. Leptospirosis is a more serious illness, and is probably more common than realized among paddlers. Most cases go undiagnosed due to lack of awareness, even by good medical personnel. It's caused by a strange type of organism that is passed from the urine of farm animals into freshwater streams. Symptoms include gradual onset of fever, chills, headache, and malaise, sometimes

mimicking viral illnesses. It can progress however to liver failure, renal failure, or other serious problems. You don't have to cry wolf about this every time you catch a cold, but if you have a mysterious febrile illness and are becoming seriously ill, mention your exposure history to your physician. Leptospirosis usually responds to certain antibiotics.

Wilderness CPR and Drowning

CPR for drowning works. The first thing to know about CPR is that you've got to start quick if you want to make a difference. If someone is pulled from the water unconscious, with no apparent breathing or pulse, don't waste time reaching for your CPR pocket mask or your oral airway, just start rescue breathing and chest compressions immediately. Try not to move their neck around too much if possible. Don't try maneuvers to "clear their lungs" such as pumping on their stomach or hanging them upside down. Expect vomit, and expect nasty stuff in your mouth. It's a small price to pay for saving your friend's life. Drowning victims

that wake up should go to the hospital afterward, no matter how good they feel.

CPR for most other wilderness situations is usually futile, but necessary for the survivors to feel like they have done everything possible. If someone has a traumatic injury (such as a fall) and requires CPR in the wilderness, it is invariably fatal no matter how good you are. Give it your best effort, and try to get the victim to the next level of care, but if the rescuers are in danger (hypothermia, exhaustion, nightfall, etc.) you may need to discontinue efforts.

Rescue kits

Here's a simple river rescue kit that I carry on almost every trip. You want useful gear that is lightweight, inexpensive, and can get you out of a jam. On any given trip, I break it down into 3 categories of gear for almost all rescue scenarios (survival, rescue, and medical). Multi-day trips or trips in exotic environments may need extra thought. This assumes a good throw rope and appropriate PFD (with rescue harness if you know how to use it), warm clothing, and a good helmet. All of the gear mentioned below fits in a small dry bag. There are probably a lot of opinions out there about ways to improve this kit, and I'd like to hear them.

Miscellaneous gear

Duct tape
Foam block (for drain plug hole)
Cable ties (for various repairs, splints, etc.)
Whistle
Knife

Survival gear

You need to be able to spend a night out in the cold. This can happen unexpectedly on any trip, particularly in the early spring and winter. I used my space blanket bag recently, and it actually kept me warm and it's re-usable, if you take the time to repack it correctly.

Pushing the scapula towards the midline.

photos by Jack Ditty



Headlamp (small LED lamp)
Fire starter and lighter (one in the boat,
one in the PFD)
Space blanket bag
Folding saw

Rescue gear

The idea here is to be able to set up a quick mechanical advantage system like a Z-drag. This means setting an anchor, clipping into a pinned boat, and having a sliding Prussik and one or two pulleys. The folding saw can help if the pin involves a strainer. The webbing sling can be used to make a sit harness for various uses.

Prussik loop (2)
Carabiner pulley (2)
Webbing sling (harness or anchor)
Locking carabiner


Medical gear:
Water purification tabs
Epi-pen (prescription)
Benadryl 25 mg tablets
Prednisone 60 mg tablet (prescription)
Nasal or oral airway
CPR mask
Steri-strips
Benzoin skin prep
Shoulder sling
Ace wrap
Kerlix gauze wrap
Gauze
Tape
Samsplint
Motrin 800 mg tablets
Tylenol 325 mg tabs
Aspirin 325 mg tabs
Zofran 8 mg tabs (prescription)
Immodium
Glucose paste

So, no excuses any more. Learn the skills you need to fix these things. Take a few days to get formal training. Your friend will re-imburse you with beer, maybe run your shuttle for you while his shoulder heals, and your river karma will be back in the black.

Suggested reading

Medicine for Mountaineering,
James Wilkerson, MD

Whitewater Rescue Manual,
Charles Walbridge and
Wayne Sundmacher Sr.

Wilderness First Responder,
Buck Tilton, MS 



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History

Innovations in Kayak Design

By Sue Taft

Two of the most significant innovations to affect kayak design over the last twenty-five years are squirtboating and the planing hull. In the early 1980s, squirtboating took the sport to a new level, recognizing and designing for sub-currents. It was the first critical step to move away from displacement hulls, designed for surface currents alone. While squirting remained a relatively niche sub-sport in whitewater, its drastic departure from commonly held beliefs about whitewater design set the stage for the next major innovation in the mid-1990s, the planing hull. However, both of these innovations were dependent upon a much earlier innovation, an innovation in materials for building kayaks. That innovation, intimately linked to design, was fiber-reinforced plastics (FRP), aka fiberglass.

While the shapes and curves of today's kayak designs are rarely limited by the materials and processes (the plastics used for rotational molding or blow molding), that was not always the case. The first commercially produced kayaks were foldboats for river touring (pre-WWII), manufactured by Klepper in Germany. Their kayaks were actually modified touring boats—shorter in length with added rocker—modeled after native kayaks primarily designed for open water conditions by builders in the arctic regions of North America and Greenland. Unfortunately, Klepper and their skin-on-frame construction established the standard for all whitewater kayaks, including the length and width requirements for wildwater and slalom competition. This had several ramifications. First, the skin-on-frame construction had inherent limitations of the curves and shapes that could be incorporated into designs. Second, kayak design was primarily the realm of the manufacturer, because building skin-on-frame boat building was not an easy process to replicate at home. The result was that changes in design concepts were slow to come for whitewater—there were



Above: Fiberglass kayak at FIBArk races in 1958.

photo by Carl Trost (Courtesy of Tiver River Chasers)

Right: Folding kayaks on a 1940s river trip


Photo by Bart Hawthaway (Courtesy of The River Chasers)

just not that many people experimenting with design. However, this all changed with the development of fiber reinforced plastics technology after WWII.

In the mid-1950s, boaters “discovered” FRP and began to build their own kayaks. No longer were boaters dependent upon kayaks designed and manufactured by someone else—anyone could design and build their own kayak. At first, home-built kayaks were close approximations of their skin-on-frame counterparts, including the hard chines in the hull and peaked decks for shedding water. In a few short years, though, the sharp angles were softened into curves. Not only did the new designers realize that FRP did not require those built-in shapes for stiffness, but those same hard edges were also not necessary for performance. Design for whitewater was finally able to break from its native watercraft roots, facilitated by the trial and error of a plethora of designers tinkering with different concepts and shapes in their garages. FRP helped break the mold and the old pattern of thinking.

Within ten short years, all kinds of design modifications had been tried, including countless changes in rocker, volume, hull cross-section, deck modifications and knee bumps. Some modifications worked, others didn't; but FRP provided the medium

for the trial and error and even continued to provide the prototypes for testing new design concepts after plastic became the material of choice for manufacturing in the late 1970s.

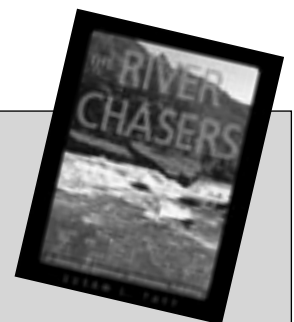
FRP also played a key role in the development of squirtboating during the 1980s. Not only did it allow Jesse Whittemore, Jim Synder, and others to design, build and test boats representing entirely new concepts, it allowed for the individual customization of deck and overall boat volume. The latter was an integral part of squirtboating design and technique development, something that rotational molding could not provide. Not only was rotational molding cost prohibitive (return on investment for mold costs did not meet the demand for the niche market), the actual molding of such low volume kayaks was almost impossible at the time for the rotational molding process and materials. FRP was the only way to commercially produce squirtboats and although the market was small, their success helped validate the new design concepts that took advantage of sub-currents, now an integral part of free-style kayak and C-1 designs. 

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Sue Taft is the author of *The River Chasers, The History of American Whitewater Canoeing and Kayaking*. If you have a topic or question you would like answered, e-mail it to editor@amwhitewater.org and look for its answer in an upcoming issue.





Events



What Do You Do When You've Lost Your Crew?

by Stacey Johnson

I've only been kayaking for a few years now, but earlier last year, the call of whitewater sent me clear across the country.

You see, from the very first time that I sat in a boat I knew it would be a priority in my life. So, it wasn't very surprising to those that know me when they heard that I was planning to move to Portland, Ore., to be closer to great whitewater. While it was the best move of my life, there was one small detail that I forgot as I packed up my belongings and headed to the great Northwest: Who would I paddle with?

From the very first days of my paddling

career, I discovered an amazing group of paddlers to play with. Ben, Talia, Amy, Jessica, and myself shared a love of whitewater and common river goals, so we teamed up. Ben had the experience and patience to teach, Talia had the passion, Amy the drive, Jess the sass, and I had the first-aid skills. We all had the desire to be out in nature seeing the river as only paddlers can. Together we made a wonderful crew.

I arrived in Portland hoping to find that camaraderie again. So where does a paddler new to Portland go to find folks to boat with? To Paddler's Pint, of course!

The Upper Clackamas Whitewater Festival is a melting pot of whitewater enthusiasts.

photo by Stacey Johnson

Every Thursday night, local paddlers meet up at Morrison's Bar and Grill to socialize and plan the next trip. After your first week, the bartender, Jen, will even have your drink waiting for you. What a welcome! It was here that I met my new crew—but they weren't whom I was expecting.

It was just another Thursday, and the bar was beginning to fill up. In walked a guy with an overstuffed bag over one shoulder. He sat his bag down and started passing out fliers. Several folks stopped him and seemed to be asking excited questions. I took a flyer from him as he came around the bar.

"The Upper Clackamas Whitewater Festival? What's that?" I asked.

"This is our 23rd annual river festival held on the Clackamas River at Carter Bridge," he said. "It's put on by the NorthWest Rafters Association, but it's a festival for the entire boating community. There will be races, exhibitions, music, great food, and family fun. 'For boaters by boaters,' we say. Are you a hard sheller?"

"You mean kayaker? Yeah." I said. "And I'd love to help with your festival." I never missed an opportunity to attend a good whitewater festival, and this one sounded like fun.

It didn't disappoint! That chance encounter brought me to one of the best festivals I've ever attended—a festival for anyone who loves whitewater. It was an opportunity for rafters, hard shellers, IK'ers, cat boaters, and—believe it or not—river boarders to get together and have fun on a great river. What a truly remarkable experience and a wonderful chance to share stories and paddling adventures. Because of my involvement in the festival, I have since had the pleasure to boat with folks using all kinds of watercraft.

I'm still missing my old crew in the Southeast, but my new crew with their rafts, IK's, and cat boats sure can hold a lot more gear. It makes our overnights warmer and more filling!

Happy paddling, y'all! Oh, yeah, River Divas rule!


The Upper Clackamas Whitewater Festival

The Upper Clackamas Whitewater Festival is one of the oldest whitewater events in the Pacific Northwest. Twenty four years ago, just for the fun of it, a few members of the NWRA (NorthWest

Rafters Association) got together to see who could best negotiate a challenging half-mile run on the Upper Clackamas River near Estacada, Oregon, just outside Portland, Oregon. The run finished at Carter Falls, an exciting Class IV rapid. And to this day, the focus is still on having fun! In years past the event has drawn elite teams of whitewater racers from Russia, Japan, and all across the United States. Hundreds of spectators turn out to watch, shop, or demo boats and gear. This year's festival will get back to its roots—a festival for paddlers, by paddlers, with river education, safety demonstrations, and a focus on community. It includes activities for the whole family with a BBQ and live music Saturday night to celebrate the event. The festival happens May 19-20, 2007, so come check it out.

For more information, visit: <http://www.upperclackamasfestival.org>

2007 Whitewater Symposium Date Announced

The 2007 Whitewater Symposium is scheduled for Friday-Monday, October 19-22, 2007, at the Adventure Sports Center's new artificial whitewater course in McHenry, MD. The symposium program is primarily directed at those who actively promote the sport. Workshops are designed to support the grassroots feeder programs that encourage new and continued participation. The result is empowering more people to take on productive roles in stewarding whitewater kayaking development. 

For more information, visit: www.wwsymposium.com



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AW's Ben Van Camp accepts the big check.

photo by Don Spangler

2007 National Paddling Film Festival Wrap-up

By Todd Garland, NPF 2007 Director

For me, running the National Paddling Film Festival has been like a typical big-water trip on a new river: upside down, out of control, sometimes swimming as hard as I can.

The NPF is 24 years old, and somewhat of an institution among the paddling community, especially here in the Southeast. It has been run extremely well by several dedicated volunteers over the years, and has seen many incarnations on its path to what it is today. I remember the NPF as the first whitewater festival I ever attended, about 10 years ago, and have attended every year since.

During the course of several club meetings last year, it became apparent that someone needed to step up and take over running the show. I pondered, with great trepidation, the idea of volunteering. I was afraid that I would try to take too much on myself, and would get frustrated, and possibly alienate the very people I've come

to regard as my tribe. I discussed it with several people whose opinions I trust, and decided that I would give it a go.

Fortunately, also like a typical big-water trip on a new river, I had lots of friends to back me up when things began to go awry. The NPF Committee is made up of several volunteers who have been doing this for a while, and they knew very well what needed to be done. All the fear I had that I was going to have to do it by myself evaporated after the first couple of meetings, and I learned to let others simply do what they knew how to do better than I.

As the weekend of the Festival approached, and more time was taken up by preparation, I began to get anxious and nervous again, and the "What ifs" took over: What if nobody sends films? What if nobody shows up? What if we run out of food? What if the music isn't good? What if the projector breaks? What if the venue

burns down? What if Lexington is taken over by packs of rabid dogs roaming the streets? WHAT ABOUT NAOMI!? (Those of you under 35 probably won't get that last one).

When Friday the 23rd finally rolled around, and I pulled up to the Woman's Club to start setup, I felt pretty calm. At this point I was committed to the drop, and there was nothing to do but stay on line, lean forward, and boof hard.

The next two days were spent running around like mad, trying to make sure everything was running smoothly. Thanks to the tremendous volunteer staff, the entire weekend went off pretty much without a hitch; I grinned from ear to ear for nearly 48 hours. What a FANTASTIC EXPERIENCE!!!

The crowd was bigger than I expected, especially on Friday night. It was very exciting to see the place fill up so quickly. I

got to see lots of familiar faces, and many more new ones. My sister and her kids even showed up at one point on Saturday, and she was impressed by how friendly all the boaters were to her and my niece and nephews. She even went so far as to join American Whitewater, just to help the cause.

Saturday was huge! The dining area was so full, we had to shoo people into the actual theater. Team Wavesport and Team Dagger represented, and it was cool to realize that the Brian Jennings I kept hearing about was an old friend of mine from WV. When the time came to do the money awards, I felt so honored to be up there presenting the big checks to American Whitewater, the Green River Access Fund, and the West Virginia Rivers Coalition. To be able to give something back to the community that has given me so much was extremely cool.

Our Guest Host, John Grace, was tremendous. Who better to have at a paddling film festival? John showed some awesome footage, and gave a very informative presentation on what goes into making a paddling video, along with great tips for those looking to try their hand. I look forward to working with John and LVM in the future. What an all-around cool guy! To be able to make the Nealy Award presentation in memory of Daniel DeLavergne was another experience I'll always remember.

In short, the 24th Annual National Paddling Film Festival was a huge success! We donated \$4000 to river conservation efforts, and brought together paddlers from all over to celebrate and enjoy each others' company. It was a tremendous personal experience for me, and I look forward to doing it next year, for the blowout 25th Anniversary.

I'd like to thank all the volunteers who helped out during the event – especially the NPF Committee.

NPF Committee

Phillip Sisk, David Leachman, Dustin Anderson, Jason Foley, Joey Breckel, Dale Perry

Behind the Scenes Stuff

Website & Ticket Sales - Jason Foley
Guest Host Contact - Phillip Sisk
Sponsors, Silent Auction - David Margavage, David Leachman, Dave Thomas, Cynthia Grimes, Phillip Sisk, George Mead, Justin Bolender, Dave Lafferty, Rick Everton
Beverages - Phillip Sisk
Judging - David Leachman, Hanley Loller, Jason Bailey, Chris Hellman
A/V - Joey Breckel, Jason Foley
Poster Contest - Joey Calder
Still Images - Chris Howard
Food - Angella Anderson (YAY, FOOD!)
Venue - Dustin Anderson, Meagan Winkler
Insurance - Tyler Cundiff
Music - Dustin Anderson, David Leachman
T-shirts - Megan Memmer, Tim Miller
Paddling Club Outreach - Zina Merkin
Program - Don Spangler
Treasurer - Dave Thomas

The Rest of the Cast

Allen Kirkwood, Larry Cable, Jessica Dussex, Chris Hellman, Codi Foley, Travis Bolinger, Alicia Rowe, Joe Wheatley, Dave Merrifield, Dan Grimes, Emily Grimes, Jennifer Coates, Nate Nitz, Penny Kephart, Jonathan Dale, Hanley Loller, Barry Grimes, Dave Howard, Brian Sandmann, Kelly Glasser, Jeff Kirkner, Guy Evans, Zina Merkin, Robert Milgate, Dave Lafferty, Justin Bolender, Joe Wheatley, Gary Ress, Andrew Koch, Adam Trunnell, Dave Martin, Tim Miller, Christy Morgan (sausage won-tons!) (I have probably missed a couple of names, and if so, I'm sorry. I really appreciate everyone who helped out!)

Professional and Accomplished Category

Judges

Bill Eades
Stacy Doose
Ben Hasler
Spalding Hurst
Oliver Levey
Clay Wright

The Filmmakers Themselves

David Hamlet, *2006 World Cup Freestyle Kayaking Championships*

Taylor Cavin, *A Kayak Assisted Hiking Trip*
Jefferson Beck, *Up A Creek*
Vittorio Pongolini, *Kayaking, Where the Day Starts 2*
Daniel Monskey, *The Last Kung Pao Through the Yong Bao Gorge: A Mekong Expedition*
Ammen Jordan, *Wavesport '07 Promo*
Spencer Cox, *Grayscale*
Simon Westgarth, *Gene17 Advanced Whitewater Technique*
Steve Runnels, *Lake Creek, Colorado*
Yellowbird Samora, *A Time Ago*
Eric Atchison, *Evolutions – A Creature Craft Story*
Nathan Sass, *Teen Angst*
Dan Fowler, *Fire It Up! Blazing Paddles Part 2*
Matt Buys, *The Death of Desolation*
Chris Gorman, *Gravity*
Ladd Campbell, *Waxed Poetic – Tashenshini River*
Heath Damron, *A Year in the Life of MUWC*
David Spoelstra, *The Cleanse*
Remy Mansfield, *Migratory Species*
Bryan Smith, *The Range Life: British Columbia, Summer 2006*
Simon Westgarth, *Neva Foreva*
Trip Jennings, *Mission: Epicocity*

And the Winners

Amateur General - *The Cleanse*
Amateur Documentary - *The Death of Desolation*
Accomplished General - *The Range Life: British Columbia, Summer 2006*
Accomplished Documentary - *The Last Kung Pao through the Yong Bao Gorge*
Professional General - *Neva Foreva*
Professional Instruction – *Gene17 Advanced Whitewater Technique*
Professional Commercial - *Wavesport '07 Promo*
Paddlers Choice - *A Year in the Life of MUWC*
Best of Festival - *The Range Life: British Columbia, Summer 2006*
Still Image Competition – Chris Barr
Kids' Safety Poster Competition – Zach and Steven Buys
Best Chili – Christy Morgan, White Chicken Chili 

River Voices

The Queen of the Whitewater Women

By Stephen Godfrey, M.D.

It was the end of the run,
All the paddlin' was done,
And the boats were all up on the rack.
The wet gear was dryin',
The sunlight was dyin',
And now it was time to head back.

We had paddled all day,
Showed our stuff on the way,
So we all had some stories to tell,
Of the holes that we played
And the rolls that we made
On a run that had really gone well.

We had all aced "Big Meanie,"
Ran clean at "Great Greenie,"
And sidesurfed the wave at "The Bruiser."
Even "Portals of Hell"
We had all handled well,
So the run had been mostly a cruiser.

But one place on our river
Sure gave us the shivers
Whenever we set out to run it.
Some claimed to have made it,
Some said that they played it,
But nobody really had done it.

Where each one of our masters
Had had a disaster
Sometime, when we paddled this run.
It was mean, it was gnarly,
And hungry, and snarly.
We just called it "Hole Number One."

It was always a slaughter,
That mean piece of water,
Which had a huge log at the top,
With a big twisted root
That was blockin' the chute,
So you couldn't run clean through the drop.

No, you couldn't get in there,
Or surely you'd pin there.
That stump was a strainer, for real.
So you sneaked, if you could,
To the left of that wood,
And then off from the edge you would peel.

