

# american whitewater

July/August 1997




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# american whitewater

Journal of American Whitewater

Volume XXXVII, No.4

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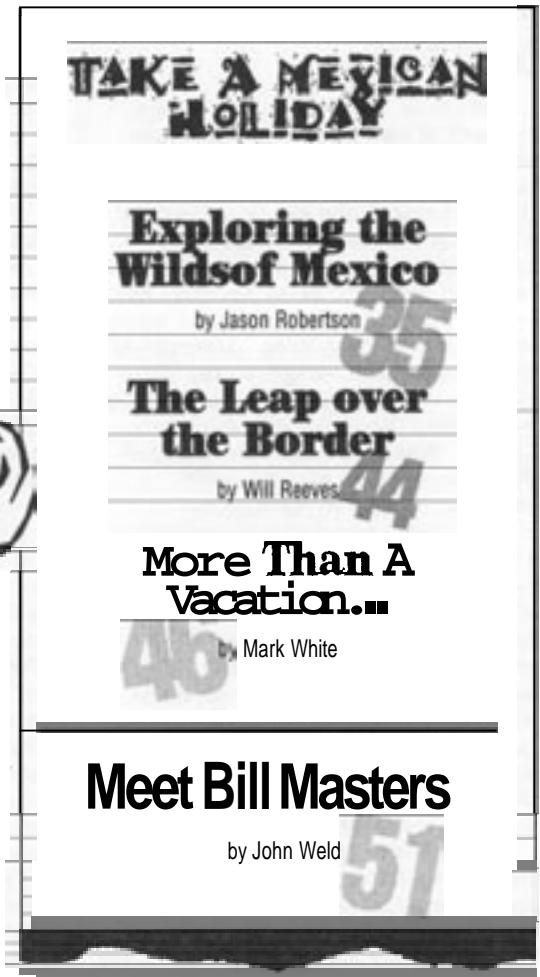
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Cover: Arnd Schaefflein making the last move on Triple Drop, Cataracts of the Kern. Photo by Barry Tessman.



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## Director's Cut

by Rich Bowers

As I write this article, the Directors and staff of American Whitewater have just returned from our annual board meeting, this year held in Salida, CO and graciously hosted by the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (Colorado State Parks). This was a long weekend of both hard work and play, as the Arkansas river was just peaking from a mixture of winter snowpack and spring rains. Interspersed with discussions of programs and strategic plans were multiple high-water runs of the Numbers, Royal Gorge and Brown's Canyon. Without a doubt, the Arkansas Valley is one of the most beautiful whitewater valleys in the country.

The central theme of the meeting was a review of our Strategic Plan, first released in 1995 and the primary motivator of our actions through the year 2000. Is American Whitewater on track? Where are we heading? And what have we accomplished for rivers and for our members? Each of these major questions was examined and debated in Salida. While there is always more work to be done, the review of our progress for both whitewater rivers and members was very positive.

To avoid excruciating detail on meeting minutes, I'd like to highlight recent accomplishments by pointing out some of the articles in this edition of the Journal. Our cover showcases the "Cataracts" of the

Lower Kern in California. Until American Whitewater and our friends in the Kern Valley got involved with relicensing issues, this section was off-limits to whitewater. Today it is one of the hottest runs in the country. Keep reading this issue, and you'll learn how boating groups and local businesses are ensuring even more improvements for this river - through education of children, festivals, on-going negotiations, and continued efforts to increase private use on the upper "Forks" run.

Find out how American Whitewater continues to locate new rivers to paddle, by resurrecting rivers long dewatered by dams. If you're ready for it, you can sign up for this November's first ever recreational release on Georgia's Tallulah Gorge - or find out about recent efforts to improve Utah's Black Canyon of the Bear. Besides better boating, American Whitewater is increasing flows for fish, aesthetics, and water quality - all important aspects of a quality river experience.

American Whitewater is also dedicated to ensuring access to river resources. One reason for holding our meeting in Salida was the opportunity to celebrate with state and federal agencies the opening of legal access to the "Numbers" section of the Arkansas. Find out how a ten-year effort by these agencies, Colorado Whitewater Association, and American Whitewater has finally paid off for boaters. Celebrate also, American Whitewater's purchase of land which guarantees public take-out from North Carolina's Watauga, and on-going efforts with the BLM to purchase an access site to California's Consumnes river.

American Whitewater's plans for in-

creasing awareness of river issues is also on track. A growing number of river festivals, rodeos and races are bringing the issues to boaters and non-boaters alike. Check out the "Events Central" section and find out how we are spreading the word on the Potomac, Kern, New, and Canyon Creek.

All in all, we are pleased with the progress of our strategic plan so far, and in Colorado we renewed our pledge to improve rivers and provide access in the upcoming years. We will also redouble our efforts to make rivers safer for our members and for others. In the next year, you can expect to see an even greater emphasis on education and safety issues.

As a wrap up, I'd like to extend to you and your friends an invitation to celebrate these river victories with us at our annual Gauley Festival in West Virginia (Saturday, September 20th). This is American Whitewater's 40th Anniversary, AND WE ARE THROWING A PARTY! We bill the Gauley as the biggest boater get-together in the nation, and we promise that this year's festival will be bigger and even more fun than before. Party On! And another 40 Years of Conserving and Restoring America's Wildest Rivers.

## EDITORIAL DISCLAIMER

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

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

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## Hang 'Em High

An open letter to whoever is paddling my granite (white with black speckles) Pro-Line Corsica S (Serial # WEM49 H21 I 595).

My boat was stolen in Albright, WV, early in May. I miss my boat, but even more I miss the feeling that my fellow kayakers respect other boaters' gear. We need to return to former levels of honesty. A paddle found floating in the river is not yours just because you found it. Even worse is when identified gear doesn't return home.

If you are paddling my boat and got it from another party, please call me with whatever information you have about it. If one of your "friends" is paddling it, ask them to contact me or contact me yourself, after you think about what kind of "friend" steals from other paddlers.

Chuck Singer  
Sheffield Lake, OH 44054  
Editor's Reply

Sorry to hear about your boat. Believe me, you are not alone. This spring there has been an epidemic in gear thefts and shuttle vehicle break-ins. Most of the time this can be attributed to non boaters, but sometimes it seems likely that other boaters are involved.

As a matter of principle I am opposed to capital punishment, but when it comes to boat rustlin', maybe we should make an exception! Hang 'Em high!!!

This raises another issue, that of boats and paddles that are along the river.... Presumably after some unfortunate has taken a miserable swim. Some boaters are starting to claim the "rights of salvage...i.e. finders keepers, losers weepers!" I can't go along with this, especially if there is a name and phone number on the errant equipment. Even if there isn't, I think it is only right to ask around and attempt to find the legitimate owner, before claiming the gear as one's own.

## C-2 Boater's Lament

Dear Editor,

A tip of the helmet to Bruce Farrenkopf. His letter in the March-April '97 issue lamented the lack of plastic C-1's on the market. I'd like to add to his point—double it, in fact.

Like Bruce, I paddle a Dagger Cascade. I got my C-1 because my previous solo boat, a Clipper Viper 12, leaked water over the top. Now, I paddle while my

friends paddling open playboats bail. I agree with Bruce; the Cascade is a decent boat, but not perfect. And yes, I would like to see a wider variety of C-1's on the market.

But lets face it, the only times I paddle C-1 are when I can't find a partner to paddle tandem with. Indeed, the most memorable paddling I've ever done since I began the sport in 1965 has been tandem.

Whether it's running Deadman's Drop, plucking an overturned boater from the brink of Killer Fang Falls, surfing Heaven's Wave, or just drifting and watching the eagles feed on sockeye, it's twice the fun with a partner.

But I get tired of bailing my open tandem boat. And, if C-1's are scarce, C-2's are virtually extinct. If there's a plastic C-2 on the market, I haven't discovered it. The few composite C-2's I've found are more suited for slalom racing than for playing.

I wrote to Dagger about this, and Mr. Pulliam was kind enough to reply personally. His message: There's not enough market to justify developing a plastic C-2.

Really, I can't fault the man for his stance. I can only bemoan the state of

paddling which drives the market. Are we so narcissistic and selfish that we can only get our boating kicks in the solo position?

It's like Robert A. Heinlein said about sex: "Masturbation is cheap, clean, convenient, and free of any possibility of wrongdoing...but it's lonely!"

Any interest in C-2 paddling out there? Twice the paddles, twice the fun!

Rick Bryan  
Williams Lake,  
British Columbia

## Escaping An Ordeal

Dear Editor:

I would like to share an experience we had of improvising evacuation on a wilderness river trip this last spring. Four friends and I were on a high water run on the Dog River in Ontario. On our second day out in the difficult Class III-V Gorge Section, one of my kayaking companions had a swim above a dangerous hole. We pulled him into the eddy just 15 feet from the drop. There was no hope for his gear.

After a tough portage and not knowing where his boat was, Tom and Mike headed down river in search. Jarma (pro-

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Last year's festival was attended by 350 people and included displays from all the major boat manufacturers plus other vendors from throughout New England. This year's event will be the first time that AWA will be able to provide tent sites for camping at the festival site and will also include food and entertainment on the day of the festival. Guaranteed to be a first rate party with the best whitewater in the Northeast.

Besides the rip-roaring Kennebec River, the Union Water Power Company has agreed to provide releases on the Dead River for three days. Friday, July 4—1,300 cfs, Saturday, July 5—1,800 cfs, and Sunday July 6—1,000 cfs. All are excellent levels for beginner or early intermediate boaters.

The relicensing of Harris Dam and the Indian Pond Project began in February of this year and AWA will begin negotiating with the Central Maine Power Company on a number of issues that are important to boaters. AWA members should make a special effort to support our work in Maine this year. We need our membership strength which has significant financial impact to demonstrate how important the Kennebec River resources are to boaters and other recreationists. Without your help we stand to lose ground in this relicensing procedure. Your presence this year especially, is very important, and will help send a message to those who would restrict our access to Kennebec whitewater.

## THE DEERFIELD RIVERFEST

**WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY AUGUST 2, 1997. THIS FESTIVAL WILL BE HELD IN THE LARGE FIELD ACROSS THE STREET FROM ZOAR OUTDOOR OUTFITTERS, ROUTE 2, CHARLEMONT, MASSACHUSETTS.**

Last year's festival was attended by 700 people in spite of a horrible rainstorm and AWA put on it's first "Killer Chicken Barbecue" cooked entirely by AWA volunteers. A good time was had by all with plenty of tents to shelter festival fans from the rain and the barbecue never tasted better.

The Deerfield River has been the site for national championship races in both canoe and kayak events and continues to build its reputation as the next major league whitewater mecca in the Northeast as thousands of boaters now travel to western Massachusetts each summer. Through the cooperation of the New England Power Company and the landmark "Deerfield Settlement Agreement" boaters now have the opportunity to enjoy great whitewater just a short distance away from most of the large population centers in New England.

With so many dams in New England still mired in the relicensing process, river festivals play an important role in establishing the American Whitewater Affiliation and our members as important players in the process. The more positive economic impact we present to communities near whitewater resources, the easier it is to generate local support in our negotiations with public utilities. The more credibility we establish as an important user group, the greater our chances for future success.

Get out to the New England festivals this summer.  
This is the year to make the Big Trip for guaranteed wet days and cool summer nights.  
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# Purpose

## American Whitewater

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

AW was incorporated under Missouri non-profit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its principal mailing address at P.O. Box 636, **Margaretville, NY 12455**, (914) 586-2355. AW is tax exempt under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.



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## Tallulah Releases Set for Three Weekends in November.

This fall, three weekends of whitewater releases have been scheduled for Tallulah Gorge, the "Niagara of the South" in northeastern Georgia. These releases are currently scheduled for the weekend of November 1/2, 8/9, and 15/16.

Due to an agreement between Georgia Power Company, Georgia State Parks and national and local boating organizations, releases will be scheduled for the first two weekends in April and the first three weekends in November. These will be scheduled for the next 30 years, the length of Georgia Power's license through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission process.

Tallulah Gorge is an **advanced/expert** whitewater run involving Class IV and V rapids. In addition, it has severely limited access in and out of the canyon in case of accident, and is further restricted due to the fragile nature of the gorge and the existence of the federally endangered species "Persistent Trillium."

If you are unsure of your whitewater skills, please do not attempt the Gorge. Boating accidents are always unwelcome, but

are even more unwelcome during initial releases. Besides hurting yourself, you may jeopardize **future** whitewater in this incredibly beautiful canyon.

Tallulah Gorge has recently been added as a Georgia State Park, and is administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Due to the fragile nature of this area, access will be limited to 120 boaters per day (currently, limits for all other users including climbers and hikers is limited to 100 people per day). To help administer this program, to protect the resource, and to be as fair as possible, American Whitewater and the Georgia Canoe Association have helped Georgia DNR produce this permit. If you have comments on this permit, please contact American Whitewater at (301) 589-9453.

Right now, all systems are go for November releases. However, actual access to the gorge is dependent on a trail which is to be built this summer. To verify releases, even with a permit, please call 1-888-GPC-LAKE.

### TALLULAH GORGE STATE PARK WHITEWATER BOATING RELEASES PROPOSED PERMITTING SYSTEM

[Please Read All of the Instructions. Failure to Comply May Result in Your Not Receiving a Permit]

1. Only persons paddling Qualified Whitewater Craft will be permitted to paddle Tallulah Gorge. Qualified Whitewater Craft is defined as follows: kayaks (one person and two person), whitewater canoes or open hard boats (solo and tandem), decked canoes, including C-1s and C-2s and "Qualified Inflatables." Qualified Inflatables mean inflatable craft owned (not rented or borrowed) by the applicant or one of the people in his or her group that conform to established DNR guidelines.
2. Permits allow access for both days of the release weekend. Each permit holder (or one of up to four alternates listed on the permit application) must check in by 12:00 p.m. each day or the permit will be released on a first come, first served basis.
3. An applicant may request one permit for each of the scheduled release weekends. Up to five paddlers paddling Qualified Whitewater Craft are authorized per permit. A separate request must be submitted for each scheduled release weekend.
4. Each permit request must be prepared by hand and mailed by the applicant.
5. Permits are nontransferable and the applicant (or one of

the alternates listed on the permit request) must present proof of identity at the check in.

6. Any fraudulent application will disqualify the applicant and all alternates listed on the permit from receiving the requested permit or any permit in the future.
7. Requests will be filled on a first come, first served basis by postmark date. **NOT RECEIPT DATE.** Absolutely no metered mail, courier or hand delivered packages of any kind will be accepted. Certified mail may be used for either the permit request and/or the return envelope at the applicant's expense.
8. We will begin accepting requests for the 1997 (Spring/Fall) releases on October 1, 1997. Permit requests postmarked prior to this date will not be accepted.
9. Failure to comply with these rules may result in disqualification of the applicant's permit request.
10. Remember that polite, responsible and safe behavior might ultimately result in greater access.
11. Permit holders are encouraged to confirm that the scheduled release has not been postponed due to adverse conditions or emergency before de-

parting for Tallulah by calling 1-888-GPC-LAKE and noting whether or not a postponement message has been added to the recording.

12. Applicants are reminded that much of Tallulah Gorge State Park is extremely rugged and

potentially hazardous. It is an environmentally sensitive area. To protect the visitor from the gorge, and more importantly, the gorge from the visitor, all regulations and laws are strictly enforced.

### PERMIT INSTRUCTIONS

- I. ALL PERMIT REQUESTS MUST BE MAILED IN A LETTER SIZED ENVELOPE.
- II. THE OUTSIDE OF THE ENVELOPE MUST CONTAIN THE FOLLOWING:
  - A. The applicant's name and return address in the upper left hand corner;
  - B. Adequate U.S. postage for First Class Mail;
  - C. Addressed to:  
Tallulah Gorge State Park  
Boating Permits  
P.O. Box 248  
Tallulah Falls, GA 30573
  - D. In the lower right hand corner:
    - i) The date of the weekend release which the applicant is requesting (only one weekend per request.)
    - ii) Number of people in the applicant's group (not to exceed 5, including yourself)
- III. THE APPLICANT MUST ENCLOSE THE FOLLOWING INFO/ITEMS INSIDE THE ENVELOPE:
  - A. A letter sized return envelope bearing the applicant's return address and adequate U.S. postage for first class mail; and
  - B. a 3 x 5 index card containing the following information:
    - i) the applicant's name, address, and daytime phone number;
    - ii) (OPTIONAL BUT RECOMMENDED): The names and daytime phone numbers of up to four (4) alternates who would be authorized to check in if the applicant is unavailable;
    - iii) Date of the one (1) scheduled weekend release being requested; and
    - iv) Number of people in the applicant's group (not to exceed five (5), including the applicant).



# AMAZING GRACE! (Idaho)

By Rich Bowers

It was the perfect task for American Whitewater's Hydro Program – a river with both gradient and attitude! An impressive canyon of Class III, IV and V rapids within easy driving distance for boaters from Idaho, Wyoming and Utah, and the closest available whitewater for a vast number of boaters living and working in Salt Lake City.

Unfortunately, the Black Canyon of the Bear, just west of Grace, Idaho, has been totally dewatered since the construction of Grace dam in 1986, one of three hydropower dams on this section of the river. Sometimes, in years with exceedingly

high rain or snow, the Bear has surpassed man's attempts to divert it, and rampaged through the Canyon. This last happened in the mid-80's, when local boaters enjoyed several years of flows, sometimes as high as 3,800 cfs.

It happened again this April and May, when the snowpack in Idaho reached 150 to 160% of normal. For several weeks, boaters had the opportunity to run the Bear at between 500 and 700 cfs – perhaps not optimum, but enough to attract desert dwelling boaters and tweak the curiosity of local citizens of the Bear Valley.

For the past three years, American Whitewater, Idaho Rivers United, Utah Rivers Council, Idaho's Departments of Recreation and Fish and Game, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and local boating clubs have been involved in trying to restore the Bear. Not only for whitewater, but for fish, water quality and aesthetics (the Black Canyon is an incredible visual resource). Basically, a river with no water is no river

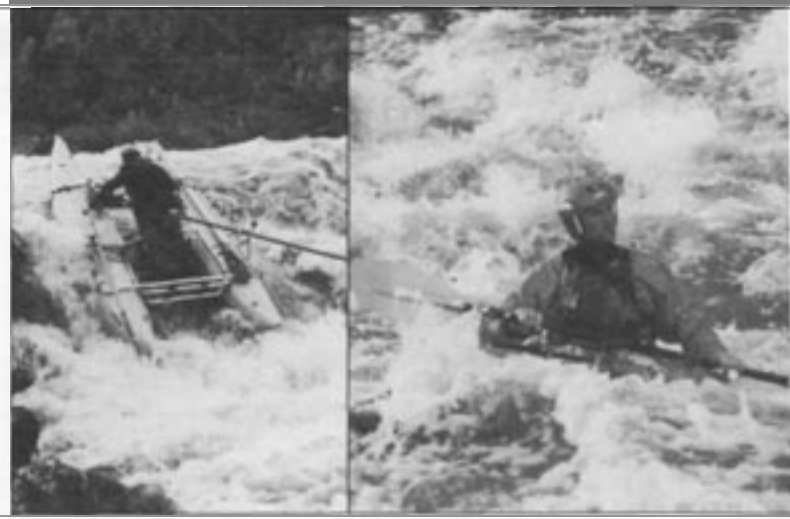


at all! Because of this preparedness, when the water came down, the boaters were ready. Not only the boaters, but the locals and PacifiCorp (the dam owner) were ready also, and together were able to stage an outstanding whitewater study for the weekend of May 17 and 18th. which included studying the potential impacts of high flows on the fishery and vegetation.

The study and the river was a real hoot! The expert whitewater team consisted of some who ran in the 80's, some who had run in previous weeks at 700 cfs or less, and some who had never run the river before. All team members (and other boaters in the area) were suitably impressed at flows of 1000 and 1500 cfs, optimum levels for whitewater boating. At all three levels, the Bear is a solid Class N run, with all day waves and play holes for its entire eight-mile length. At lower levels (500 to 700) the Bear is a great run for advanced boaters, and perhaps those boaters who are just stepping up to Class IV and are with a strong group of friends. The rapids are numerous and continuous, but not too difficult. They are not forgiving, however. As with most dewatered rivers, the rocks are sharp and abrasive. Those rolling or swimming can expect to use up a few boxes of Band-Aids per run. At higher flows, the rapids merge into one continuous frolic – but not the place for anyone without a roll and good hole-riding technique.

Several rapids deserve attention. Grace Falls lies just downstream of the first set of rapids. A big drop with multiple routes, many of which were explored by the study team with varying success. At the end of the run, BooBoo is the anomaly. In a river which is overall Class N at tested flows, BooBoo is a definite step above. A solid V on anyone's scale, this rapid deserves to be seen before boated. However, like most rapids, this one is easily portaged, which brings the Bear back into the running for most advanced boaters.

In addition, the release also allowed for a great study in human relations. Take a predominantly agricultural community, a small town, and local irrigators concerned over water rights – and then add in twenty or thirty boaters not seen in ten years, and you have potential! Potential in Grace meant new friendships.



It seemed like the whole town showed up for the release. In a town with one stop light, the study actually caused a major traffic jam on Grace Bridge. However, the local officers seemed more interested in watching the show, and content just to keep the bridge clear of traffic. And while private property owners are leery of trespass, many opened up their land for the study. In fact, on Sunday morning, the local restaurant (which is normally closed) let study participants in to cook breakfast for themselves and for regular customers.

This is a major win for whitewater! If you boat the Bear, or just drive through Grace, remember these folks. Stop and chat, and definitely stop and fill up your tank as a thank you for this royal welcome.

The study was a victory in many ways. Preliminary results demonstrated that boating flows would not harm the stocked fishery, and the success of the boating study has locked in boating on the Bear during high flow events. It also moved boaters several steps closer to the ultimate goal of annual scheduled releases on the Bear, although it may be several more years before these releases are a certainty. The new license for the Grace dam is not up until the year 2001, and it may take even longer to lock in new license terms. For their part, PacifiCorp has shown good faith in working with agencies and recreation and local interests in starting this project several years early. Later this summer, we hope to leverage the success of this study into further studies on the downstream Oneida Narrows section of the Bear, a great training spot for local clubs and the University of Utah at Logan.

These victories would have been impossible without the generous volunteer efforts of many people. A special thanks to the entire study team, including safety volunteers. Thanks to American Whitewater's new Conservation Director, John Gangemi, who drove over 10 hours to participate in his first whitewater study (a tough life). Special thanks to Liz Paul, Idaho Rivers United, and to Team Leader and American Whitewater Regional Coordinator Mark White. A very special thank you to American Whitewater Regional Coordinator Bill Sedivy, without whose dogged determination and endless meeting participation, we would not have gotten even a trickle of water!



Page 14, Grant Amaral disappears under Grace Bridge.

**Inset: Bear River Whitewater Study Team :**

Mark White, Team Leader, Salt Lake City, UT; Larry Dunn, 2nd Team Leader, Salt Lake City; Kent Peters, Salt Lake City; Rod (safety) & Brian Huck, Murray, UT; Allen Gavere (safety), Salt Lake City; Gene Gillette (safety), Salt Lake City; Grant Amaral, Garden Valley, ID; Dino Lowry & Steve Zeman, Idaho Falls, ID; Joyce Gronston, Murray, UT; Aurelle LaMontagne, Jackson, WY; John Gangemi, Big Fork, MT; Alan Hamilton, Boise, ID; Chuck Elliott, Boise, ID

Page 15, above Arelle LaMontagne at the bottom of Grace Falls. Top right, left is Alan Hamilton at Grace Falls. Right is AW's new conservation director, John Gangemi. Bottom is Chuck Elliot "Graceless" at Grace Falls.