'Cause if you were to enter
The tongue at the center,
You'd blast off a twenty-foot lip.
And then as you begin to
Come down, you see into
What's waitin' for sinkin' your ship.

It's a whirlpool below,
And it never lets go
Of a paddler, paddle, or boat.
It just spins them around
And then sucks them straight down
Like a submarine, too deep to float.

Now the pool down beyond
Is as calm as a pond,
Where what's left of them finally arises.
And it always is nervous
'Til they come to the surface,
And the shape they're in, never surprises.

For the kayak is here
And the paddle is there
And the boater, somewhere in between.
Though we'd tried with our might
We could not run it right
Yes, that hole was a mulchin' machine.

Now the left had that sneak
At the mouth of a creek,
And so usually, that's where we went.
Yes, a blow to our pride,
But we valued our hides
And our gear wasn't broken or bent.

So now, back in the van
We recalled how we ran
As we drove back to camp, down the road.
All the boaters 'round here,
Number One's what they feared,
And to look at their faces, it showed.

There was Brass Knuckle Pete
Lookin' white as a sheet
Because he'd been the victim today.
And when we asked him when
He would try it again,
He said "Never," "No how," and "No way."

In the back, Dirty Harry
Whose run had been scary.
Rememberin' it made us all wince.
When he tried it last year
He got munched in pure fear,
And he'd never attempted it since.

At the wheel was Big Dan,
A huge brute of a man
Who we all thought someday just might
do it.
We had seen him come close,
He had made it, almost...
But then even Dan got sucked back to it.

Well, we all thought that first,
Since we'd worked up a thirst,
We would stop at our favorite bar.
So we drove to the Thin Bear
And headed on in there
While Big Dan was parkin' the car.

Now, the Bear's kind of rough,
But it's healthy enough,
With its boaters and bikers and joggers.
When the music is loud
It can draw quite a crowd,
And the beers run from pilsners to lagers.

We went in and sat down,
And we ordered a round,
And when Dan came, we ordered one
more.
But he stopped in his tracks,
Lookin' over our backs,
Sayin' "Look what just walked through
the door!"

So we all turned our heads,
And we saw what he said.
Four women had entered, and stood
there.
They were clearly together,
Wore furs trimmed with leather...
We thought that they really looked good
there.

And it wasn't just us,
Because bartender Gus
Had just stopped in his tracks, and was
starin'.
What was grabbin' our eyes
Was the sudden surprise
Of the colors on what they were wearin'.

They were each in a shade
Of pastel, and it made
Us all think of an Easter egg hunt.
They were gorgeous, it's true,
Each in one solid hue,
So we thought this was some kind of stunt

There was one in pink rose,
Every inch of her clothes,
From collar to the tips of her boots.
She was shapely enough,
And our crowd's kind of rough,
But she drew neither hollers nor hoots.

On the second, lime green
Like we never had seen,
And the third wore a light shade of peach.
On the fourth, there was blue
In a lavender hue,
But still only one color on each.

Well, the band even stopped,
And the noise level dropped,
Because everyone there had quit talkin'.
They were whisperin' to Gus,
Then they looked straight at us,
And then right to our table, came walkin'.

The one in rose pink
Said, "It's these men, I think."
And then asked, "Are those boats on your van?
For we've come from afar
But we spotted your car,
So we'll ask for your help, if you can."

There was Dan, in a trance,
'Til she shot him a glance,
Sayin' "Are you their King? Is it so?"
So he warmed to their visit
And said, "Just what is it
You ladies are wantin' to know?"

Said the woman in blue,
"You're their ruler, its true
So we'll tell you the reason we've come.
For we're Whitewater Women
And a challenge was given...
We're lookin' for Hole Number One.

Well, we all gave a gasp.
Then, Dan started to laugh
Sayin', "Honey, you gotta be kiddin'."
Now, you girls really oughta
Stay out of that water.
Hole Number One's never been ridden."

But the looks on their faces
Said we were disgraces.
How quickly they stifled our laughter!
And we now knew, instead
That they meant what they said,
And this really was what they'd come after.

So we had them sit down
And we bought them a round,
And we showed them the map to the put-in.
Even Dan spoke anew,
Gave directions quite true
From the mouth that he'd just stuck his
foot in.

Well, we knew why they'd come,
So we asked them, where from,
And the reason for how they were dressed.
But they only would say
"We're from far, far away."
And they just wouldn't tell us the rest.

Then Pete said, "Can I ask,
If you manage this task,
Which one of you will we have seen?"
They said, "We'll get our gear wet,
But she isn't here yet.
The one who will ride, is our Queen."

Then they all rose as one,
For their drinks were all done,
And then out through the door they all went.
But they left us to ponder
Their Queen, and to wonder
Just what in the hell they had meant.

We had told them just when
We would see them again,
With another run planned the next day.
We would reach Number One
By the noonday sun,
And we'd said, 'til they got there, we'd stay.

Well, the band played again,
And our pizza came then,
But we hardly were tastin' a thing.
We were wonderin' some,
When tomorrow would come,
Just what kind of a day it would bring.

So we left, and we went
To our camp, and our tent,
And we sat by the flickerin' fire.
But those women, it seems,
Had invaded our dreams
In the night, when we finally retired.

With the first light of dawn
We were up, and were gone
Just as soon as the coffee had hit us.
And we drove off in haste,
To the put in we raced.
It was just as though somethin' had bit us.

It's a moment so fine,
Almost frozen in time,
When you start a new day on the river.
It was just what we sought,
But we only had thoughts
Of the answers this day would deliver.

So the boats were now ready.
Our nerves were all steady.
We geared up and snapped on our skirts.
And with miles to be run
Before Hole Number One,
It was crucial that we get there first.

Well, we paddled our way
Through the start of the day
And the drops that we all knew so well,
But the closer we got
To that frightenin' spot,
Apprehension was starting to tell.

We had less than a mile
And we slowed for a while,
When a strange mist came over the sun.
So we peered through the fog
And we spotted that log
At the entrance to Hole Number One.

We pulled into the eddy,
Called out, "Are we ready?"
It seemed our emotions had peaked.
But we all had been burned there,
And lessons had learned there.
Us weenies went left, and we sneaked.

For the hole was so rough
That we'd all had enough.
If we'd balked at the challenge, so be it.
But those women were comin',
The sight would be somethin',
And we had to be there to see it.

Well, we peered though the shroud
Of the mist and the cloud
That was swirlin' above and below,
And they came into sight
Through a strange, eerie light
So it seemed that the scene was aglow.

There they were, it was true.
Pink and peach, green and blue,
All their boats and their paddles and gear.
We had thought they might scout
But they didn't get out,
Though all four of them finally were here.

By my watch, it was soon
That the time would be noon,
Just a minute 'til twelve, by the clock.
But like us, they were waiting.
They seemed hesitating.
They just weren't yet ready to rock.

It was silent as death.
All our world held it's breath
As the seconds ticked by, one by one.
Then, "She's come into view!"
Cried the woman in blue,
And we knew that the moment had come.

Then they all gave a cry,
Raised their arms to the sky,
And their paddles clashed over the heads.
Then together they rolled,
And then stroked toward the hole
That was waitin' below to be fed.
They shot out, then curled down

River Voices

And went spinnin' around
As they circled it, faster and faster,
Skimmed the edge, at the rim
But did not get sucked in
As they danced on the brink of disaster.

They amazed us, it's true
With the moves they could do
So one mystery no longer was hidden.
For they'd showed Number One
Now indeed could be run,
But the Hole had not yet gotten ridden.

They were all right beside it
But none tried to ride it,
Though clearly they all had the skill.
They just circled the brink,
And it made us all think...
If they're not gonna do it, who will?

A strange breeze cleared the haze,
And we shifted our gaze
From the hole, up above to the wood,
Where alone at the top
And high over the drop
An incredible figure now stood.

She was dressed all in white,
Such a fantastic sight
With her kayak, her paddle, and gear
She had hauled through the fog
To the top of that log
And we sensed absolutely no fear.

We could see that instead
Of a helmet, her head
Had a hood with a ridge all around.
It was pointed and white,
And it shone in the light,
So it looked like the rim of a crown.

And she called to us then
"Hey, you Whitewater Men,
Now, I could just run right down beside it.
But the Hole's in my view,
So it's all up to you...
Are you sure that you want me to ride it?"

"For you realize, of course,
It's a powerful force
On this river, whenever you came here.
It was always your goal,
But if I ride this Hole
It will never again be the same here."
Well, it seemed that this lass

Should be given a pass
But then Dan let his pride get into it.
And he called to her, "Hey!
You can't mean what you say,
'Cause I really don't think you can do it."

And we knew that she heard,
But she spoke not a word.
She just stood there alone at the top.
Then she got in her boat,
Through the air, seemed to float,
And then into the center she dropped.

Well, we thought what we'd seen
Was the last of the Queen
She was headed straight into the maw.
But she pivoted then
And she swiveled again,
'Til we couldn't believe what we saw.

What a feat, where we gazed,
For she truly amazed
With a move that we'd never seen done...
Stuck her shaft like a pole
In the heart of the Hole,
Got up on her bow, and she spun.

There she whirled, 'round and 'round,
But she wasn't sucked down.
She did not look concerned in the least.
And it seemed, through the battle
That somehow, her paddle
Was calming the heart of the beast.

For the Hole, with that ride,
Seemed somehow to subside.
It was magic the Queen was creatin'.
Yes, the moment was here,
For we then heard a cheer,
And it came from her ladies in waitin'.


We'd seen not just a sport,
But a Queen and her court,
And we knew now that she was their
tutor.
This was clear, as we gazed
At the paddles they raised
High over their heads to salute her.

And all five of their crew
Then saluted us, too,
And the Queen smiled, and blew Dan a kiss.
Then they turned down the stream
And it seemed like a dream
As they faded away in the mist.

Many long moments passed
In that pool, 'til at last
We began to start paddlin' again.
Only silence was heard.
No, we spoke not a word,
For our lives had been changed, there
and then.

Sometime later that night,
As we thought that it might,
The huge log came unstuck, and washed
through.
And we heard, later on
That the hole now was gone
And the drop was now easier too.

It was months until when
We all saw it again,
But there really is nothin' much to it.
You can start at the top
And go right down the drop.
Hell, even newbies can get through it.

Yes, the pool is still there.
You can go, if you care,
'Cause it's mostly for fishin' and
swimmin'.
But the hole's never showed
Since the day it got rode
By the Queen of the Whitewater Women. 

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Stewardship Updates



Two paddlers enjoy the Cispus River as it flows through Gifford Pinchot National Forest near Iron Creek Campground.

photo by Thomas O'Keefe

New Hampshire Boat Fees Get Pummeled

by Kevin Colburn

New Hampshire proposed to increase revenue for their state Department of Fish and Game late last year through a \$10 per boat per year fee on all boats used in New Hampshire. AW and regional clubs worked with the agency to help them understand and share our views about the proposal throughout the spring, but in the end our interests were not met and most paddlers opposed the fees. Fortunately, paddling related businesses and paddlers rallied against the fee proposal with calls and emails, because it was unanimously defeated in the New Hampshire Senate on March 22nd.

Nantahala/Tuckasegee Standoff Exposed (NC)

by Kevin Colburn

Paddlers have probably noticed that the new releases on the West Fork of the Tuck and the Upper Nantahala did not happen in 2006 or 2007. The base flows have not increased, trails and access areas have not been built, and Dillsboro Dam is still standing. American Whitewater has spent the past several months carefully researching the cause behind delays in the issuance of new federal licenses for multiple dams on these rivers and the federal approval of removal of Dillsboro Dam. These actions are required before flows can be restored, the dam removed, and recreational amenities built. We uncovered a senseless procedural stand-off between the Federal Energy Regulatory

Commission and the North Carolina Division of Water Quality. Communication lines between the agencies were down, and no progress was being made. In response, we submitted a letter to both agencies and other stakeholders describing the impasse, recommending an appropriate solution, and requesting immediate action. Our letter stressed that procedural delays have very real ecological and recreational impacts every day. We are optimistic that our actions will yield results.

St. Patrick's Day on the Lower Cispus

by Chris Wittenfeld

I woke up to a foggy rainy day in Bonney Lake, seriously concerned about who would show for the St. Patrick's Day grand opening event at the new Lower Cispus take-out. For more than 15 years American Whitewater and local volunteers have been working to provide access to the lower Cispus. This access was finally constructed and now it was time to celebrate the official opening.

As I looked at the rain and fog, I experienced feelings of gloom and doom. Would anyone show up in this weather? Only a dozen people had confirmed that they were coming. A smile came across my face as I remembered Michael Deckert's comment about the Cispus Factor; would it be in play today? Fortunately, the Cispus Factor was at work. The closer I got to the river, the better the weather became. The rain turned to drizzle and then sun. As for boaters and rafters, no worries! Randle was overflowing with whitewater enthusiasts. Some 53 kayakers, 17 WRRR rafts, and 3 local rafts, totaling more than 80 people, were there to enjoy the Cispus. Boaters had come from as far away as Portland, Oregon and Bellingham, Washington.

The rafters were leaving Randle as I arrived. They were putting in at the Forest Service Rd 28 Bridge, doing both the Class II and III sections of the Cispus River, making for a 12 to 14-mile run. The longer run for rafts worked out perfect; they arrived at the take-out about 20 minutes after the kayakers at the end of the day.

At 11:00 am sharp Michael Deckert headed up a huge caravan of cars, destination Twin Cedars put-in about a mile above Iron Creek Campground off FS Rd 25. I arrived late at the put-in because of some last minute confusion in Randle; fortunately shuttles were in progress. Boaters were already playing on the surf



Paddlers enjoying and waiting for their turn for Paul's Play Pen, Lower Cispus

photo by Thomas O'Keefe

wave at Twin Cedars, eager to work their way down river. When I returned from the last shuttle, individuals groups were already eddy hopping their way down the river in an organized fashion.

The surf wave at Paul's Play Pen was in great shape for those who wished to enjoy it. Play spots are plentiful along the Lower Cispus. I saw boaters seal launching off the rocks into the clear, deep green water. The rapids were splashy and fun. Eagles, hawks, ducks, geese, blue heron, water ouzel, a beaver and a deer were spotted along or in the river. In other words, the Cispus Factor was definitely in effect.

A light drizzle started on our way to the Big Bottom Bar & Grill in Randle. A free raffle took place with gifts supplied by American Whitewater, Washington Recreational River Runners, and me. Thomas O'Keefe of American Whitewater gave an informational background talk about the Lower Cispus and the current status of the take-out. In the near future Lewis County PUD and Port Blakely Tree Farms will get a website working with information about the roads, gates and permit availability. I would like to thank everyone who joined in the St. Patrick's

Day grand opening of the Lower Cispus to make it such a success.

If you're looking for the new take-out at Copper Canyon Creek, it's on the south side of the Scanewa Reservoir, just off the 300 Road, now with a sign to identify it, thanks to the LCPUD. There is a big yellow gate which has been marked as entrance to the 340 or 341 Road, which goes down to the take-out. See Green Tails Maps, Spirit Lake, WA No. 332, for roads in the area.

American Whitewater Note: Thanks to dozens of individuals who worked on this project and filed public comments. Michael Deckert, Brooke Drury, Gary Korb, Carol Volk, and others worked on this access for many years. In recent years, Ed Kane, Tina Myren, and Chris Wittenfeld joined the team. We thank all the individuals who contributed their time and effort to this project.

Stewardship Updates



The Future of Colorado's Water at Stake

By Nathan Fey

Colorado is at a critical point in its history, one at which river recreationists and whitewater boaters can create lasting environmental protections. Today, Colorado is faced with challenges and opportunities that are of vital importance to the future of the state's rivers. Water is a limited resource in our semi-arid state. It supports our livelihoods, enables our quality of life, and sustains our communities and environment. Competition and conflicts over water are intensifying in Colorado as limited supply is used to meet significantly increasing municipal and industrial water demand, continued agricultural needs, and growing interests in water use for recreational and environmental needs.

Colorado is a headwaters state, straddling the continental divide. All water in Colorado, both surface and ground, is generated by precipitation in the form of rain or snow. There are no rivers (aside from 50 miles of the Green River through Lodore Canyon) that flow into Colorado without originating there, while the Rio Grande, the Arkansas River, and the Colorado River all have their headwaters in the State. Water generated in Colorado's high mountains directly support nine western states and parts of Mexico.

Colorado generates roughly 95 million-acre feet (MAF) of water on average annually from precipitation. While most

The future of Colorado rivers? The San Miguel River in 2002.

photo by Nathan Fey

of this is absorbed into the states millions of acres of forest and rangelands, some 16 MAF finds its way into Colorado's creeks and rivers. Six million-acre feet goes to meeting the needs of Colorado's 4.6 million residents. On average, 80% of water used in the state is diverted directly out of our rivers. The remaining 20% is pulled from groundwater and aquifers. Of the water Coloradoans use, 86% of is used to meet agricultural needs. Less than 7% is used to meet municipal demands, 2% for industrial needs, 2% to recharge groundwater and aquifers, and 3% for environmental and recreational needs.

Because we are a headwater state, on

average two-thirds of the surface water generated in Colorado is legally obligated to downstream users. Each year, 8.8 MAF of water flows to states west of the continental divide, including Utah, Nevada, California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Mexico. Colorado supplies another 1.4 MAF of water to states on the Atlantic side of the Divide, including Nebraska, Kansas, and Wyoming.

Colorado's water supply is limited by fluctuating precipitation levels. Drought cycles are a common characteristic of our semi-arid climate. In the drought of 2002, Colorado generated roughly 4 MAF of surface water. Municipal water providers across the state were forced to implement restrictions on water use, and there was concern about Colorado's ability to supply downstream states with their water requirements. To meet demand, an additional 6 MAF of water was withdrawn from reservoirs and storage

systems, which have yet to fully recover. Agriculture, recreation, municipalities, and the environment suffered serious hardship during one of the most serious droughts in Colorado's history. Colorado's obligations to provide water to downstream users via interstate compacts, international treaties, and court ordered apportionment, continues regardless of drought conditions or increasing demands in the headwaters.

Colorado expects another 2.8 million people in the state by 2030, placing more demand on water supplies—more demand than can be met today. The Colorado Water Conservation Board reported in the State Water Supply Initiative (SWSI) that Colorado needs an additional 630,000 AF of water supplies to meet these new municipal demands. Conservation will play a critical role in stretching existing supplies, but cannot meet all of the requirements alone. To meet the increase

in demand, Colorado is planning for new reservoirs and dams, expansions to existing storage projects, and proposed inter-basin transfers and agricultural withdrawals.

In 2005 the Colorado Legislature created the Interbasin Compact Committee (IBCC) and nine roundtables across the state to further evaluate statewide water supply and demand at the basin level. The IBCC organizes to negotiate diverting water between basins. These Basin Roundtables are charged with refining the SWSI 1 report by quantifying consumptive and non-consumptive water needs and identifying water projects scoped to meet projected future demands. In Colorado consumptive water use includes all withdrawals from surface or ground water supplies to be put to beneficial use, including agricultural, municipal, and industrial needs. Non-consumptive uses include recreational and environmental


Basin	Contact	Meeting Location	Meeting Schedule
Arkansas	Alan Hamel 719-584-0221	CSU Cooperative Ext. 2200 Bonforte Blvd. Pueblo, Occhiato University Center E. Ballroom	2nd Wednesday each month
Colorado	Dave Merritt 970-945-8522	Glenwood Springs Community Ctr 100 Wolfson Road	4th Monday each month
Denver Metro	Doug Scott 303-692-9797	No set location	2nd Wednesday each month
Dolores/San Juan	Steven Harris 970-259-5322	No set location	No set schedule
Gunnison	Michelle Pierce 970-944-2333	Holiday Inn Express 1391 S. Townsend Ave. Montrose, CO	1st Monday each month
North Platte	Kent Crowder 970-723-4660	US Forest Service 100 Main Street Walden, CO	No set schedule
Rio Grande	Mike Gibson 719-589-2230	Adams State College Student Union Alamosa, CO	2nd Tuesday each month
South Platte	Bill Jerke 970-336-7204	SW Weld County Service Center I-25 and CO 119 Longmont, CO	2nd Tues each month
Yampa/White	Tom Sharp 970-879-1482	No set location	3rd Wednesday of every 3rd month (next meeting April 18)

Stewardship Updates

needs, including in-stream flow rights, recreational in-channel diversions, and needs for threatened or endangered fish and riparian life.

Critical decisions will be made within these nine roundtables that will determine whether many rivers and streams in Colorado have sufficient flows for paddling and other river recreation, fish, wildlife, local economic benefits, and municipal needs. Currently the paddling community is unrepresented or underrepresented on these roundtables.

The Basin Roundtables and the IBCC present any proposed water project in the state to the Colorado Water Conservation Board. Each basin roundtable screens for projects or programs that benefit multiple users, and balance competing needs of a shared water source. It is critical that we protect any existing recreational or

environmental water uses from potential impacts, in addition to advocating for recreational and environmental needs in proposed future water developments. American Whitewater is seeking paddlers willing to thoughtfully represent the paddling community and AW on these roundtables. This is a critical time for river recreationists and whitewater boaters to participate in Colorado's water supply planning, one in which we can create lasting environmental protections for the year 2030 and beyond. 

To volunteer, contact Nathan Fey, AW's new Colorado Stewardship Director at 970-708-5181, or nathan@amwhitewater.org.

Nathan Fey has been an active paddler in Colorado and the West since the early 1990s. Nathan grew up in the Boulder area and began his boating career racing C-1 slalom and teaching for the Boulder Outdoor

Center. Before joining AW's Stewardship Team, Nathan worked for federal and state agencies, national and statewide non-profits, and local community groups to protect river resources in western Colorado and throughout the state. Nathan is the former Executive Director of the San Miguel Watershed Coalition, and a Core Committee member of the Dolores River Watershed Coalition, both in Southwestern Colorado. He has also served on the Advisory Board of the SW Colorado Program of The Nature Conservancy, and the Colorado Watershed Assembly. Nathan is a fifth generation Coloradoan and currently lives in Ridgway, Colorado with his fiancé Marin and their two girls: Angie, a Border Collie/Malamute, and Fisher, a Lab mix.



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The advertisement features a white circular area on the left containing a small, fluffy kitten. To the right, a kayaker in a yellow helmet and orange jacket is shown in a red and grey AIRE kayak navigating white-water rapids. The text 'vs. High-Performance Cat' is prominently displayed at the top right, and 'For those who need more than catnip to get going.' is written in a bold, sans-serif font across the middle. The AIRE logo is at the bottom left of the ad area.

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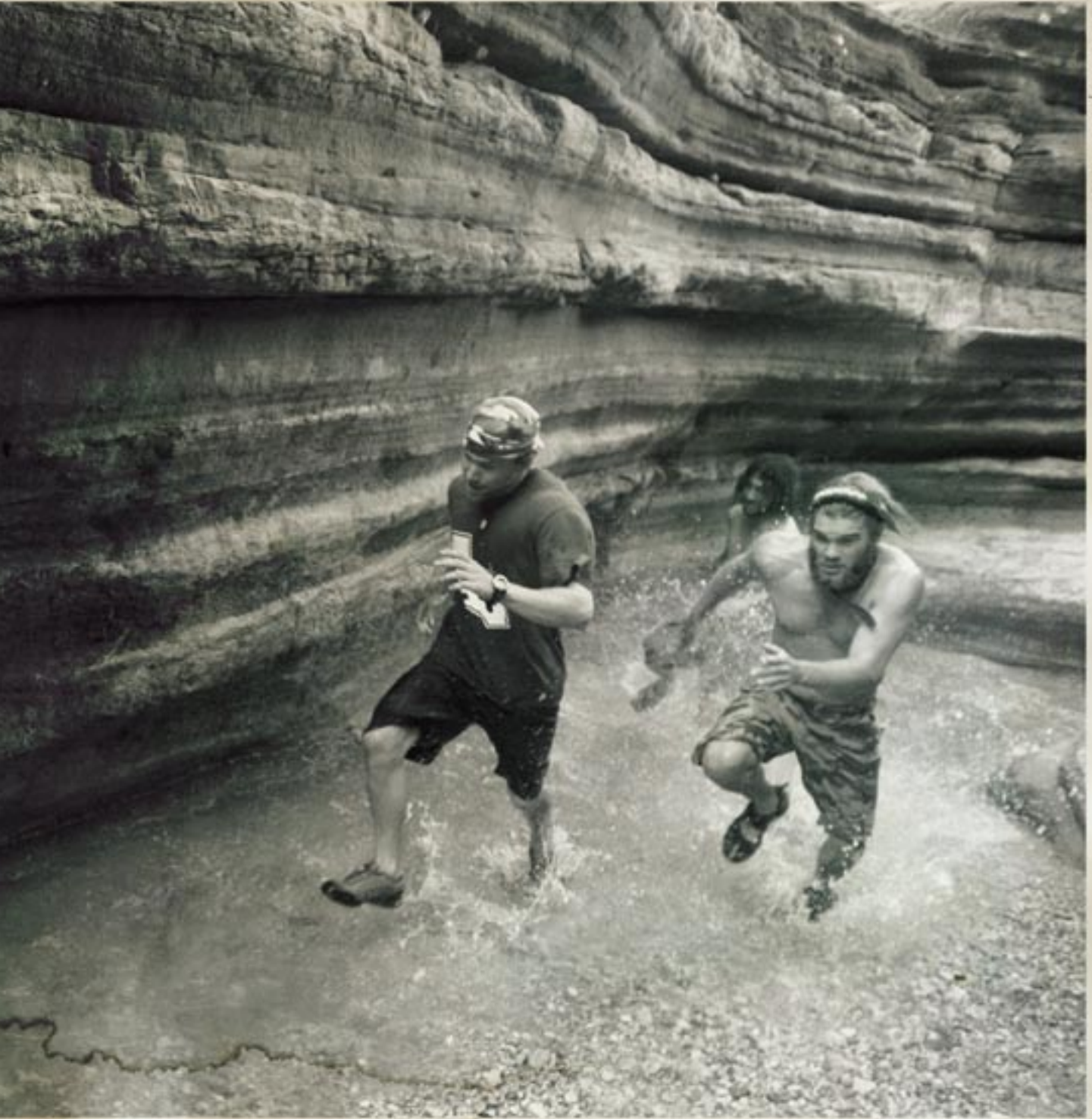
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Photo by Chris Rorer



Day 10, Mile 136: Rush, Marlow, and Anthony cut through Deer Creek Narrows. Tapeats sandstone slots; freshwater creeks; shallow plunge pools; drainage debris and gravel, exposed boulders and rocks, ankle-high water

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A Mexican Adventure

Average Paddlers in Not-So-Average Whitewater

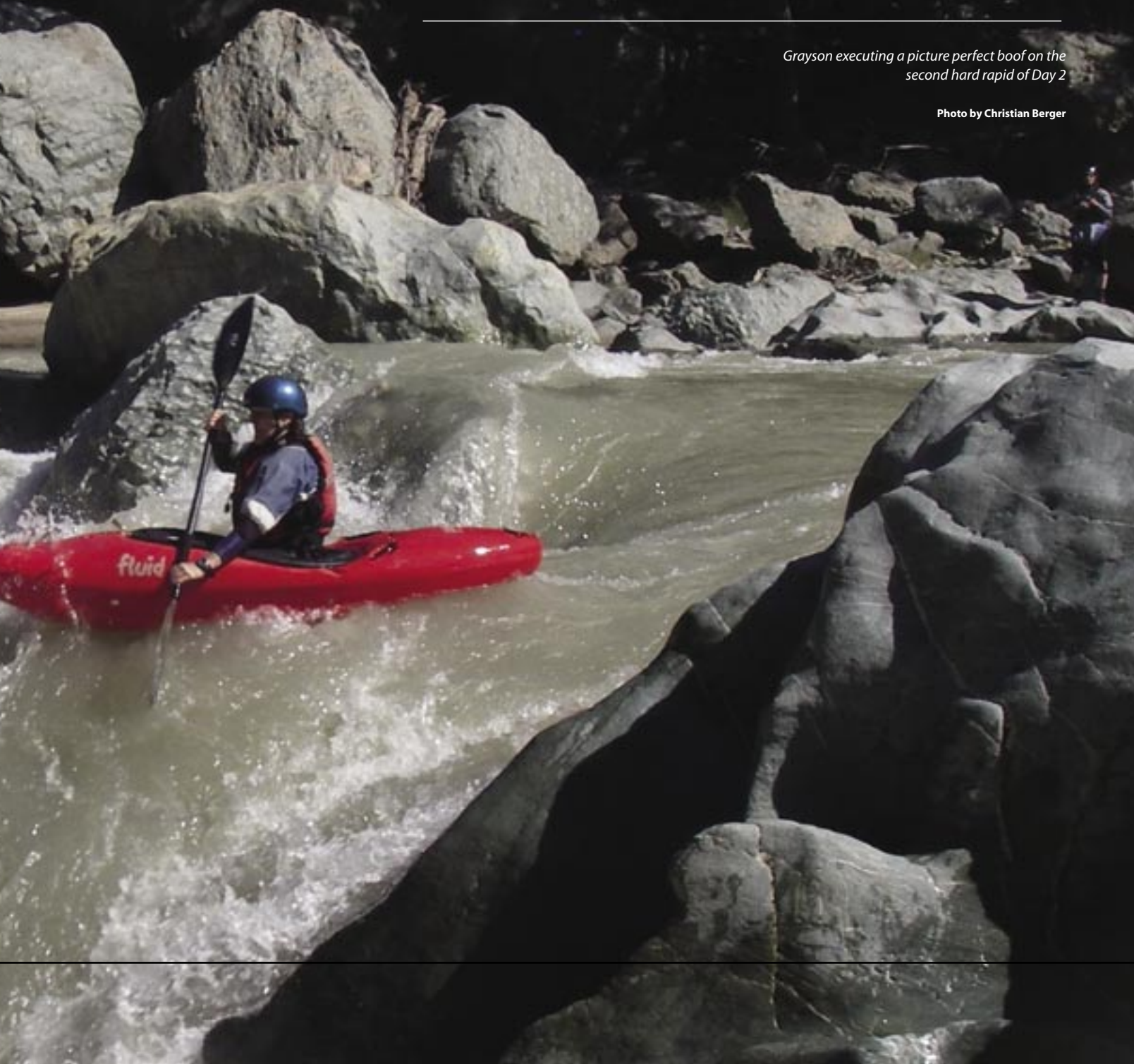
by Helene "Riverwuss" Scalliet

Worldwide Creek Boating

Tom McEwan wasn't kidding when he decided to name his Washington DC-area kayaking school/travel outfitter business "Liquid Adventures." This pioneer of whitewater organizes several weeklong trips to Mexico each winter, ranging from beginner to advanced. This year, the first trip was an advanced trip, and he needed to drive the van down from Washington DC, so I offered to help him with that instead of flying into Mexico City directly for the weeklong trip. The van will winter in Mexico and be driven back by Tom and some poor unsuspecting soul next spring, so I would fly back with the rest of the group at the end of the trip.

Grayson executing a picture perfect boof on the second hard rapid of Day 2

Photo by Christian Berger



A Mexican Adventure

We left Washington DC at 2pm on Monday, November 20th, and crossed the Mexican border at 2am on Wednesday, November 22nd. We didn't stop on the way except for food, and even that was only TWICE because Tom forgets to eat and I was too intimidated to tell him I was hungry. I learned quickly that if I needed a basic necessity (food/rest/shelter) I really had to speak up. Tom's needs are abysmally smaller than anyone else's, so he doesn't think about these things in terms we mortals can understand. So we just alternated between driving and resting, on approximately three-hour shifts. I wasn't able to sleep in the moving van, so after 36 hours I was a mess and really needed to rest. I tried to measure up to Tom as long as I could, but on the second evening all I could do was collapse in the back of the van, unable to sleep and unable to drive.

Two hours after we finally crossed the border (we had to find another border crossing after the first one wouldn't let us in with 13 kayaks strapped on the roof), we pulled over near some shacks and crawled in the back of the van for three blessedly non-moving hours of sleep. This was by far the longest I'd ever driven without stopping, and while it was physically demanding and I was beyond exhausted, it was incredible to traverse so much ground and see the climate, topography, and architecture change gradually as the miles went by. Watching the sun rise over frost-crust fields in western Arkansas, observing a flamboyant sunset while lying in the back of the van, sharing the standstill of Houston traffic with thousands of others—these were all priceless memories. This is the kind of progression that you miss completely when you fly somewhere, so I am thankful that I was able to be part of the McEwan adventure from the very beginning!

Once we got to northern Mexico, we had a bit of free time so Tom led me down a river (Rio El Salto) and a creek (Rio Frio??—we will never know...). The river was turquoise and full of waterfalls, which were a total blast. I got to run the highest waterfall I've ever run (24 feet) and I had a super clean run, so that alone was worth

the trip! (One side note: you should know a little more about me—I started kayaking because I saw a movie with kayakers going over ridiculously high waterfalls, and I wanted to do the same. Of course, little did I know that it would take an incredible amount of pain and frustration (oh yeah, and sometimes fun) to acquire anywhere near the skill level required to run waterfalls, and that I would probably never be able to run the kind of stuff I saw in that movie. So now that I've just begun to run waterfalls after a year and a half of paddling, I cherish every chance I get to huck my scared self over anything that doesn't look too trashy. I'm just pointing out that I'm not one of those great kayakers who accomplish great kayaking things. This article is about average kayakers—except for Tom the fearless leader, of course—but enough about me; on with the Mexican adventure).

Tom led me expertly through all the drops on El Salto, turning back with that signature boyish smile on his face and that isn't-this-fun look that he gets when he's on the water (I hope I'm still that much of a kid when I'm 60). We ended El Salto by taking out just above a gorgeous 100-footer. Tom immediately hailed a pick-up and yelled, "I'll be back with the van" as he was jumping in the back with whatever questionable cargo the truck was carrying. In the meantime, I took pictures of ants carrying a dead moth, and of my sandals given to me by a friend to prove that I was putting them to good use.

The next morning, in the little town of El Naranjo, we were driving away when I saw a pick-up with kayaks in the back at the gas station and yelled "kayaks." We stopped to chat with the group. It was three guys and one girl from the Southeast US (sorry I can't remember your names). One guy asked me if Tom was my husband and I was just like, "uhhh, no that's just Tom." Then another guy said, "there was this guy McEwan who used to run trips down here" and he was blown away when he realized he was in fact talking to THE McEwan, the legend. I felt proud.

Since there was more water than normal

in the El Salto, Tom thought there might be good water in this tiny creek he'd run before with tons of ledges. So we embarked on a wild goose chase trying to find this Rio Frio for a quick run before heading down south for a 10-hour drive to Tlapacoyan where we had to be on Friday. In any case that was the plan when we started off. We drove tiny, muddy dirt roads in between rows of sugar cane fields for HOURS trying to find this "Pequeño Rio." The locals we talked to were helpful but we didn't quite know how to describe where we wanted to go because Tom didn't remember the place's name, and besides we only understood about a quarter of what they said. They sent us to this little hamlet called Ojo Frio (we thought that might be the name of the river, so we told people that's what we wanted) but there was no river there or at least not one with whitewater.

We drove back to this main town of Damian three times until we finally got pointed in the right direction after Tom remembered the put-in was in a place called Aguacate. When we stopped in Damian for the second (or third?) time, we got better directions from the locals in our broken Spanish, while the local kids chanted some doubtlessly derogatory terms in our direction and practiced their English with us. I think the locals will remember the locos gringos who kept on driving by again and again asking for more directions! So off we went to Aguacate, a little hamlet with two dirt streets and people living in mud huts with their cattle. At some point we saw this tiny little drainage ditch-looking thing called the San Nicolas, flat water and all, that abruptly soared into a GIANT sinkhole (I mean giant like mini-Grand Canyon giant) with a 300-foot waterfall into a walled-in canyon at the bottom. It was the craziest thing I've ever seen and it certainly made me think twice about running ANYTHING blind in that area (Not that I would ever run anything blind, I'm a Potomac boater after all). Anyway, after leaving at 9am thinking we'd be done paddling this Rio Frio by noon, we actually finally put in at 4pm. Tom drove the van to the take out and



ran back to the put-in while I carried the gear from the road down to the river, on the other side of the sugar cane field, watching for snakes with every step.

The Rio Frio (that's what we called it, but I seriously doubt that's its name) was tiny and ledge after ledge after ledge. Mainly just two to four-footers but super continuous and fun, with one larger drop that we scouted and then ran. The river was maybe 20-30 feet across and sometimes we had to crawl under thickets of sugar cane, which would have turned into ugly strainers had there been more current. It turns out that there wasn't much more water than the last time Tom ran this so it was really easy, but still tons of fun. It was definitely a change of scenery compared to my usual Maryland/West Virginia/Pennsylvania river trips. It was so pretty with the turquoise waters and the overgrown canyon. The whole river was covered with tree canopy the whole way, so it was like paddling in a cave. It took me about five minutes to get rid of that claustrophobic feeling but then I had loads of fun. I love creaking! We got done once again right at sunset. Then we had a great dinner in Damian, while the locals told stories of terrible snakes and crocodiles in the rivers. We think they were just trying to scare us—at least that's what I'm banking on.

After dinner we got in the van and drove from 8pm till 6am the next day, non-stop again. I had the graveyard shift from 1am to 5am on psycho winding Mexican roads where you have to aggressively pass slow trucks, often on blind corners. I couldn't believe how crowded the roads were at two in the morning! Once again it took some getting used to; at first I was too scared to pass the trucks but eventually I realized that if I had to drive 30 miles an hour the whole way, we'd still be there. So I had to get over my hesitation and just put the pedal to the metal. Oh, and let me tell you about the TOPEZ. They are evil little speed bumps that crop up out of nowhere and threaten to send vehicles flying off the road. Freaking Topez! They also make it impossible for the non-driver who should be resting to get any sleep (except they had no effect on Tom). Topez seem mainly to crop up around bends where you really don't see them till it's too late and then you have to slam on the brakes to avoid a catastrophe. I think I will make a bumper sticker that says, "I hate Topez" and all the Mexicans in the DC area will have a great laugh!

After 10 hours we arrived in Tlapacoyan—a small town in the state of Veracruz—at 6 am. The town boasts a small adventure resort (Aventurec) whose owners, Tonio

It is a struggle to fit all the gear in the boats, but the author cleverly decided to pack the food bag in front of the bulkhead to save space and balance out the weight.

Photo by Emily Cohn

and Sofia, are friends of Tom's. This is his home away from home while he's in Mexico for the winter. We spent a day there getting the van fixed (the poor brakes were battered down from the Topez) and gathering/organizing food for the weeklong trip, and picked up the crew the next day in Mexico City. The group consisted of Christian Berger (the fearless co-leader), Ted Bradley, Grayson Taff, Emily Cohn, Mike Johnson and Patrick Gannon. Tonio from Aventurec was going to meet us the next day with the van in Puebla; he was coming on the trip with us, along with Luis (an Aventurec employee), the shuttle driver for the week.

From Mexico City we took the bus to the town of Puebla where we spent the night in a real hotel (the only hotel we saw the whole trip), then drove the van all day to a no-name town in northern Oaxaca to put in on the Rio Santo Domingo. The Rio Santo Domingo starts with a few miles



A Mexican Adventure

The first and tallest waterfall on the Rio El Salto also happened to be the author's first 24-footer. Tom took the more challenging left line and yours truly took the straightforward middle line.

Photo by Emily Cohn

of flat water, then drops into a canyon with about 20 miles of rapids, then ends with another few miles of flat water. It was going to be a two-and-a-half days, two nights on-the-river type of trip. We slept by the river on Sunday night and packed all our gear in our kayaks in the morning. It was the first self-contained trip for most of us, and it took us awhile to figure out how to fit all the gear in our boats. Sadly, I had to leave my book behind (a hardback)—ah, the sacrifices that we make just to spend the night under the stars, away from civilization. At last, around 9:30 am on Monday morning, we were off!

Tom had assured us that this river was very scenic, and comparable to the Lower Yough, a Class III river we are all very familiar with in Pennsylvania. He was absolutely right ... about the scenic part. The trip started in an Arizona-like landscape, complete with cactus-covered hills and scorpion tracks in the dirt; and it ended in a lush forest with mossy trees covered with lianas and bromeliads and ferns, and huge iguanas lazily watching us go by from nearby branches—incredible!

However, it soon became apparent that there was more water in the river than Tom had expected, and once we got into the meaty section of the river, we were boat-deep in true Class IV waters! I have run Class IV whitewater before and I am becoming more comfortable on it, but this river was at the top of my abilities at that point in my paddling career. I wasn't ready for the kind of sustained mental effort it takes to run tough Class IV for hours on end, day after day, with an unfamiliar and oversized kayak loaded with several days worth of food and equipment!

Being the least experienced paddler of the group, I was extremely challenged by these four days of paddling difficult water, which was difficult enough for everyone else. The sustained tension of constant fear left me hanging to my composure by a mere thread, which broke a couple of times after trashings by the mighty river gods. One of these involved a pretty long and scary swim, after which I found myself sobbing and hysterical in an eddy, looking for a way out. In fact, I feel the need to confess I cried, "Help meeeee!" to Emily during

my swim, in between episodes of getting sucked under by large boils and pushed toward the (maybe undercut?) cliff wall. It's all blurry in my mind but I believe the words "I HATE WHITEWATER! I DON'T WANT TO BE SCARED ANYMORE" came out of my mouth. Shameful, I know. Thankfully my companions were understanding and just gave me a few minutes to regroup whenever I broke down (yes, it happened more than once), knowing that there was no choice for me but to recover and keep paddling, and keep paddling WELL in fact. I really feel that I surmounted an incredible amount of fear on this trip, and I'd like to think it makes me a better person in the end. It'd better; otherwise the shame of crying in front of the whole group would have been in vain! And of course there is no doubt in my mind that the experience of a multi-day self-contained trip was worth every single tear I shed on that river.