# Recreational Equipment, Inc. Funds National Rivers Coalition Grants for 1997

Once again, REI has donated \$70,000 this year to support grassroots river conservation. The funds are administered by the National Rivers Coalition, which consists of: American Canoe Association, American Rivers, American Whitewater, National Wildlife Federation, River Management Society, River Network, Sierra Club, and the Wilderness Society.

The program seeks protection of the nation's river resources and the public's access to them by providing grants (\$200 to \$1000) to cover specific expenses such as mailing, travel, phone

and meetings. The program provides grants to groups engaged in river recreation, lobbying for rivers, state river policies, hydropower reform, urban river restoration and new strategies.

The Coalition meets three times and has **THREE DEADLINES:** June 1, August 20, and November 20th. For more information, or to receive a copy of the application, contact Chad Smith at American Rivers (202) 547-6900, or American Whitewater at (301) 589-9453.

## Gold Medal Kayaking on the Kern



Left to right: Eric Otto and Jake Dinsmore

The two year old Kern River Alliance (KRA) is a non-profit group of dedicated volunteers who put on the Kern River Festival annually, host the West Coast National Paddling Film Festival, run a kids program that operates year round, and publish a monthly newsletter. KRA is also committed to preserving and enhancing the quality of the Kern and is actively involved in the re-licensing process for various Power Station's located on the river.

Bakersfield is a town of over 240,000 people, yet there are only a small number of

boaters using the easily accessible class I-V water within minutes of downtown. The KRA's educational programs are one method of developing local interest in the Kern river and whitewater paddling. A Gold Medal Kayak Camp, held in March, offered the Bakersfield community a chance to sample the kayaking experience in the context of their own neighborhood paddling paradise.

A diverse group of boaters lined up for the camp on the banks of the Kern river. Ages ranged from 8 to 58 and included every level of experi-

ence from those who had never been in a boat before, to aspiring slalom racers. It was a trick to address everyone's varied instructional needs. The variety was absolutely intentional and allowed beginners to be inspired by those with more experience and more accomplished boaters to be reminded of the fundamentals and images of their paddling roots.

The camp was held at the Rio Bravo Resort, minutes from downtown Bakersfield, which is a fantastic facility for such an event. Every conceivable venue was just a stones throw from the resort - from a warm pool, ideal for rolling practice, to slalom gates on three unique sites, paddlers spent their time on the water, instead of travelling to and from the sessions.

The Camp itself, a four day clinic dedicated to broadening the base of kayaking enthusiasm through fun-filled activities, was designed by Tom Long, noted whitewater instructor and Director of the Cascade Kayak School on the Payette River outside of Boise, Idaho. Among Tom's instructional partners in this venture were 1992 Olympic gold medalist Joe Jacobi, 1992 Olympic slalom coach Fritz Haller, and 1996 Olympic slalom coach Bob Campbell. Together this "Gold Medal" team brought tremendous insight and expe-

rience to the table, as well as a light hearted approach to teaching, encouraging spirited efforts from camp participants.

The first day, all the campers went to a nearby flat water site and, in small groups, went through a number of presentations made of the instructors on basic technique. Stretching, posture, forward and turning strokes were all introduced and reviewed to make sure everyone was on the same page.

We use our slalom background, techniques and philosophies to help recreational boaters increase their paddling skills or simply to introduce new people to the sport" remarked Joe Jacobi as he finished the first session. In addition to offering his technical expertise, Joe is also a great motivator when it comes to instruction. "It's great to pass along the sport to these people in the same way we enjoy it, paddling with our friends and keeping it fun, he continued. "The young kids are an integral part of the camp too. The element of youth in the teaching environment helps everyone feel at ease."

In fact one of the goals of the Gold Medal Camps is to assist local organizers in developing and maintaining instructional programs especially for kids. "We want expose kids to the fun of paddling, while fostering an appreciation for



all aspects of whitewater sport" offered Bob Campbell, who was one of four Olympic Team coaches during last summer's competition on the Ocoee River. "It's really satisfying giving these kids a strong enough background so that they can emerge as truly proficient and safe river runners. They then become good role models for other would be kayakers. Today's youth is also where future slalom champions come from, should they get hooked on the thrill of paddling with precision. To be the best in the world, one has to start developing these skills at a young age. We're not trying to push these kids through, simply make opportunities available if there's an interest. It's a long and demanding road to competitive excellence and I wouldn't want to encourage anyone who couldn't recognize their desire to excel and commitment to a lot of hard work. You've got to enjoy the process of dedicated effort or it won't be worth it. These kind of camps are a great way to introduce kids to the range of paddling possibilities and I believe they will become increasingly critical to developing young competitors in this country."

"Teaching adults to kayak isn't all that different from teaching kids, except that they often have more inhibitions at first", observed camp organizer Tom Long. "We are very

Top left: Bob Campbell, far right at the moving water gates.  
 Top right: Moving water gates provide perfect location for a mini-slalom.  
 Bottom left: Joe Jacobi  
 Bottom right: Fritz Haller

interested in presenting the character enriching elements of this learning process to all ages. We offer techniques and ideas for physical training and fitness, but also try to articulate the mental challenges involved. We want people to have positive experiences with kayaking, developing self-confidence and discovering psychological strengths that contribute to good performance."

"We also want to share some of the excitement of top level international competition with these folks", insisted twice world champion Fritz Haller. Fritz was one of the coaches in Spain in 1992, where the U.S. took the C2 gold medal. He's a terrific story teller and captivated the campers with his Olympic tales. "I believe in trying to strengthen the link between whitewater's recreational and competitive realms. Even if you're not interested in becoming a racer, there is still a lot to be learned from watch-



ing technically accomplished paddlers at work. It's phenomenal actually! There's so much about slalom technique that's extremely useful for those who want to boat demanding stretches of river and do more than just escape with their lives. We're talking about making your paddling more efficient. There's a big rush in that. It allows you to do more things and have more fun at the same time."

"I've never had so much fun", said one exuberant camp member. "I've learned so much in the past few days. Not just about kayaking, but about all the mental aspects that figure into learning something new and challenging, it's definitely been that. I'm going to continue taking kayaking lessons this summer, although what I'm really excited about is just going out on the river with the new paddling friends I've made here."

This camp was a great success not only from a

participant's viewpoint but also as a public relations vehicle for the KRA. Between filming numerous coached workouts of National Team athletes who were on hand for the camp and covering the simplified slalom race which all the camp members participated in, the local newspaper and television media had a field day informing Bakersfield, about this unusual event taking place in their back yard. KRA is already planning for next year and will hold two one week camps back to back.

# Haysi Dam Project

The US Army Corps of Engineers has released a Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS) for flood damage reduction in the Levisa Fork Basin. The DEIS contains five alternative plans of actions for public review with an agency "preferred" alternative. The preferred alternative includes additional water storage in Haysi reservoir for whitewater releases downstream on the Russell Fork. This alternative has been carefully crafted by the Army Corps to appeal to both the paddling communities desire for additional releases and the local populace desire for increased economic opportunities associated with whitewater users. In sponsoring this alternative the Army Corps attempted to reduce opposition and shift the focus of the argument from dam verses no dam to a discussion on the storage capacity of the dam. To some degree their deceptive tactics have been successful with some members of the public taking the bait—hook, line and sinker.

Upon closer examination of the preferred alternative, its obvious that whitewater releases are not guaranteed. In fact, full implementation of the preferred alternative requires state funds for cost sharing measures.

Whitewater releases fall victim to this gray area of the DEIS contingent upon the respective state legislatures of Kentucky and Virginia recognizing the need and appropriating state funds for cost share of the project "enhancement".

Furthermore, the DEIS outlined a total of five alternatives. The preferred alternative was estimated as the most expensive. The least expensive alternative proposes a dry reservoir. In this era of budget reductions it is not unlikely that the "selected alternative" or ultimate course of action will be the least expensive alternative leaving the paddling community with further degradation of the river resource and limiting future economic opportunities for the local community.

American Whitewater objects to construction of Haysi Dam on the Levisa Fork whether it be proposed for whitewater releases or for flood damage reduction. The impacts to the river system associated with dam construction and operation remain unjustified even in light of the tenuously proposed whitewater releases. Alternatively, the existing John Flannagan Reservoir could provide more assured whitewater release dates stimulating the local economy with tourism dollars and eliminating the need to construct Haysi Dam for whitewater. The Army Corps recently issued findings that more water could be released from John Flannagan for whitewater.

American Whitewater proposes further adjusting current operations at John Flannagan Reservoir to accommodate additional whitewater release dates—thus fulfilling the recognized value of whitewater recreation for the local economy. These releases will undoubtedly bring money into the local economy as the October releases have in past years without the costs accrued from new dam construction.

The DEIS did not adequately consider alternative strategies to reduce flood damage other than new dam construction or no action. American Whitewater encourages the Army Corps to explore flood damage reduction alternatives more thoroughly in their Final Environmental Impact Study.

American Whitewater has worked hard with the local community and the Bluegrass Wildwater Association to get whitewater releases that would both benefit the paddling community and stimulate the local economy. We've secured releases since 1988 on the first four weekends in October from John Flannagan Reservoir. The local community has been extremely receptive to paddlers and we as an organization representing paddlers are grateful for this hospitality. We will continue working with the local community and paddling clubs to develop sound alternatives that enhance the river resource providing additional opportunities economically and recreationally.

For more information contact John Gangemi (406) 837-3155.

## Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone

Remember the highly publicized attempts to protect the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River from the proposed New World Mine (see AWA journal ?)? President Clinton supposedly struck a deal with Crown Butte guaranteeing that mining would not occur in the headwater area that drains into both the Stillwater River and the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone. Several settlements have been attempted, none of which have been successful to date, that would protect this headwater basin from mining. Most recently, President Clinton requested \$65 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to purchase the proposed gold mine. This "deal" is fatally flawed: Crown Butte is not the sole owner of the mineral rights it planned to transfer to the government. Margaret Reeb, a retired school teacher residing in Livingston, Montana, has a substantial claim to the mineral rights in this headwater basin. Most importantly, Reeb has no intention of selling her claims to the government or Crown Butte. This unwilling seller intends to develop the mineral rights. The end result for the public and paddling community is that mining in the headwaters of the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River continue to pose a significant threat to water quality. Don't be fooled by the slogans, there is no "deal" guaranteeing protection for the Clark's Fork. We need to keep a vigilant eye on this valuable resource.

For first hand accounts of adventures on the infamous Clark's Fork read the article in the January/February 1996 issue of American Whitewater. These articles and accompanying photos illustrate the value of this irreplaceable multi-day class V paddlers find far more valuable than strutting with a gold necklace.

Several groups have been outstanding watchdogs on this is-

sue. Contact them for further information.

Headwaters Paddling Association (HPA)  
Judy Theodorsen and Guy Erb (503) 242-9498

Greater Yellowstone Coalition  
13 South Wilson  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
(406) 586-1593

Beartooth Alliance  
P.O. Box 1141  
Cooke City, MT 59020  
838-2402

## Pumped Storage Projects defeated in Tennessee

by Ron Stewart, American Whitewater Director

Working with a grass roots organization of concerned citizens, called "Save our Sequatchie" (SOS), and a coalition of other groups, American Whitewater has helped to stop one of the most serious threats to river issues and property rights in the country.

In September, 1994, Armstrong Energy Resources (AER), a private company based out of Butler, PA, received a preliminary permit from FERC to pursue two pumped storage projects in the Sequatchie Valley, near Chattanooga, TN. In an effort to take advantage of pending deregulation of the power industry, AER embarked on a well orchestrated effort to lure political leaders, state agencies, community leaders, and other parties they believed necessary to secure the permit. The lure of a lucrative \$4 billion



project was mesmerizing for AER, even though they had never built such a facility before. Richard Hunt, former Director of Hydropower Relicensing for FERC, was hired as project manager by Armstrong, presumably because he knew how to get a project through the FERC licensing process. The Project was to be front loaded, which meant that the work for the EIS would be conducted before the license application.

American Whitewater **determined** early in the process that it would become an intervenor in the process. At stake for the boating community were two of the finest advanced creek runs in the area, plus the watershed that feeds North Chickamauga Creek, without a doubt, one of the best class IV/V runs in the country.

But, from the beginning, the project was a trumped up economic fiasco, encouraged by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). What soon became obvious was that there was a lot more at stake than an independent power producer (IPP) seeking to obtain a license. Once the license would have been issued, AER, as a private, for profit, company, would gain the right of eminent domain. In addition to land owners losing their homes, there were damaging environmental consequences that were certain to follow. It was a mega project that was targeted to attract mega bucks at citizen and environmental expense.

As time passed and information was learned, it became clear that the precedent being set by AER would open the door for a series of similar energy producing projects that would sprout throughout the area. The manipulation of the facts by AER and TVA, accompanied by efforts to control the press and local political leaders, to prevent access to information about the project, some under the table tactics, and at times down-right unethical and deceitful practices, represented one of the worst abuses of legitimate business interests within the power industry. Since the summer of 1996, SOS and American Whitewater have been engaged in weekly meetings, appearances before various state and federal agencies, press conferences, strategy meetings, and personal visits with political and community leaders. Persons opposed to the project recently traveled to Washington, DC, in a highly successful effort to present their case to Congress.

As facts about the project were uncovered, it became increasingly clear that AER was not acting alone. Phone calls from persons wishing not to be identified, and information leaked from individuals and sources close to the project, but who were afraid to be identified, increasingly connected the project to high ranking officials within TVA. One of the most significant events, turning the tide of public sentiment, and exposing the extent to which the project was being used by TVA, was securing the release of the Memorandum of Understanding between AER and TVA. The document clearly showed how TVA was to control and operate the facility and to jointly market the power using TVA's transmission grid system. As a co-lead agency with FERC, and the Army Corps of Engineers, TVA was responsible for conducting an unbiased EIS for the project.

American Whitewater, working closely with SOS, the Tennessee Tree Toppers (a nationally recognized hang gliding organization), and other groups, mobilized to make sure that the EIS was carefully monitored. The persons working closely on the project gave countless hours, and untold personal expenses, in opposing the project. USA Today reported on a major victory for the opposition in getting the Sequatchie County Commission to rescind a unanimous vote of support for the Armstrong project.

Dominos began to fall. At one point, in an effort to both appease and divide opposition to the project, AER dropped the Reynolds Creek Project, which would have dammed Big Brush Creek. This left the Laurel Branch half of the Project as its main objective. But the opposition remained unified and galvanized in opposing the entire project. The specter of 380 ft tall earth filled dams, thousands of acres of impacted waters, disruption of the highly toxic Whitwell Shale in the reservoir area, untold miles of

new transmission lines over environmentally sensitive areas, threats to the Sequatchie River, and a looming economic disaster, all came to the surface in efforts to study the project.

In truth, the effort cannot be fully documented in a short conservation article. Uncovering the covert nature of the operation, the many moments of intrigue, relentless efforts by those concerned about the project, and a sincere desire to address inequities in the deregulation of power legislation, particularly concerning the abuse of eminent domain provisions by IPP's in a way never intended by congress, all contributed to the recent announcement by Armstrong that it was halting the EIS. Armstrong says that they are requesting a temporary suspension of the project, while they study the current market economics, but the word from within, and the reality is, that this project is dead. It is a project that never should have been proposed.

We are only too aware that other communities, other rivers, and other persons are fighting similar projects. That a major victory has been won, should give heart to those similarly embattled, that the cause is worth the fight.

## Pit River

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued a notice requesting recommendations, terms and conditions, and prescriptions for draft environmental analysis (DEA) of Pacific Gas and Electric's (PG&E) Pit #1 hydro-power relicense. American Whitewater and Shasta Paddlers have made a number of recommendations concerning the scope of the study as well as license conditions which help

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to restore the integrity of the river and enhance public recreational opportunities. These conditions include but are not limited to; maintaining existing public access and development of new access sites, year-round minimum instream flows for protection of aquatic fauna, and scheduled whitewater releases for recreation and restoration of the river resource.

Pit #1 impacts 8 miles of class IV paddling on the Pit River and an upstream tributary, the Fall River, which has a class V cataract section. This is obviously a valuable resource for paddlers as well as the public in general.

We will keep readers apprised of the DEA release. Many thanks are owed to regional coordinator Kevin Lewis. Kevin has volunteered a great deal of personal time drafting comments and keeping a watchful eye on PG&E's relicense strategy. For more information contact Kevin at (916) 221-8722 or John Gangemi at (406) 837-3155.

## North Fork of the Mokelumne River

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) released the Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) for relicense of hydropower project 137 on the North Fork of the Mokelumne River in January of 1997. American Whitewater, along with Friends of the River and Foothills Conservancy, filed comments identifying deficiencies in the DEA. American Whitewater felt the DEA did

not adequately recognize nor allocate equitable use of the resource for additional purposes beyond power generation. American Whitewater advocates better flows for aquatic habitat restoration, scheduled releases for recreational opportunities, improved access at put-ins and take-outs, and development of a camping facility within the North Fork Mokelumne River corridor.

The North Fork of the Mokelumne River contains six paddling sections ranging in difficulty from class II to class V with remarkable scenery all in close proximity to the San Francisco Bay Area. This river could have been a premier paddling destination for Californians and non-residents alike but Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) captured the flow of the river for power generation. The license for Project 137 expired in 1972 but the relicense process stalled until recently when the federal relicensing effort was renewed. The relicensing process presents a grand opportunity for the public and paddling community to demand terms and conditions for the new license which help restore flows and the ecological integrity of the North Fork of the Mokelumne River. We have much to gain on the North Fork of the Mokelumne given the present dewatered condition of much of this river.

Susan Schuefele has been instrumental in coordinating American Whitewater's involvement in this relicense. The paddling community and public at large owes her many thanks for her hard work attempting to secure additional whitewater miles and restore a greatly impacted river.

FERC will issue a Final Environmental Assessment (FEA) based on the DEA comments. Look for an announcement of the FEA in upcoming issues of the journal. For further information call John Gangemi (406) 837-3155 or Susan Schuefele (408) 459-7978.



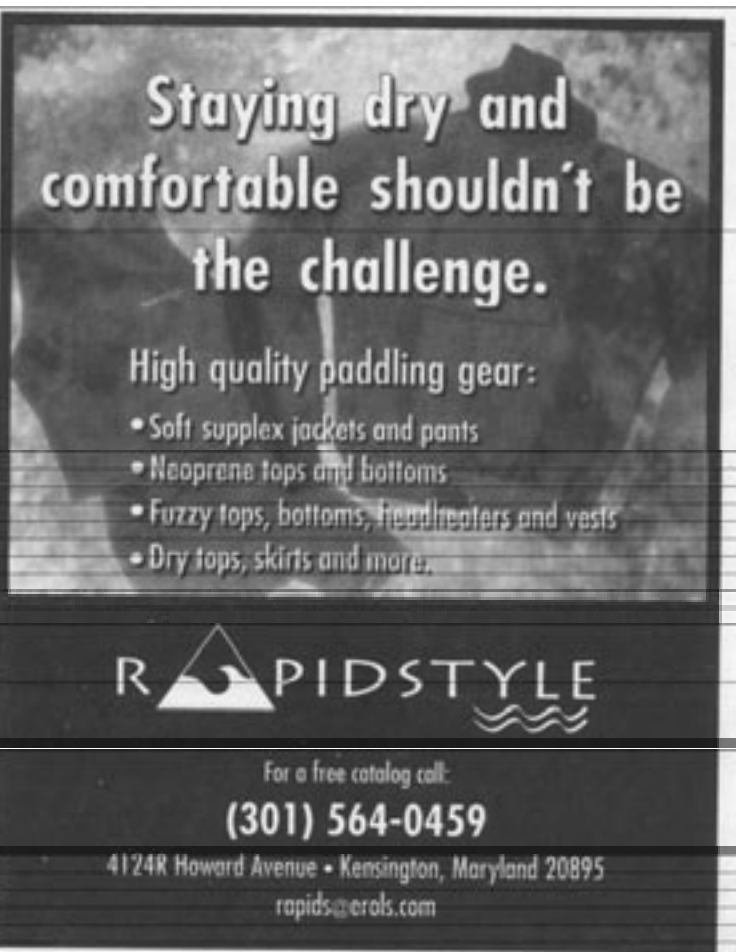
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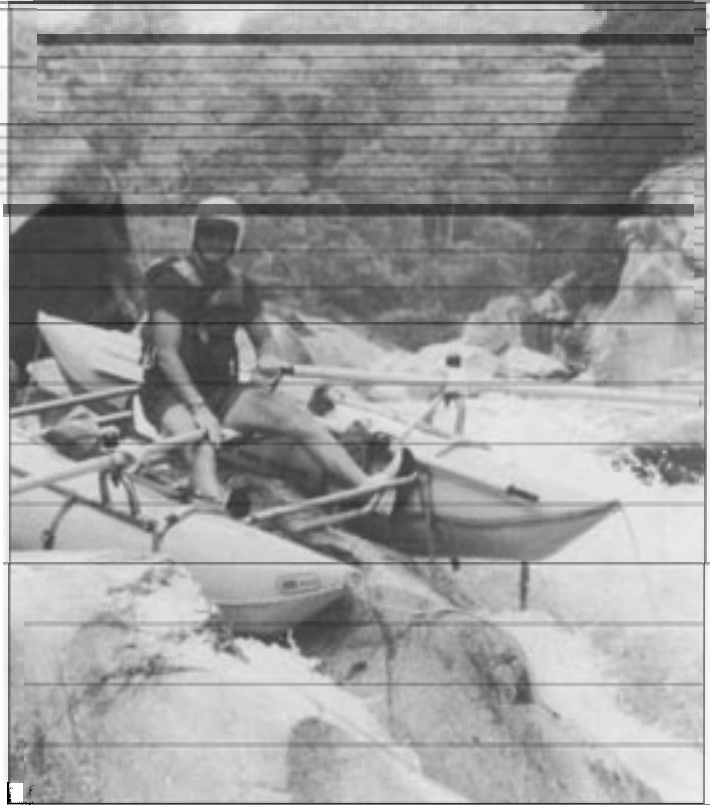
## Temporary Solution to Arkansas River Access (CO) for 1997 Season!

After over ten years of hard work by boating organizations, state and federal agencies, a legal access site to the Numbers section of the Arkansas River (CO.) has been established for the 1997 boating season.

The Forest Service recently acquired property on the west side of the river that will allow access to the Numbers upstream of Rapid 1. This site is just upstream of the old put-in, and close to the access site that boaters have been using for the past couple of years.

This access site was possible through the innovative "trading post" concept that allows federal agencies to manage lands owned by other federal agencies. The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (Steve Reese and Dave Taliaferro), Colorado White Water Association, and American Whitewater (Access Director Rich Hoffman) attempted to purchase the piece of property that was historically used for access two years ago but were unsuccessful when the landowner decided not to sell the property.

To reach the "new" put-in: turn off the Highway at Scott's Bridge (the same turn off), carefully cross the railroad tracks, take a left at the sign ("put-in") and drive upstream for about a mile.



AHRA Manager Steve Reese pondering river access in Central America

## Watauga Takeout

In May, American Whitewater signed a contract to purchase a piece of land that will serve as an ideal take out for the Watauga River, a six mile class 4-5 run that flows from NC into TN. The land is approximately 1 acre and is located just downstream of the traditional "short" take out upstream of the lake on Stansberry or Watson Island Road. The closing for the property is the end of July. We will schedule a work party for later this summer. Please send your suggestions for the management and upkeep of this land to Access Director Rich Hoffman, <awa@compuserve.com>.

## Navigability Research Project

For the past several years, American Whitewater has been researching and collecting the law that affects the public right to travel down rivers. As listed in our strategic plan, our goal is to assemble all of the laws that affect the right of downstream passage by the year 2000. Having a library of these laws will enable us to better serve our members who frequently have questions on this issue, and will help to clarify the confusion and potential conflict that exists among boaters, landowners and law enforcement personnel. As the law on this issue varies from state to state, assembling this library will be a large task.

If you are an attorney or know of an attorney in your state

that may be able to assist us with this effort, please contact Rich Hoffman at (301) 589-9453, email: <awa@compuserve.com>. Specifically, we are trying to address the following issues:

1. The rights of the public to float down rivers, the bed and banks of which are privately owned. As stated in 6 ALR4th 1030, "such ownership is normally the consequence of the stream's being 'nonnavigable' in the 'federal' sense, because, instead of having passed into state ownership (as did the beds of 'navigable' waters within their boundaries), the beds thereof passed by virtue of federal patents and incidents of riparian ownership into private hands."

2. The range of public uses allowed in the river corridor (i.e. does the public have the right to make incidental contact with stream bed and/or banks up to the high water mark? Scout and portage around dangerous obstructions? Fish?).

3. The legal basis for these rights (statute, common law and/or constitution), the criteria or test used to determine "navigability," and the role of public trust doctrine.

Any help would be greatly appreciated!

## Black River, NY

For the 1997 boating season, American Whitewater has arranged for a take-out site for the Class 3-5 whitewater run on the Black River that starts in Watertown, NY. Rexam DSI, a factory in the town of Brownville that makes paper products, has graciously allowed us to use a small cove on the downstream end of



Hope this picture gets in AW mag.

Shut up and paddle!

# Celebrate 40 Years of conserving and preserving Whitewater!

Appreciate it! Support American Whitewater...access, conservation, safety and the right to enjoy the great outdoors. And who knows maybe get your picture in a magazine someday.

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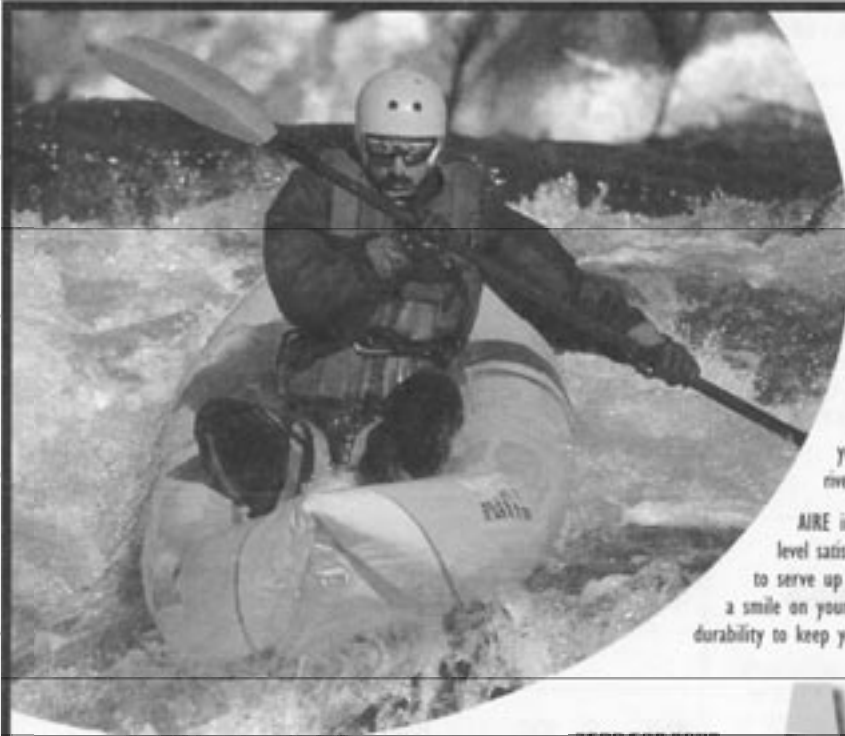
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their property for a take out. To find this site from the road: drive west from Watertown to Brownville. The Rexam plant is located just downstream of the steel bridge in Brownville. The take out is located downstream of their factory, down the big hill, in the small cove. If it is a weekend, and the Rexam parking lot is not crowded, you can park on the far end of the lot closest to the take out. To find this site from the river: move to the right as soon as you pass beneath the steel bridge in Brownville. Eddy out on river right just downstream of the cement wall. Look for the small cove just upstream of the water treatment facility. Please be very, very discrete about changing clothes and

parking. This is a temporary arrangement and we need to establish good relations with the landowner! Also, please consider writing a thank you note to:

Keith E. Strohschein  
Resident Manager  
Rexam DSI  
Bridge Street  
Brownville, NY 13615

Be sure to attend the Black River Festival on July 26-27.

## Grand Canyon Fees

American Whitewater is continuing to work with Grand Canyon National Park to establish a reasonable fee program for non-commercial river runners. GCNP has made several minor modifications to this program:

'The launch fee for solo boaters will be reduced to \$50—a \$150 reduction in overall trip costs.

'The launch fee for parties of 2-5 will be reduced to \$100—a \$100 reduction in overall trip costs.

'The NPS is considering a "family discount" for launch fees.

'The NPS has reinstated the allowance for missing one continuing interest period. In other words, if you do not renew your interest in staying on the waiting list, you can renew your interest the following year, provided you remit the \$50 (\$25/year to maintain your name on the list).

However, GCNP maintains that non-commercial river running is a "special park use" and is required to recover 100% of their management costs. At press time, Access Director Rich Hoffman is scheduled to testify before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to address continuing concerns.

Unlike the lack of public involvement in the fee program,

GCNP is doing an excellent job of spreading the word on the update to the Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP). In Spring '97, GCNP published a document entitled "The Canyon Constituent: Engaging the Public in the Management of Grand Canyon National Park" that clearly outlines the process for the CRMP update. The **timeline** is as follows:

'September '97: Public workshops in Phoenix, Portland and Salt Lake City to define issues and gather information regarding potential solutions.

'January '98: Summary of issues and suggested solutions prepared and distributed. Public continues to be engaged in decision-making process as the draft plan is formulated.

'January '99: Draft plan and environmental assessment released to public for review and comment.

'April '99: Public involvement workshops held to discuss draft plan.

'January 2000: Release of final draft plan and environmental assessment.

To receive a copy of the "Canyon Constituent," write to:

Grand Canyon National Park Science Center  
P.O. Box 129  
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023  
Attn: Linda Jalbert

Or call Linda Jalbert, CRMP Team Leader, at (520) 638-7909.

## Oregon Navigability

At press, the damaging bills circulating around the legislature that would have destroyed public access to rivers appear to be dead.

## South Fork American

American Whitewater continues to be involved in the update to the management plan for the South Fork of the American River (CA). In May, the River Management Advisory Committee voted against looking further into user fees for non-commercial boaters during the formal Environmental Impact Review process. The final vote on this issue from the Board of Supervisors will likely occur this summer. It is unclear whether or not a discussion of user limits will be included in the EIR.

## Metolius River Management Plan

In June, the Forest Service issued its Record of Decision for the Metolius Wild and Scenic River (OR). The FS has decided that boater numbers and season of use are not limited down-

stream of Bridge 99. Instead, a registration system will be used to determine use patterns and thresholds of use that maintain the desired **primitive recreation experience** for both land and water-based visitors. There is no **longer** a provision for agency closure of the river for safety reasons. American Whitewater would like to commend the FS for its active involvement of the public in its decision making, and its responsiveness to that involvement.

**Noah**

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Join Today to Celebrate :

For forty years now American Whitewater conservation, access, safety, recreation and promote whitewater sports and protect a nationwide. You can be a part of the action Whitewater, support our efforts and stay c our bimonthly journal, American Whitewater next millenium!



## American Whitewater Member Benefits

- Subscription to American Whitewater
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- American Whitewater Safety Code
- Special 40th Birthday Bonus --
- American Whitewater Safety Flash Cards

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- Junior (under 21) (\$15.00) ..... \_\_\_\_\_
  - Individual (\$25.00) (Canadian \$30, Foreign \$35) ..... \_\_\_\_\_
  - Family/Household (\$35.00) (Canadian \$40, Foreign \$45) ..... \_\_\_\_\_
  - Ender Club (\$100.00) (Bonus Gift - T-Shirt, Specify M,L,XL) ..... \_\_\_\_\_
  - Retendos (\$250.00) (Bonus Gift - Embroidered KAVU Cap).. \_\_\_\_\_
  - Club Affiliation (\$50.00) ..... \_\_\_\_\_
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- E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I would be interested in working as an AW volunteer.

Remember - tomorrow your favorite river **could** be in jeopardy. A donation of any amount to the AW Whitewater Defense Project goes a long way toward keeping our whitewater rivers wild and free!

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Detach and mail to: AWA, P.O. Box 636, Margaretville, NY 12455

# Events Central

by Jayne H. Abbot

## American Whitewater/NOWR Event Manager

### EVENT CENTRAL - LET THE PADDLES FLY!

by Jayne H. Abbot - Events Manager

And we're off paddling! The 1997 American Whitewater rodeo, races and festival season kicked off in a fury of paddlestrokes at the Kern River on April 18-20. From there, it was off to the East coast and the New River Rodeo April 26-27, then to the Cheat River Festival and the first annual Canyon Creek race organized to help save Canyon Creek from a proposed dam. The Lochsa Rodeo played out in Idaho on May 10 - 11 and the Bigfork was overwatered with a frothy debris-filled flow on May 23-25. The Kananaski rodeo on May 24-25 in Calgary, Alberta started off with 4 inches of snow! A great time was had by all at the Great Falls Race/Potomac Whitewater Festival on May 31 - June 1. It's busy season...and this is only the beginning.

The success of these events is due to a huge number of volunteers who dedicate their time, sweat and equity to pull off these events across the country. Thank you volunteers!!

I was lucky enough to attend both the Kern and New River events and can say first hand that they were excellent! Lots of boaters gathering together for competition and fun - it would be hard not to have a great time under those circumstances! Parties and auctions with great gear donated by sponsors supporting river conservation efforts across the country. Read on for highlights on many of these events then check out our web sites at [www.awa.org](http://www.awa.org) and [www.nowr.org](http://www.nowr.org) for all the latest and greatest from American Whitewater events across the country.

## Kern River Festival

Kernville, CA

April 18-20

The Kern River Alliance sure knows how to put on an event. Days were filled with rodeo, slalom, downriver and squirt events and nights came complete with dinners, videos, silent and live auctions and lots of boating tales with new and old friends.

Attention was drawn to the beautiful Kern River and the conservation issues undertaken jointly by the Kern River Alliance, American Whitewater, FOR and other conservation organizations in California and across the country (see other articles on the Kern in this issue for more details). In a move that surprised and elated our busy organizers, Southern California Edison decided to support the festival by providing an additional 200cfs flow into the river specifically for the rodeo. The Kern River Alliance (KRA), the



Kern Festival. Photo by Todd Standus

group of volunteers putting on the festival who are dedicated to the preservation of the Kern River and its whitewater sports, hopes that this signals a turning point in their negotiations with Southern California Edison for whitewater releases. This move highlights how river festivals can increase awareness of conservation and

access issues and create better relationships between dam owners and recreational boaters

The festival was attended by approximately 200 participants and 1500+ spectators raising \$8,000 to help fund the Kern River Alliance in their efforts to keep water flowing on the Kern.



### Highlights from Kern River Festival Rodeo Results

**Pro/Expert K-1 Men's**

1. Brandon Knapp
  2. Shane Benedict
  3. Dave Collins
- (out of 39 competitors)

**Pro/Expert K-1 Women's**

1. Whitney Lonsdale
  2. Brenda Ernst
  3. Buffy Bailey
- (out of 13 competitors)

**Expert K-1 Junior**

1. Rusty Sage
  2. Ryan Felt
  3. Spencer Steinbach
- (out of 4 competitors)

Kern Festival Rodeo. Photo by Todd Stands

# New River Rodeo

## Blacksburg, VA April 26-27

Celebrating its 10 year anniversary this year, the New River Rodeo marks the first NOWR stop on the East coast. This is an event focusing on the serious whitewater rodeo competitor. There was no downriver, wildwater, extreme or any other type of paddlesport competition. While the weather could have been warmer, the competition was good and the New River Rodeo will continue its tradition for their 11th year next April.

### Highlights from New River Rodeo Results

**Elite (prolexpert) Men's K-1**

1. Clay Wright
  2. Jimmy Blakeney
  3. Tracy Clapp
- (out of 22 competitors)

**Elite (prolexpert) Women's K-1**

1. Aleta Miller
  2. Susan Wilson
  3. Roxanne Howard
- (out of 4 competitors)

**Elite (prolexpert) C-1**

1. Allen Braswell
  2. Ellis Smith
  3. Tracy Clapp
- (out of 4 competitors)

**Elite (prolexpert) Squirt**

1. Eric Zitzow
  2. Matt McOsker
  3. Clay Wright
- (out of 8 competitors)

**Men's Advanced K-1**

1. Jason Arnold
  2. Scott Alexander
  3. Camron Campbell
- (out of 25 competitors)

**Junior Intermediate K-1**

1. Patrick Metheny
  2. Andre Spino-Smith
  3. Nathan McDade
- (out of 9 Competitors)

**Women's Advanced K-1**

1. Joanne Bogner
  2. Michelle Gentry
  3. Cindy Little
- (out of 4 competitors)



---

Highlights from New River Rodeo Results continued

**Advanced Juniors K-1**

1. Nate LaBrecque
2. Jeremy Adkins
3. Andrew Holecombe

**Advanced C-1**

1. Eli Helbert
2. Jonathan Souter
3. Ben LaBrecque  
(out of 4 competitors)

**Men's Intermediate K-1**

1. Jason Hill
2. Ben Dickerson
3. Nathan Freier  
(out of 25 competitors)

**Women's Intermediate K-1**

1. Barb Stiefel
  2. Alicia Zatcoff
  3. Mary Makley  
(out of 5 competitors)
- 

# Lochsa Rendezvous

**Lochsa River, ID**

**May 9-11**

The weather was great, warm and sunny on the days leading up to the Lochsa Rendezvous. Of course warm weather is welcome especially when you've had a winter like Idaho had in '96-'97! However, the warmth brought with it a mass meltdown causing the river to rise quickly and the possibility of a washed out event. In the end, the water held back just enough so that the competition was held and fun was had by all.

**Highlights from Lochsa Rendezvous Rodeo Results**

**Pro/Expert Men's K-1**

1. Shane Benedict
2. Richard Oldenquist (tie)  
Sam Drevo (tie)  
(out of 21 competitors)

**Pro/Expert Women's K-1**

1. Simon Jamie
2. Brenda Ernst
3. Roxanne Labelle  
(out of 9 competitors)

**Pro Junior K-1**

1. Rusty Sage
  2. Brad Ludden
- 

# Bigfork Festival

**Bigfork, MT**

**May 16-18**

The Bigfork Festival was not as lucky as the Lochsa where water is concerned. Thursday, the day before the start of the festival, Missoula Country closed rivers to boating due to high water. Friday rolled around and the Swan River was still open to boaters, but the water was rising. The pro/expert rodeo took place and slalom races got started. Part way into the slalom races a cable above an upstream dam came apart - it had been there for years collecting debris. It was a spectacular show of telephone poles, trees, logs, etc. flushing through the river for about twenty minutes - a real crowd pleaser! All events had to be canceled on the upper and lower stretches of the river due to log jams from the debris. "It was definitely too dangerous to have people on the course" said Gini Ludden lead organizer of this years event.

Spontaneous events were quickly put into action by the organizers and expert/pro competitors - a "Chinese fire drill" event to keep the spectators happy, a sand bagging party to help save a local home and relay race in the bay. While participants were disappointed to be flooded out of the competition and the organizers talents were put to the test, lots of people pulled together to make the event fun for everyone - participants and spectators alike. While us boaters always like to hear water rushing by, sometimes enough is enough!

**Highlights from Bigfork Festival Rodeo Results**

**Pro/Expert Men's K-1**

1. Niko Chassing
2. Corran Addison
3. Sam Drevo  
(out of 9 competitors)

**Pro/Expert Women's K-1**

1. Saskia Van Morik
2. Jamie Simon
3. Jodee Dixon  
(out of 8 competitors)

**Chinese Elimination Race**

Overall Winner - Sam Drevo

# Kananaskis Whitewater Rodeo

Calgary, AB

May 24-26

"This years event was a huge success despite 2 days of solid rain" says Kananaskis Whitewater Rodeo organizer Mark Taylor. "We had 105 competitors in 12 different events and classes. Everything ran smoothly and a great time was had by all! The Western Canadian team being sent to the worlds was chosen at this event and looks to be strong. A huge THANK YOU to all of the volunteers and sponsors that made this event possible, in particular Dagger and Stohlquist both NOWR national premier sponsors. We are looking forward to next years event and hope to you all here!!"

## Highlights from Kananaskis Whitewater Rodeo Results

### Expert Men's K-1

1. Eric Southwick
2. Sam Drevo
3. Chris Emerick  
(out of 21 competitors)

### Expert Women's K-1

1. Saskia VanMourik
2. Heather Lamson
3. Erin Cullen  
(out of 14 competitors)

### Expert Men's Open Canoe

1. Lyle Dickieson
2. Tyler Elm
3. Ian Holmes

### Expert men C-1

1. Cody Boger
2. Tony Howes
3. Tyler Elm  
(out of 10 competitors)

### Expert Men's Squirt

1. Paul Marwood
2. Jodee Schick
3. Lyle Thompson  
(out of 5 competitors)

### Expert Women's Squirt

1. Darlene Fair
2. Michelle Hofstee
3. Loretta Sale

# Potomac Whitewater Festival/Great Falls Race

May 31 - June 1

The Potomac event was a great success. Water levels and weather were ideal both days. Spectators numbered in the one-thousand range, competitors estimated at 170 and close to \$8,000 was raised to help fund American Whitewater's conservation and access programs! "We nearly doubled all of our figures from the previous year" said Potomac organizer Pope Barrow.

## Highlights from the Potomac Whitewater Festival/Great Falls Race

### RODEO RESULTS

#### Pro/Expert Men's K-1

1. Eric Jackson
2. Kurt Braunlich
3. Luke Hopkins

#### Pro/Expert Women's K-1 Expert Juniors K-1

1. Deb Ruehle
  2. Allison Steiner
  3. Aleta Miller
1. Nejc Poberaj
  2. Sabastian Zimmer
  3. Danny Stock

#### Pro/Expert C-1

1. Ryan Bahn
2. Dirk Young
3. Andy Bridge

### GREAT FALLS RACE

#### Women

1. Deb Ruehle
2. Harriet Taylor

#### Junior K-1 (under 18)

1. Sabastian Zimmer
2. Andrew McEwan
3. Kyle Marinello

#### C-1

1. Ryan Bahn
2. Andy Bridge
3. Adam Boyd

#### Masters K-1 (over 40)

1. Mike Hipshir
2. Tom McEwan
3. Jerry Lechowick

#### Senior K-1

1. Eric Jackson
2. Jason Beakes
3. Brent Weisel



Above: Great Falls Race Photos by Rich Bowers

## NOWR Point Series Championship

The National Organization of Whitewater Rodeos is pleased to present the first annual NOWR Point Series Championship. The championship series provides an opportunity for rodeo boaters to showcase their freestyle rodeo skills at NOWR events around the country and gather points towards becoming the first ever NOWR SERIES CHAMPION!

Points will be earned in the following six **pro/expert** classes only at all 1997 NOWR events as follows:

### K1 Men's

Place	Pts	Place	Pts	Place	Pts
1	30	6	13	11	8
2	25	7	12	12	7
3	20	8	11	13	6
4	15	9	10	14	5
5	14	10	9	15	4

### K1 Women's, C1, OC1, SQK1, Junior

Place	Pts	Place	Pts
1	25	6	8
2	20	7	7
3	15	8	6
4	10	9	5
5	9	10	4

The points above will awarded for **Funtier** events and will be multiplied by a factor of 2 for Upper Tier events. The winners will be announced in November, 1997 and the first place winner of each class will be awarded an engraved trophy from Nazazi Artworks. The top three placements will receive certificates for their accomplishments. The winners picture and name will appear in American Whitewater's Journal as well as in press releases to media across the country.

Best of luck to all NOWR competitors and may the best person win!

#### Restrictions:

A class must have a minimum of 3 competitors to be eligible for points.

Classes must be held at a minimum of 8 events for results to qualify for championship series awards.

## Perception Donates Events Trailer

Thanks to the generous donation by Perception Kayaks and President Bill Masters, American Whitewater is now the proud owners of a 5ft x 8ft trailer complete with American Whitewater and Perception logos. This newest addition to the American Whitewater family will be used to tote our ever increasing events equipment to an event near you. You know how it goes, you start something and it just keep growing and growing and growing (kind of like how the Energizer bunny keeps going and going....) until you've amassed enough stuff to fill....well, let's just say it's a trailer load.

Over the years, Phyllis Horowitz, American Whitewater Administrative Director, and her husband Denis have seen this pile of equipment grow and have watched it creep into their storage area and begin to take hold, like how Kudzu vines grows in the Southeast. Over time, the cost of renting trailers to bring this increasing load to our ever expanding array of events added up to some big bucks. And our events are definitely not shrinking!

In case you're wondering what this stuff could possibly be, it's really good stuff we need to make our events run smoothly and light our way, items like; miles of power cords, huge lights, fuseboxes, ladders, etc. There's even some duck tape (but of



course!) and other miscellaneous stuff of importance to event organizers.

The unveiling of the newest addition to our equipment staff took place under a drizzling sky at the Cheat River Festival on May 3. Board member Barry Tuscano promptly packed the new baby up and whisked it away for it's final annointment- customized racks and shelving with space for all of that stuff! Thanks Perception!

Rated at class 3-4.

# BLACK

Free rodeo and surfing clinics for AWA members.

# RIVER

The Black River Bay Campground has a special section for Festival camping.

July 26-27,  
1997 at  
Watertown,  
New York's  
Riverwalk Park

Featuring two days of "on the water" activities—the Black River Festival promises to be an exciting change from the AWA's typical festival format.

■ The celebration includes two days of instructional clinics, a novice rodeo competition, on-the-water equipment demos and other events.