The descent of the Santo Domingo took us four days instead of two and a half since the difficulty forced us to advance cautiously and scout many more rapids than Tom

had anticipated. The river was strewn with large house- and car-sized boulders, so almost every rapid was completely blind. Tom and Christian were incredibly good at leading us—they would eddy hop until they could see the whole rapid between the two of them, then signal us with their paddle to go left or right from their boat or from a nearby rock. The paddle signals only gave us ballpark advice; clearly we still had to read the water to avoid the sticky holes and pourovers, which was nerve-racking hour after hour and day after day. But they set the pace in a way that allowed us not to rush or run anything blind, and to walk any rapid we needed to walk on a personal basis. I did walk two or three rapids during those four days, and despite our delayed schedule, no one ever tried to say, “Oh come on, just run it. It’s easier than walking,” which to my novice eyes means that we had a great team together for that trip.

Every evening we would find a suitable beach and everyone worked well together to set up camp. Each person would empty his/her boat, and then some would gather firewood and start a fire to boil water for our meals. Not having much gear meant that we didn’t have to worry about much of anything at the campsite. All we needed to do was to set up our sleeping bag and bivy, and to boil water for the freeze-dried bags and warm drinks. That left plenty of time for lively discussions, playing with fire, roasting marshmallows, and going to bed early dreaming of the next day’s rapids. The canyon walls were generally


so steep and overgrown with vegetation that we did not do much exploring beyond the immediate camping areas.

The 24-hour delay meant that we weren’t able to paddle the Rio de Oro, which is supposedly a little gem flowing from a volcano to the Gulf of Mexico with waterfalls and all that good stuff. The night after we took out the Santo Domingo, we stayed at a gulf-side beach (Las Tuslas) violently whipped by hurricane-like winds. I hadn’t quite recovered from my heat exhaustion episode (which happened at the take out of the Santo Domingo, and had me barely conscious on my back for the rest of the day), but with some Tylenol I was able to get better and rest. No one seemed particularly chirpy by the end of the four days—even Tom The Man wasn’t looking too fresh. He suggested that we drive through the night to save a day and still run the Rio de Oro the next day. Our unanimous answer was, “No way, we need to rest.” We knew we could always run the Rio de Oro next year! There was no way anyone was going to be disappointed by the trip after our amazing experience on the Santo Domingo!

The next day (Friday, but who cares?) we spent many hours in the van getting back to Tlapacoyan, where we had the chance to run the Rio Filobobos on the last day. We all agreed to run the easy section, which supposedly contained one Class IV rapid, but after the gruesome high-water Santo Domingo we were underwhelmed and felt that we were just floating down boogie water the whole way. It was nice to enjoy paddling without being scared, though. There were these caves you could paddle through, but I avoided them

because I wasn’t up for too much adventure that day. At the end of the run Tom held an impromptu “strokes technique” workout while waiting for the shuttle. Patrick, Mike and I apparently needed to learn something called “a bow draw” and other such technicalities.

I knew I would miss Mexico, but on Sunday this average paddler couldn’t wait to be reunited with her cozy home in Washington DC. Once home, strange thoughts were going through my head, such as, “No, you don’t have to throw the dirty toilet paper in the waste basket anymore,” and “Yes, I swear you can rinse your toothbrush with tap water.” On my walk home from work the next day, I caught myself looking for a discreet bush in the local park before it dawned on me that this is the kind of place where you can just use a regular bathroom.

So, was this one of the toughest trips I’ve ever done? Definitely. But was it the kind of trip that an average paddler like me could enjoy? Yes. And would I ever go back? Heck yeah, I’m going back!!!! Next year, baby—sign me up! 



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FUSE

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Down Everest... By Kayak

An unusual sight in the shadow of Everest.

Photo by Tom Hughes



By Tom Hughes

I struggle for breath. It's like sucking air through a straw and I'm panting to stop my heart from racing, pumping oxygen-deprived blood to organs desperately in need of lifesaving O₂. My lifejacket, expanded in the thin air, presses tight on my ribs making breathing harder and my helmet, the lining similarly obese, crushes my temples exacerbating my mild headache.

Admittedly, coming here to Everest's North Face with a boat is a folly. Kayaking the Rong Chu, a small creek draining the Rongbuk Glacier, isn't all about running whitewater, it's all about obsession.

For me and my traveling companions, Everest has always been an obsession. Ever since an Autumn's night in 1986 when the News at Ten screened footage of neoprene clad warriors riding the glacial waters of Nepal's Dudh Khosi River, I've dreamed of following in their footsteps, of challenging the whitewater, the altitude, the isolation and the arduous journey to the put-in. I've dreamed of being one among the few who make the pilgrimage to the waters of the world's tallest mountain, of kayaking in Everest's shadow.

My first experience of Everest kayaking came back in 1999. An abortive kayaking trip in India, denied by lack of water, saw three of us collect in Kathmandu and assess our limited options. Flicking through the guidebook we realized that between us we'd done all the most notable rivers bar four; the four least accessible, most talked about and lengthy rivers trips in Nepal: the Humla Karnali, Thuli Bheri, Arun Gorge and Dudh Khosi. Knowing least about the Dudh Khosi we opted to fly to the Everest region and see what went. Two weeks later we returned to Kathmandu tired, thinner but ultimately elated. We'd made the first kayak descent of the river since the team

of 1986, the very team I'd watched as a teenager.

Pretty soon word of our descent spread and the Dudh Khosi began to appear on the "wish list" of international kayak bums. I know of at least seven descents between 1999 and our own return to the river in 2004. The Dudh, however, maintained an air of mystery. Only strong crews (stronger, usually, than ourselves) headed

The meeting of two distinct cultures—aquatic and terrestrial, of course.

Photo by Tom Hughes



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towards Everest with kayaks and each, in their own way, found in the challenge of the Dudh a worthy adversary.

Our trip to Everest in 2006 began, in reality, upon our return to Kathmandu after our Dudh Khosi trip in 2004. When we got back to Holy Lodge, we found a collection of boats belonging to an Australian crew heading to the Parlung Tsangpo in Tibet. I was jealous; I'd always wanted to kayak in the forbidden "Shangri La." Preconceived ideas of what Tibet would be like filled my imagination: an oppressed Himalayan nation struggling to keep its culture and way of life alive, a living symbol of resistance, a spiritual paradise, an abode of snows. Filled with these images I packed my boat and headed for the airport; Tibet might be my desire but my destination was home.

Shouldering my boat, I was approached by one of the Australians.

"Hey" he said, struggling for breath, "I need to buy your boat. Mine's stuck in Canada."

"Listen mate, I'd love to help you but I'm planning on needing this when I get home," I told him.

"I'll give you \$500 and hook you up with a new boat back in the states."

"Done!" Truth be told I wouldn't have sold him the boat if I had any money left but I'd had my eye on a nice Thangka painting and his money would more than pay for it.

So I headed to the airport carrying no more than a painting and the knowledge that Chris Jones, a disheveled Australian boater, was going to hook me up with a new boat and had a way to get me permits to kayak in Tibet in 2006.

And so it happened. Chris phoned the manufacturer and got me a new boat, I framed the Thangka painting and hung it over my bed and, in 2006, five scruffy friends and I arrived in Tibet and started hitting the rivers. It was much, much more

than we expected. First we headed out east and stumbled across a land full of first descents on creeks and big bouncy rapids on the main rivers. Then we headed north and found more creekie firsts and more playful big water ... and then we headed west, towards the Nepali border. Towards Everest, high altitude and the two most incredible rivers I've ever paddled.

Getting to Everest on the Tibet side is far easier than it is in Nepal. While the Nepalis were busy carving trekking routes from Lukla and Jiri, the Chinese were building a road as far as the monastery at Rongbuk. We took a Landcruiser and a truck and watched as the landscape changed from lush forest of eastern Tibet to arid, high altitude desert and the people changed from Han Chinese in Lhasa to tough yak herding nomads. We stopped for a brief paddle on the Yarlung Tsangpo, hit another first descent of a tributary, ate in roadside Chinese restaurants, jeered cycle bound tourists and arrived in the shadow of Everest a couple of days later. We camped in the monastery garden and watched Everest disappear in darkness as the heavens opened and our Chinese-made tents developed worrying sags.

The next morning, having run out of official road, we loaded our boats onto the horse carts, which traditionally take Chinese tour groups up to the mountain, and made our way to "Base Camp." On the North Side of Everest, Base Camp differs little from a typical Himalayan staging post. Rare are the grizzled mountaineers making summit attempts, surrounded by sat phones and laptops, the technological paraphernalia of mountaineering expeditions. Base Camp consists of rows of traditional Tibetan tents catering to the far more lucrative tour group market, selling yaks sizzlers, fried rice and the occasional bottle of oxygen.

We created quite a stir upon our arrival. Prior to our trip on the Rong Chu only a small group of Russian crazies and Chris' own group had navigated the river. Local herdsman watched, bemused, as we struggled into our kit and packed our boats. For them, the high altitude held no

demons; for us, even the act of putting on a pair of boots or inflating airbags was like taking a brisk jog.

Pretty soon, souvenir base camp photos taken and remarks to Dave's video camera complete, we pushed off into the flow. At this altitude, so near the glacier, the river was freezing cold. No major problems though, for it was completely flat and barely deep enough to float a kayak. We bumbled through braids and cruised across ripples, universally facing upstream and marveling in silence at Everest's massive North Face.

About a mile downstream from Base Camp the Rong carves its way through an ancient glacial moraine. Erring on the side of caution we got out and inspected. Within yards I knew that an arduous portage lay ahead of me. The river fell in a mass of holes and loose rock, creating confused, hole-ridden rapids. Being far from the road meant that the easiest portage was likely to be behind the moraine and over the loose scree.

While Dave and Andy elected to paddle the moraine's rapids, the rest of us took the walk of shame. Seventeen thousand feet is no place for continuous Class V+ yet, as I summited the rocky slope, I was treated to the most incredible display of kayaking I have ever seen. Dave and Andy were paddling like dervishes, punching holes, surfacing and punching ... again, and again, and again.

Reunited at the base of the moraine we rested to catch our breath and pushed off once more to cover the last eight kilometers down to Rongbuk. For Andy and Dave, the river had eased off a bit; for the rest of us, this was our first real test of the Rong's whitewater and it didn't disappoint. What we had confidently described as "Class III braids" from the bank never fell below Class IV and, a few kilometers above our day's resting place, the river tightened up again to an Alpine Class IV+. Eddies in this type of water were both a rarity and a luxury and each one would be greeted with frantic gasping—especially from me. I found the continuous whitewater and

Serious mountains make for serious whitewater.

Photo by Tom Hughes



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thin air difficult to deal with and realized, almost too late, that my proactive, forward paddling style of boating was useless in this environment. I had to ease back, drift more and react only when I absolutely had to. In short, I had to conserve both energy and air while reading further ahead to make sure I was on line for the myriad boofs, moves and hole dodges required for safe passage.

Finally, reunited with our support crew (two drivers, a translator and a hitch hiker we'd picked up some days earlier), we collapsed, worn out by the day's exertions. A group of cyclists had arrived while we were paddling and were sharing our campsite. They had cycled all the way from Lhasa; I don't know who was more tired but I certainly felt like it had to be me. It started to rain. We retreated into the mess tent to cook, dry out and make phone calls home on the cell phone. With full

bellies, we headed out to hit the hay. The clouds around Everest had cleared and we watched darkness fall over the mountain from the cover of our brollies—a very British scene.

The following morning was a slow start. While driving we estimated that we only had about 15 kilometers of the river to paddle before it braided out. The next section of whitewater on the Rong was many miles downstream in Nepal where the Rong became known as the Arun and plunged through infamous gorges.

Nearing the put-in, it became clear that the previous night's rain had swollen the river somewhat. Instead of running light glacial gray there was a darkness to the water. At river's edge we discussed the plan of attack for the day. Often throughout the trip we had split into two groups, departing 15 or so minutes from each other. We

figured that this technique would allow us to eddy hop more easily and break the river down into more manageable chunks. Today, however, we voted to go "Blue Angel," a paddling style perfected by Daz and Dave in Pakistan. Essentially it works on the reasoning that in this style of river there are hardly any eddies and that, in all probability, dangers will be along the shores, where the majority of boulders create pourovers. "Blue Angel" paddling necessitates a Le Mans style entry to the river, after which everyone tries to keep five or ten seconds behind the guy in front of them. The onus is on the paddler in front to find or improvise a safe passage and the rest act accordingly or react to any difficulties ahead. It sounds reckless, but at high altitude, charging around and hitting every eddy on the river will leave you drained of energy and get a group of six into more trouble.

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It worked like a charm. Andy took the lead and never faltered in finding good lines. Any holes ahead we simply punched and I concentrated on following Dave's line ahead of me and making sure that Sammy, behind me, was okay. A brief inspection saw us all through a sudden narrowing where two cliffs almost joined overhead and a small plank bridge made a good photo standpoint. My hands were freezing and we rested while they thawed painfully.

With Dave in the lead, paddling confidently, we entered a small box canyon. A mistake occurred. Chaos ensued. I remember cutting left to avoid a hole, right to climb an almost vertical standing wave and another hole, a quick, split-second decision and the last river-wide hole was punched in the middle. We'd named no rapids even this far into the trip, but left this one with the moniker of our thoughts as we followed Dave

into oblivion. For reference, the second box canyon below Rongbuk in Tibet is called "Dave!"

After "Dave!" the river began to ease. The gradient shifted from constant Class IV+ down to IV in barely a kilometer. A kilometer later and we were cruising Class III. We stopped for lunch and, hoping to milk the river a bit, carried on some more but knew deep down that we'd done it. We'd kayaked down the North Side of Everest. At the take-out no one celebrated; there were no hugs or congratulations. We'd become the first team ever to kayak down both sides of a very large rock. It meant little to anyone else and we were too tired to explain. Quickly and quietly we hit the road. We had only a few days left in Tibet and an important date with the Upper Upper Bhote Khosi remained....

Tom Hughes paddled with: Andy

"Rrrrrroundy" Round, Dave "The Angry Dwarf" Thompson, "Dapper" Daz Clarkson, Darryl "Bugger" Sergisson and Sammy "The Brain" Robinson. 

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Logistics: Chris Jones, Windhorse Expeditions, Tibet; Karma and Dawa (drivers), Yonten (mis- information)

Many thanks: Christy, Clare, Amanda, Val, Amy and Lhasa Amy for letting us go to Tibet.



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Dennis Squires hiking up to run the River Styx

Photo by Mike Feldman

Difficult Lessons: a Near Miss and a Fatality in New Zealand

By Jody Dixon

A Near Miss ...

Bruce, the helicopter pilot on the west coast of New Zealand's South Island, flew four of us into the Arahura River. We made (or rather I made) a few mistakes that day in December. As a group, we decided last minute on the run of the day and went racing off to catch the pilot in time, not immediately learning the river was running higher than normal. The two remaining mistakes on the river were mine.

We did many things right that day, however, and worked well as a team.

Had we been fewer than four paddlers, though, we would have been much more vulnerable.

Bruce flew us in 16 kilometers, through three wilderness gorges, to a small landing zone on the edge of the Arahura, which is rated Class IV-V. We immediately found the river had a great deal of punch to it. Mick Hopkinson of Murchison had generously spent most of a morning with us to orient us to the New Zealand (NZ) landscape of rivers when we first arrived from the States in early December. Clearly the most valuable information he shared was that rivers in NZ are a good bump up from those in the States, that we needed to run as a team and that scouting is paramount because of the wood—even if

we had run the river in recent days. Every rain brought more wood.

All four of us flipped and rolled within the first few drops. It was beefy. We had been running rivers as a team in NZ for about ten days at that point. In addition, we had all paddled together in the States on a regular basis. Still, we took safety seriously and had run drills with paddle and hand signals on our first day out to ensure we were all on the same page. We even added a few signals to account for the nature of the NZ rivers, as we gradually increased the difficulty of our runs.

We ran Curtain Falls, the first named drop, which comes after a number of drops that would likely be named here

at home. Dent Falls was tumultuous. We all walked. Shortly after that, still within the first gorge, I took a Class V swim. I rolled up at the lip of a 10-foot drop, over which I paddled backwards as I tried to hug the enormous boulder on my left shoulder. As I landed, the hole sucked me in. I tried one roll but felt like I never surfaced and decided to bail in order to conserve energy for the swim. I relaxed and felt myself sinking farther and farther down. The others said I surfaced about 30 feet downstream.

Our team had already kicked into high gear. As luck would have it for me, Mike Feldman, my husband, happened to have gotten out of his boat to fix his backband next to the hole, removing his throw rope to have it available—a good practice to remember. Dennis Squires immediately yelled, “Jody’s in a hole.” Mike’s throw dropped the rescue bag in my hands as I surfaced, with the rope across the bow of Dennis’s boat. Dennis flipped the rope off his boat and made sure I had grabbed it. I remember how surreal the giant boulders looked as the water rushed downstream. I turned to see where Mike was to see how long it would take him to pull me in. My judgment was already impaired and I made my first individual mistake. I let go of the rope because I thought it would be too difficult for Mike to work the rope around one of those house-sized boulders. The rule is to never let go of the rope unless your rescuer tells you to do so. I knew this well but my thought process was clouded.

As Mike continued to yell, “Grab the rope, DON’T let go of the rope,” I managed to grab it again. As he worked the rope, I was conscious of the pummeling of the water crashing into boulders before my eyes. Though this was going to be a much longer swim for me because I had let go of the rope once, I realized I would likely die if I did so again. I had no energy left and my forearms were screaming from hanging onto the rope; I do not believe I could have self-rescued. Mike hauled me onto a rock and into a bit of sun that was starting to dwindle. Dennis and Gant Ginter hauled in my gear. I was thankful that I always

dress in neoprene—and I will always do so in the future ... dress for the swim, not the weather.

After they all made sure I had sufficiently recovered and I had eaten some food, we continued downstream to exit the first gorge. My head was in the right place after that swim and I focused on conserving energy and getting ready for gorge number two.

I then made my second mistake—I lagged behind the group. As we left the first gorge, there was a bit of flat water, which then became a Class II drop. I was simply planning to run straight down the drop but at the last moment decided to go for an eddy on river left that I had watched the others catch. Because I was behind, I failed to notice the problem Dennis had with a stick in the flat water as he left the eddy. It caught his hull and would not let go. He flipped, still stuck on the stick, and dropped his paddle momentarily to work the stick off the boat. He believed he managed to do it only with brute force and luck. It was such a small stick, barely as wide as my fist. We talked for days about how such an innocuous looking stick—not even visible until it caught your boat—could be so stubborn and dangerous.

Not seeing the stick, or Dennis’ incident, I landed on it as well. The stick hooked and was wedged under the combing around my cockpit, leaning my boat on its downstream edge. I countered with an upstream brace as I tried to work the stick off my boat with my left hand. After many failed attempts I was able to turn my head downstream for a glimpse of the others at the bottom of the rapid. They were not able to see my predicament. I went back to working the stick. Eventually the boat shifted further on the downstream edge and it seemed the stick was wedged even tighter. The others were still in their boats at the bottom.

I decided to wet exit since I could not risk flipping and I could no longer wait for assistance. Although I had trouble pulling my skirt, I was able to force myself out of the boat. Only by luck was there an underwater rock at knee level, since I was pinned to the boat by the stick. The stick had punctured my skirt

Group picture on the banks of the Kokapotahi River. From left to right: Gant Ginter, Eric Aguilar, Dennis Squires, Jody Dixon, Mike Feldman

Photo by Mike Feldman



Worldwide Creek Boating



and was wedged inside my boat toward the back deck. Thoughts of the bizarre accidents I had read about over the years raced through my mind. A snagged skirt can be the end. Had that rock not been positioned in that spot, there might have been a different outcome. Had I not lagged behind the group, I either would not have encountered this situation or I would have been rescued quickly by my teammates.

I used my left forearm to keep the boat, which was by then fully on its side, from flipping completely. I used my right hand to try to “work” the stick, which simply was not “workable.” I would conserve energy and then focus every ounce of strength in attempts to raise the boat up and away from the stick. It was, of course, futile to work against the power of the current. I then tried tearing my skirt off the stick, but I could not rip the rand. I

knew I could not hold the boat upright and use a knife to cut the skirt, so I tried to work my skirt down off my waist. I knew I needed to do this cautiously since the skirt would either stay snagged or could become snagged again on something else. With my left arm fully in the boat to keep it as upright as possible, I simply could not work my skirt out from under my drytop with one hand.