# FESTIVAL

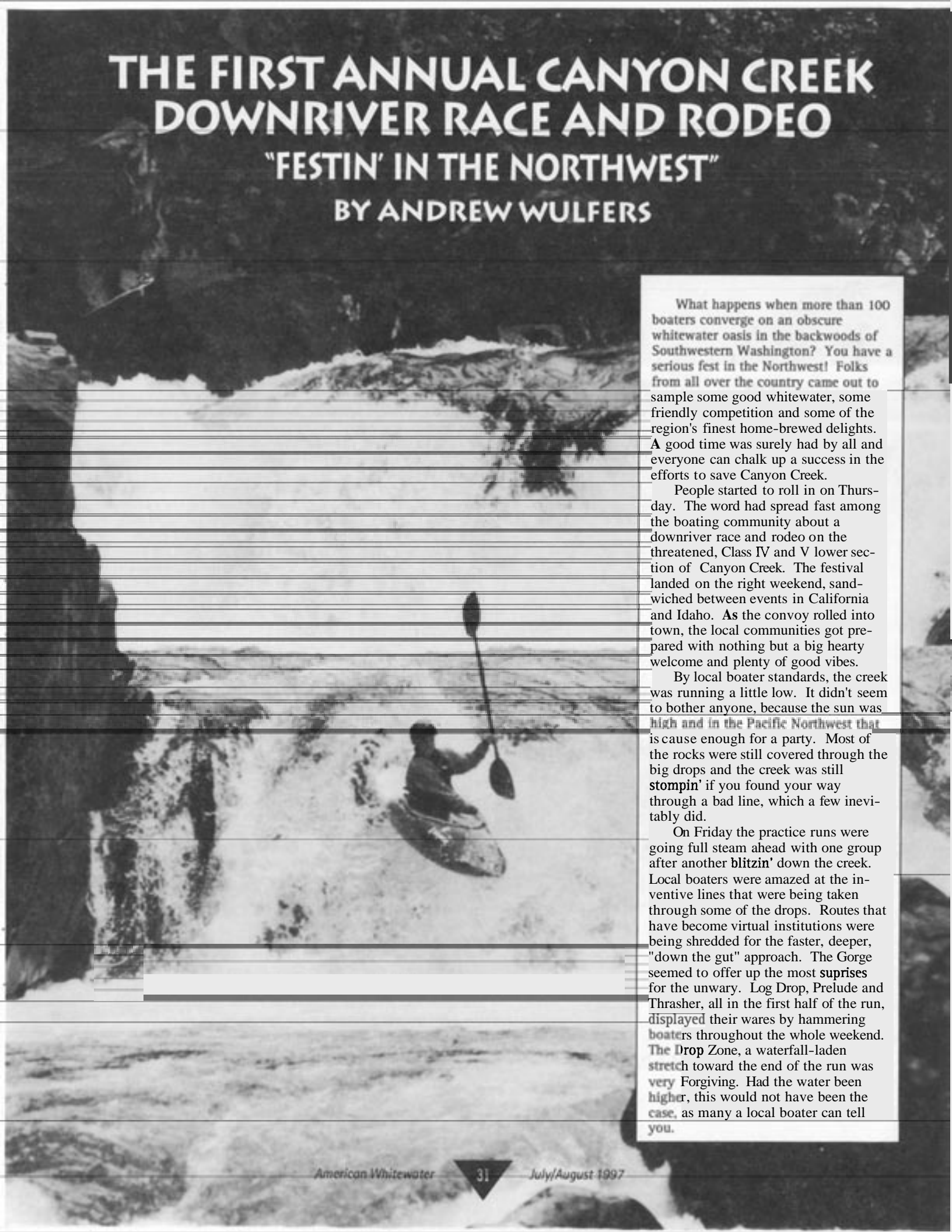
Registration for the weekend clinics and rodeo will be made on a first-come, first served basis on the day of the Festival at the AWA booth starting at the Adirondack River **Outfitters** put-in.

■ For more information, contact Chris Koll at (315)652-8397 or by e-mail at [CKOLL1234@aol.com](mailto:CKOLL1234@aol.com). A festival newsletter featuring maps and detailed schedule of events will be available in mid May—call to receive more information.

# THE FIRST ANNUAL CANYON CREEK DOWNRIVER RACE AND RODEO

## "FESTIN' IN THE NORTHWEST"

BY ANDREW WULFERS



What happens when more than 100 boaters converge on an obscure whitewater oasis in the backwoods of Southwestern Washington? You have a serious fest in the Northwest! Folks from all over the country came out to sample some good whitewater, some friendly competition and some of the region's finest home-brewed delights. A good time was surely had by all and everyone can chalk up a success in the efforts to save Canyon Creek.

People started to roll in on Thursday. The word had spread fast among the boating community about a downriver race and rodeo on the threatened, Class IV and V lower section of Canyon Creek. The festival landed on the right weekend, sandwiched between events in California and Idaho. As the convoy rolled into town, the local communities got prepared with nothing but a big hearty welcome and plenty of good vibes.

By local boater standards, the creek was running a little low. It didn't seem to bother anyone, because the sun was high and in the Pacific Northwest that is cause enough for a party. Most of the rocks were still covered through the big drops and the creek was still **stompin'** if you found your way through a bad line, which a few inevitably did.

On Friday the practice runs were going full steam ahead with one group after another **blitzin'** down the creek. Local boaters were amazed at the inventive lines that were being taken through some of the drops. Routes that have become virtual institutions were being shredded for the faster, deeper, "down the gut" approach. The Gorge seemed to offer up the most **surprises** for the unwary. Log Drop, Prelude and Thrasher, all in the first half of the run, **displayed** their wares by hammering boaters throughout the whole weekend. **The Drop Zone**, a waterfall-laden stretch toward the end of the run was very Forgiving. Had the water been higher, this would not have been the case, as many a local boater can tell you.

## THE FIRST ANNUAL CANYON CREEK DOWNRIVER RACE AND RODEO CONTINUED



**ALL PHOTOS BY JAY CARROLL  
PHOTOGRAPHY**

Between practice runs small groups of paddlers would chip in some time for what I am sure was the first ever Canyon Creek Clean-Up. By the end of the weekend we had amassed quite a selection of oddities, some of which were from a different era all together and the place was looking better than I had ever seen it. A special thanks goes to the group at the put-in who helped rid the area of some of the most disgusting, rot-infested garbage ever to grace the great grounds of the Northwest. You were true wamors.

There was a huge throwdown at Mike and Brenda Olson's house on Friday night. The Wave Sport crew was in glitter suits and shining shoes and provided some of the evenings refreshments. Orosi was in the house with a fat keg of good beer and KAVU rounded things out with a barbecue fit for kings and queens. Like I said, "a serious fest in the Northwest".

The Team Race went off without a hitch on Saturday morning. Despite folks feeling a little grizzled from the previous night, there was a good turnout. Twenty-two teams plunged themselves across the finish line, which was located at the bottom of the last falls (literally, as soon as you hit the boof the race was over). Teams consisted of two people and they had to cross the finish line within thirty seconds of one another. This worked out well but next year count on being ten seconds apart.

The solo downriver race was next. Twenty nine competitors gave it their best. Safety was set throughout the canyon with rescue teams stationed at each drop. Debate raged early on about whether to race a mass start or be a timed event. Sanity and safety got the better of us and we opted for starting at thirty second intervals. Everyone raced clean and fast with only a few mishaps along the way. What would an extreme race be without the usual bits and pieces of carnage? Everything was video taped and we are in the process of putting together a video of the event.

By Saturday night people were hungry and thirsty. The town of Amboy, WA was kind enough to rent us the community park and it provided us with the perfect setting for a grand party. Wave Sport came through with a deluxe, catered feast for the masses and another untapped keg of the Northwest's finest in ales. I can surely appreciate a company getting behind a good cause and supporting paddlers doing what they do best.

The race awards ceremony was held immediately following dinner and the highlight was when Brian Tooley's first place cash prize was given back to race organizers to help fight the dam on Canyon Creek. The spirit of the event had come alive and the party raged on into the night..

Sunday was rodeo day. "The Wheel" was a little rocky but the ends were flying anyway. What made the went special but also a little difficult to organize was the fact that the Canyon Creek hole sits deep in the canyon, it is not some roadside jubilee like Bob's Hole. The quarter of a mile hike down into the canyon didn't seem like it was stopping people from showing up; the house was packed and over 60 people entered the event. Competition was tight. The way I saw it was there were about five first place finishers in every class. I am thankful to the judges, it was a difficult job. The fans loved it and there was plenty of enthusiasm to last through the finals.

After the event I stood at the put-in bridge, hazy from three days of non-stop action, and reflected a little upon the water flowing underneath me.

I imagined what rebar, concrete and steel would look like, choking the river below me. A giant funnel sucking the lifeblood from the streambed and delivering all of its essence into a turbine downstream. This event was not about glamorizing

how great the boating is out here, it was a call to action and the entire community answered. When over 150 runs go down Canyon Creek in two days, you know the place is special.

It makes you feel good to be part of the paddling community when everyone pitches in for a good cause. Companies like Patagonia, Wave Sport, The Greenwood Lodge in Vancouver, WA, Perception, Alder Creek Kayak and Canoe, All Star Rafting and Kayaking, KAVU and Orsi deserve our support. They are willing to stand up for what we float on. The race and rodeo wasn't the most high profile and visible event in history but the sponsorship that was there deserves special recognition for giving something back. In the end we raised well over one thousand dollars for the AWA Northwest Conservation Fund, which allocates money to the Northwest in times of need.

**Race and Rodeo Results:**

**Downriver Race**

**Women's Pro Class**

1. Jamie Simon
2. Buffy Bailly
3. Whitney Lonsdale
3. Maria Nokes

**Men's Pro Class**

1. Brian Tooley
2. Dan Gavere
3. Sam Drevo

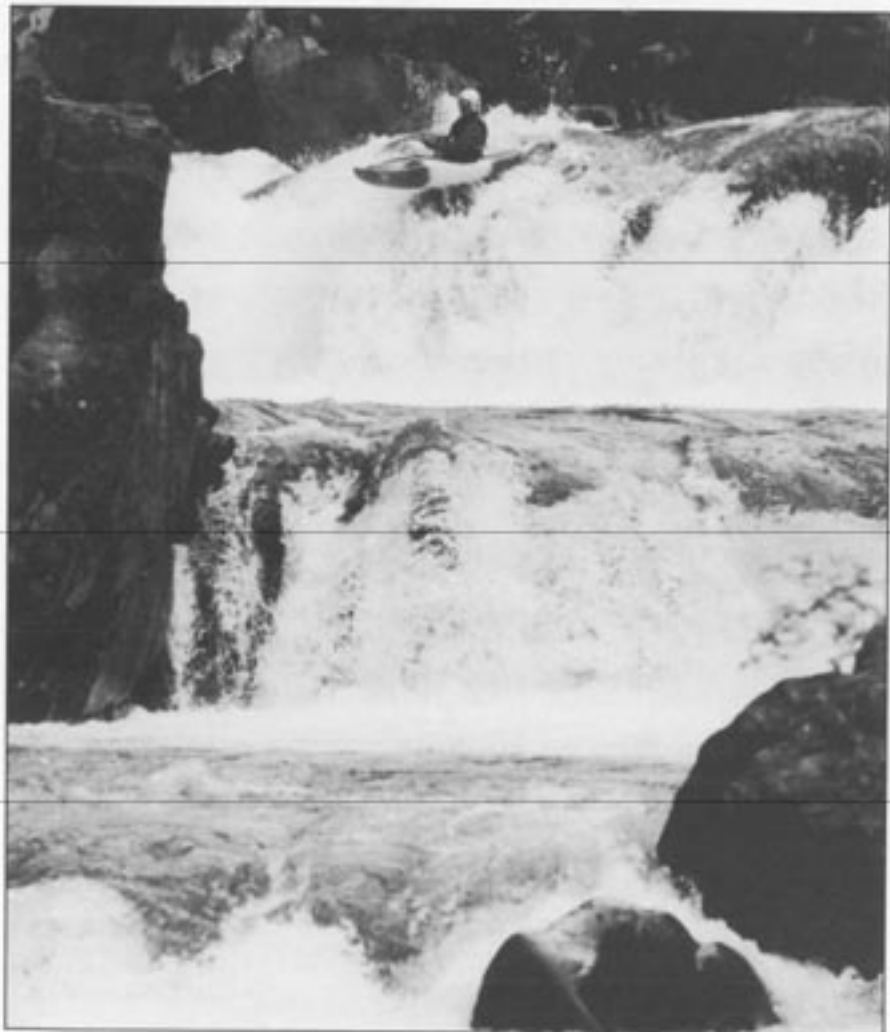
**Rodeo at "The Wheel"**

**Women's Pro Class**

1. Ericka Mitchell
2. Jamie Simon
3. Brenda Ernst (T)
3. Jamie Cooper (T)
4. Whitney Lonsdale

**Men's Pro Class**

1. Richard Oldenquist
2. Dan Gavere
3. Shane Benedict
4. Josh Kitella
5. Jay Kincaid



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# UPDATED 1997 SCHEDULE OF RIVER EVENTS

## AMERICAN WHITEWATER EVENTS

Kennebec River Festival	July 5	ME	Tom Christopher	508-534-9447
Black River Festival	July 26-27	NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397
Deerfield Festival	August 2	MA	Tom Christopher	508-534-9447
Upper Yough Race	August 21	MD	Jessi Whittemore	301-746-5389
Gore Canyon Downriver Race	August 23-24	CO	Paul Tefft	970-923-3955
Gauley Festival	Sept. 20	WV	Phyllis Horowitz	914-586-2355
Gauley River Race	Sept. 29	WV	Donnie Hudspeth	800-950-2585
Russell Fork Race	Oct. 25	VA	Phyllis Horowitz	914-586-2355
Moose River Festival	Oct. 18	NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397

### NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF WHITEWATER RODEOS (NOWR) CIRCUIT

Derby Creek Days	July 25-27	CO	Chris Emerick	970-736-0080
Kootenay WW Festival	August 2-4	BC	Bob Dupee	250-447-6561
Ottawa River Rodeo	August 29-31	Ontario	Paul Sevcik	416-222-2221
American River Festival	Sept. 12-14	CA	Larry Goral	916-621-1224
Outer Banks Surf/Kayak Rodeo	Sept. 19-21	NC	Pam Malec	919-441-6800
Savage Rapids Rodeo/ Slalom	Sept. 26-28	OR	Dunbar Hard!	541-482-4148
Coosa River WW Festival	October 3-5	AL	Lonnie Carden	334-272-0952
Ocoee Rodeo	October 10-12	NC	Susan Wilson	704-658-1332

### OTHER EVENTS

Nenana Whitewater Festival	July 19-20	AK	Chris Bataille	907-451-0110
West Coast Team Trials	July 11-13	CO	Dan Brabec	970-736-0080
1997 World Championship	Sept. 5-7	Ottawa	Mark Scriver	613-727-5388
World Cup #1	July 5	DC	Eric/Brian	202-546-9214
World Cup #2	July 15	DC	Eric/Brian	202-546-9214
World Cup #3	July 19	DC	Eric/Brian	202-546-9214
World Cup #4	July 26	DC	Eric/Brian	202-546-9214
Extreme World Kayak Championship	Sept. 19-21	DC	Eric/Brian	202-546-9214



Don't Be Worryin' Your Mama!

## EXPLORING THE WILDS OF MEXICO

by Jason Robertson



"Adventure is not in the guidebook and Beauty is not on the map."

—Terry & Renny Russell

Exploration holds an element of risk that attracts and frightens me. There is a brutal honesty in finding my limits or realizing that I have surpassed the normal boundaries of my life. I have memories from kayaking and climbing in which my experiences seem almost supernatural because they were so far beyond my daily life. In these memories the facts have turned into stories which later became tales that now retain only tenuous elements of the truth. When my friends and I travel down to Mexico during the winter and explore rivers in our kayaks, the mundane facts of our experience are hidden by the fantastic memories of our daily hardships and adventures. That is why my favorite stories from this last winter were not really about kayaking; the rivers merely provided the props and setting for a higher adventure.

Through exploration I learn about myself and my world and am repeatedly amazed at what I find. I am reminded of the words of Annie Dillard, who wrote that Nature "conceals with a grand nonchalance." After examining the maps, and planning a descent into

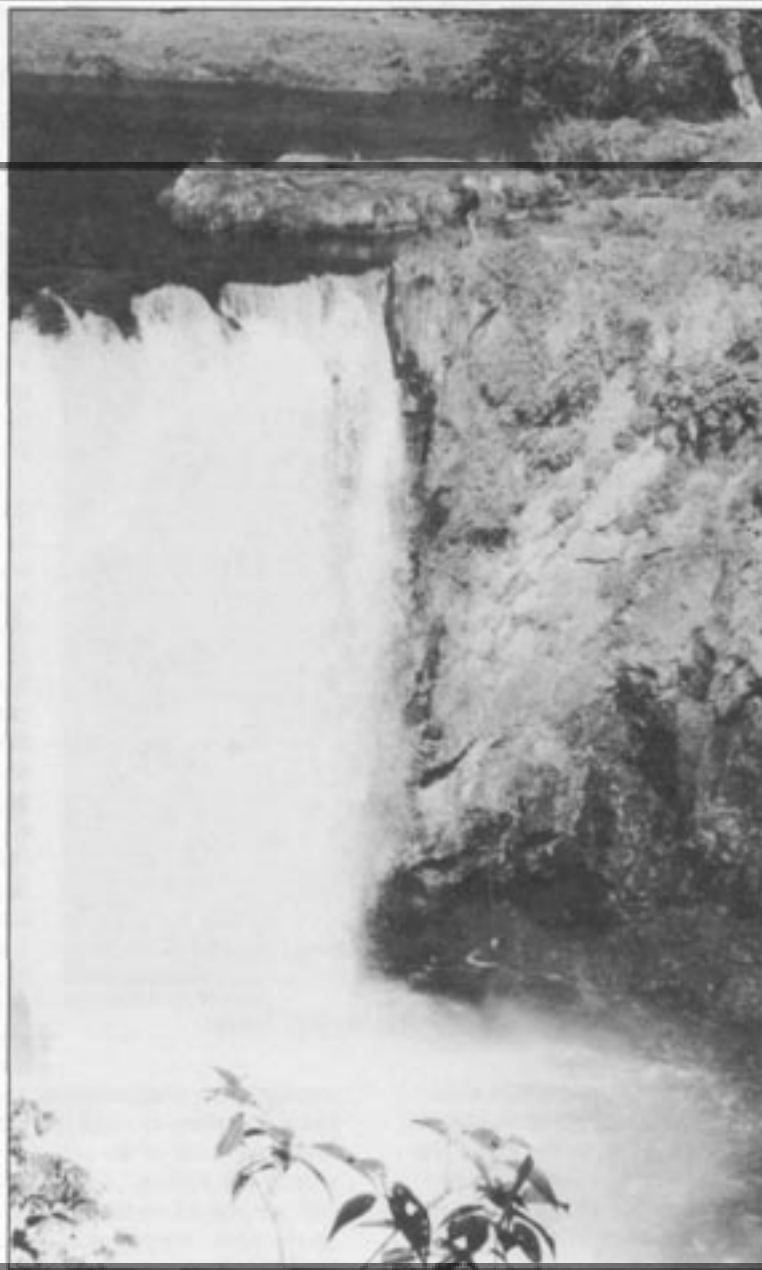


photo by Dave Bruton

Upper Tomata, Tom McEwan measuring the 30' foot falls with a 75' throw rope.

and through a gorge, there is always the mystique of seeing a waterfall for the first time, or listening to the rumble of a rapid beyond the next bend. Then there is the added thrill of discovering that the maps are wrong and that an impassible waterfall plunges over a hundred feet just yards from the bow of your boat, or the reminder that rivers never do run straight as the river winds its way through a maze of house-size boulders.

In our pursuit of adventure we make choices based upon our fears and hopes and dreams. We push the limits of our bodies and equipment, seeking out the unknown, always trying to peer around the next corner. We know that we can stretch ourselves just a little further if we have to, until, at last, the decision to commit and step beyond the knowable has been made. But through it all, we caution ourselves with individual variations on Stefansson's mantra that "a successful expedition is a boring one because nothing

goes wrong." We take every precaution and try to account for the worst, but do not allow our fears to stop us from making the attempt.



**"The elemental simplicities of wilderness travel were thrills not only because of their novelty, but because they represented complete freedom to make mistakes. The wilderness gave them their first taste of those rewards and penalties for wise and foolish acts which every woodsman faces daily, but against which civilization has built a thousand buffers. These boys were "on their own" in this particular sense." —**

**Aldo Leopold**

Every Winter Tom McEwan arranges for a team of expert kayakers to explore Mexico's whitewater rivers. This year Tom brought two expeditions down and I was a member of the second team. Three weeks before I arrived in Vera Cruz, the first expedition spent three fruitless days hiking down a virtually dry river bed on the Las Minas to a town of the same name. Members of this group tell stories about their experience of climbing over obstructions, through cacti, and over choked boulder gardens. Ultimately, this first group resorted to dragging their boats almost twenty miles without finding more than a few yards of runnable whitewater on the entire upper reaches of the river. Brutal. To make matters worse, as the group was hiking out of the canyon to meet the van, they spied a second canyon below the town of Las Minas with "incredible" whitewater but didn't have time to explore it. This story set the stage for the first leg of our trip.

Our team of eight collected at the Aguas Caliente, hot springs, in the town of Carrizal, Vera Cruz. The team was led by Tom McEwan and John Weld, and included myself, Eric Brooks, Dave Bruton, Chase Sheridan, Alex Markoff, and Joe Bryson. Ben Lockard and Sarah Park volunteered to run our shuttles.

Our first decision was to run the Bobos from the town of



photo by Jason Robertson

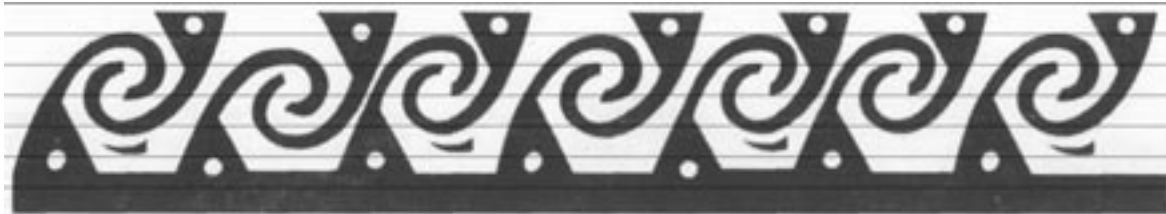
Alex Markhoff is the meat of "Martian," Tomata.

through sheer stubbornness, rather than any act of engineering. The gorge slices through the mountains and is only a few hundred yards wide at the top, and generally less than ten yards wide at the bottom. As we were bumping our way down the cliff, we passed an old Indian woman leading a pair of donkeys up the path. We pulled aside and, surprisingly, got a tongue lashing for being on the wrong side of the path. Through sign language and Dave Bruton's translation, we determined that a woman had died after being kicked off the cliff by a donkey. Lesson learned, we stepped to the inside of the path, leaned against the wall, and let the old woman lead her donkeys past. The remainder of the hike was uneventful and we finally reached the river around 4:00.

It is useful to note that distances began to reach epic pro-

Tatemala to Plan de Arroyos. As we spent four hours making the forty-mile drive to the put-in from the hot springs, Eric Brooks was an all too entertaining and cooperative victim of Montezuma's Revenge and we were unsure whether he would be able to paddle. Our run down the Bobos would not be a first descent, though no one in our group had been through the canyon. We had heard that the gorge was an incredible Class IV+ experience and were really psyched about running it. We were not to be disappointed. Meanwhile, John Weld and Ben Lockard hitchhiked to the town of Las Minas where they were going to attempt to explore the "incredible" stretch of the river that John had spotted on the earlier trip. Las Minas was off the edge of our map: however, we calculated that they had about five miles of paddling before reaching the confluence of the Bobos and the Las Minas below the town of Tatemala.

When the seven of us arrived at the put-in for the Bobos, we unloaded the van, packed our boats, and started hiking to the river at about 2:00. We waded down a donkey path through knee-deep mud for about 75 yards before finding the trail down to the river. Those of us who were merely human resorted to dragging our boats which were packed heavily (80 lbs.) with sleeping bags, bivvy sacks, pots, paddles, throw ropes, climbing gear, a change of really warm clothes, first aid kits, meals, water purifiers, and our books. Tatemala is on the lip of a 1500 foot deep canyon with nearly sheer walls. The trail down to the river is about 4 feet wide and seems to hang on the walls of the canyon



portions and scale became difficult to judge. There are few familiar visual references in the gorge and, as a result, distances are difficult to judge. At first glance, rapids, rocks, and plants often appear to be much smaller than they really are. The problem of scale increases the sense of unreality I have when I am traveling in Mexico and often leaves me with a shortage of adjectives: awesome, majestic, massive, etc. The cacti are too large, the canyons are too deep, and the ferns are too big for my East Coast eyes to measure.

The put-in for this stretch of the **Bobos** is a sandy beach with a beautiful stone bridge that, if there were magic in the world, should have a family of trolls living in its shadows. The river begins with a Class III-IV run, disappears around a blind comer, and quickly becomes more difficult. We scouted two significant rapids in the first two hundred yards and set up camp a mere quarter mile from the put-in. While some of us gathered driftwood for a fire, others set up drying lines and pumped water. By dinner time Brooks was recuperating from the worst that Mexico could throw at him, while I was just starting to succumb to Mexico's effects on my stomach. The sun quickly disappeared, but a full moon rose shortly after we hung up our gear and reflected light off the canyon walls for most of the night.

The next day we set out at dawn and explored about 4 miles of solid Class III whitewater, scattered with a dozen Class IV's, a couple of serious Class V's, and one fourteen foot waterfall. The waterfall was unlike any that I have run before and though the drop was clean, it was essentially impossible to deflect off the shore and boof flatly into the deep pool below. No one accurately anticipated what their boat would do on this drop. Variations included pirouetting off the surface of the pool, literally bouncing our bows off the water, instantly transitioning into a stem squirt, and pulling a vanishing act or "melting" down, a euphemism for swimming. A few minutes below "Meltdown Falls," Chase broke his dad's brand new

paddle after scouting a drop. As a result, Chase used our only "break-apart" paddle for the last seven miles of the trip. Fortunately, we didn't need another paddle and the canyon opened up turning the river into a Class II-III paradise with an occasional IV or V.

We stopped and ate lunch on a gravel bed and explored a side canyon which sliced down from the plateau. The creek only had about 25 cfs of flow, and was about two-feet deep: but the water cascaded over dozens of six to ten-foot waterfalls. The walls of this gorge leaned inward and we could often touch both sides and mantle ourselves up the polished walls. Finally, after climbing a half-mile up the river, the river divided and we found a three hundred-foot waterfall hammering into the canyon on the right branch. I am convinced that the total number of people that have ever seen this waterfall can be counted on two hands. It was a magical experience being in such a beautiful location that has never been seen before.

We arrived at the takeout, which is located at the bridge in Plan de Arroyos, sat back in a cafe on the riverbank to enjoy the weather and a cerveza and waited for John and Ben. They didn't show up and, when the sun set, we drove to the beautiful town of Tlapacoyan. This was a rare chance to shower and we were determined to take full advantage of it. We were not yet concerned about John and Ben, since the two of them had only been on the river for two days and had food for another. We figured that they were probably camping a few miles upriver of the takeout and would catch up with us soon enough. Meanwhile, we intended to explore the Tomata River from the town of Tomata to the road to Plan de Arroyos.

At this point my memory gets a little fuzzy as my intestines got tangled up in the Mexican cuisine. Though I clearly remember the misery of being sick and not being able to hold down a meal for several days, I don't remember much about the Upper Tomata. I was too ill, and the rapids were just too outlandish to properly comprehend back in the security of the



photo by Jason Robertson





Jason Robertson, "Resurrection Falls," Rio Verde.

States. I remember snapshots of the trip, such as hiking to the put-in and staring at a seventy-five-foot waterfall which Tom swore was a "runnable thirty-footer." I remember opting to bypass the falls and carrying around it through an orange grove to a point where it's possible to climb down the cliffs and seal launch off the rocks, dropping into the river. Once we were on the river, we paddled upstream to the third runnable drop which we called "Martian" (Class V+) where I found a patch of sunshine on the cliff and fell asleep. Meanwhile, the other guys spent two hours portaging a couple of hundred yards up the canyon, and climbing over two more drops to get to the foot of a sixty-foot waterfall which Tom thinks may be runnable (remember, Tom also said a seventy-five-foot falls was only thirty!). Regardless, there are plenty of falls below this sixty-foot drop that are sufficiently challenging to satisfy the most dedicated paddler. Alex spent an hour trying to name the first truly runnable drop, a comparatively small eight-foot falls, "El Qordo" or "The Hog," while Chase Sheridan quickly named the second eight-foot drop, "Huevitos" or "Little Eggs." These are followed by Martian which drops more than thirty feet in about the same distance. The last stretch of this rapid is vertical, and the first stretch is just plain

hairy and pushy. Of the fourteen very strong paddlers that have seen this rapid only four have run it. The line is incredibly narrow, and the current pushes strongly into a monster sieve on the right. In the three miles below Martian, there are about six more drops which range in height from twelve to twenty-five feet, including "The Nozzle" (a sweet, 15', undercut, corkscrewing waterfall), "Mama McEwan" (25'), "Brindle Falls" (25-30'), and an unnamed Class V rapid that swallowed Tom McEwan for several seconds, but treated the rest of us with the respect we figured we deserved. Though all the rapids are runnable, most of us carried Mama McEwan: actually we climbed out on the rocks tossed our boats over the edge and leapt more than forty-feet into the backwash of the falls. The takeout was not obvious, until we pulled around a corner within a few dozen yards of the horizon line of a hundred-foot waterfall! One of the exciting aspects of exploring this river is that none of these drops were on the topological maps of the area. We only found out about this river through word of mouth from a tourist who had visited the first waterfall while working for the US Ambassador in Mexico City!

As our group has too often discovered, maps of Mexico tend to approximate large surface features and roads, and merely average the gradients of rivers rather than depict waterfalls or rapids. Towns move from map to map, changing names and spellings without regard for their relative size or economic importance. Major roads may or may not be paved, and major intersections may or may not be marked as indicated on the map. Maps of Mexico loosely reflect the countryside and are generally less reliable than a guide or a hitchhiker: in the end, intuition is often your best guide. Cormac McCarthy wrote in *The Crossing* that "...a bad map was worse than no map at all for it engendered in the traveler a false confidence and might easily cause him to set aside those instincts which would otherwise guide him, if he would but place himself in their care," concluding that, "to follow a false map was to invite disaster." In Mexico, this statement is particularly accurate, though the worst disasters that we have experienced were from winding up two hours or thirty miles in the wrong direction. We have learned to trust our instincts and keep our senses open when traveling in the countryside. There are few guardrails or warning signs, and the roads are littered with the rusted remains of old accidents.

After running the Tomata we loaded up the van and drove



Chase Sheridan, "Huevitos," Tomata.

photo by Dave Bruton

back to the takeout for the **Bobos**. John and Ben were still missing in action, so we decided to send the van to Las Minas the next morning. That night we spent another relatively luxurious night sleeping in a hotel while our friends camped in the bush. We calculated that the guys were literally eating their last meal, and theorized that they would meet us at the take-out in the morning. So, with an easy conscience we sat down to a meal of acarnayas, which are a type of freshwater shrimp, and **cervezas** and planned for a first descent of the Middle Tomata.

Our plans to descend the Tomata were based on our observations of the gorge below the hundred-foot falls. We had seen that the canyon walls on the Middle Tomata were so steep, so incredibly narrow, and so featureless that we would be unable to approach the edge and scout the river from above. Furthermore, what natural means of protection existed, such as trees or cacti, were too unstable for setting up climbing ropes or reliable, "bomber" anchors to support our weight. The soil is composed of a shallow blanket of loam stretched across a bed of basalt. The soil is loose, trees are easily uprooted, and cacti thrive on the edges. Therefore our initial plan was to return to the hundred-foot waterfall and lower a paddler to the pool at its base. This paddler would scout the first bend in the gorge, make the decision whether the river was mnnable and determine whether it would even be possible to get back out of the canyon further downstream. If the canyon was not negotiable, then the paddler would **jumar** back up the repel line and we'd go to Plan B, which was to find a better access point downstream. However, Plan A did

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not survive the drive to the put-in. Instead, as we drove over an arroyo in the side of the gorge, we got out and scouted a path which descended to within 50' of the river. We figured this would be a better access point even though it meant leaving a quarter mile of the river unexplored.

We pulled the boats off the van, packed a minimum of overnight gear in our dry bags, and began repelling down the cliff to the water. We dropped **two** paddlers and their gear into the canyon and they took off around the first bend to see if we would be able to get out of the canyon further downstream. These scouts, Brooks and Alex, **quickly** vanished around the corner abandoning me on the side of the river, untangling the climbing ropes, and gathering boats as they were lowered to the banks. The biggest hazards on this trip came from dodging the falling rocks that the boats dislodged, and fending off the oily carpet of ants that threatened to carry off our boats as the rest of the guys repelled down. As soon as the scouts reappeared and reported that it would be possible to get out downriver Dave **Bruton** and I got in our boats and began exploring upriver, following our ears to the unmistakable sound of a thundering waterfall. I rounded the first bend and immediately found a **seventy-foot** waterfall! We had definitely made the right decision to bypass the repel down the hundred-foot falls earlier in the morning, since the repel around this waterfall looked dicey and would have been difficult and time-consuming to navigate with such a large group.

Following the initial excitement of the repel and the thrill of a first descent, the whitewater on the Middle Tomata was somewhat **disappointing**. The first rapid that we discovered was a beefy **version of Sock 'em Dog** on the Chattooga, but the river quickly mellowed out and the canyon opened up. Despite the disappointing rapids, the gorge was incredibly majestic and we stopped to absorb the beauty of the place. A couple of miles downriver the gorge tightened up again and the river picked up its velocity. Tom had scouted the takeout earlier in the trip and had warned us that, "it would be bad to miss," a typical **McEwan** understatement, which he later qualified, adding that rescue was "nearly impossible." However, we safely eddied out and dragged our boats up to the road. While we were waiting for Sarah to return with the van from Las Minas, we hiked downstream through orange and banana groves to the edge of the gorge and scouted a couple of miles downriver. We decided that at somewhat lower water this could be the preeminent whitewater run in North America! The river necks down into a thirty-foot deep canyon with vertical, featureless walls. The first rapid is a ten-foot drop into a recirculating maelstrom that disappears around a bend. The next quarter mile was unscoutable,

though thunderous, and ended with a twenty-foot drop, followed immediately by a fifteen-foot drop and a forty-foot drop. The portions of the next mile that were scoutable included several ten to twenty foot waterfalls and some of the best oranges and mandarins that I have ever eaten.

When Sarah finally **returned** from Las Minas with the van, we found out that she had not been able to find our friends. She said that she had spoken with two men that had seen them carrying their boats to the put-in, answering our question of whether they actually made it to the river. Since the Tomata is only minutes from the Bobos we drove to Plan de Arroyos one last time, hoping that the John and Ben would be there waiting for us. They were not.

### III.

**"And dont be gone late worryin' your  
mama neither."**

**—Cormac McCarthy**



We started getting concerned, things got sketchy, and our story got a little longer. We drove back to Tlapacoyan for a brainstorming session, plotting our strategy for the



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Chase Sheridan, "Rain Forest Crunch," Tomata.

next morning. John and Ben had been missing for four days. They had probably not eaten for the last twenty-four hours. We believed that they were still somewhere within a thirty-mile stretch of the gorge or else they would have hitchhiked into town to meet us.

I began fantasizing worst case scenarios to explain why John and Ben were so late, and succeeded at shattering my confidence for the following week. The worst believable scenario involved a broken leg, a drowning, an **unrunnable** waterfall, and an impossible evacuation. The canyons are steep; but we figured that it was possible to get out if they abandoned their boats. We knew that John had some bolts, which they could have drilled into the rock to set protection and climb up the walls. If there had been a drowning, then we had confidence in both John and Ben's ability to get out and contact us. Therefore we figured that they were either stuck and just didn't want to abandon their boats (probable), they were lost on the canyon rim (unlikely), they were hiking through another canyon like the first group on the previous trip (didn't really fit, since they both wanted to hit the **Tomata** with us and would have quickly backtracked to **Las Minas**), they were both injured or had drowned through some bizarre

accident (possible), or they were assaulted by the region's **narco-traffickers** (not to be discounted). However, one of the great things about John is that he really gets off on impossible situations: he thrives on sheer acts of endurance and has a supreme will to get the job done right. Sending John down an unexplored river is usually as anticlimactic as asking a monkey to climb a tree. Therefore we still believed that John and Ben were simply missing as opposed to lost, and were probably delayed because they were being meticulously careful.

We got up before sunrise on the fifth day and drove to **Tatemala**, where four of us hiked in with our boats to "clean" the Bobos. The other four drove to a town halfway up the upper five-mile stretch and hiked up and down the river looking for John and Ben. We probably could have coordinated our search a little better; however hindsight is **20/20** and there were several opportunities to make better decisions. Furthermore, we were limited by the fact that we didn't want to involve the military or the police in a rescue operation, and we didn't want to create a bad reputation for **kayakers** in the region, whether it was deserved or not. The area, surprisingly, already supports a thriving commercial rafting operation and we wanted to minimize problems for the whitewater industry in the area. However, if we didn't find John and Ben by the end of the fifth day, we were going to solicit the help of the local government and fishermen in organizing a search of the canyon.

The four of us that were paddling the Bobos didn't pack for an **over-nighter** and only carried our home grown first aid kits and a couple of meals. We fully expected to find the guys somewhere in the first four miles of the canyon, thinking that it would have been easy for one of them to get injured on the rocks. In retrospect this idea doesn't make much sense, though our theory was supported by some anecdotal evidence. For instance, we passed some Indians on the hike down to the Bobos who said they had seen two boats on the river the day before. However, we have since learned the art of a Mexican interrogation in which you don't give any indication of the answer you are looking for. We have found that it is not sufficient to ask "yes" or "no" questions, because the Mexicans seem to respond with the answer you want to hear rather than the facts. I felt like I was in the midst of a bad soap opera in which all of the actors had different scripts, and, worse yet, were speaking a language which I only vaguely remembered. When I asked whether anyone in their group had seen any other boats, they said "Yes." I asked when: they said "Yesterday." I asked what color; they didn't understand. I asked, "Blue?" they said, "yes." I asked how many, they said, "one." Their answers sounded reasonable to me at the time, but I later realized that this conversation had been different from ones I had held with Indians in the past. In this case, when I had asked my questions, they had merely given single word answers or gone off on tangents using a Spanish dialect that I couldn't understand.

The four of us reached the bottom of the cliff and paddled down to the takeout in about four hours. We blazed **down** the first four miles of the gorge through the heaviest whitewater in a mere 50 minutes. Not surprisingly, when we reached the takeout, John and Ben weren't there, and we had to wait for

the van to pick us up.

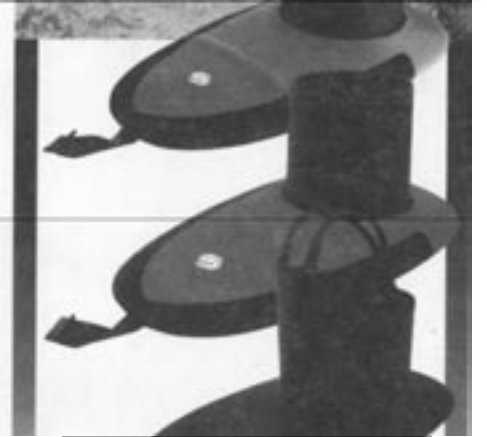
Ten hours later, with no sign of the van and little money to our names, a cold front moved in. The last bus to town had already gone by, and we were holding down the asphalt with our butts. To make matters worse, we had arrived at the takeout in time for the Super Bowl, but the cafe owner wanted to watch fútbol (soccer) instead of football, giving us too much time to worry about our friends while doing nothing. Finally, hours after the sun had set, we gave up on the van and hitched into town, got another hotel room, crashed out, and were awoken after midnight by the rest of the group. They had found John and Ben in Las Minas and were ready to drive North for another week of paddling in the State of San Luis Potosi.



**IV.**  
**"Play for more than you can  
afford to lose, and you  
will learn the game."  
—unknown**

The real, short, happy ending: After we dropped them off, John and Ben hitchhiked to the put-in, carried their boats about five miles down a donkey trail and camped on the side of the canyon. The next day they paddled around the first bend, carried a few rapids, and covered about a mile before a tributary joined the creek. They ran the first rapid past the tributary which was a Class V drop, but eddied out in the middle of it when the river disappeared around a bend through a channelized boulder sieve. This is where their story breaks down and takes on an air of factual mystery. Apparently John installed a bolt in a rock, and they climbed around the corner where they scouted a non-negotiable rapid which dropped "about 200 yards over the same distance." They had only covered a short mile in their boats and decided that they couldn't go forward and probably couldn't go back. Therefore, they decided to climb. When they were about 50 feet up, John

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Chase Sheridan hiking through the orange groves on the Tomata.





... tied a line onto a log to haul the boats up. The log shifted, rolled and pinned Ben's knee to the rock and almost swept both of them into the river below! Luckily, the log stopped rolling and Ben got out of the way. With night approaching, they camped by the log. The next day they climbed several hundred feet, pulling small trees and roots off the rock, "cleaning" the walls of the canyon in order to find decent handholds. Even so, there weren't any "bucket" grips which they could climb like a ladder: instead, everything was polished smooth. Towards the end of the day, they began running out of water, so they put in a second bolt, tied off the boats and hiked to the top of the canyon where they spent the night in the bushes, sleeping by a creek. The fourth day they retrieved their boats and hiked to the put-in, missing Sarah by about 30 minutes. They waited and joked about eating ants while John continued his favorite pastime of trying to figure out what makes Tom tick, and Ben admired the rainbow of hues on his bruised leg. Finally, an hour after the sun had set at the end of the fifth day, Tom found John and Ben lounging in Las Minas. Three hours later they had driven back to Tlapacoyan and found the four of us in the hotel. We gathered our gear, drove to XXX to pick up our boats, and spent the remainder of the night driving to San Luis Potosi to paddle four rivers that we'd explored or run the year before: the El Salto, the Upper Rio Verde, the Lower Verde and Resurrection Falls, and the Santa Maria.

v.

**'While they talked as men talk nearing home and meeting someone newly come from there, their minds watched a scroll of forever-changing images. What they had done, what they had seen, heard, felt, feared, the places, the sounds, the colors, the cold, the darkness, the emptiness, the bleakness, the beauty. Till they died this stream of memory would set them apart, if imperceptibly to anyone but themselves, from everyone else.'**

**—Bernard DeVoto**

Mexico is an easy place for Americans to visit, and it is easy to develop a cavalier attitude toward traveling there. The food is great, travel is cheap, the people are wonderful, and the country is a whitewater heaven. Trespassing laws probably exist: but they are not enforced, and our greatest access prob-

lems stem from inadequate maps of the region. The language is not much of a bamer, though some knowledge of Spanish is useful. Mexico in winter is warm, but **drytops** are useful and I often wore my warmest clothing in the canyons. By far, the greatest drawback to traveling in Mexico is the threat of illness; however, the reality of blowing out both ends is a part of the total Mexican experience which I look forward to with a grimace. In our explorations, we assume that we are three days from medical help. Therefore everyone has some degree of first aid training, the appropriate vaccines and medications, and a conservative but adventurous approach to running rapids.

There are several private individuals and companies that run white-water **kayaking** trips throughout Mexico. However many of these trips limit the difficulty of the paddling and include several mandatory portages of rapids which our group runs. While our trip is organized by Tom McEwan, he emphasizes teamwork and views these trips as an educational experience for everyone involved. We are pushed to improve our paddling, broaden our degree of confidence, expand our horizons, and learn exploratory skills which we can apply to other ventures. Tom is supportive of the needs and interests of the individuals in his group and is always looking for new rivers to explore. These factors result in an enriching and successful adventure that we will always carry with us.



Tom McEwan, "The Nozzle," Tomata.

photo by Dave Bruton

# El Rio Salto

## THE LEAP OVER THE BORDER

by Will Reeves

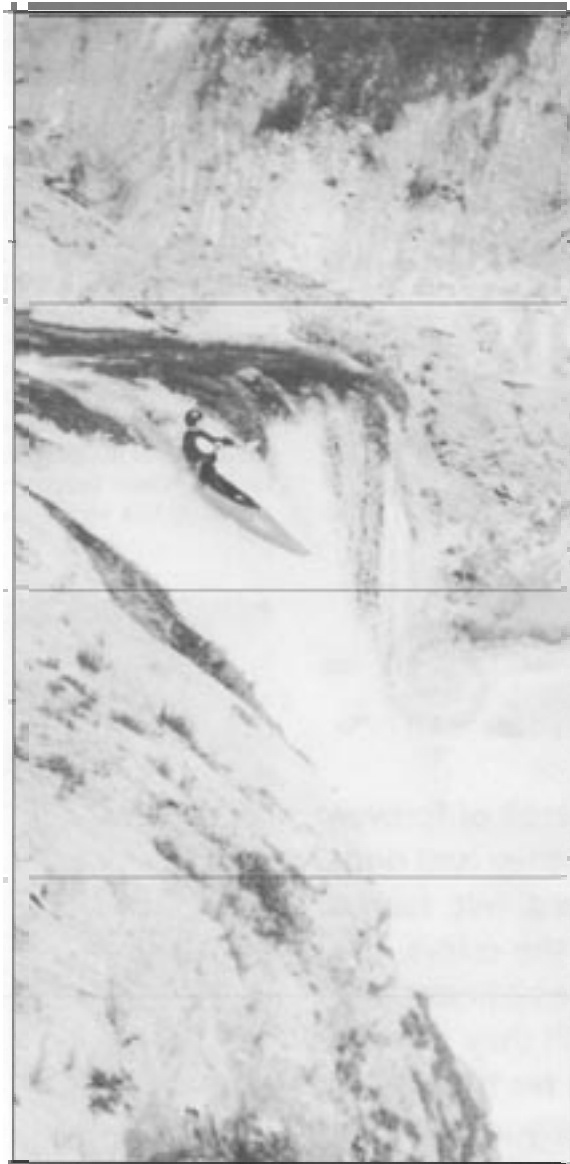


After days of map and photograph research I found a

Mexican river within striking distance of Brownsville, Texas.