By this time, the others had found my paddle and Mike was on the shore, running upstream with his throw bag. Since I could not hold the boat and catch the bag, the plan was for Gant to swim out and clip onto my boat. I conveyed to the others that I was pinned to the boat and, in his effort not to move it, Gant missed the target on his first attempt. He quickly repositioned for a second try, clipped onto the stern loop and swung in right behind my right

The first drop in the third gorge of the Arahura River.

Photo by Mike Feldman

shoulder on the rock. There was relief for me knowing that Mike had my boat on the rope and would keep it positioned while we worked to free my skirt.

Dennis suddenly appeared on my left shoulder. He was intent on saving my skirt, but I literally screamed at him to forget the skirt and just get it off me. I knew I did not have much time left before I lost all energy. They worked the skirt off me, Gant helped me swim to shore, and Mike and Dennis hauled in the boat.

At this point, I had spent a substantial amount of time in cold water. Still, I was dressed warmly and had extra fleece

in a drybag. It was late in the day, the sunshine had disappeared, we were down a sprayskirt and we still had two gorges to go. I knew my judgment was impaired and agreed to the decision of the group: Mike would give me his skirt and hike out, leaving his boat and hike back in for it the following day. Dennis and Gant would lead me out. Dennis promised I could walk everything that was Class IV and above. They knew I was spent, so Dennis would immediately hop out of his boat for every scout, pick up my boat and start hopping boulders to carry it around drops. He and Gant tag-teamed my boat around the toughest drops in the second gorge as well as around the entire third gorge. I was so exhausted, I focused only on Dennis' back as he led me down the easiest lines he could find.

I realized in the weeks that followed that once you take a tough swim, your judgment is likely impaired. While Dennis said anybody would have swum out of that hole, I know I never should have considered letting go of the rope.

A view of the second gorge of the Arahura River.

Photo by Mike Feldman



www.americanwhitewater.org

My impaired judgment is also the reason I lagged behind. Had I not done so, the incident with the stick could have been prevented.

And a Fatality

After our team parted to travel our separate paths in New Zealand, as originally planned, we left Dennis Squires with some other very capable boaters. Only upon returning to the States in early January did we learn that Dennis had "painfully bruised ribs," acquired on the Styx river on December 16, the day after we left him. Apparently after resting for a couple of weeks, he was boating again by the first of January. Around January 12 he paddled the Nevis Bluff section, a very short Class VI- run, and took a swim. It turns out that Dennis also swam two other times on different rivers between the time he bruised his ribs and his swim on Nevis Bluff. Perhaps the swims were due to his injured ribs; perhaps paddling a new boat was a factor.

On January 13, Dennis went off to run the Waikaia River in the southern part of the South Island. This remote wilderness



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run is rated Class IV-V, and Dennis was paddling with only one other person that day. Dennis swam a 15-foot waterfall while trying to chase down his runaway boat, bruising his hip and lacerating his leg. The next falls he ran beautifully.

For whatever reason, Dennis chose not to scout the drop after that. From the river, he could not have seen the tree that stretched from river left across two-thirds of the river, because the line of it was obscured by a rock. Once he committed to running left, there were no eddies to catch. He was found four days later, entrapped in the root ball of the tree.

We will never know why Dennis ran left and why he did not get out to scout. Perhaps the right side looked potentially undercut and too tight, and he thought he could boat scout from the left. He


was certainly injured; not only did he get hurt two drops above, but he had to still be recovering from bruised ribs. In addition, he had bruised his leg while hopping boulders as he carried my boat on the Arahura River earlier in December. Perhaps it was the same leg he cut that day on the Waikaia.

He may have been cold and fatigued in addition to being injured. Perhaps he decided it was less painful to stay in his boat and run the drop than it would be to get out and look. In any case, I believe his judgment was impaired and I believe that is why he did not scout.

While no one could have rescued Dennis or prevented his death once he chose his line, this situation emphasizes why it is so important to have a working team. You need to be able to tell your friends when

to stand down, when not to run a drop; you have to be able to read the cues in a person you paddle with regularly. A new paddling partner cannot possibly pick up on subtleties that indicate you may not be on top of your game.

I wish I could go back in time and remind Dennis of Mick's advice in the beginning of our trip to New Zealand: scouting is paramount because of the wood and you need a "team."

Dennis, we will miss having you as a part of our team. 



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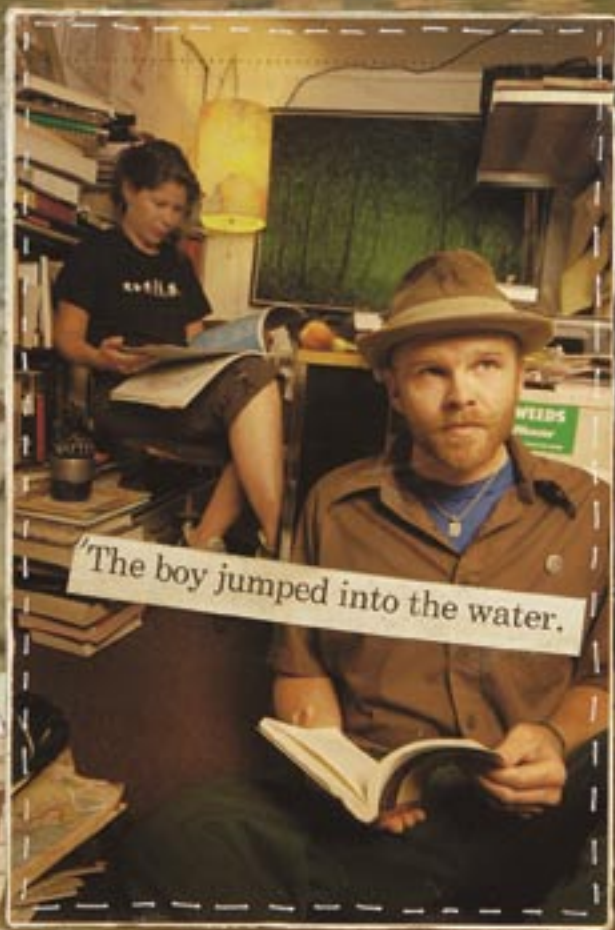
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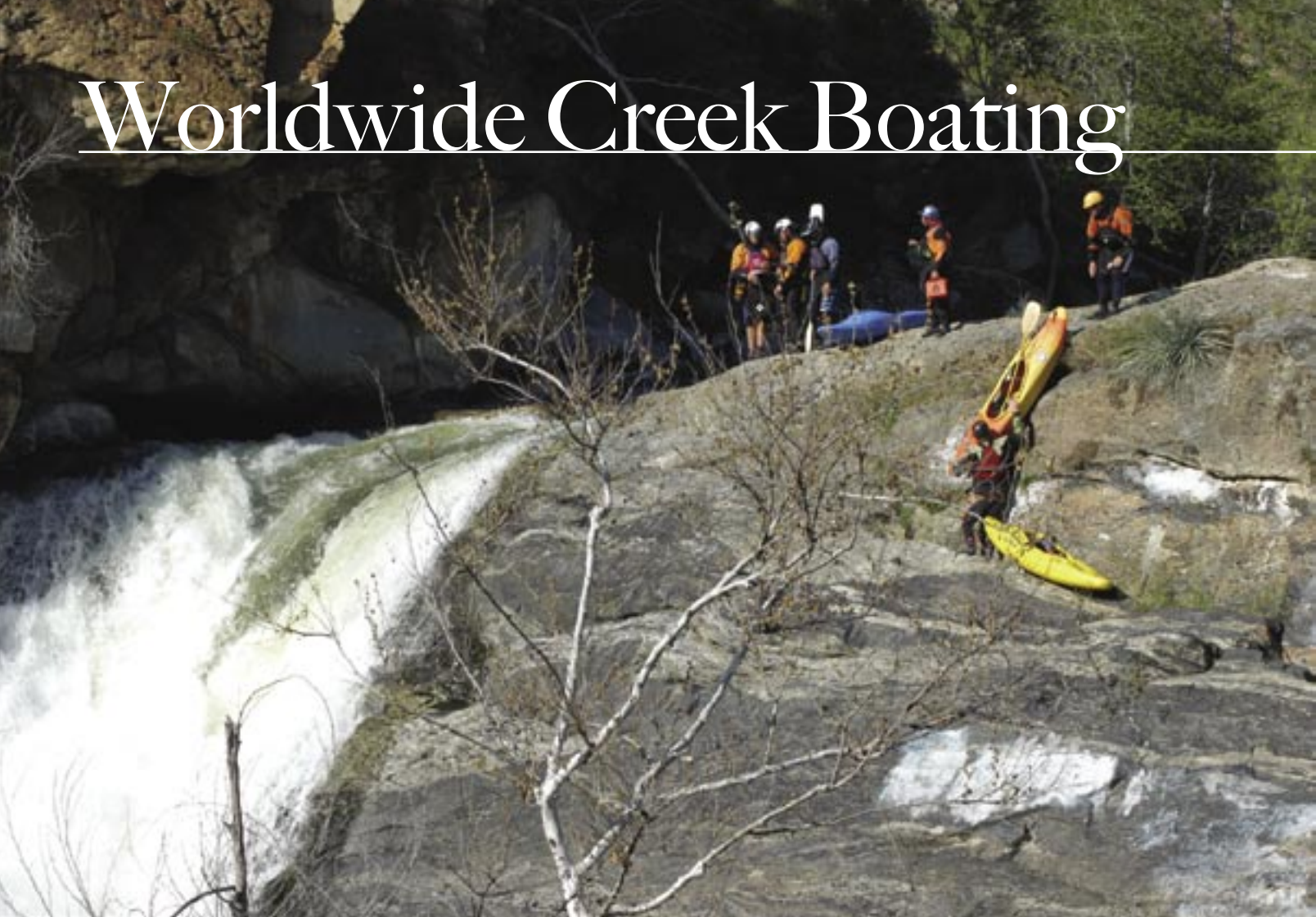
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Why is water use always a dry debate among a few? When you strip it down, isn't water conservation a responsibility for all? That's why local author Laura Prichett and publisher Todd Simmons want a more sustainable solution than the current plans to dam one of the last free-flowing rivers in Colorado. And they found many friends ready to take the plunge with them. More revealed at followyourfolly.com

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This group is working as a unit to scout and to begin the difficult process of portaging. Communication is important here.

Photo by Laya Chapman

How to Scout: a 10-step Plan for Success

By Adam Johnson

1. Get out of your boat carefully. Usually, you do not want to swim any whitewater, but especially not a rapid that needs to be scouted. Try to look for a good, calm, safe spot to pop your skirt and get onto shore. Do not crowd the eddy where your friends are trying to get out, as this can cause unnecessary anxiety and chaos.

2. Store your boat in a safe spot. Oftentimes, when creeking, you have to stash your boat in a precarious spot (on a slanted rock, a log, branches, etc). Before you leave your boat, make sure it is safe and will not float away without you. Remember, without a boat, you will either be chasing after it or hiking out of some place where

it is probably easier to kayak than hike (not to mention buying a new boat).

3. Bring your throw rope! After you check to make sure that your boat is stowed securely, be sure you take your throwrope along to scout. I have seen too many people walk down to see the rapid without a throwrope in their hands. People have managed to get themselves into trouble on the river where, if their partner(s) had a throw bag with them, things could have turned out much better. Even if you don't think you'll need it, bring it. Someone could end up slipping and falling in during your scout, or someone in your group might get the sudden urge to run

something you assumed everyone would carry. In these cases you might not have time to run up and get your throwrope.

4. Analyze the rapid. Try to find a line, but also look for hazards (caves, sieves, undercuts, holes, etc). Make sure to look at it from different angles so that you can be certain of what you see (a rock could look fine from one angle, whereas, from another angle, you could see the undercut cave it forms). In addition to moving up and down the shoreline, make sure you vary your height above the river. Try to get the big picture (higher/farther away) as well as a sense of how big and scary it might look from your boat when

you're running it (river's edge, right next to big features or crux moves).

5. Choose your line and stick to it.

You should be able to visualize yourself paddling the rapid even before anyone else runs it. If you cannot visualize yourself running the rapid in your head, you probably shouldn't run it. Often, after a few people have taken a different line than yours, you will think, "Wow, maybe their line is better..." Whichever line you choose, just make sure that you are confident in it and that you can visualize yourself paddling the entire thing.

6. Make a "worst case scenario."

What would happen if something went wrong? Let's say that you got off line—where would you go now? How do you get back on line (can you)? Where is safety set? Could they get to you there? Your worst case shouldn't psyche you out, but it should force you to think about realistic problems you might encounter.

7. Get your game face on.

After you have your line in your head and are confident that you can stick the line, give the rapid one last look and start heading back to your boat. Signal to your friends with hand signals or with a paddle that you will be running it. If you are walking the rapid, make sure your friends know.


8. Look at the horizon line.

Back at the top of the rapid, you should take one last opportunity to scout. This is an important step in the scouting process and is often overlooked. Before you get in your boat, make sure to stop and take a look over the horizon from the top of the rapid. You need to know where you are going when you get in your boat. From water level, what markers do you have to keep yourself on line? These could be waves, holes, riffles, trees, approximate distance from shore, etc.

9. Make sure you are ready.

Now it's time to get in your boat and do a final check to make certain you are ready to go: skirt properly ... check, noseplugs ... check, elbow pads ... check, backband adjusted ... check (you get the idea). At this point you will probably have some butterflies

in your stomach. All that you should be thinking about is the line that you are about to stick.

10. Now, ferry out and STOMP YOUR LINE! 

Adam Johnson is a three-year Team Riot member. In 2003-2004, he was a U.S. Freestyle Team member and placed 5th at the 2004 Pre-World Championships.

Today, Adam lives in West Virginia, where he balances school with paddling, while frequently contributing to the Team Riot Blog. Check it out to find more "How To" articles like this one.



After all the hard work of scouting, it's time to stick that line!

Photo by Tom McKee

Worldwide Creek Boating

In Silvio We Trust

By Bob Daffe

For years my friend, Silvio Gallo, talked to me about this Argentine river, near San Rafael, the Diamante. I went there twice to run it but each time the dam had shut down and the river was dry. Finally we made it. The river was flowing so we went. "Dos maquinas plus" was Silvio's wide-eyed comment when he saw the river. He never had run it this high. The Diamante is a 40 kms wilderness trip. Once you enter there is no way out except downstream. We stopped to look at Picassa, a river-wide hole. From the portage trail it was obvious that portaging was not an option. The huge river-wide hole was V-shaped so it would flush if you hit the middle.

Next was El Largo, the long one. We stopped to look at it but Silvio stayed in his boat and said, "RobertOoo, it is El

Largo, too long to scout. It is 2 kilometers long." I asked where the line was and he said, "No se (I don't know), everybody flips, once, twice, maybe more." Next we stopped above eddy Loco (crazy eddy). We asked how to avoid it and Silvio answered, "No puedes (you can't), everybody goes through," and then he took off downstream.

This year Silvio said, "RobertOooo, I have a new river for you." The middle Atuel starts at the Devil's throat (nice name!). Silvio said the put-in is a little sketchy. How does a Spanish guy learn the word sketchy? On the way to the put-in, more information came out about rockslides, the dangers of flipping on this run, etc.

The sketchy put-in was an almost sheer cliff with loose rocks, three throw ropes' lengths down to the river. The entrance into the river looked reasonable from up high. I did not feel like going because the

climb to the put-in was at least 34 degrees and I was suffering from a bit of diarrhea.

It is normal to suffer from a bit of diarrhea when you travel to South America. The food is different, sometimes you drink a little too much, and knowing you are heading for a hard run tends to loosen your bowels. They say Yogurt is good for your stomach because it has those good bacteria. Heck, if you're going to take risks you might as well do something healthy, so I ate yogurt. I had a couple in the morning to settle my stomach—not like I had the option of backing out—there's hardly a choice when you need three paddlers for safety and three throw ropes just to get down to the put-in. I got dressed in full gear for protection, in spite of the heat.

Silvio just wore shorts and a life jacket. Kevin, my son, also got dressed in full gear. Another yogurt and down I started climbing. Lowering the boats, Kevin's

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rope got jammed. He pulled hard on it, and rocks started falling. I was wearing full gear so I should have put my body against the wall and ducked but instead I just looked up: miss, miss AH! AH! A little battered, we finally reached the bottom; I was sweating so bad that I must have lost five pounds. Another yogurt! The entrance didn't look so reasonable from river level. We had to ferry in front of a wall, avoid some squirrely currents and peel off downstream. I might have considered not putting on after all, but the climb back up was totally unreasonable. Funny how sometimes our options dictate what is reasonable!

A few days later, a kayaker did miss the line at the put-in and flipped. He went over a few pour-overs before swimming. He got out with a few bruises and a long walk ahead of him; his kayak did not fare so well.

We did fine following Silvio. Once we stopped at a horizon line and Silvio said, "Es pequeño (it is small) center." We followed him over a 15-foot falls and,


luckily for us, the center line was perfect. Normally we stop and scout all Class V rapids, but with Silvio we just seem to follow his lines in blind trust.

We followed Silvio through a complex long rapid. He pointed right, we pointed right; left, and we went left; ferry across the river and we followed; boof, jump, lean right, paddle hard. Silvio eddied out; he looked at us as I was coming in and said, "Todo bien (all good)." He smiled that happy paddler's grin and took off downstream. I peeled out behind him and yelled at a smiling Kevin, "In Silvio we trust." We both grinned.

Boof, jump, ferry, slide between rocks ... we just followed. Finally the river calmed down. The river life contrasted with the desert scene of the canyon walls; it was pretty. Ducks and river birds were abundant on shore, crickets and frogs were singing away. Silvio said, "I don't like this." I could not understand why, but he explained that a rock avalanche had created another big rapid. Remember, don't flip.... The entrance looked reasonable until Silvio pointed out the log on the right.

We had to squeeze past a pillow rock to take a chute to the left. We watched Silvio go from the eddy, the current took him right up on the pillow; not a clean line, and then he disappeared over the horizon. Kevin followed and I went next. I clean the first line just in time to see Kevin go over another horizon line. We were running Class V on the fly!

Finally we reached the bridge where Silvio stopped in an eddy; we all had big grins. Where is the toilet paper?

Two weeks later we found ourselves at the start of another Diamante trip. Theresa offered Che Che, another Argentinean kayaker, a yogurt. He answered, "No estoy bien del estomago (no my stomach is fine)." A strange response! Theresa offered again, and he repeated himself in half decent English. At our puzzled look he grabbed the yogurt and said, "See this is for when you have problems: laxativo (laxative)." The fine lines went on to explain this yogurt helps prevent constipation and loosens the bowels. I need to use my reading glasses more often. 



The "sketchy" put-in for the Middle Atuel.

Worldwide Creek Boating

Eddy of No Return

By Rocky Contos

Photos by Rocky Contos and Barbara Conboy

It's kind of romantic-stranded in the middle of the Mexican wilderness with my hunny, Barbara. Shade from the canopy of trees cools us in the warm humid weather. Birds chirp and the lava gorge is absolutely breathtaking. There is a nice place to camp just upstream where we spent the previous night. Unfortunately, we are stuck. A huge volume of muddy water (300 cms/10,000 cfs) is pouring over a massive Class V drop, with half the river swirling into an Olympic pool-sized eddy on our side of the river. A giant pile of wood flotsam clogs the head of the eddy. We try nearly a dozen times to punch through into the main current to start heading down the river, but to no avail. Even if we do get out into the current, what lies downstream? More of the same? Worse? God forbid it get any worse. What a disaster it would be to flip and lose the raft and all our camping gear and food. We're so thankful that I got the raft through this one. Hiking out is not an option—it's about 12 km and 1,000 m up over the rim through dense forest to the nearest road by Tequilita. So I guess we'll just wait indefinitely until the water level drops – I hope soon. Will this seal our fate together? Will it endear Barbara to me? Or will she despise me for bringing her into

this dangerous mess?

I first met Barbara Conboy when she enrolled in a UCSD Outback Adventures kayak rolling/surfing Class I taught in 1994. Soon after that she came on a sea kayak trip in Baja that I guided. Our group spent 4 days paddling around the San Quintín area about 4 hours south of the border. On that trip, the weather was windy, we had sand in our camp all the time, and we couldn't go very far in the ocean or around the bay. But Barbara was a good sport about it. I got to know her a little bit then. She was fluent in Spanish and had traveled extensively in Mexico while studying in Mexico City for a year. She had been working as a bilingual speech-language pathologist in San Diego, and was about to start working on her Ph.D. Originally from Long Island, she had grown up very comfortable with the water but hadn't had much exposure to whitewater. We didn't meet again until 1998, when she coincidentally moved in upstairs from me at the UCSD graduate student apartments. I invited her on some river trips and we started dating. A couple years later, I had graduated and was spending the summer in Mexico when she came down to visit and do some exploring with me.