The Rio Salto, or the Leap River, appeared to offer excellent opportunities for whitewater boating. The Rio Salto falls out of Mexico's Sierra Madre mountains just a day's drive south of the border. Flowing for miles over limestone bedrock, the river makes its first plunge over a three hundred foot waterfall near the town of Meco. Below this huge drop is a wonderful class IV bluewater river. After falling hundreds of feet over the next three miles the Rio Salto becomes a flat, valley river again. It makes one last lunge as it cascades from the mountains in a spectacular series of blue-water travertine waterfalls and flows past the city of Valles.

It took about a week to plan a trip into Mexico. Our group pulled out of Atlanta the day after Christmas, taking advantage of the holidays and claiming sick leave which would expire at the end of the year anyway. Our Mexico expedition included five kayakers; Jeremy Orr, Clint Rinehart, Brad Moulton, Kevin Thomas, Josh Fisher, and, myself, Will Reeves, the sole open boater. The drive it-



Brad Moulton, First Falls on El Rio Salto.

photo by Will Reeves

self was easy, requiring only a few hundred miles of Mexican roads to reach the first canyon of the Rio Salto, near Meco, in San Luis Potosi.

The shuttle revealed very little about the run until we found a convenient pull-off next to the river. The Rio Salto seemed to drop out of sight next to the road, so we stopped the cars and hiked down for a good look. Below us was an impressive waterfall, easily measuring a hundred feet, if not more. Upstream, we could see several more five to fifteen foot drops. Excited about the prospect of a bluewater run with numerous waterfalls, we located a convenient takeout just above the big falls. Back on the road it was just three more miles to El Salto, a huge three hundred foot waterfall, and the put in. The Mexicans have a hydroelectric plant downstream of the falls to draw power from the river. The guards told us that most people put in on a channel leading out of the hydroplant. However, after scouting upriver, we choose to launch just below the big

falls in order to pick up a few more runnable drops.

After a hearty debate over the pitfalls of putting on at 3:00 in the afternoon on an unscouted river in a foreign country, we concluded that at worst we would spend a nice warm Mexican night in the

jungle. The run started with four relatively creek waterfalls. The first and last drops were easy, but the middle two required good boat control to avoid slamming against the bottom. After these initial drops, the river was artificially diverted into the power plant through a dynamite-blasted channel. This created a jagged ten foot drop with some pin potential. Everyone ran the drop but several boats hit poorly placed rocks, causing us to conclude that the channel was not worth running on future trips. The Rio Salto was much larger now that the flow from the power plant was back in the riverbed with us.

### Rio Salto

The next drop featured an U-shaped hole with a strong backwash. Clint and I had clean runs off the left side, but Josh got maytagged in the hole and eventually swam. I began chasing his boat and gear as Clint pulled him to the bank. Josh's boat disappeared down stream as I chased it around a blind bend. Rushing around the corner I found myself standing at the top of the twenty five foot drop wondering if this trip was over for Josh as his boat flushed over the lip. The boat washed free and I concluded that the hole was clean. Brad arrived at the scene a few seconds after the boat washed over the drop and I signaled the line over the falls. He ran the drop flawlessly and proceeded downstream after Josh's boat. Having scouted the rapids down to the falls, I ran back up to the others and took the lead. We watched as Brad recovered Josh's boat and then we each ran the falls several times. The big drop had several lines, but the best was straight off the center. Kevin and Jeremy tried to boof the left edge but both ended up in the hole below and were sucked out of their boats.

After running the falls multiple times, we continued on and encountered several difficult boulder gardens and smaller waterfalls. Many of the rapids had large undercuts, as the travertine banks were slowly growing across the surface of the water. We found one portage, several good ender holes, and a surf wave. Unfortunately, since we put on at 3:00 p.m. daylight was running out. After a few more six foot ledges we encountered an interesting class V waterfall.

Probably larger than the twenty five footer, this drop involved serious rock bashing. Clint, Brad, and I discussed the line and concluded that we were too far from any good medical aid to be running drops like this. We portaged and continued downstream, running several more large waterfalls before reaching the takeout.

The next day we headed out to tackle the lower canyon much farther down stream. Near the city of Valles the Rio Salto makes its final plunge through a roadside park called Cascados Micos. The put in was easily reached by lowering our boats to yet another hydroplant. The Cascados Micos run was amazing. Over one hundred and forty feet of travertine waterfalls in about a mile. We spent the whole day running the drops over and over. Each waterfall had at least two lines varying from class II to V and was between five and seventy feet high; only the seventy foot giant appeared too hard to survive. We didn't run the big one, but boated the others several times each. The kayakers even tried my Rodeo out on a few of the drops.

The area around Valles has several other amazing runs including the Santa Maria, with five separate canyons, and the little known Rio Verde. Each of these rivers hosts class IV and V whitewater along with a number of great waterfalls and some spectacular scenery. The food in Valles is great and the locals were very friendly. Perhaps next year, we will return to explore the first two canyons of the Santa Maria and explore the Rio Salto above the huge waterfall at the put in.



Josh Fisher, El Rio Salto.

photo by Will Reeves

More Than A Vacation...

IT'S A MEXICAN ADVENTURE

by Mark H. White - AWA Regional Coordinator

## Havana Azul

Our sun tanned crew was assembled on the narrow edge of the fern-covered outcropping which created a sensational 23-foot waterfall. Deep pools of effervescent water were impounded both above and below the falls. My wife Andrea's easy smile and eagerness to paddle over the cascade reflected a perfect setting and the team's collective bliss. This was indeed our *havana azul*—our blue heaven.

The El Salto is a relatively low volume, high excitement stream packed with travertine ramps, chutes, slides and curtain waterfalls. This idyllic aquatic playground is appropriately named since 'El Salto' means 'the leap'. Topographical maps indicate the El Salto descends at an average of 40 feet per mile, not dramatic by current standards. However, the schizophrenic nature of this part of Mexico's rivers—flowing either horizontally or vertically, makes for some exciting boating.

The several mile section of the El Salto terminates abruptly at the lip of a heart-stopping 200 foot sliding cascade. Although I didn't seriously consider kayaking it, a potential line seemed to present itself along the left edge. Intrigued, I curiously thrashed my way through the thick foliage to investigate. It was in the midst of this exploration I received my first lesson in south of the border botany.

*Malo* Muhar (bad woman) is a sinister cousin of our all too familiar poison oak. I brushed one of these toxic weeds which caused my skin to burn, then blister for the next two weeks. Local medicinal folklore has it that destroying the of-



"Look Ma! No hands," Mark White on El Salto.

photo by Jeff Macfarlane

surreal chalky sky blue color.

When not dropping off the falls, we focused on the trees, hoping for a glimpse of the *micos*. We never spotted any *simians*: short tailed or otherwise. Some locals suggested that the monkeys have disappeared from the region's overhead canopy only to reappear on local dinner tables. The shortage of *monkeys* was more than made up for by an incredible number of mangy, half starved dogs. These 'pence peros' (roughly

fending plant immediately after contact will mystically invalidate its ill effects. Although I am neither a botanist, dermatologist nor medicine man, I am fairly sure this is a poorly disguised wives' tale designed to make gullible gringos touch the noxious leaves again.



## Micas, Peros y Los Tigres

The *micos* is a species of short tailed monkey which is found in forested parts of Mexico. It's also the name of a short, but fantasy-like kayak run which we tackled several times. Like El Salto, the *Cascados de Micos* is characterized by tropical blue pools and dramatic waterfalls ranging to 20 feet. The falls are created by travertine rock dams which are continuously augmented by calcium carbonate flowing in the water. Another naturally occurring mineral, calcium magnesium, gives the *Mico* and other nearby streams a



Dr. Andrea White on El Salto.

damned dogs) are considered to be scavenging, but tolerated pests.

Unlike homeless canines, Mexican horses possess high utilitarian value and are usually treated as honored family members. One evening while out of gas and killing time near the Santa Maria River, we encountered a one-eyed cowboy who was out of money and killing beers. (We, too, had discovered that killing mucho cervezas is an easy undertaking, since

and raise endless miles of sugarcane. The ever-diminishing virgin forest and narrow strips of natural growth between the cane fields still provide refuge to secretive armadillos, coyotes, tarantulas, lizards, road runners and an impressive variety of song birds.

The mountain natives we encountered seemed to live in terror of 'tigres' or what we Norte Americanos would call mountain lions. During a multi day run on the Santa Maria River, we had to fork over hazard pay to the burro drivers who shuttled our supplies. Despite good natured negotiation, these entrepreneurs weren't about to risk being eaten alive by los tigres for less than five American dollars.

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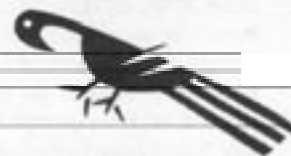
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**Welcome To  
Camp Pinolilla**



Camping along the robin's egg blue Santa Maria River with Andrea and friends was one of the most memorable aspects of our Mexican adventure. After a long day of surfing playful waves and jumping waterfalls, we roasted tamales over a crackling fire while mist rose gently off the placid water. The following morning was delivered by a peaceful breeze and the distant commotion of green parrots. Sunrise also revealed that we were covered with tiny blood sucking pinolillas. Removing these nasty ticks necessitated sweeping body parts through open flames, searching and picking at one another like a band of desperate naked apes. As we examined one another's private parts, it became apparent this was more than just a vacation...it was a Mexican adventure.

A few of these minuscule monsters escaped detection and migrated to Utah aboard our persons and camping gear. Driven more by curiosity than genuine concern, Andrea sought the advice of an infectious disease specialist at the University Hospital. These exotic parasites were unfamiliar to the doctor and he became ecstatic at the prospect of 'discovering' a new species. He gleefully explained that ticks often carry serious dis-

eases, so samples were rushed to the Center For Disease Control for thorough analysis. Andrea and I spent the next week talking about, obsessing over and searching for ticks. The tests eventually came back negative, but not before we had become something of celebrities among Utah's parasitic research circle.

## Narrow Of The Green

At the put in the Rio Verde flows through a wondrous, sculpted micro chasm four feet wide and thirty feet deep. Accessing the river must be by way of roped assistance or a surgically accurate seal launch into the skinny ribbon of green water.

Within a half mile of the put in the Rio Verde became so constricted, we were twice forced to portage our kayaks. Logs wedged impossibly high between the polished basalt rock walls indicated that great volumes of water occasionally flush down the narrow canyon. We later learned that a hurricane and resulting rain storm not far upstream had produced an incredible flood several years earlier. The high water mark which inundated nearby farms and villages made us estimate a phenomenal river level of **80,000** cubic feet per second.

Below the magical mini-gorge, the Rio Verde took on a fairly serious demeanor. Several major falls and countless smaller cascades awaited us. We decided the first significant waterfall—a sheer fifty footer—should not be attempted. I'm certain that at some earlier point in my life this would have been seen as an exciting and absurd way to impress my friends. Now that we all possess the conservative wisdom which accompanies age and/or fatherhood, we were presented with two routes around the thundering obstacle. We could embark upon a mighty portage around the fall, or hurl our boats into the frothy pool below—then jump. By **trekking** through the jungle, we would certainly encounter more poisonous plants and pinollillas—possibly even a few hungry tigers. I considered the options, tossed my boat, then leaped.

Not far downstream, we came upon a vertical **100** foot waterfall which was much more dangerous than the first. To jump into the plunge pool as we had earlier would likely prove injurious, if not fatal. So we repelled our boats onto the rocks below and scrambled through the wilds.

Mantanga Su Cinturon Abrochado (Fasten Your **Seatbelt**)

The largest waterfall we opted to **run** was a photogenic **40** footer dubbed The Spout. A successful run down The Spout was a relatively straight forward affair, requiring two shots of adrenaline and a few basic moves. The result was an unforgettable sensation of piloting a kayak through space.

## Autobus Primera Per Favor

Andrea and I had survived the Mexican bus ride from Tampico to Valles, but four hours of acrid dust, incessant rattling and diesel fumes left us exhausted. In retrospect, I believe it was that particular bus ride which convinced Andrea we should spend future vacations at five star beachside hotels. Of course the ugly **pinollilla** incident may have had something to

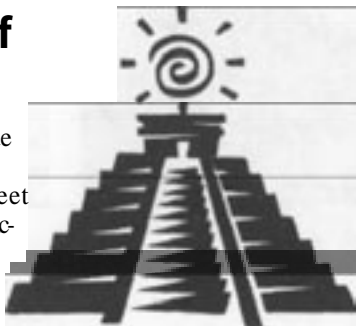


photo by Jeff Macfarlane

Mark White on Rio Verdes, "The Spout."

do with it as well.

When it came time for our next **autobus** foray, we sacrificed an extra ten pesos and upgraded to the highly exclusive **primera** class. This vehicle was luxurious by all cultural standards, being equipped with air conditioning, reclining velvet seats, enormous windows and even "in-flight" movies. I was certain the **Primera** bus would prove to be the ultimate way to tour the Mexican countryside. It turned out the touring was ideal, but the viewing was non-existent.

Customary procedure regarding **Primera** bus window curtains is to pull them shut, thus insulating one's self from the sometimes depressing world outside. So, in lieu of the landscape, we were treated to action hero Jean Claude Van Dam effortlessly annihilating dozens of adversaries with his fists, feet, forehead, a gas can, a motorcycle and a plethora of other seemingly benign objects. Jean Claude was not the cultural experience I had anticipated, but after all, this was more than a vacation...it was an adventure.



## Estoy Muy Macho

Male and female roles in rural Mexico are highly defined. Women perform domestic duties, always in white shirts and dark skirts. Men toil outside in straw cowboy hats and denim pants, secured by frisbee-sized belt buckles. By long standing tradition, real men neither wear shorts nor squeeze limes into their beer. I had made the mistake of doing both in a remote village store and so was immediately viewed with disgust.

To diminish the shame I had brought upon my friends, country and self, an act of supreme bravery seemed to be an unspoken, yet mandatory requirement. I sauntered over to a man with an accordion, borrowed it, and played Stairway To Heaven--complete with emotional vocals. The musical performance was painful for everyone within a quarter mile, but my machismo was quickly restored.

## Memories Of Mexico

Pursuit of an adrenaline rush had initially motivated us to seek these exotic Mexican rivers. But after the gear was dried, the photos developed and the pinolillas eradicated, something a bit more lasting began to surface. A collection of friends had gained insight into a different culture and one another. Through temporary uncertainty and discomfort an appreciation for friendship and life was rediscovered. It had **been more** than just a vacation...it was an adventure.



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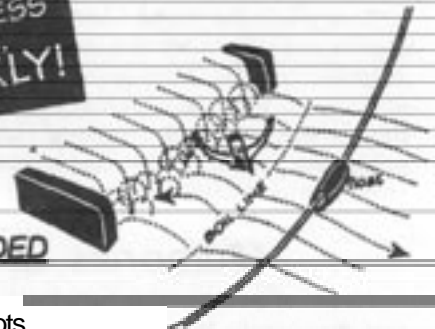
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## Charlie Walbridge

has been reporting fatal accidents and near-misses for the American Whitewater and American Canoe Association for over 20 years. These narratives contain many lifetimes of hard experience; reading them, while painful and unsettling, can help paddlers of all skill levels avoid making similar mistakes.

In these two books from Menasha Ridge Press Charlie condenses over two decades of hard lessons from the pages of American Whitewater.

***The River Safety Report*** describes over 100 fatalities occurring between 1992 and 1995, along with many near misses. These are expanded versions of the summaries that appeared in American Whitewater, and are frequently written by the participants themselves. 166 pp; softbound, \$12.95 + \$2 postage.

***The River Safety Anthology*** describes thirty-five of the most significant river deaths and 35 near-misses occurring between 1975 and 1992. Charlie's accident descriptions are combined with additional material from Jody Tinsley to organize the material and drive the message home. 130 pp; softbound, \$12.95 + \$2 postage.

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# Meet Bill Masters

by  
John Weld  
Contributing Editor

## Perception's commander-in-chief



Bill Masters truly is a self made man. He grew up in a family of mill workers in Pickens, South Carolina. Despite the fact that he wasn't expected to go to college, he earned a degree in engineering from Clemson. His quirky and controversial personality must be put into the context of his rags to riches story: his father died when Bill was 16; his mother later became legally blind, and Bill was responsible to provide for the family. Yet he went on to build a very successful business with branches in England and New Zealand. Somewhere within the tycoon are the insecurities and pride of a poor boy from a small town. But to truly measure Bill's influence in the sport, it's important to use a standard outside Bill himself. His bunta are everywhere on the river and they have made a tremendous amount of people very happy.

**I**n the beginning, there was only fiberglass. From the dark, gaseous garages of primitive boat-builders, the forms of the earliest whitewater crafts emerged. At first, there were only a few makeshift designs. Later, boats started to appear in many shapes and sizes. A culture was born. VW vans, loaded with kayaks, roamed the earth. Inevitably, people started to make money from this way of life; selling homemade skirts and paddles, guiding rafts full of tourists and making more boats. This hunter and gatherer society gave birth to small businesses. Some of these businesses took root and whitewater civilization dawned.

And it is no secret that Perception, under Bill Master's direction has set a remarkable industry standard for corporate support of river conservation. All of the boat manufacturers have been generous to river conservation non-profits, including the AWA, but none more than Perception. When it comes to saving rivers, Masters is a man who can be counted on.

In 1972, whitewater slalom was featured in the Olympics for the first time. The following year, legend has it that Holoform produced 15,000 of the world's first whitewater plastic kayaks. Then, like an ancient city that vanished without a trace, Holoform disbanded. Whitewater paddling, although growing, was still an infant.

I called Perception a few weeks ago and Masters graciously took time to meet and talk with me. Right away, I was flooded with stories of his exploits: aerobatic flying, car racing, motorcycle crashes, business ventures, meet-

Then came Bill Masters. In the early 1970's, years before he was to create Perception, Bill made boats and paddles in his garage like the rest of the paddling world. Soon, however, his influence grew. And grew. Over the next ten years, Masters would seem to have his hands in almost every business endeavor in the sport. Creating companies, splitting companies, bringing people together, driving them apart. Bill's boundless energy reached out in all directions, and the list of industries that he either created, influenced or scrapped reads like a Who's Who of Whitewater manufacturing: Dagger, Harmony, New World, Hydra, Blue Hole. Then, in 1976, came Perception, the face of the whitewater renaissance.



photo by Larry Evans





ings with President Clinton. **While we talked about his** business, the story kept wandering into different arenas. His other patents, senior citizens, taking in troubled youths, involvement with his church. He's a hard guy to figure out. Creative genius? Manic inventor? Workaholic (a label he rejects)? A consummate **deal-**maker? I'm not sure, but there was no question that Bill Masters is an extra-ordinary individual. Maybe you can gain some insight from a few of these questions and answers.

**Let's start off with a few basic questions. How old are you, how did you get started?**

I'm 47 and I'm a little bummed out about it. I grew up around here. Actually, I grew up in **Pickens**. I worked my way through the school system and went to work for a couple years. Then I decided to go to Clemson University. I got a degree in electrical engineering from there in 1974.

**Were you boating by then?**

I started boating in 1971 **while I was in college**. I started boating first, and then I got into building my own stuff. I built paddles and life jackets and spray skirts and boats. Then people started to ask me to make some of this stuff for them. I had a house in Liberty and that's where I started.

**So all of this started while you were in college.**

Yeah.

**At what point did you decide that this might be a good business?**

I never really thought that it would be a good business. I just really loved it... I was just passionate. I didn't have any brains. When I graduated from college, I didn't know anybody who owned a thousand dollars, much less **any-**

**body that had a thousand dollars** that they were going to give me. I was just a fanatical kayaker. I would kayak every weekend and after work and school.

**Doing the Ocoee, the Nantahala, rivers like that?**

The French Broad...a lot of the creek runs that people are running now. A fellow named Don Hamilton and I were doing a lot of things that we probably shouldn't have been doing. We didn't know *any* better. We didn't paddle with helmets and our paddles were made with closet rods and plywood blades.

**So, you started making this boating gear commercially while you were in college.**

I was **making** boats while I was in college. That was how I paid for my last two years of college. I was building boats in an old mortuary in Liberty that had the roof fall-  
~~ing in and was~~ **ing in and was** in my back yard. Then I graduated in 74 **Canada** for a couple of months with my wife-I was **married** when I was 19. I loaded up a C-1, a **canoe, a kayak** and my wife in my old VW bus and I took off, and I said "Mail me my diploma."

**So, when did Perception start as a real business?**

Well, Perception started as a business in 1976.

**And at that point you were making all fiberglass boats. No plastic...**

No, actually in '76 I was doing vacuum **formed** canoes [ABS], paddles, spray skirts and fiberglass canoes. I was Blue Hole's biggest nightmare. People don't know this but at the time Blue Hole was doing about 1,200 canoes, and I was making about 1,000.

**Now Blue Hole is out of business, right?**

No, they're not. I actually talked to them the other day. I eventually bought Blue Hole, and kept it for a while and

toyed with the idea of going into the canoe business. You probably know the story. After it was raided and after the take-over it went down hill in a hurry. It was just pathetic. I bought what was left over from the bank. Then I sold it to a guy named John Williamson. He's back in business and looking at making the old OC1.

**What was the first year that you guys started to roto-mold kayaks?**

In 1977 we started making the Quest. Keith Backlund and I built that; that was when we owned New World Paddles. See, I owned New World Paddles in 1975 and '76.

**Was there any other plastic boats being made at that time?**

Holoform. They were a trash can company owned by a guy named Tom Johnson. Great guy.

**How did the Quest sell?**

Yeah, it was a first. There was Holoform, and then Holoform went belly-up and we bought out all of those molds too. The Quest did real well. I was learning business and when I first built it I was approached by a company in South Carolina. They said "Yeah, we can build this boat for you." We thought that all we had to do was give them one of our existing designs, hand it to them, and they could make a mold from it. But it didn't happen. We wound up designing a boat from scratch. Then I found out that they couldn't afford a mold so I ended up selling more stock in the company to finance the mold. After we got the mold built we found out that they didn't

have the machinery to do it. So I ended up hiring a welder—I'm a welder too—and we went down and modified the machine. I was going down to tractor places to weld tractors in exchange for the use of a welder. Then I would go and rebuild these machines.

**This was really the infancy of the sport. It sounds like you were making it up as you went along.**

We were making it up as we went along, but we built a lot of boats.

**How many boats did you build that year, would you venture to guess?**

We probably built three to five hundred. At the time that was a lot of boats. Now keep in mind that right after the Olympics in 1972 [Whitewater slalom was a part of the Olympics for the first time that year] Holoform did almost 15,000 boats.

**That's amazing.**

People didn't know they sold that boat. 15,000 roto molded boats!

**That [Holoform] must have been the first plastic boat in the U.S.**

That was the first plastic boat in the world. It was called the River Chaser, designed by Tom Johnson.

**After the Quest, you came out with the Mirage.**

We came out with the Mirage, and then the Sage, which was C-1 and a kayak. That was one of my early lessons in marketing—there is a real long story behind that—but anyway, after that we came out with the Dancer. That was in 1982.


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**The creation of the Dancer strikes me as a real shift in whitewater design\***

It was. It was a short boat. It was a real innovative boat. It was 11' 7" ...

**Every boat before that was 13' 2" ...**

4 meters long, 60 cm wide. That was the race standard [It still is].

**Did you design that boat or did you have help?**

Alan Stancil and I designed that boat. Alan is still here. Keith Backlund and I designed the Quest, Alan and I designed the Mirage, Don Hamilton, Alan and I designed the Sage, Alan and I designed the Dancer, after that we designed the Eclipse. The Eclipse, I think, was a very innovative boat. It performed as two boats: as an upright boat and as a boat up on it's edge. This was back in the early days when we started to look at what happens when you put a boat up on it's side.

**Is the Dancer the boat that put Perception on the map?**

No, we really got started right after the Quest. Roloform was out of business—they were a trash can company and made kayaks just on the side line. When they went under there was nothing else on the market. Well, there was another company there in between. They made boats in a tractor trailer that drove around. And they were a spin-off of Holoform. They'd drive up and make boats with you.

**And Hydra is in there somewhere.**

My wife died real suddenly in 1980. I met a guy just before she died named Ken Horowitz. Ken's the neatest **guy**, but both me and him are weird people and we clashed a lot. Ken was probably the genius who kicked off the marketing of the whitewater industry. Up until then, we just made products. Ken was the one who really created the market. Anyhow, Ken was going through a nasty divorce, and I was trying to get my life back in **order**—I had a ten month old baby and a five year old baby—and all of this **crap** started happening.

I would fire Ken, and he would show up on Monday and say "**Hey Bill, how are you doin'**". This went on several times, until one day we had this big blow up, and I fired him again. So he went out and started Hydra. Hydra is a mythical monster. Every time Zeus cut it's head off, it would grow two back. And that's why the company was called Hydra. Because I would always cut its head off, and it would keep coming back.

**So you sold 500 boats in your first year. How many boats did you sell in 1996?**

I can't tell you that. A whole lot more than everyone else.

**You and Joe Pulliam [owner of Dagger Canoes] worked together for a while.**

I taught him. He left and took over Blue Hole. What he did was, he was trying to buy Blue Hole, and they didn't want to sell, so he took all of the key employees out of Blue Hole and started Dagger.

**Didn't Dagger make paddle8 to begin with?**

I started Dagger.

**You started Dagger as a paddle company? How did Dagger make the transition to making open canoes?**

Don Hamilton [who now runs Harmony Paddles], Steve Scarborough, Keith Backlund and I ran New World Paddles. This was in '74, '75 and '76. Keith was **bankrupt** with Woodline Paddles—I put together a deal where Don, Steve and I invested 1,000 dollars each and gave Keith some of the company. I owned 40% of the company. At the time Steve was working with Southern Bell and he was coming down from Atlanta, while Don made most of the original New World Paddles. A lot of people don't know that Don was the craftsman who made most of the paddles.

Meanwhile another **guy** name Brandy **Lesan** got involved. But Don had a kid starting college, and he was not making any money—it was a lifestyle business. Then Keith and his wife separated and Keith took



off. Then Brandy and Scarborough started to try and run New World. By then we had started to make the Dagger line of paddles--Dagger was our low-end line of paddles. When we broke up Keith was going to take the New World name, Steve took Dagger, and Don and I spun off and started Harmony paddles.

**And then I guess at some point Steve and Pulliam hooked up and started to make canoes as well.**

That was right after Joe was working at Blue Hole,

**These days Perception makes a lot of things besides whitewater kayaks. Everything from Keowees to footbraces. What's the single largest aspect of your company now?**

We've got five categories: sea kayaks, whitewater kayaks, sport kayaks like the Spectrum, fun boats like the Keowee, and sit on tops.

**Which is the biggest seller?**

I have no idea. We dominate all but the sit on tops.

**What do you think of the smaller companies coming up now in the whitewater industry? Do you see them as real competition?**

They already are; there's so many of them. Whitewater is a fashion business, and these guys are fashion makers. Like John Shriener at New Wave. John's the neatest guy. He's real creative. I love seeing people like that in the market because he'll take risks. He's just a real good guy.

**You consider all of those guys as competition...**

We pay attention to what everybody does, what sector they're in, what they're doing, what they're moving with. You're a fool if you don't. I watch everything and everyone. I make a point to know what everyone does in the entire world. Anyone who makes kayaks, we know about.

**Anyone in particular who you think is coming up with new**

**and innovative designs?**

Everyone is copying what everyone else is doing. We're all making one huge mistake and that is we're marketing to the top end.

**What trends do you see coming for the sport over the next few years? Rodeo seems to be the thing right now.**

By necessity we're having to play into that market. It's such a small market and it hasn't reached critical mass, but if you don't keep playing in it, you'll lose your momentum. We'll introduce two more boats this year and we've got another one coming that's shorter than any-

thing we've got.

**These two new boats, are they going to be geared towards this "forgotten" entry level market?**

They'll be a crossover between the entry level and a short boat. We're staying in the short boat category for the ease of paddling. We're focusing everything we have on making the person look good. We thought we could do it with the sit on tops. We came out with the Torrent--the Torrent is an incredibly good boat--but it just never caught on. I mean it's not a slouch, by any means, but it hasn't sold the number of units I thought it would. The same thing with the Revolution [a plastic pontoon whitewater craft introduced a few years ago]. An incredibly innovative boat, but there is not enough demand to

continue the line.

**Are you going to draw this entry-level crowd out of the shorter boats in the next few designs?**

For in a cruising boat, you have to go over ten feet. Personal opinion. In designing a boat there is balance like a lever arm. If you are going to cruise down the river, you have to be able to get that boat moving and catch eddies and do river wide ferries. If you have a short boat and

your head is sticking three feet above the water, every movement you make is going to bounce you all over the place. There is a point where a boat gets so short, you just can't run a river in it any longer. Seven feet is the bottom end. You just can't do much with seven feet, and that's where rodeo boats are heading right now.

**Do you think that rodeo is going to last, or go the way of squirt boating?**

I don't have a clue. If they had included whitewater in the Olympics in 2000 [as of the writing of this piece, there will not be whitewater slalom in the 2000 Olympics], and if we had won some medals in 1996, we'd have a good chance of pulling racing into the mainstream. But we didn't medal [U.S. K-1 Woman Dana Chladek did, in fact, earn a Silver medal], and we didn't get any t.v. coverage at all at the Ocoee. That was a major loss for the industry. That sector of the market (slalom) had a lot of potential, because it looked good, it was repeatable, it was good for t.v., and it was clean.

Now rodeo boating, on the other hand, has got a lot of potential. But it doesn't have anywhere near the push behind it. It's more the ragged edge of boating, and it's not easy to judge. I've argued for years that we ought to take the system for judging aerobic airplane flying and transition it to judging rodeo moves. Aerobic flying is highly sophisticated in the way it's judged. On each move there is a certain criteria that has to be met. The judges sit in different places, and each judge scores certain criteria.

It's very repeatable.

**What was the most successful boat that Perception made?**  
The Dancer, the Chinook, and the Sea Lion.

**How long did the Dancer reign?**

Ten years. From about '83 to '93. Then we re-did it, and actually made an incredibly good boat.

**The Dancer Pro.**

The Dancer Pro is a really great boat. The problem we have had with that boat is the name. People think they're getting an old design.

I was trying to mimic the Porsche 930. That's a twenty-five year old car that stayed top of the line for twenty five years. I thought that we could transition that, but it should have been renamed.

**You must enjoy your work here. Would you consider this your dream job?**

Well, I'm an inventor. I'm actually trying to give this company to the employees now. I want to be out by 2000. You see, I own other companies.

**What else do you do?**

I just invented a technology for a computer company that just burned through about 12 million dollars in venture capital... I hold over thirty patents.

**So you're trying to get out of whitewater boats to make something else...**

No. This company is my platform. I'll never give up ownership of this company. I just want to get the leadership

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into the hands of my key managers so I don't have to pay attention to it. But I have another company called Steriology Research Inc. that researches um...high tech stuff. I've also got a company called Resurrection Products that I run on the side that reclaims and recycles old wood. And I dabble in real estate. But what I want to do after 2000 is devote my life to senior citizens.

**That's kind of a broad brush stroke there...**

Well, I was on a board of directors that built one senior citizen center and I really enjoy building things. So, what I want to do is build more senior citizen centers. What I will do is come to the location, get organized, get the money in place, then let the community take it over and I'd be done. I'll be the guy that organizes the whole thing. That's where I want to go.

**Here at Perception, what's the worst part of the job?**

The worst part of the job is the growth.

**Why is that the worst part? I would think that a lot of people would consider that a good thing.**

There are a ton of problems. One of our biggest problems is that we have almost no unemployment here. Our unemployment rate is under three percent in this county. We have 160 people, and then we have another operation in New Zealand, and one in Great Britain. And we're trying to hold all of these things together. I'm not an owner of companies. I'm a visionary. So I have good people around me who do exceptionally good jobs. It's a chore to handle this place.

**So you get bogged down with things that you really don't want to think about...**

Well, I know what I'm good at, and I know what I'm not good at. I'm not good at the day to day running of corporations. And so I have to struggle at it; I have to work at it. Creative people don't make good runners of compa-

nies. Entrepreneurs don't make good runners of companies. Some of them think they do, but they just don't.

I've got good people but my problem with the growth is that I outgrow people so fast. Our growth rate, to give you a reference point, in one average year, is bigger than the all third tier companies combined. Take out Perception and Dagger, Old Town and Mad River—we're pretty much the big players—our annual growth rate (increase in volume) is the entire size (volume) of one of the next companies down from us. Just our growth rate. That means that we have to grow that amount every year.

**What's the best part of what you do here?**

I love the speed, I love the energy. I love the bobbing and weaving and the chaos. You have to run it from the gut; you can't run a business just by looking at the numbers. And my gut instincts tend to be pretty good. I really enjoy seeing people advance. If you want to boil it down to the one thing I really like most? Pushing people farther than they think they can be pushed. I'm tough. I'm moving real fast, and my expectations are pretty high.

**Do you think that you're a difficult employer?**

No, no. Not in my world of peers. I'm a pussycat. In fact, my peers tell me I'm a pussycat. But, I push people to become really good. And then you'll see something just click for somebody, and they'll say "I can do this." Teach someone to roll, it's the same thing. They can't do it, can't do it, can't do it, and then, Bam!, they do it.

They've got it. I do the same thing with people. And I only focus on a few. I only manage five people in this company. I only work with a select group.

**What was the best decision you've made during your tenure here at Perception?**

Diversification. No question about it. I saw the markets move, and every time I saw a market move, I played



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in it. Example: I've been playing in the surf market for years, but it never moved, so I never moved into that market. In '87 I took a sabbatical and lived at the ocean. That's when I designed the footbraces we have now, I designed the Sea Lion; I designed boats for Hobie ~~Cat~~. I also designed boats for Yvon [Chouinard, owner of Patagonia]. Yvonne and I designed some boats together. We called them the Studibaker, the Buick...I designed a lot of surf boats in that area.



photo by Larry Evers

**How about canoes? You guys don't design any more whitewater canoes?**

In the canoe business you've got to be in the transportation business. You've got to run your own rigs. So we don't want to run our own rigs.

**That's the primary reason why you don't build canoes?**

Absolutely. We manufacture kayaks. That's all we do. We used to build canoes, we used to make industrial products. We're good molders. In the world of molding, we out-mold anybody in the world, hands down. The percentage of our machines, nobody can touch it. I'll put hard money on the table for that.

**What is the criteria for good molding?**

We use hot air ovens, we use process logic controls, we test almost every boat with non-destructive thickness testing. I mean everybody else just has one huge flame bar. Roto-molding ovens are just down and dirty. They're easy to make, if you utilize the old, traditional flame bar. We use hot air. It's a whole different process. In the world of molders, we're precision molders.

**So the best thing that you did was to diversify. What would be the worst decision that you ever made?**

Let's see... I'm not sure how to phrase this...I've never done anything technical that I've regretted. I would say that the worst thing that I ever did was not having the skills to manage some really good people the way they should have been managed. To help them achieve what they needed to achieve at that point in their life. I've screwed up by not having the skill to manage some of the people that have come to me. I've had some really neat people come through that were at really strange phases in their lives, and I didn't have the security level to help them succeed.

**What exactly is your title here at Perception? President? CEO?**

Whatever... President No More. I hope they fire me within a year. I should not be in my position. I am totally incompetent to run a day-to-day organization.

**You wouldn't know by looking at this place...**

I'm not running it. I mean. How many times have you heard the

phone ring? (None). I meet once a week with a group of people. Unless it's an emergency. They leave me alone.

**Do you still paddle much?**

Not really. I was paddling pretty heavily until about three years ago. Then I ran off the side of a mountain in a motorcycle. I was in the hospital for several days, and then it took two and a half years for my arm to fully heal. I just paddled flatwater during that time. We did the Grand Canyon last summer

and I tried to paddle, but I ended up in the raft most of the time.

When I kayak now, I hide. I'm real secretive about it. When I go kayaking, I don't want to talk to anyone about kayaks. I just want to boat. September is the last time I went whitewater kayaking. It was real good because I hadn't been kayaking in two years, and the Chattooga came up to three feet.

So Adam, my youngest son [16 at the time], said to me, "Come on Dad, let's just go do it."

So we came to Bull Sluice, and I said "Do you want it first, or do you want me to drop it?"

I went ahead, dropped off the high drop and back-ended right into the hole. I was trying to roll up and my skirt blew off. I didn't have any muscle left by then, because of my accident, so I rolled up on this rock and bailed out of my boat. By this time Adam came over the drop, and pulled up to me and said, "Dad, I can't believe you did that."

My skirt was off and hanging, and he says "It's o.k., nobody knows you." That's the last time I paddled.

**I guess it's better that way. To be anonymous on the river.**

I go paddling to go paddling. I don't go paddling to talk about it. Like I said, I'm an inventor.

Paddling was a passion of mine. It was something that I grew up with. I had the Volkswagen bus, I guided people all throughout the southeast. I was a guide for a number of years. And now when I go, I don't want to be talking about what's this is gonna do and what that's gonna do.

Paddling is spiritual. Some people think since I own a kayak company, I must paddle to make money. You know, paddling and making money are two different things. I can make a lot of stuff; I just happen to have a passion about kayaking. I'm not out to show how great

this boat is, or make you think I'm the greatest thing in the world. I'm out paddling because it's spiritual. It's my identity.



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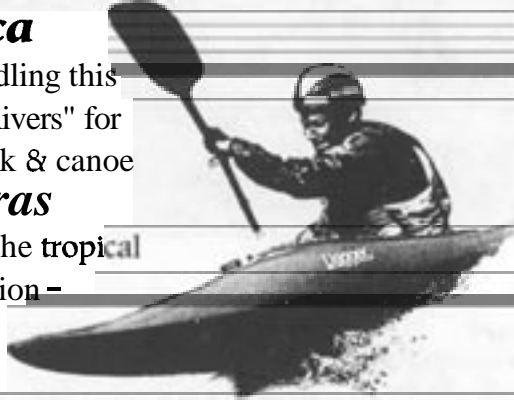
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Drawing by Tatiana Prokhorovskii - Aztec ruins of Piedras Negras

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# american whitewater



1996 Annual Report

**AMERICAN  
WHITewater**



## "To Conserve and Restore America's Whitewater Resources and to Enhance Opportunities to Enjoy them Safely"

Dear Friends and Members of American Whitewater -

We are happy to present our annual report for 1996. As you read over this report, you will see that 1996 was a year of strong organizational and **financial** growth for American Whitewater - and that we were able to effectively leverage this growth back into restoring and conserving this nation's whitewater rivers.


The success stories included in this document are more than the work of the American Whitewater staff and working directors; they represent the collective effort of some 30,000 recreational boaters and friends around the country. In addition to paddling whitewater, our supporters have donated countless volunteer hours and effort to work with other organizations, improve river conditions, increase public access, raise awareness, and make our sport safer and more enjoyable. Equally important, our **grassroots** membership donates an impressive 52% of the funding that supports American Whitewater's river programs.

In addition to conservation and access efforts, American Whitewater represents river recreation. River runners are an increasingly important constituency for the outdoor environment, and their ties to (and first-hand knowledge about) the rivers they paddle are critical to effective understanding and protection. In 1996, American Whitewater worked to create a stronger alliance among outdoor users, to promote sustainable recreation, to make our sport safer, and to increase the way rivers are celebrated through festivals, races and free-style events.

As we approach next year's 40<sup>th</sup> **Anniversary**, American Whitewater is sure to confront new threats and opportunities for both rivers and recreation. We look forward to addressing these, and increasing both the awareness and influence of our membership. The gauge of future success will continue to be reflected in our programs and in the rivers we paddle — and in the support of our members and friends.

Thanks to each of you for your help making American Whitewater, and our efforts, so successful in 1996.

Sincerely,  
Ric Alesch    Rich Bowers  
President    Executive Director



**"In 1996, American Whitewater worked to create a stronger alliance among outdoor users, to promote sustainable recreation, to make our sport safer, and to increase the way rivers are celebrated through festivals, races and free-style events."**

# American Whitewater's River Programs for 1996

## Saving Whitewater and Providing Access!

Just recently, U.S. Olympic and World Champion paddler Davey Hearn commented that "American Whitewater is the only group constantly banging down doors just for whitewater boaters." In 1996 American Whitewater continued this legacy by improving access and restoring even more miles of whitewater rivers.

The exceptional high water of 1996 meant significant changes to many whitewater rivers, and elevated river access to a new level for both boaters and non-boaters alike. Just as paddlers adapted to changes on the South Fork American, the Elkhorn, the Potomac and elsewhere, so too American Whitewater's access program stepped up in both visibility and effect. Through the efforts of Access Director Rich Hoffman and the American Whitewater's Access Committee, this program made great leaps in 1996. Together, they purchased critical access land and confronted Federal Agencies, State Legislatures, County governments, and anyone else who considered "river safety" synonymous with "river closure."

Likewise, American Whitewater's Conservation Program continued to strengthen the reputation of whitewater boaters in river protection and restoration. Like many rivers, the flow of river conservation also changed in 1996, moving from East to West across the country. This movement was reflected by the weight given to western issues by American Whitewater, and our search for a Western States Conservation Director. This change in emphasis was especially evident in the relicensing of privately-owned dams, and in the actions of American Whitewater's hydropower reform efforts in California, Utah, Oregon and Washington State.

## Education and Safety

In 1996, American Whitewater's Safety Program sold over 1,500 new Whitewater Safety Flash Cards. In addition, we continued to maintain the whitewater accident database and publish accident reports in the American Whitewater Journal. American Whitewater also began the slow and tedious process of updating the National Scale of Whitewater Difficulty. Our safety committee is now analyzing some 3000 reported rapid ratings from volunteers, and will build a list of benchmark rapids to be used as standards to rate rapids and rivers in the future.

The American Whitewater Journal and Home Page ([www.awa.org](http://www.awa.org)) continue to be primary sources of information for whitewater education on conservation, access, safety, and events. They also include outstanding articles about some of the world's wildest rivers and whitewater humor. Reflecting our membership, both the distribution of the Journal and the content of our Home Page showed solid growth in 1996.

## Celebration of Rivers

The celebration of rivers - that's American Whitewater's goal in establishing and promoting river events across the country. From cutting-edge whitewater rodeos and extreme races to film festivals and paddling gatherings of every kind, we support them all. During 1996, we added the Upper Yough Race and National Paddling Film Festival (a joint effort with the Bluegrass Wildwater Association and American Canoe Association) to our wide array of existing events including our world famous Gauley Festival.

In addition, the National Organization of Whitewater Rodeos (NOWR) continued as the leading series of whitewater freestyle rodeos with an impressive list of 15 events, including 3 in Canada.

# American Whitewater Affiliation's Major Accomplishments in 1996

- Restored and/or improved over 60 miles of whitewater rivers in California, Georgia, Washington, Massachusetts and New Hampshire.
- Engaged in over 100 new dam fights to improve whitewater rivers - including flow improvements, public access, water quality and recreation.
- Initiated or completed boating studies on Utah's Bear, California's Lower Kern, Maine's Rapid and Magalloway, and on Washington's Sullivan Creek.
- Helped defeat yet another Auburn Dam on California's Sacramento River.
- Appealed a decision by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to allow a transmission line to cross West Virginia's Meadow River and Glade Creek.
- Assisted the U.S. Forest Service (through legal action) in balancing power and non-power use on Idaho's Hells Canyon of the Snake.
- Appealed poor agency decisions on whitewater rivers such as California's North Fork Kings and Upper Kern, and on Maine's Penobscot.
- Won access rights to California's Lower Kern.
- Wrote legislation to clarify the right of downstream passage in Colorado. Filed amicus briefs to establish the right of passage in Virginia and New York.
- Helped create new river Coalitions in both Oregon and California.
- Prevented river closures on Maryland's Potomac and Oregon's Metolius Rivers.
- Purchased access land on West Virginia's Blackwater and Dry Fork Rivers.
- Produced and distributed over 1,500 American Whitewater Safety Flash Cards.

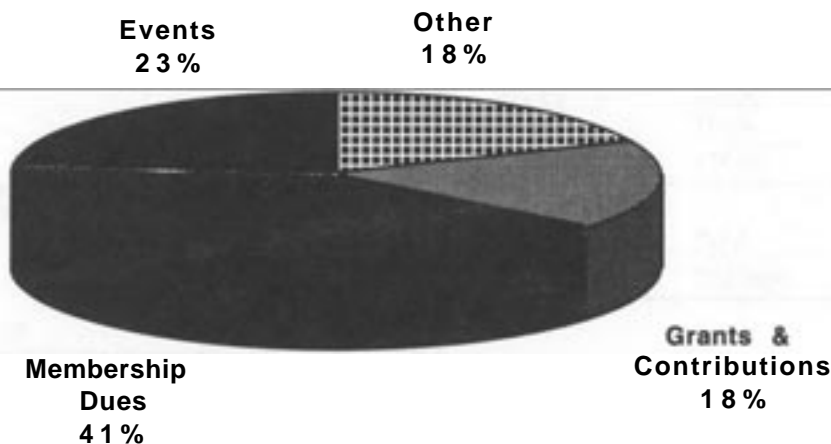
**American Whitewater would like to thank the many volunteers, agencies, organizations and clubs which assisted us with each of these whitewater victories. All of the above were accomplished through strong partnerships and the commitment of those who love and enjoy rivers!**

# Supporting Services

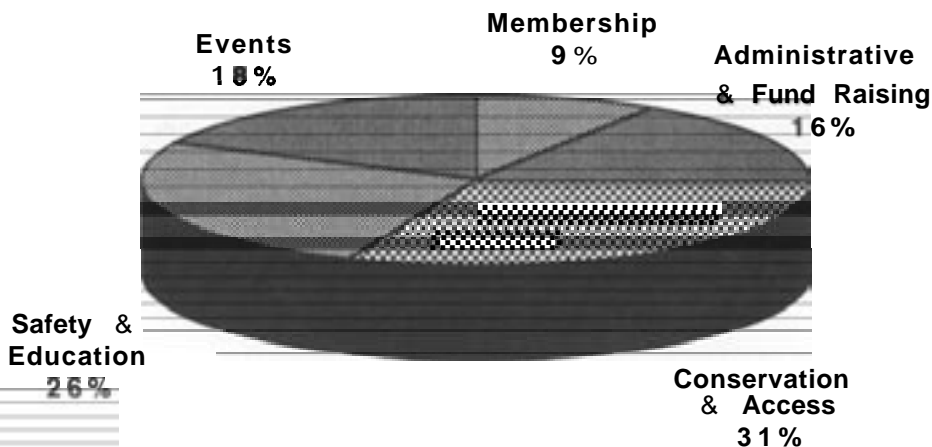
During 1996, American Whitewater increased its national membership by 12%, and welcomed an additional 1,645 friends of whitewater to our ranks. By the end of the year, American Whitewater's total membership stood at 5,267. In 1996, our membership renewal rate was 82%.