I was based in Mazatlán at the time, and since Barb's kayaking skills weren't good enough to tackle an unknown monsoon-

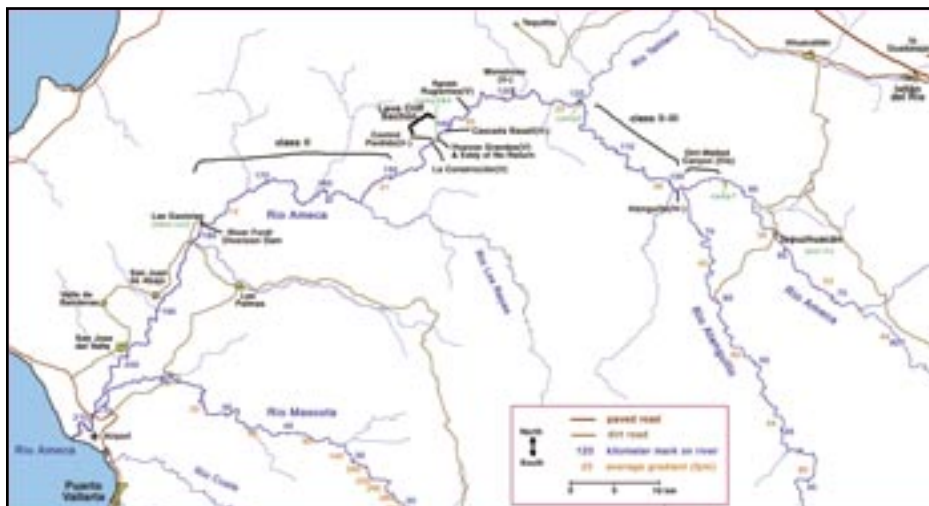
fed Mexican river, we decided to do a descent on my cataraft. Barb wasn't skilled at rowing a raft through rapids, but she could help guide the raft with a paddle from the bow. The rain was falling down around Guadalajara, so I suggested we try a river in that area that might be a bit more challenging – Río Ameca. We would float the lower stretch of 130 km from Tepuzhuacán to Puerto Vallarta. The highest average gradient between the 100 m contours was ~10 m/km (50 fpm).

I said, "Barbarita, that gradient in what looks like a not-so-tight canyon probably means there will be a lot of Class IIIs and IVs; maybe one or two Class Vs. We'll almost certainly be able to portage around the Vs." It was an easy sell.

"OK, Roquito, let's go do Ameca," she said, trusting that we'd have an adventure, but nothing too dangerous.

Río Ameca is the river that debouches by the Puerto Vallarta airport. Several years earlier I had eyed up this river trip as one of the easiest to arrange logistically if flying down into Mexico with a kayak. I figured since the river runs right by this major airport with frequent flights to and from the US, all we would need to do is get a ride from the airport up to the put-in, 212 km upstream at Ameca, and then float back down to the airport where we would hop on our flight back a week later. Simple! It would be an easy way to get into the heart of the Sierra Madre and get a good feel of what the river systems were like down there. I had the maps and knew the average rainfall in the drainage, and surmised the river would be running about 15 cms (500 cfs) at the put-in of Ameca, and about 200 cms (7,000 cfs) at the mouth in the summer. The average gradient, about 7 m/km (35 fpm), indicated it would probably be a fun river with mostly Class III-IV rapids. Now I was down in Mexico with my truck, raft, and girlfriend! I would finally get to do Ameca.

As we were preparing to leave, Barb asked, "What's the weather going to be like out there?" I mentioned that she should



prepare for stormy, rainy weather on the trip. After all, this was August, the middle of the rainy season. She replied, "I hope it doesn't rain the whole time. It's been so foggy in San Diego; I want some sun!"

Her attitude vexed me. Rain is the life-blood of my cherished rivers in the Sierra Madre. At the time, there had been a fairly long dry spell that had me scraping down rivers the previous couple weeks. When it would start pouring, I would dance for joy and run around like a young kid who just got into Disneyland. I was hoping and praying that we would have deafening thunder and intense downpours each day. Contrary to Barb's desires, I wanted lots of rain.

We drove off to the put-in at Tepuzhuacán with my friend and shuttle driver, Rafael. I picked that spot, about midway down the river, since it was the last access point before the lower canyon and the river would likely be large enough for the raft there. Río Ameca wasn't flowing as high at the put-in as I had anticipated – it looked like about 20 cms (700 cfs). Maybe they diverted more water out of the upper basin than I suspected. It seemed sufficient, though, and my brand new 16' cataraft was a treat to row – much better than the \$100 army surplus bucket I had used previously on rivers like the Kern, Salt, and Grand. For one thing, the new one didn't have to be pumped up every hour, and maintained its composure well. There was no need to bail it out constantly. It turned easily and didn't drag. It was comfortable to row. But it lacked a floor, and water could splash right up onto us.

We weaved around the boulders and Barb lifted a wire cable for us to scoot under. I cringed every time the raft scraped over a rock and became annoyed. At a few spots Barb had to hop off to lighten the load so we could progress. I told her, "Look, you're getting what you asked for – clear skies, low water, and scraping." Looking back now, I think to myself - the unfortunate gal – she was already suffering from Montezuma's Revenge and a pinched nerve in her leg (from spending the 8-hour drive to the put-in wedged between me and Rafa in the tiny 2-person cab of my Toyota truck), and now she was dealing with an



Above and below: The Lave Cliff section has a high gradient and eight major Class IV-V rapids. Huevos Grandes is located at the right side of this photo where a lower lava cliff can be seen.

ornery boyfriend whom she hadn't seen in months. To her credit, she did stick it through the tribulation and came to see my logic, saying, "Some rain for the river would be good."

We camped at the edge of a farmer's plot, having been benighted before finding an ideal beach. We were only 8 km into our 120 km journey to Puerto Vallarta. We still had 4 more days before Rafa would arrive to pick us up. The farmer came by in the morning and we chatted a while. He didn't mind us camping on his land and seemed interested in the idea of floating down the river. He said he had never seen or heard of anyone floating down before. We didn't ask what he was going to plant,

but it possibly was agaves to make tequila, a product of the region.

After a Class III dirt-walled canyon, we arrived at the confluence with Río Atenguillo. This river more than doubled the flow, and my temperament improved at least as much! "Wheeeewww" Barb exclaimed as we floated over a Class IV about a kilometer past the confluence. "That was fun. I wonder how many rapids like that we'll have?" she asked. I knew there would be a lot in the 10 m/km (50 fpm) section. We continued through many more Class IIs and IIIs as storm clouds ominously darkened the sky, then settled in to camp across from Río Tetiteco.



Worldwide Creek Boating

“Are you happy now?” Barb asked me as we ate our pasta meal in the tent, rain pouring down hard. It lasted like that for over an hour and then off-and-on all night long. I was fearful that the river might come up to our tent, located only 2 m above the water level. The next morning I saw in the pot outside that about 4 cm (1.5”) had fallen. The river came up nearly a meter, but was still far from our camp. Now I was dancing around, so excited to get on the river, with about 150 cms in it (5,000 cfs)! “Finally, this is what the river really should be like!” I said as we zipped away in the swift muddy water.

Downstream the canyon walls steepened, the gradient picked up, and we passed through many Class III-IVs. Barb was still suffering from her gastrointestinal ailment, which weakened her. Partly because of this, in a few of the rapids that were Class IV+ or more, Barb would get out on the side to take photos or shoot video of me running the raft down. This suited me for good documentation, and it suited her, since she didn’t want to float through anything that might flip the raft or knock her off. Besides, she had just taken a photography class and wanted to utilize the techniques here.

We approached a left bend in the river with a huge cataract in the main channel on the right. Scouting this one, Barb said to me, “That looks a lot worse than Lava Falls on the Grand,” referring to a trip we did a couple years earlier when the army raft we were on had folded back over itself and flipped. “You’re not going to float through that, are you?” she asked. “What if you flip?” I acquiesced and we removed the heavy coolers to line/portage on the slightly watered river-left channel. I told her “there shouldn’t be many more like that.” We refer to that Class V as “Aguas Rugientes,” or “Rough Water.”

After more IVs, we approached a real lava canyon. “Where are all these rapids coming from?” I asked myself. Barb rode through a few of the ones above. Now in the beautiful Lava Cliff section I floated through three tough Class IV rapids. “They’ve got to stop soon,” I said. I never thought I’d be wishing for less whitewater.

Then we came to one that looked horrendous - a 4-meter drop with the water folding over on the right side, and plunging into a sticky hole on the left. A dicey run down the center was the only possible line, but looked almost certain to

flip a raft. If that didn’t get you, one of the 3-meter high exploding waves downstream would. Then there was the end of it where all the water charged into a low lava wall, with half the river swirling to the right and into the Olympic pool-sized eddy. I just kept sitting there looking at the monster. I didn’t let on to Barb how terrified I was of floating over that and what dire straights we were in. We searched around for an hour to see if there might be some way to portage around, or even just to camp. The rapid was indeed ineluctable – it would have to be run. Upstream we found a place to put the tent, nestled back in the forest, and pulled the raft up to it. We settled in for the night, hoping that the water level might drop the next morning. Thankfully, it didn’t rain much on us that night.

The water had indeed dropped when I went out to look at the rapid at 7 a.m.. It was more manageable. I sat there for 15 minutes still awed by the sight. As the minutes passed, the water started getting siltier and the rapid changed. It was coming up again! Geez, we better hurry and get over that drop fast. But it takes time to get a raft ready. It was over an hour later when we had things packed. The level had risen above what it was the previous day. Barb waited nervously on top of the lava near the end of the rapid, planning to take a photo of me coming down. I was delayed a good 20 minutes double checking the rigging and fixing my helmet strap that had popped off. Finally I was ready and floated into this “Huevos Grandes” beast. As I went over the center, a lateral struck my oar and whacked it away from me. I quickly regained it and tried to straighten out for the huge waves below. Up and over I went, getting doused with water and coming close to flipping but staying upright. I had lost the oar again and was headed straight for the wall at the



This is the view upstream into Huevos Grandes and the Eddy of No Return. Half the river swirls to the right in to a massive eddy that is clogged with debris at the head. At this flow, it was impossible for us to get out of the eddy and continue downstream.

end. I drifted toward it, and then to the right. I had wanted to get to the left since the eddy looked too tough to get out of. Oh well, at least I was safe, upright and in the eddy. I didn't see Barb where she was stationed initially. She was partway back up the rapid.

"Did you get the photo?" I asked as I approached her.

"No," was her reply, slightly agitated because she knew I would be upset. "What happened to you? I was waiting and waiting and thought something went wrong."

"What?? I just rafted the biggest rapid ever in my life and you missed the photo?? What the heck happened?"

"I thought you were in trouble and started going back up to see." It turned out that while I was fixing my helmet strap she couldn't see me from her perch atop the lava, so she had climbed down to check on me, fearing I had slipped on my climb down to the river and had either hit my head or hurt a limb. And she didn't get back to where she could snap the photo in time. I eventually forgave her.

She hopped on the raft, and although we tried to get out into the current many times, we couldn't. Whether she was helping paddle or off the raft to lighten the load, it was impossible. The swift water would just spin the raft around and it would float back down into the eddy. Part of the problem was all the wood at the head of the eddy, preventing a peel out up there. This "Eddy of No Return" wouldn't let us continue downstream.

So we waited. The water level started dropping by lunchtime but I still couldn't punch into the current. We set up camp again in the same spot upstream, relaxed, and perused around a little. I tried to scout out the next rapids downstream. I saw a couple tough rapids that looked manageable.

The next morning the water had dropped considerably and it was easy to punch out into the current. After the two rapids I had previously seen, we came upon "La Constricción," another Class V named for the river narrowing to 10 m wide at the exit. I wanted to portage but couldn't. Barb had to stay on the raft through this one, since there was no way for her to get down below where I could pick her up. It was a good thing she rode along because she employed a dexterous high side to keep the raft from flipping as we hit one of the big waves!

The only real casualty on the trip was at the following rapid ("Ponchado") where we hit the lava wall hard and the tube bent back up so far that the frame punctured a hole in it. We patched it at lunch, which held remarkably well. Soon the canyon opened up and rapids eased to Class II. At that point Barb wanted to take the oars.

She did well for a while. But then we came to a spot where I said, "You've got to miss that stick over there. It'll come up on you fast so start moving left now."

She didn't hear me say to move left - I guess it's true that I often don't have the loudest, clearest voice. She tried to get around it to the right, underestimating the force of the current. We hit it and I angrily took the oars to move us away. Luckily there was no damage.

"I need to practice reading the river and steering the raft where it's easy, not where there's something dangerous to avoid!" she snipped, defensively. "And those oar-rights that other rafts have would help. And it would really help if you would speak more clearly!"

We arrived at the Las Gaviotas river crossing/diversion dam and instead of portaging it and finishing the 36 km to the coast, we decided to take out there, since we were a day late and Rafa was due to arrive about that time. I went off to make the call to change the rendezvous and Barb


stayed behind to watch in amusement as the locals washed their truck by driving over the dam.

Not all people interested in whitewater are daring adventurers that want to do Class V rapids. Many are like Barbara - willing to go out for a good adventure, but nothing too scary. Río Ameca was a bit much for her and could have put a rift between us. However, I think in the end that the experience brought us closer together. Barb got to see first-hand what it was like to descend one of those unknown rivers south of the border, and helped get us through on the raft. A year later, she even kayaked another unknown river with me - Río Balleza.

Despite our occasional bickering, I love her dearly. She did nix my plan to spend our honeymoon doing a 4-week descent of Río Marañon in Peru (she didn't want us to end up like Glen and Bessie Hyde!), but we still enjoyed a month of sea kayaking in Southern Baja. She continues to regularly come out on raft trips to rivers like the Salmon, Grande Ronde, and Deschutes, and enjoys kayaking Class III water. A few minor issues still plague us on the river, though. For instance, in spite of her background in speech-language pathology and almost 8 years together, she hasn't been able to cure me of my oftentimes-incoherent mumbling speech (for which I've earned the nickname "Mumbly").

We enjoy our life together. As we entertain people in our Seattle home or on a river, we fondly reminisce about the Eddy of No Return.

"Hey Roquito, when are you going to write up the Ameca trip?" Barbara asks me.

"Well, hunny ... here it is!" 

River Voices

Old School Values Meet New School Kayaking: The Keeners on the Ottawa River

By Joe Kowalski

Growing up in the 1950s and '60s puts one decidedly in the old school today. It was a time of "Father Knows Best," Vince Lombardi values and JFK optimism. What I was taught at home was reinforced by my teachers, coaches, scout leaders and, later, the US Army. I was taught to "Be Prepared," and "Do a Good Turn Daily" from scouts as well as to be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent.

From my football coach I learned, "It is not the size of the dog in the fight but the size of the fight in the dog" and that "a tie game is like kissing your sister." At my Catholic school we wore a jacket and tie every day. Since every guy was dressed in black pants, white shirt, school tie and blazer, I learned quickly that the only way to attract attention was through academics and sports. Piercing, tattooing and outlandish dress never crossed my mind.

Uncle Sam was also a great teacher: "If it doesn't grow, pick it up, if it doesn't move, paint it and if it does move, salute it." Boot Camp was the ultimate finishing school. Our instructors were 82nd Airborne, just back from Vietnam. They were big and tough and had little regard for college kids. After boot camp, everything in life was easy and I still regard it as one of life's great experiences.

Surprisingly, I don't rate my college education as highly as the other experiences. Maybe I cut too many classes to run rivers but it might also be that it wasn't old school enough for my liking.

With no business education, business experience or investment capital, I started Wilderness Tours in 1975. With nothing but old school values, it grew into

Canada's largest whitewater rafting and kayaking company, profitable in every year including the very difficult first few years.

As my own children grew, it was obvious that my teaching was not reinforced by anyone—certainly not by their schools, where piercing, tattooing, and outlandish dress and behavior were the norm! Our high schools permit iPods in class as long as students leave one ear free for the lecture. Organized kids' hockey sees not only fights on the ice, but also in the stands, between parents.

I was frustrated as a parent and decided to do something about it. As my children, Joel and Katie, approached their teens, I decided to resurrect a work-trade program from the past called the Keeners. The original Keener Program was a youth employment program where young staff was paid in kayak gear instead of money. That program was founded by Adirondack paddling legend Jerry Marquis. Jerry was a teacher at Tupper Lake High School and he was our river manager in the summer and ran our Hudson River program.

He came to the Ottawa every summer with his best and brightest students. These kids were so gung ho we called them Keeners. The program produced such greats as Rob and Scott Gaffney, Ken Whiting, James Roddick and scores of top boaters. It was a wonderful idea and I thought it was just the program in which to enroll my own children.

The new Keener Program started five years ago and enabled me to practice my own social engineering. One primary goal was to combine new school kayaking with old school values. As my real job was running rafters down the Ottawa, I could afford to "play" with the Keener Program and run it the way I wanted, without yielding to market pressures.

What happened did not surprise me. Teens loved the program because of the kayaking and parents loved it because of the youth development aspects. The kayaking formula is simple. We have a great coach in EJ protégé Stephen Wright and a

featured weekly guest instructor from the ranks of Clay Wright, Moe Kelleher, David Nieuwenhuis, Tiffany Manchester, Eric Jackson, Benoit Gauthier, Ken Whiting, Corey Volt, Brad Sutton, etc. Rounding out the instructional team are Keener graduates like Rafa Ortiz, Nick Troutman and Joel Kowalski.

Keeners live in isolation at the base of McCoy Chute, just a few minute's paddle from Baby Face, Beaver, Right Side and Garberator. They train Monday through Friday and have some evenings and part of the weekend off for more kayaking. It's when they paddle on their own that their learning is most impressive. Several years ago, a young lady from Australia, Anita, joined the Keener Program. Not understanding why someone would travel around the world for it, I asked Anita about her decision. She replied she wanted to be surrounded by people her own age who were passionate about paddling and couldn't find it anywhere but the Keener Program.

The Worlds in Sydney revealed a lot about the Keener Program and provided it with new direction. We had seven Keeners compete, pretty good for a small kayak school with a 20 student/week limit. One of the competitors, Mexican Rafa Ortiz, placed 29th in junior men. The ironic part of Rafa's finish was that he is a tremendous paddler. It was obvious watching him that Keeners taught Rafa to kayak but not to compete; two very different disciplines. Immediately, we changed the program, making every Friday "competition day," where Keeners organize, score, scribe and take part in their own competition. The results are impressive: 12 Keeners will be competing in the 2007 Worlds.

Besides competitive skills, Keeners learn creeking skills. Because the Ottawa is a fairly forgiving river, there is the danger of Keeners becoming overconfident and getting hurt on more serious rivers. Each year we take a trip to the Seven Sisters section of Quebec's Rouge River to practice running waterfalls. Other road trips include the Gatineau, Lachine, Black and Deerfield rivers.




As impressive as the results are, the Keener Program is about much more than kayaking. The other goals are youth development and job training. Keeners who stay with the program for several years will be readily employable at 18 as river guides, kayak instructors and video boaters. Keeners learn First Aid, CPR, Swiftwater Rescue, digital photography, movie making and communication skills. Keeners give weekly speeches and post regularly to the keener weblog, www.okskeener.blogspot.com.

As a former Eagle Scout and US Army Captain, I borrow heavily on those two organizations for leadership material. The scout law becomes the keener law and military discipline is integrated into the program.

Not only has the program worked from the competition side, it has also excelled in job training. New Keener instructors are Nick Troutman, Rafa Ortiz, Deuce Fahrur and Joel Kowalski, all young, but very accomplished paddlers with great

teaching and demonstration skills.

The true test of any youth program is, "Would you send your own children?" I did and it is the best thing I could have done for them. 

You can contact the author about this program at: joe@wildernesstours.com or find out more at: www.wildernesstours.com.



*Top: Keener Camp group shot.
Bottom: A Keener shredding at
Gladiator last spring.*

River Voices

Whitewater and *The White Spider*: Making the Right Decision

By Adam Herzog

The key to surviving extreme conditions is good decision making. In *The White Spider*, an epic recollection of the first ascent of the north face of the Eiger, a peak in the Swiss Alps, Heinrich Harrer discusses the mentality that led to the first successful climb. Two groups of climbers had previously attempted the face but all members of these parties had perished in the attempt. The men committed to their routes, leaving no option for escape. When faced with injuries and bad weather, they had no way off the mountain and disappeared in the clouds. Contemporary mountaineers deemed the face un-

climbable. In 1937, two well known climbers made an unsuccessful attempt at the Eiger. They did not summit, but they lived. Harrer and his friends realized that they too could survive the mountain if they made good decisions. Later that summer, two years after the mountain claimed its first victims, they completed the route.

Mountaineering and Class V kayaking are dangerous sports. More climbers die on the way down than the way up. This is ascribed to “summit fever,” a lapse in judgment resulting from the drive to get to the top. Even smart, experienced climbers can be guilty of looking past impending weather to see their goal. On the way down the mountain, they often regret it.

The same phenomenon occurs in paddling. In some ways, climbing is more

committing than kayaking, but I have found myself in uncomfortable situations on the river many times. My friends and I made tough calls twice last year—to put on or not to put on. We made different decisions in each case—but they were the right decisions. These incidents illustrate the process involved in making decisions about and running hardcore rivers.

Russell Fork at flood stage

When I drove to Elkhorn City, KY the last weekend of October 2006, I expected a normal “high water” release of 1,100 cfs. Little did I know we would have four

The author on the Russell Fork at normal flows, a few weeks before the BIG day.

Photo by Cooper Lambla



times as much water. Rain pounded down on my truck camper all night. I tossed and turned through the night with visions of nightmarish holes flashing in my head. When I walked to the river in the morning, I could feel fear coursing through my veins. It was a torrent of coffee colored brown hell. My wife told me the level via cell phone as I ate breakfast. It was 4,200 cfs and rising. The good news was the river was starting to peak.

My friend DJ was at the campground soon after I finished breakfast. We were excited, scared and unsure of what to do. I came up with four reasons not to put on: (1) No one had ever run the river at more than 2,500 cfs. (2) We did not know what the dam operators had in mind; they could release even more water without warning. (3) There is a potentially unrunnable hole at this level (the first drop at Triple Drop). (4) The bad karma of the Russell Fork (I watched a boater die there a couple of years ago).

The fear of the unknown is easy to deal with. Part of the reason we run big Class V is that it is unrehearsed. You never know what is going to happen. A bigger concern for me was the dam upstream. There was a chance another 10,000 cfs could descend upon us while we were out there, and we did not want to see the river at fifteen grand.

The hole at Triple Drop is a killer at any level. I was certain it would be a portage. I knew that at 2,000 cfs there are eddies above it. We decided if things got out of hand upstream we could walk downstream from a pool a half mile above Triple Drop and check things out.

The local boaters thought we would never make it if we put on the river that day, and a few of them did not hesitate to tell us so. Sometimes it is best to look past voodoo and superstition and make a rational decision. DJ and I had some good reasons to put on. (1) We had a solid crew

with many years of Class V experience. (2) We had both run rivers at higher-than-recommended levels. (3) I had run the Russell Fork at a wide variety of flows including a few 2,000+ cfs runs. (4) Most importantly, we had a way out. Railroad tracks run parallel to the river for most of the gorge. There is a long tunnel, but it starts close to the beginning of the biggest rapids. I had hiked around in the gorge and knew how to get out of it. If the water rose to an unmanageable level, we could always bail out.

While floating through six-foot wave trains leading up to the first rapid, I felt scared but calm. In the end, we were not in over our heads. The run was intense, and anything could have happened, but it was one of the best days of my life. The only portage was the aforementioned hole at Triple Drop. I do not recommend the Russell Fork at high water to anyone, but it was an incredible run.


Blizzard at the Ravens Fork

I thought about that day a few months later at the Ravens Fork. I stood in a snowstorm at the takeout and stared into a whiteout sitting over the mouth of the gorge. My friends looked like I felt—indecisive and fearful. At the same time, we wanted the run badly. This case was very different than the Russell Fork situation. We knew exactly what we were getting into. Scouting and portaging would be difficult or impossible. The only rescue option was self rescue. Hypothermia was a real concern. The consequence of a mistake on the Ravens Fork in the snow is death. Slipping on the ice could be fatal. Hiking out was not an option.

Making the smart call that day was difficult because we had all paddled in inclement weather before. Not only had everything worked out, it had always been a blast. But, as we processed the information we were absorbing (snow, 20 degree weather,

etc), we were conflicted. Occasionally, experience can be detrimental to good judgment. My experiences paddling in adverse weather were good ones. If I had a bad day to remember and reflect on, the decision would have been easier to make (i.e. “that time I got stranded in the snow was terrifying, and I won’t do it again”). Every time I make a mistake on the river, I learn from it and make every attempt not to repeat it. For example, I took a bad swim on the Watauga at high water this winter because I got too far ahead of my group. Now, on big water, I stick close to my paddling partners.

In the end we considered the worst possible scenario and decided the risk was not worth it. As painful as it was to walk away from a good water level and a potentially great day, I was glad we did not hike up and drop into the gnar in the middle of a blizzard. Four-wheeling around Cherokee was a pretty fun consolation.

The rewards of running hard whitewater are great, but the consequences can be catastrophic. Summit fever kills. The best way to stay alive in the wilderness is to listen to your gut and pay attention to your environment. 



Essay Contest

\$5,000 Kayak High School Essay Scholarship Contest!

American Whitewater and New River Academy announce a \$5,000 Academic Scholarship to the author of the best original composition describing a remarkable river experience or relation based on the school slogan, "And that has made all the difference."

Have you considered attending a high school for kayakers? Are you a teen kayak student excited to earn high school credit in China and Chile and paddle amazing rivers after school? Have you had a remarkable experience related to the river that you want to write about? If so, here's an opportunity to receive a \$5,000 Academic Scholarship for the 2007-2008 academic year and find yourself studying on the banks of, and then paddling, the best rivers in the United States, Canada, and China and Chile, including the Ottawa, New River Dries, Salween, Yangtze, Mekong, Seven Teacups, and more...

The Rules

- Applicant must be twelve to seventeen years of age.
- All entries must be submitted via email, as an attachment in Word document or Acrobat PDF format, to hugeh2o@yahoo.com.
- All entries must include a cover letter that lists: your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, current grade level, and your high school name and address.
- Entries should relate to river or paddling experiences and the school slogan, "And that has made all the difference."
- Entries may be fiction, non-fiction, poetry or news writing.
- Only one composition per applicant per category will be accepted.
- Entries must be double-spaced and no more than 1,500 words in length.
- Entries must be solely the work of the applicant; plagiarized entries will not be accepted.
- Previously published works will not be accepted.

- All entries become the property of American Whitewater and Huge Experiences.
- A panel made up of American Whitewater staff and Huge Experiences faculty will judge entries.
- Decisions of the panel are final.

Deadline

Entries must be received by July 12, 2007.

Award

- \$5,000 Academic Scholarship to the author of the best original composition to be applied to two semesters or rated for shorter programs.
- The Winner and all other applicants will be notified via e-mail and/or by mail no later than July 24, 2007.

For more information contact David Hughes at www.huge-experiences.com or (304) 640-1001.

Winner 2007 New River Academy/AW \$5,000 Essay Scholarship

By Michelle Yates

Eyes stinging and lungs screaming for oxygen, I thrust my paddle to the surface in a worthless attempt to right the kayak. I pushed and gasped for air as a green gluttonous claw of turbulence dragged me once more below the surface. Pulsating with anger and frustration, I initiated three more futile attempts to surface. Finally, I grasped the flailing loop of the spray skirt, dislodging my frantic body from the clutches of the disobeying kayak. My head shot to the surface like a Poseidon missile. Struggling to keep contact with the flooded bathtub of a kayak, I crashed through the incessant rapids. A gigantic hole loomed below me as I was swallowed into a gaping maw of the river. Watching me kick frantically as I attempted to stay afloat, the river took pity, allowing me to drift haphazardly into a large green pool.

The sun kissed my face in understanding as the turbulence dwindled. Overwhelmed by exhausted relief, I kicked to shore. Salty tears began to cascade down my frozen cheeks. I collapsed down on the moss-glazed rocks alongside my father as he clutched my rescued boat. Mouth dry and muscles fatigued, I slumped beside him as if I were a football player freshly cut from the team. My father may have been saying something, but my ears were closed to human conversation. The overpowering voice of humiliation and despair drummed a syncopated beat throughout my brain.

“Dad,” I whispered at last. “I’m finished. This is yet another thing that I am too fat to do. I can’t even roll.” He may have argued some contradiction to this statement, but my mind was made up. I would never paddle again.

In the fall of 2005, I ran in the top five for my high school’s varsity cross-country team. I was strong, I was determined, and I was fast. Yet, at the time, something menacing cowered over me, something utterly unexplainable. Though I was running every day and was averaging at least thirty miles a week, I started gaining weight. I went from a sinewy petite athlete to the fluffy Pillsbury Dough girl in less than a year. For months, I denied the weight gain, but eventually I could no longer live in my fictitious world of denial. My running slowed to pathetic speeds. I lost my starting positions on the soccer field as I

struggled in vain to fit into tee shirts that had been loose and baggy a year before. My world began crumbling down around me and I was suffocating in the rubble.

Finally, I broke down in the doctor’s office as the red fiery digits glared up at me from the scale: 164 pounds. I officially weighed more than my father. After a series of blood tests and an extensive look into my medical history, I was diagnosed with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome. This chronic condition can cause a variety of symptoms including obesity, acne, and hirsutism, all of which I am currently experiencing. Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome insidiously consumed my life just as ivy slowly strangles an unattended garden.

As I slumped in the golden light of noon, the river lapped by, calm and steady. Eyes staring down at my pudgy knees, I whispered in a small voice, “I’m through, Dad. I can’t even paddle a Class II anymore.” My brain throbbed with overwhelming feelings of failure. What would happen at my ten-day California kayaking camp planned for the following week? I had attended this camp the previous four years and usually looked forward to the experience. Yet, sitting on the riverbank, drowning in defeat, California was the last place on earth I wanted to be. My friends watched in pity as I slipped in soccer, slowed in cross-country, and as I plummeted in school. The last thing I needed was the final humiliation of failing on the river. I hauled my kayak off the river that day believing it would be my last run. As the week progressed and the time to leave for California approached, my parents, along with the instructors, convinced me to fly down and have another shot at the river.


My body swayed forward as the wheels of the plane gently made contact with the Arcada runway. A multitude of butterflies took flight within my chest. I dreaded the moment that I would meet Kirby after an absence of an entire year. Though he was only an instructor, I had known him for nearly five years as one of my finest river friends. I was ashamed of my body and terrified to disappoint him. My feet felt heavy and sluggish in their white Brooks tennis shoes. As I tentatively toddled into the airport, it was not long before Kirby swept me up in a huge bear hug. He wore the same goofy smile and glow of excitement as he had in all the previous years. My eyes gave forth a tidal wave of emotion. The first peak was summited. Now only the river lay ahead.

The first day on the water, I donned each

article of river garb slowly and meticulously. While all the other students were chattering with excitement, I lagged behind, plagued with apprehension and worry. I feared the looming pity, the resentment that would follow for slowing the progress of the group. As I slid into the vibrant red I-4 kayak, I could immediately feel the sense of stability return that I had lost the week before when paddling the Siren, now a boat far too small for me.

We exited the eddy and paddled downstream toward the first rapid. The river tugged and frolicked with the I-4, tugging and clawing, waiting to catch me off-guard and pull me down under. I made it through the first rapid unscathed, yet still felt uneasy. Soon I came to the realization that despite my weight gain, I also had grown considerably stronger. As we moved downstream, motoring through larger, more technical rapids, the sudden familiar talon of green seized the bow of my boat and snapped me under. My mind shot back to that desperate day on the riverbank, visualizing my body flopped and exhausted next to my father after the pathetic swim. I thrust the nightmare from my brain. I would not surrender. Instantly, I was righting myself. Without losing momentum, I drove into a tiny eddy midway down the rapid and watched the others struggle past.

I needed a moment to sort out the upwelling emotions. After so many crushing failures in the last year, was the river attempting to teach me something different? The river pulled me under to cleanse me of my emotional baggage. It slapped me straight in the face and gave me a shake. It brought me to my senses and spit me back upright. With the world now changed, I made an arcing peel-out from my eddy, whooping and hollering like a drunken cowboy after the Calgary Stampede, anxious to join my new river buddies.

That night, long after all the campfires burned down to smoldering coals, I lay cocooned inside my sleeping bag recounting my epiphany on the river. As my lids slid shut over drowsy eyes I quietly whispered to the dark, “A ship without anchor drifts with the ever-changing breezes, but a ship that does not raise its sails to fly is not a ship at all.” My sails are hoisted. 

Michelle is a published writer, a photographer, and a student leader at New River Academy. To see more of Michelle’s articles and photos surf to www.huge-experiences.com.

AW Corporate Partners

Class V Sponsor



In 2006 Keen's contributions will aid American Whitewater's projects in the Southeast, and the Pacific Northwest. In the southeast Keen's support will help American Whitewater's work restoring the Catawba watershed. Additional funding from Keen will support AW's projects on the Columbia River Basin and the Cascade range in the pacific northwest.

Class III Sponsor



Kokatat remains one of AW's strongest allies by continuing support of AW's membership and river stewardship programs. By providing American Whitewater with valuable membership and donation incentives, Kokatat will create the support we need to continue our stewardship of North American rivers.

Class IV Sponsors



At Dagger we love what we do because it's all about the water, and American Whitewater is the organization that helps put water in our rivers. That is why Dagger has long supported American Whitewater and is proud to continue our support of their river stewardship program today.



Teva and American Whitewater have worked together for nearly a decade to protect access and conserve whitewater resources for paddlers and rafters nationwide. Teva and AW have partnered on numerous tours and events over the years, including AW's 50th Anniversary Gala in 2004.

Class II Sponsor



Boof Sponsors



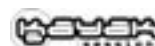
WAVE SPORT

Wave Sport is American Whitewater's longest standing and largest philanthropic supporter. Both Wave Sport and AW are committed to one thing, whitewater.



As part of Jackson Kayak's focus on environmental responsibility, the Jackson's have long supported AW through promotional efforts. In 2006, as part of their commitment to 1% For the Planet, Jackson Kayaks will be supporting AW's river stewardship work.

Wave Sponsors





Corporate Spotlight: Clif Bar

Since its inception, Clif Bar Inc. has supported hundreds of non-profit organizations and events nationwide, focusing on environmental, health and social issues.

At Clif Bar Inc., we are on a long journey toward sustainability. Our mission has always been to sustain the individual—from the outdoor enthusiast hiking or paddling to the busy mother—by offering healthy nutrition products and through conscientious business decisions that sustain our communities and the planet.

Efforts to reduce our ecological footprint include using organic ingredients, supporting a wind farm to offset the company's CO₂ emissions, purchasing certified organic cotton for our promotional T-shirts and incorporating "green" office practices. The company continually seeks new ways of doing business in an eco-friendly manner. Clif Bar Inc. also encourages employee involvement in community organizations and events. In 2006, employees contributed over 2500 hours of their time to volunteer for more than 50 different non-profit organizations in their local community and abroad.

Most recently Clif Bar launched its "Start Global Cooling" campaign which allows individuals to support wind energy by purchasing stickers through the Clif Bar website. All funds contributed to the "Start Global Cooling" campaign help the Rosebud Sioux Tribe build the Rosebud St. Francis Wind Farm in South Dakota.

Clif Bar is proud to support American Whitewater and other groups that promote outdoor recreation. This year Clif Bar is bringing back the "Clif Bar Flowing Rivers Grants" to help local clubs make a difference on the rivers in their watersheds. In addition, Clif Bar will be supporting the AW Member Appreciation Tour. Stop by the AW booth to grab a Clif Bar!



The Last Word

IT'S sNOW GOOD

By Ambrose Tuscano

When I first started paddling in California, one of the things that made it seem so much more appealing than the East Coast, where I grew up, was the relative predictability of river levels. In California, and much of the West, flows are determined less by what's falling out of the sky just before your trip and more by how much snow has fallen and melted in your particular watershed. Tons of snow in the Sierra Nevadas means that central and southern California rivers will have long seasons with plenty of water. And, as I said earlier, knowing that all that snow is sitting up on the mountains waiting to fill the rivers on sunny days gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling. In an average snowpack year you can count on paddling superb rivers well into July on natural flows. In fact, in good years, some of the bigger drainages in the southern Sierra often don't come down to boatable flows until mid to late August.

Well, all that peace of mind has been a great benefit of living in California these past few years. Of course, even with the ability to predict which weekend a particular river will be at optimal flows, there's still never enough time to get on all the great rivers you want to. If you're lucky (read: unemployed) you can probably do the 10 or 12 stand-bys, those rivers that you consider absolute classics, plus two or three new runs that you've always wanted to try in a given season. Of course, thanks in part to American Whitewater's Stewardship work, there's bound to be a run that's new to everyone. Since it's always such a blast to paddle something that's been de-watered for decades, you'll need to find time to fit that into your hectic itinerary. Add it all up and you've got a fantastic spring/summer schedule built before any of your precious snowpack even begins to melt.

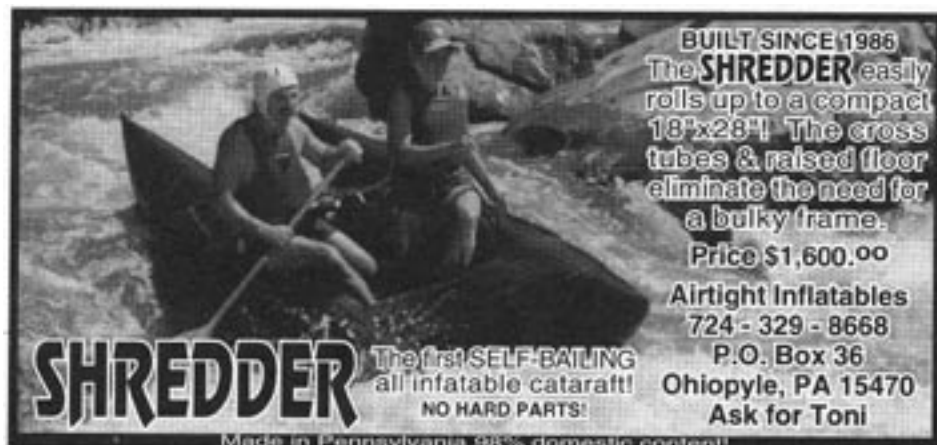
Then this winter came along. Every one of the five previous winters—since I first moved to California—the Sierra Nevadas have managed to meet or exceed their

average snowpack. So, of course I love it here. What I haven't had to take into consideration before is low snow years. Until now, that is. In case you haven't had your finger on the pulse of the California paddling community, morale is decidedly low this year. As I'm writing, I believe that we're at or near 40% of average snowpack in the Sierra, which is less than 1/3 the snow we had last year. I guess that's the downside of being spoiled: when hard times do come, not only do they suck, but they also don't win you a lot of sympathy.

I'm not really sure what to expect from the boating season this year. Maybe by the time this story appears in print all our snow will have long since disappeared downstream to sit behind the dozens of impoundments that obstruct most of California's great rivers. Maybe it won't be as bad as I think and there'll still be time for some of my favorite rivers as well as a new run or two. While there will certainly still be opportunities to catch all of the classic California runs, many of them will only be running on one weekend, and probably several of those "only" weekends will coincide. It'll certainly make for tough decisions and lots of whining from California boaters. Personally, I don't expect lots of pity.

However it plays out, I'll be sure to remember this lesson. While folks in other parts of the country don't have the same sense of security that we do in a good snow year, they're also never saddled with the despair of knowing that their entire season will be sub-par. If I told a North Carolina boater that her paddling season was going to be marred by drought (supposing I had some credible weather predicting superpower) she would have every right to take a swipe at me with her paddle or pull out my drainplug when I wasn't looking. When there's good news, everyone wants to be the first to know; when the future's not so rosy, who's really eager to find out? Not me.

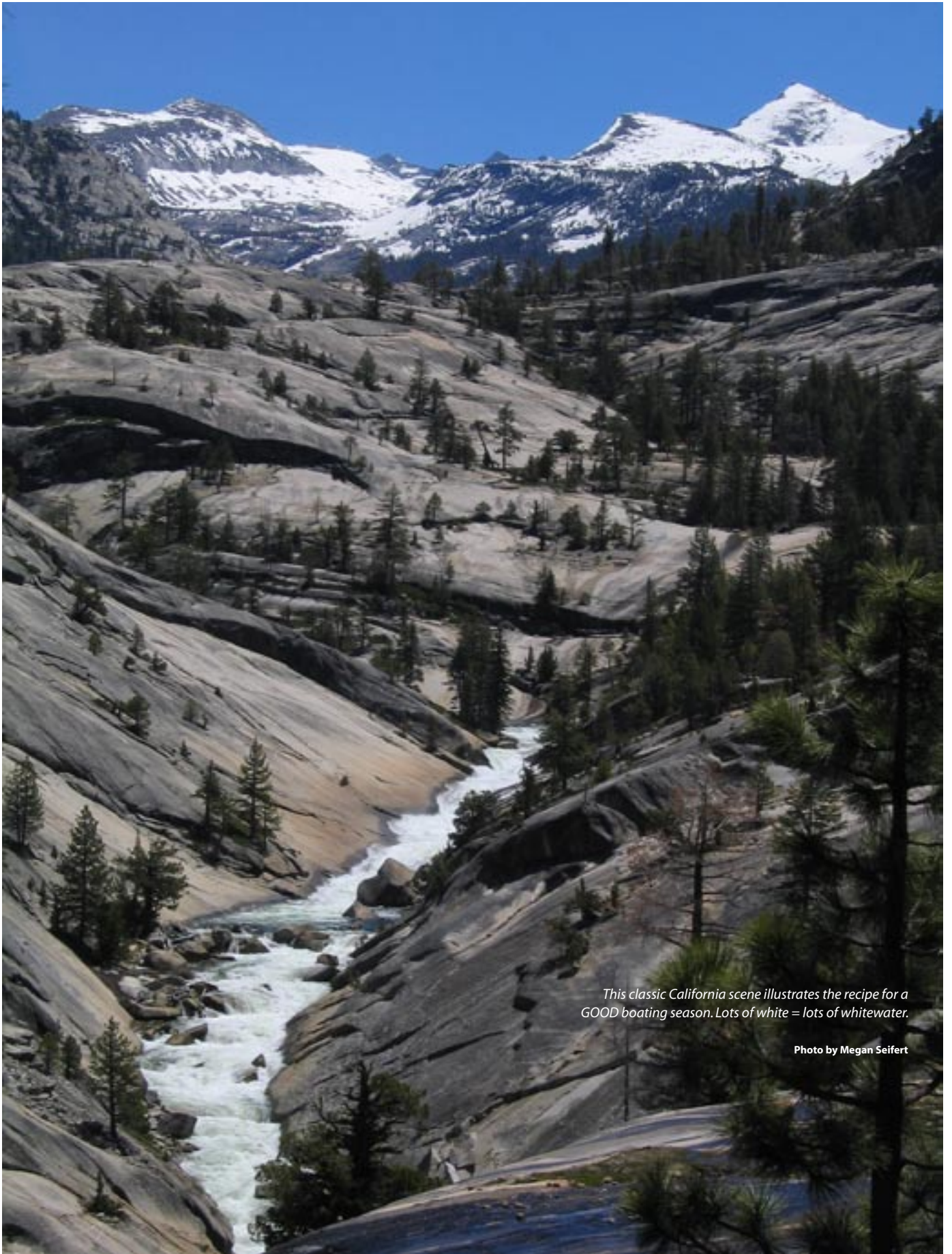
So I'll sit here and snivel about how little whitewater I'll be able to fit into what, even in a good snow year, is a tight paddling schedule. Meanwhile, those of you in climates where it actually rains in the summer, enjoy that sense of hope that comes around each spring. Keep your eye on the weather forecast, your boat on the car and keep those prayers to the appropriate rain-producing deities flowing. I'll just keep on envying you until next winter, when hopefully the Sierras will be buried under 20 feet of snow and I'll be singing the praises of our predictable river flows once again.



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This classic California scene illustrates the recipe for a GOOD boating season. Lots of white = lots of whitewater.

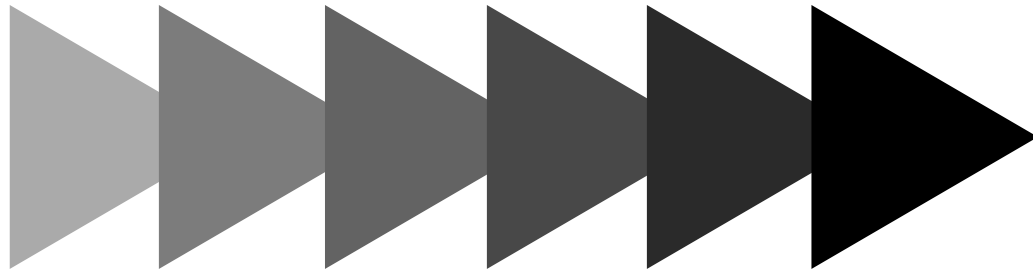
Photo by Megan Seifert

Join



AMERICAN WHITEWATER Today!

American Whitewater has been extraordinarily fortunate in our ability to leverage a strong grassroots base—members and other volunteers—to assist our limited staff with many whitewater river conservation and restoration efforts.



Over the years, American Whitewater volunteers have participated in numerous hydropower meetings as well as instream and recreational flow studies; filed comments and assisted with an uncountable number of filings; appeared as expert witnesses; lobbied; worked to fight new dams, remove existing dams, deny licenses, and improve public access to rivers and streams. In nearly every river stewardship issue AW has been involved with, the outcome has been favorable to paddlers. Not only has AW secured favorable decisions for the paddling community, but we are the only national organization representing paddlers as these decisions are being made.

A growing membership base is crucial to our ability to continue with our work. Some studies show that there are currently over 100,000 whitewater paddlers in the U.S. American Whitewater currently has 6,300 active members. When considering the amount of whitewater river miles that AW has had a direct impact on, this membership number is unimpressive. We need all paddlers to join American Whitewater. If you are a member, please

be sure that everyone you paddle with understands the work AW does, and how you, as an AW member, value that work.

Membership support is what will determine our ability to continue our river stewardship work in the years to come. Individual Annual Memberships are only \$35. If you are a member of your local paddling club and your club is an Affiliate Club member of AW, join as a Club Affiliate Individual for \$25. This is a tank of gas or an inexpensive night out. This is certainly not too much to pay to have a national organization representing your paddling interests all across the country.

Join on-line today at <http://www.americanwhitewater.org/membership>, call 1-866-BOAT4AW (866-262-8429), or fill out the form on the back of this page and mail it to:

Membership
P.O. Box 1540
Cullowhee, NC 28723



P.O. Box 1540, Cullowhee, NC 28723 • 866-BOAT-4AW

Membership Application

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

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____

E-mail _____

Club Affiliation _____

Individual Membership Levels

- ___ \$25 Junior (under the age of 18)
- ___ \$25 Individual for Affiliate Club Members (SAVE \$10 if you are also a member of an AW Affiliate Club)
- ___ \$35 Individual One Year
- ___ \$50 Family (immediate family members excluding children over the age of 18)
- ___ \$65 (2) Year Membership
- ___ \$100 Ender Club* (Receive AW's annual Ender Club T-shirt FREE)
- ___ \$250 Platinum Paddler* (Receive AW's exclusive IR Polartec shirt FREE)
- ___ \$500 Explorer Membership* (Receive a drybag from Watershed FREE)
- ___ \$750 Lifetime Membership (Receive AW's Lifetime Membership NRS Paddlers Duffel FREE)
- ___ \$1,000 Legacy Membership* (Receive AW's exclusive Kokatat Gore-tex Drytop FREE)
- ___ \$2,500 Steward Membership* (Receive AW's exclusive Kokatat Gore-tex Drytop and Pants FREE)

* A portion of your contribution is tax deductible. If you would like information about the tax deductibility of your contribution please speak with an AW Staff Member.

Organizational Membership Types

- ___ \$75.00 Affiliate Club (Join our growing network of paddling organizations across North America)

Additional Donation

- ___ \$5.00 ___ \$10.00 ___ \$25.00 \$ _____ Other
- ___ \$24.99 Kayak Session subscription (Add Kayak Session to your membership at a 40% discount)

Amount

Membership subtotal \$ _____ Do NOT Mail me the AW Journal. I will read it on-line.

Donation subtotal \$ _____ Do NOT share my name with like-minded groups.

Total \$ _____

Ender Club and Platinum Paddler indicate shirt size (S, M, L, XL, XXL). We will mail gift certificate for Kokatat gear.

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Card Type: MC Visa Discover AMEX

Card Number _____ Exp. Date ____/____/____

Name as it appears on card _____

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Affiliate Clubs

AW's Original Purpose

by Carla Miner

The Affiliate Club Program lies at the very heart of AW's existence. AW's original purpose since 1957 has been to distribute information among its Affiliate Clubs. AW's relationships with local clubs have provided the backbone for the river conservation and access work it accomplishes. Over 100 clubs are now AW Club Affiliates and they are all doing great work on your behalf. If you don't belong to a club consider joining one.

This is the fifth year that Clif Bar makes possible the AW / Clif Bar Flowing Rivers grants. Paddling clubs must be current AW Affiliate Clubs to be eligible for one of the two (2) \$1,250 grants being offered. Clubs across the country have embarked on many wonderful programs as a result of this program (See americanwhitewater.org/content/article/view/articleid/102581 for the 2006 grant recipients). Make sure your club is an AW Affiliate Club and encourage them to apply for this grant for a local project important to paddlers in your area.

AFFILIATE CLUBS, we want to know what you are doing. Send your events to us at ben@amwhitewater.org and we will include them in the Journal.

The AW Journal Club Affiliates by state:

Alaska

Fairbanks Paddlers, Fairbanks

Alabama

Birmingham Canoe Club, Birmingham
Coosa Paddling Club, Montgomery
Huntsville Canoe Club, Huntsville

Arkansas

Arkansas Canoe Club, Little Rock

California

Country Paddlers, Lotus
River Touring Section, Angeles Chapter
Sequoia Paddling Club, WindsorGold

Colorado

Avid4Adventure Inc., Boulder
Colorado White Water Association, Englewood
Pikes Peak Whitewater Club, Colorado Springs
San Miguel Whitewater Asso, Telluride
University of Colorado Kayak Club, Boulder

Florida

North Florida Whitewater Assoc., Ocala

Georgia

Atlanta Whitewater Club, Atlanta
Georgia Canoeing Association, Atlanta
Georgia Tech Outdoor Recreation, Atlanta
Paddlers4Christ, Ellijay

Idaho

Idaho Whitewater Assoc., Boise

Illinois

Chicago Whitewater Assoc., Chicago

Indiana

Ohio Valley Whitewater Club, Evansville
Hoosier Canoe Club, Indianapolis

Iowa

Iowa Whitewater Coalition, Des Moines

Kansas

Kansas Whitewater Association, Mission

Kentucky

Bardstown Boaters, Frankfort
Bluegrass Wildwater Association, Lexington
Viking Canoe Club, Louisville

Maine

Penobscot Paddle & Chowder Society,
Topsham
Outward Bound, Newry

Maryland

Greater Baltimore Canoe Club, Kingsville
Mason Dixon Canoe Cruisers,
Smithsburg

Massachusetts

Zoar Outdoor, Charlemont
AMC - New Hampshire Paddlers,
Honover

Minnesota

Boat Busters Anonymous, Stillwater
Charlie Sawyer, Maple Plain

Missouri

Missouri Whitewater Association, St. Louis
Ozark Mountain Paddlers, Springfield
Ozark Wilderness Waterways, Kansas City
Kansas City Whitewater Club, Kansas City

Montana

Beartooth Paddlers Society, Billings

Nevada

Sierra Nevada Whitewater Club, Reno

New Hampshire

Mt. Washington Valley Paddlers, Franconia
Merrimack Valley Paddlers, Merrimack

New Mexico

Adobe Whitewater Club, Albuquerque

New York

ADK Schenectady, Schenectady
FLOW Paddlers Club, Rochester
Housatonic Canoe & Kayak Squad, Ossining
Town Tinker Tube Rentals, Phoenicia
Zoar Valley Paddling Club, Dunkirk
KCCNY, New York
Wildrivers, Millwood
St Lawrence University, Canton

N. Carolina

Appalachian State University, Boone
Carolina Canoe Club, Raleigh
Mecklenburg Regional Paddlers, Indian Trail
Triad River Runners, Winston, Salem
Watauga Paddlers, Boone
Dixie Division ACA, Tuxedo
UNCG Outdoor Adventures, Greensboro

Ohio

Columbus Outdoor Pursuits, Columbus
Keel Haulers Canoe Club, Westlake
Outdoor Adventure Club, Dayton
Toledo River Gang, Waterville

Oregon

Oregon Kayak and Canoe Club, Portland
Oregon Whitewater Association, Beaverton
Willamette Kayak and Canoe Club, Corvallis
Lower Columbia Canoe Club, Portland
North West Rafters Asso, Portland

Pennsylvania

AMC Delaware Valley Chapter, Sugarloaf
Bens Creek Canoe Club, Johnstown
Canoe Club of Greater Harrisburg, Mechanicsburg
Conewago Canoe Club, York
Holtwood Hooligans, Lititz
Lehigh Valley Canoe Club, Lehigh Valley
Philadelphia Canoe Club, Philadelphia
Three Rivers Paddling Club, Pittsburgh
Pine Creek Valley Whitewater Association, Jersey Shore
Lehigh Valley White water Club, Lehigh Valley

S. Carolina

Palmetto Paddlers, Columbia

Tennessee

Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts, Gray
Eastman Hiking and Canoeing, Kingsport
E. Tennessee Whitewater Club, Oak Ridge
Memphis Whitewater, Memphis
Tennessee Scenic River Assoc., Nashville
Tennessee Valley Canoe Club, Chattanooga
University of Tennessee Knoxville, Knoxville
Chota Canoe Club, Knoxville

Texas

Houston Canoe Club, Houston
Kayak 4 a Kure, Amarillo

Utah

University of Utah, Salt Lake City
USU Kayak Club, Logan
Utah Whitewater Club, Salt Lake City

Vermont

Vermont Paddlers Club, Jericho

Virginia

Blue Ridge Voyageurs, Reston
Blue Ridge River Runners, Lynch Station
Canoe Cruisers Association, Arlington
Coastal Canoeists, Richmond
FORVA, Roanoke
Float Fishermen of Virginia, Richmond

Washington

NW Whitewater Assoc., Spokane
Outdoor Adventure Club, Redmond

Spokane Canoe & Kayak Club, Spokane
University Kayak Club, Seattle
Washington Recreation River Runners, Renton
Venturing Crew 360, Snohomish
The Mountaineers, Seattle

West Virginia

West VA Wildwater Assoc., S. Charleston

Wisconsin

Hoofers Outing Club, Madison
NE Wisconsin Paddlers Inc. Appleton
Sierra Club / John Muir Chapter, LaCrosse

Canada, British Columbia

Vancouver Kayak Club, Vancouver

Discounted AW Memberships for Affiliate Club Members

by Carla Miner
Membership Coordinator

AW offers discounted AW memberships to whitewater enthusiasts who are also members of one of our Affiliate Clubs.

We supply a unique code that will automatically offer the discounted membership specific to your club allowing individuals to receive the discount on the normal AW membership renewal form or online at www.americanwhitewater.org/membership.

Both options work equally well and help make life easier for members of your club.

Discount codes are in place for all AW Affiliate Clubs and many members are enjoying the benefits of joining or renewing their individual AW membership for only \$25.

If you are interested in taking advantage of the Affiliate Club discount, please contact me and I will be happy to let you know your Club's unique code. I can be reached at: 866-BOAT-4AW or membership@amwhitewater.org.

Join American Whitewater as a Club Affiliate!

10 Reasons to Join AW as an Affiliate Club

1. Receive the *American Whitewater Journal*, the oldest continually published whitewater magazine.
2. Join the list of Affiliate Clubs noted in each bi-monthly *AW Journal*.
3. List club events in the *AW Journal*.
4. Your Club's members can become AW members for \$25. A \$10 savings!
5. Have technical expertise for your Club conservation and access committees 'on tap.'
6. Have access to technical and onsite assistance for your Club's event planning.
7. Enjoy VIP benefits for "Joint Members" at AW events.
8. Participate in exclusive AW Affiliate Club promotions.
9. Post Club information on the AW Website to help paddlers find you.
10. Eligible to apply for a spot in the AW 2006 River Stewardship Institute.

For more information, contact Carla Miner at membership@amwhitewater.org or sign-up on-line at: www.americanwhitewater.org/membership

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).

If possible, articles should be submitted on a 3-1/2-inch computer disk. (Microsoft Word if possible – 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 word processor may submit their articles typed. Please double space.

Photos may be submitted as slides, black or white prints, or color prints or electronic, digital photos, 300 dpi tiffs, Photoshop or high res jpegs minimum 3"x5." Keep your originals and send us duplicates if possible; we cannot guarantee the safe return of your pictures. If you want us to return your pictures, include a self-addressed stamped envelope with your submission. The better the photos the better the reproduction.

American Whitewater feature articles should relate to some aspect of whitewater boating. Please do not submit articles pertaining to sea kayaking or flat water.

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 II, III & 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.

Profanity should be used only when it is absolutely necessary to effectively tell a story; it is not our intent to 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, please don't send it in! Because of our deadlines you will not be able to review the editorial changes made prior to publication.

American Whitewater is a nonprofit; 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.

Send your material to:
Journal Editor
P.O. Box 1540
Cullowhee, NC 28723
E-mail: editor@amwhitewater.org



Release for publication

I hereby release my work (literary, graphic or photographic) for publication in American Whitewater magazine

- I understand that my work may be edited or cropped at the editors' discretion.
- I understand that I will not be paid for my work.
- I accept responsibility for the accuracy of the information included in my submission. I have not libeled or slandered any individual, corporation, or agency in this work.
- I understand that all or some of my work may be reprinted at some future date in an American Whitewater publication
- I promise that this material has not been and will not soon be published by another magazine or publication and the rights to this material are clear and unrestricted.
- I understand that once this material is printed in American Whitewater it may be reprinted or reproduced in other publications if I wish, providing I notify them that it has already appeared in American Whitewater.
- I understand that the contents of American Whitewater Magazine, including my contribution will be archived on the American Whitewater website.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

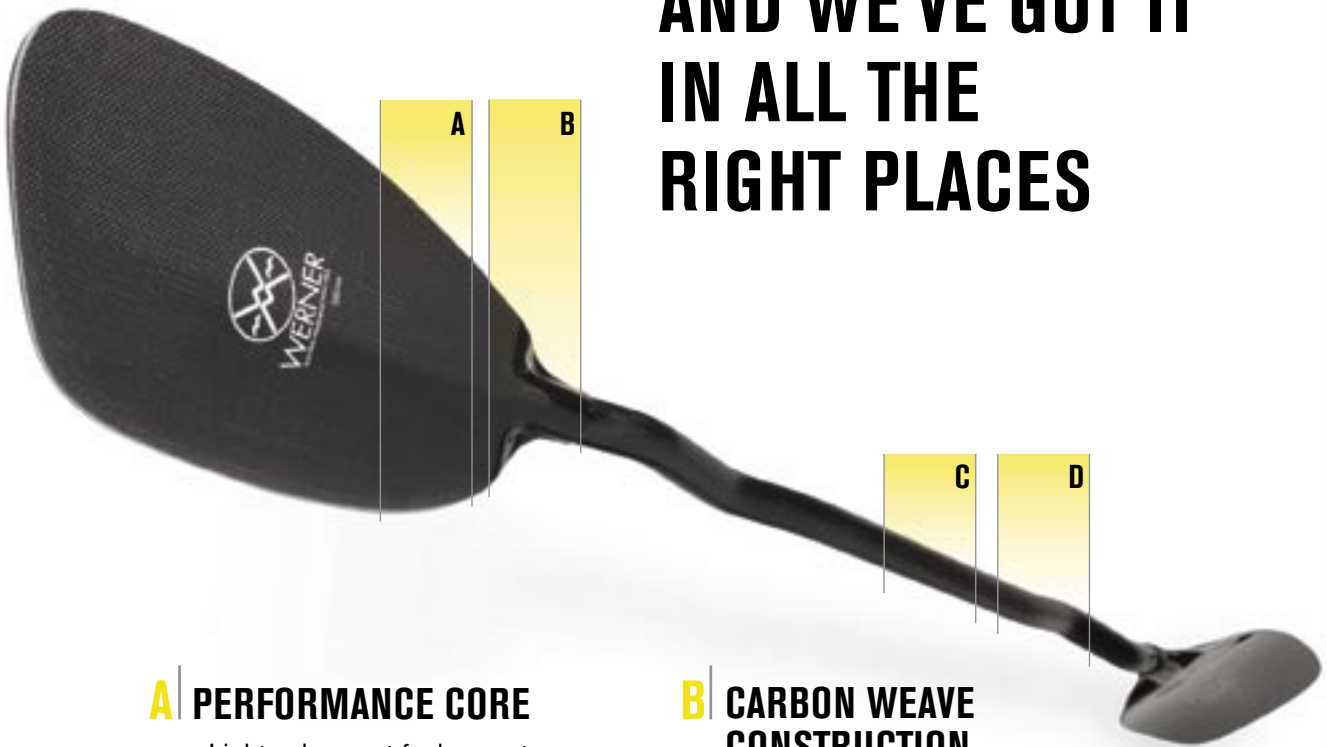
This release must be signed by the contributing author(s), photographers(s), and graphic artist(s).

Send your material to:

American Whitewater Journal PO Box 1540 Cullowhee, NC 28723 or via email to editor@amwhitewater.org

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A: THE MAMBA



Anna Levesque surf the National Whitewater Center, Charlotte.



Alex Hotze on Escalante Creek, Colorado



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