The dedication of our members has always been one of American Whitewater's greatest strengths. Not only do our members support our programs through volunteer efforts, they also provide a large percentage of American Whitewater's funding. During 1996, American Whitewater continued its significant program and financial growth. Total revenues, primarily from our members in dues and donations, increased fifteen percent to \$401,740, while expenses increased twenty two percent to \$398,557. Eighty four percent of our expenses were for our major program areas of river conservation, education and safety, while only sixteen percent of our expenses went to administration and fund raising costs.

## 1996 Revenues



## 1996 Expenses



# Statement of Support, Revenue and Expenses

Private Support:	1996	1995
Contributions	52,719	97,206
<b>Other Revenue</b>		
Membership Dues	166,051	111,457
Journal	50,537	41,116
Grants	19,469	0
Events	90,829	83,879
Products	16,035	6,769
Interest Income	6,008	8,221
Miscellaneous	92	274
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>401,740</b>	<b>348,922</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>		
<b>Program Services:</b>		
Conservation & Access	121,563	117,821
Events	72,855	42,551
Safety	101	5,828
Journal	103,872	86,651
Membership	37,532	21,413
Products	10,538	6,451
<b>Total Program Services</b>	<b>346,461</b>	<b>280,715</b>
<b>Supporting Services</b>		
Administrative	46,350	39,338
Fund Raising	4,021	3,580
<b>Total Supporting Services</b>	<b>50,371</b>	<b>42,918</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>		
Depreciation	1,725	1,516
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>398,557</b>	<b>325,149</b>
<b>Excess of Support and Revenue Over Expenses</b>	<b>3,183</b>	<b>23,773</b>
<b>Fund Balance (Deficit)</b>		
Beginning of Year	197,041	173,268
<b>Fund Balance (Deficit) End of Year</b>	<b>200,224</b>	<b>197,041</b>



# Comparative Balance Sheets

Current Assets:	1996	1995
Cash	240,506	230,636
Accounts Receivable	12,654	10,992
Inventory	10,859	6,092
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>264,019</b>	<b>247,720</b>
<b>Plant, Property &amp; Equipment:</b>		
Furniture, Fixtures & Equip	10,184	8,384
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(5,951)	(4,226)
<b>Total Plant, Property &amp; Equipment</b>	<b>4,233</b>	<b>4,158</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>268,252</b>	<b>251,878</b>

# Liabilities and Fund Balances

Current Liabilities:	1996	1995
Accounts Payable	0	525
Payroll Taxes Payable	3,276	2,125
Deferred Revenue	64,752	52,187
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>68,028</b>	<b>54,837</b>
<b>Fund Balance (Deficit)</b>		
Restricted	35,749	35,749
Unrestricted	160,242	157,134
	195,991	192,883
<b>Property</b>	<b>4,233</b>	<b>4,158</b>
<b>Total Fund Balance</b>	<b>200,224</b>	<b>197,041</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Fund Balance</b>	<b>268,252</b>	<b>251,878</b>



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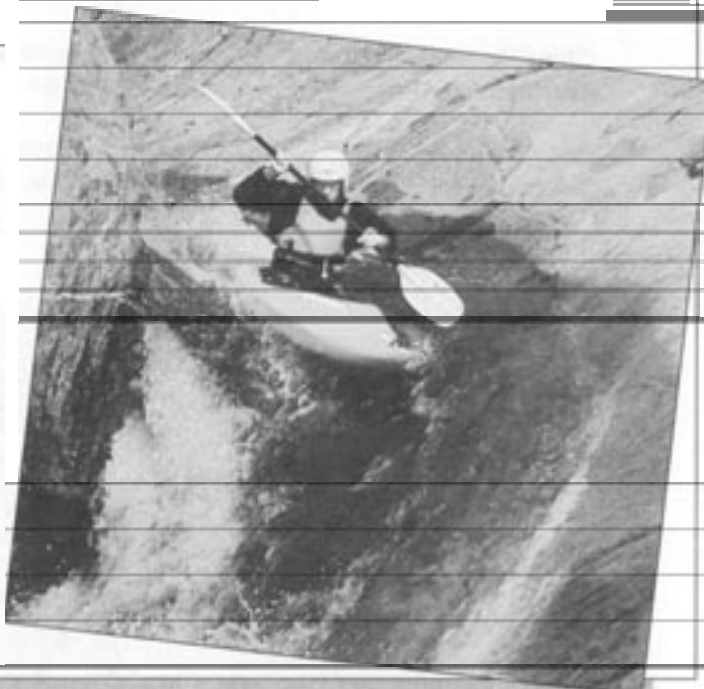
**Susan Wilson**  
Asheville, NC

## 1996 American Whitewater Program Staff

**Rich Bowers, Conservation Director**  
Silver Spring, MD  
(301) 589-9453

**Rich Hoffman, Access Director**  
Silver Spring, MD  
(301) 589-9453

**Phyllis Horowitz, Administrative Director**  
Margaretville, New York  
586-2355



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# Playing Parents on the North Fork of the Payette

By Mark Johnson

One weekend, late last summer, myself, and a group of friends set out on a trip to the North Fork of the Payette. We were all very excited about running this western thriller, but ironically the most dangerous and interesting experience that weekend didn't even include us!

We were into our second day of boating. A flip the day before at Hound's Tooth had left one of our party members a little frazzled, so we decided to make a second run on the lower section. If all went well, we were planning to head up and try the upper stuff later. We launched below Golf Course, threading our way between the holes of Screaming Left and the fast ledges at Jaws. The run at Hounds Tooth went great, and we relaxed as we entered The Lower 5 miles, an easier Class IV run down to the takeout. The river was flowing at about 1300 CFS, a lower level, but plenty big for our 14 foot cataracts.

As we drifted under the highway bridge above Otter Slide (the first big drop in The Lower 5), we noticed some people with a small raft on the left shore. Floating closer, we saw that it was some teenagers with a little yellow ducky raft and a big cooler. Mike and I drifted closer and called out to them, asking if they intended

to run the river in that raft. One of the guys gave us a somewhat surly reply in the affirmative. We told him that the river got pretty rough around the corner, but he said he could handle it; he had done it before. Meanwhile, the crew of 2 young girls and another guy (all obviously underage but with beers in hand) were busy loading the cooler into the boat, and handing out the tiny, plastic paddles. Since there was nothing we could do, we simply wished them good luck and floated around the corner, into the drop.

The moment I entered the rapid, my disgust with the teenagers turned to worry. Otter Slide is one of the easiest drops on the North Fork, but it is still a solid Class IV, with big ledges and holes. It had suddenly become obvious to me what was going to happen to that boat. As we exited the main drop, we all headed for the left bank, with the same idea. I made it to shore quickly, pulled my boat up on shore and started to run back towards the top of the drop, but it was too late. When I heard the shout I turned just in time to see them coming around the corner, floundering through the top part of the drop.

Ironically, the only thing that saved them was their boat. Being a non-bailer,

of course, it had filled with water the instant they hit the first hole. This had caused all of their gear to wash over the side, along with one of the girls. They were able to get her back fairly quickly and the little raft continued through the rapid, miraculously missing the worst ledges as it careened downstream. I say miraculously because, with all four hanging on for dear life, there was no one left to paddle. While they all tried to prevent themselves from being washed out of the boat, their gear was making no such effort. The river was littered with clothing, beer cans, paddles, cigarettes, a large cooler and horse-collar life jackets which hadn't bothered to put on.

As soon as we saw them, we jumped back in our boats and took off after them. They had flopped down through the last part of the big drops and were into the Class 3 water by the time we got to them. They made no attempt to paddle or bail, instead they simply covered in the boat shouting. Two of us got to them and began pushing the raft towards the right bank, taking turns at ramming the wallowing boat. After about a hundred yards we got the raft to shore, and the crew to dry land. They all appeared to be OK, just a little shook up. The bikini-clad girls were shivering and shaking, while the two guys tried to calm them down.

Their biggest complaint was the loss of the cigarettes, undoubtedly hard to come by at their age. They also bemoaned the loss of the cooler, which had contained a half-case of beer. We perked up our ears at the mention of beer. Quickly, we scanned the river for any sign of this treasure, but to no avail. Eventually we had to deflate their boat and row them across the river to safety. We dropped them off on the other side and they climbed out without a single word of thanks. As they walked out of sight, in search of more beer and cigarettes, I just shook my head: kids these days! As we regrouped below, someone in our group spotted the cooler, and pulled it from the river. Suddenly our mission was clear: we had to stop these teenagers from engaging in illegal and dangerous activities. Yes, we took their beer, and didn't even feel guilty.

# A Brush With Death Psycho Killer Qu'est-Ce Que C'est

by John Frachella  
Regional Coordinator, AWA

It was a warm and sunny day in 1996 when we put on the Lower Neilson in the Laurel Mountains above Quebec City. The day before we had a successful run, creekin' the Upper. We were guests of Stephen Langevin and Hugh Morin of Quebec. From Maine, we had Davey Smallwood, H.I. Hasey, Brian Budd and myself.

As we drove through the village of Pont-Rouge, crammed into my truck, the stereo was blaring the Talking Heads. The boys from Quebec were eatin' up "Burning Down the House", but they really lost it when they heard "Psycho Killer". Driving through the pastoral hillsides of Saint-Raymond, we replayed "Psycho Killer" for the third time. Everyone was chanting the lyrics. At the put in, we strutted to the haunting rhythm and our first strokes on the river were all in unison to the song. I think the Heads would have been impressed.

Two years earlier elite Quebecais creekers were saying that the Lower Neilson might be too dangerous to run. It was only recently that a few local hair boaters began to do it.

It was apparent that the water level had dropped from the day before. At the First Drop things looked bony, but still runnable. A few chutes on river right fed into shallow eddies. Everyone's speed was broken by subsurface rocks on the approach to the 12 foot waterfall that was 30 feet across. The water at the lip of the falls was so shallow that the first few boats made loud smashing sounds when they landed.

Word was passed up-stream that Hugh had caved-in the bulbous bow of his New Wave Sport Descent. He had gone far left over the falls, so I decided to go far right. I, too, was slowed by rocks, but I managed a few shallow stokes. Just before launching over the lip I recognized the ugliness of what was about to happen.

All the water on the far right was funneling down into a pot-hole, just wide enough to swallow my Cascade (which, by the way, is a monstrously large C-1). My bow scraped the far side of the pot-hole as I was helplessly sucked in. I actually watched my bow-then my spray skirt-disappear. I could only think that this

looked exactly like the terminal, life-claiming pot-hole on the right side of Initiation Rapid on the Gauley. When my body reached the sucking water, the impact thrust me forward onto my deck in a swirl of bubbles, I could only think "OH GOD, I'm being swallowed whole, enormous boat and all."

I gave up immediately because the force was far greater than anything I had ever experienced. There was no hope what-so-ever.

I do not remember struggling. There seemed to be no point. Sunlight and aerated, swirling water alternated with solid blackness. Bright light, blackness, light, blackness, light. I don't even remember trying to come out of my boat. I was aware of only two things—the very strong sucking force and the certainty that I would never breath air again.

Suddenly, in my mind's eye, I saw a long dark tunnel with light at the far end. I was moving toward the light. I had no idea where my physical body was. I was focused only on the light. Then, as if in a dream, I heard a voice yell, "Grab the rope."

My first thought was that, in order to diminish the trauma of my passage to the hereafter, the "beings" in charge on "the other side" were going to make it seem like I was being rescued. Calmly, I imagined myself reaching for a rope and, strangely enough, it began to feel like I had something between my fingers.

I was very calm. Then, suddenly, I felt the sensation of air on my face. Looking up, I saw Hugh, standing on a rock in the middle of the river, hauling me in, his eyes wide with wonder. Wow, I thought, "they're" gonna play this thing all the way through! "They" probably figure I can't handle the news that I'm just plain dead.

"Johnny, is that you? Is that you?!" Johnny don't ever do that to me again, never! Do you hear, never!" It really was Hugh's voice and he was holding back tears. Next, I saw H.I. He too was wide eyed. He couldn't speak at all, no matter how hard he tried. I told him it was okay, as if it was, but I have no idea where my words came from.

Then I heard Davey's voice from far away. Davey was standing on top of the

falls, shouting that he could still see my boat inside the waterfall, spinning end for end.

Stephan came to my side and asked softly, "Are you a ghost?" He meant it.

Eventually Davey yelled that a float bag and a paddle were heading downstream. Brian went after the stuff. Davey looked back into the pot hole and discovered that he couldn't see my boat anymore. A few minutes later, the boat surfaced in the middle of the river, about 50 feet downstream from the waterfalls. After H.I. retrieved it we all ran up to look into the pot hole. Although to this day we don't know for sure, it seems likely the hole opened into an underwater chamber tall enough to accommodate a vertically spinning 12 foot long C-1, end for end. Obviously, there must have been an exit from the bottom of the chamber through which I flushed, along with my paddle and float bag... and then, a full 10 minutes later, my boat. We stood there staring over the waterfall and deep into the pot hole while H.I. muttered something about me and my boat being the largest objects on the river, then gone, gone, nothing left...

Stephan, an excellent water-man, an emergency room physician and one of my best friends, was badly shaken. He insisted on getting out of there; never, ever, to come back. He pressured all of us to start hauling our gear out of the steep gorge. We struggled through thick vegetation up to the road.

Back at my truck, Stephan observed that it was Sunday and that, from now on, he was going to go to church. Then he directed me to drive to the put-in of the **Grand-Remous/Pont-Rouge** section of the Jacques Cartier River. It's an easy, fun Class III-IV run. There's a half-mile flat water section before the first drop and we all paddled in silence, **side-by-side**. After a few minutes, Hugh said, "Johnny, I wish I knew if right now is real, or if you're a ghost. I was so scared that we lost you back there." No one laughed.

Back at home, after seeing my wife, my dog and my house, I slept fitfully. For days afterwards I waited for "someone" to drop by, perhaps at my office, to ask if I'd said my good-byes, and if so, to "come along now". It hasn't happened yet.

I don't know what really happened to me that day, but I'm very grateful for my fine, fine friends and a wonderful wife. I guess we all have to be ready to say good-bye at any given moment...

The boys from Quebec say the first drop on the Lower has no name. I asked if we could call it Psycho Killer. They agreed, but with no assurance that the name would stick.



## SWIMMING CRYSTAL by Mark Johnson

We were six days into an eleven day, speed-run, rafting trip on the Grand Canyon. The trip, so far, had been great, everything I'd dreamed it would be. Big rapids, hot weather, and unbelievable scenery. Our party of six boats and twelve people had experienced only two flips so far, and I wasn't involved in either. We had run many big rapids, and were feeling pretty confident.

This day, however, had not started off so well for me. Earlier, at Hermit Rapid I had been **taking** pictures on the shore while the first three boats paddled through the wave train. After they had gone, we noticed another boat coming, so I got ready to take more pictures. **As** the raft drew closer, beginning its run, I was upset to see no one guiding the boat. I was further upset to see that it was MY RAFT, running right down the wave train, life jackets on deck and dry box open, without me at the oars. My prayers that it remain upright were apparently heard, as the boat sailed unscathed through the rapid. Our friends caught the wayward vessel, and we only had to hike about a half-mile up, over, and down the steep banks to get back to it.

We then proceeded downstream to scout Crystal, the next major rapid. Last night, I had made the mistake of **re-reading** the first chapter of Michael Ghiglieri's book "Canyon." In it, the author describes a flip in Crystal and the subsequent swim, in which a guy's life jacket is literally shredded off him by the rocks. Our flip yesterday had slowed us down, and now we were going to hit Crystal at high flows. **As** we scouted the rapid, the line was obvious; just stay far right and crash the lateral wave to miss the hole, then hop down the right bank and eddy out below. This didn't look too difficult, so we got back in the boats and pulled out into the current.

I was second, behind Pete. He was our strongest boater, with many Grand Canyon descents under his belt. My plan was to follow him through, surely he knew the best line. What I had failed to take into account was that Pete was a former Kansas linebacker who weighs close to 300 pounds. He pulled far out from shore, and as his boat was caught in the current leading into the drop, he began to pull right, rowing downstream at a 45 degree angle. His boat easily broke through the lateral, sailed safely past the hole and into the eddy. I began pulling almost as soon as Pete did, but my muscles were no

match for the power of the river. I remember thinking that I had made it, and turning my head to look downstream. This proved to be a very poor move, because it became immediately obvious that I had not crossed the lateral, but was instead side-surfing it into the biggest hole I have ever seen! **As** we slid into the hole from the side, it opened below us and the enormous **breaking** wave loomed high above. We surfed up and onto the face of the huge back-curler, and as the boat hit the curl it started to tip over and drop into the hole. At this point we both dove out into the face of the wave, hoping to avoid a trip into what looked like the depths of hell. I popped out the other side of the wave almost immediately, and this is where the real fun began.

I slid down the backside of the monster and began swimming through huge standing waves, trying to take quick breaths in the troughs. I spotted Jessica's blue helmet across the river; she was doing the same thing. I remember thinking that this was not too bad, and I had just started looking around for the boat when my legs started to hit rocks. We were now in the rock garden below Crystal. The water was incredibly turbulent, and it was next to impossible to maintain the proper swim position as I bounced off boulders and spun in hydraulics. I had lost track of Jessica, but I saw my friends, Ted and Kelly barreling down on me with throw

rope in hand. They got the rope to me and after a few gyrations I was able to grab hold. **As** my butt hit another rock, I remembered the section in the book about the shredded lifejacket, said, "the hell with this," and began pulling myself in with the rope. In seconds I was at the boat, but the water was so rough that we couldn't connect. I floated alongside bumping into rocks until a friendly wave shoved me against the boat and they finally pulled me in. Ted yelled at me to grab the other rope, and were off after Jessica. Although she was farther left, she too, was having a hell of a time with the rocks. She was in the proper swimmers position, and looked back at us when we yelled, so I knew she was OK. She caught the rope and we pulled her in, while she gasped for air. Once we had her in the raft, we caught the next eddy and rested awhile. Jess jumped off the boat onto shore, saying that she wanted land. I felt the same, but I didn't have the strength to move.

When we finally got back to the boat and got it **turned** over, we discovered a bent oar, but our gear was still mostly dry. Jess lost one sandal, and we got some interesting bruises, but no major injuries. At camp that night we were both pretty philosophical despite being tired, sore, and full of river water. We felt lucky to come out of it as well as we did, and besides, it makes a great story!!!

## Whitewater Whammy

by Marion Boyer

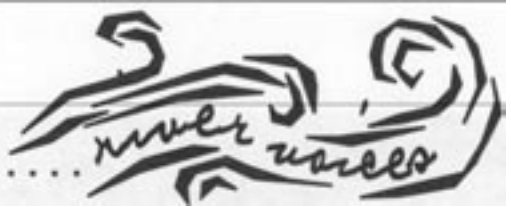
**P**eople involved in sports tend to be superstitious—have you noticed? Baseball, basketball and hockey players go through peculiar little rituals to give victory a nudge in their favor. Whitewater sport enthusiasts are no different. For example, I know kayakers who only allow their kayaks to be loaded on the car carrier with the front of the boat facing forward.

Rafters are superstitious too. I know

several with odd little prejudices against "someone" whose river nickname happens to be "Flipper" (or, more formally, "Flip Queen of North America"). They chant mantras like, "She's a jinx, she's a jinx" or "SHE'S not riding in our raft, no way, no way." It's as though they really believe there might be some sort of hocus pocus that causes rafts I ride to flip.

By mere coincidence, I have had some experience with rafts overturning in





whitewater. But I maintain if you paddle an under inflated raft toward Dimple Rock on the Youghiogheny, a flip is inevitable. I proved this, very dramatically, when our raft formed the perfect shape of a taco against that very rock. I recall announcing quite clearly, "Lean in to the roc..." before water filled my mouth.

Colosseum on the Cheat has claimed many rafts, mine included. Twice. In a row.

Iron Ring on the Gauley is a particularly nasty place to flip. But it was our guide, Kevin Byrd, who actually jinxed

that voyage, by announcing that he had never flipped a raft in North America. It was a spectacular flip at Iron Ring. We were momentarily airborne before the raft blew over in a perfect side to side flip. We have it on video tape and play it on slow speed and reverse frequently.

The Snake River in Hell's Canyon is picturesque. The major rapid is called Granite. You approach down the long sloping tongue of The Green Room and then paddle up and over a series of large waves. The feeling of a raft stalling on its upward journey out of a huge trough

is memorable. I had lots of time to register the fact that a side curler was going to slam us completely over.

In a year's time I will be rafting in the Grand Canyon. My kayaking husband says it would be a feat of no small measure to flip one of the Colorado River rafts. His money is betting I have the right karma. I certainly have no lack of experience.

I would like to reiterate that superstitions are really very silly. My friends still ride with me. Well, "River Debris" does, but "Flotsom" and "Jetsom" are switching to hang gliding. They believe it gives them a stronger sense of security.

Editors Note: When Marion Boyer is not capsizing rafts, she writes plays and teaches college in Portage, Michigan.

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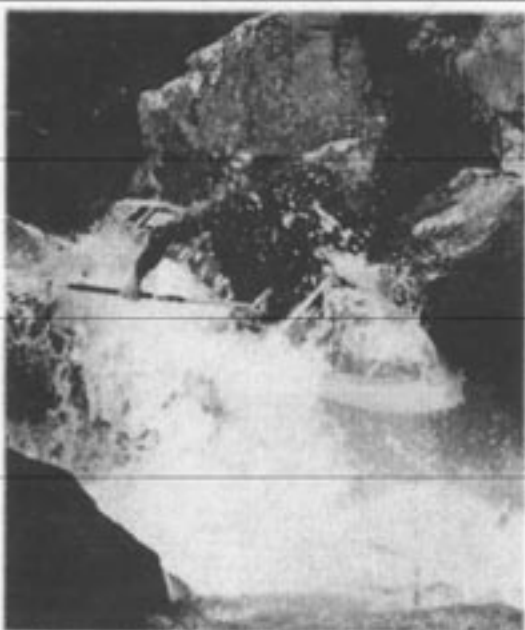
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# Top Ten Paddling Tips

(From My First Year Of Whitewater)

by Alison Snow Jones

It has been nearly a year since I first sat in a whitewater kayak and involuntarily ran Ram Cat rapid on the middle Yough. I purchased my boat about a month after that fateful day and have been in it almost every weekend since then. As a result, I've run many rapids (MOST of them voluntarily!) and met a whole lot of really wonderful people. During a recent trip down Codorus Creek near York, PA in the COLD (continuous) Spring rain, I found myself reflecting on how much I've learned. I would like to share some of it with beginner paddlers in the hopes that they will spend less time swimming (and quaking with fear) than I did and more time really enjoying the river!

## 1. Never lean upstream

I learned this my very first day in a boat. Hypervigilance, a byproduct of terror, caused me to notice that all my classmates were capsizing upon peeling out from the eddy we were sitting in. Since I had the benefit of covering in the eddy until my turn, I had plenty of time to analyze the visual data I was gathering. A quick review of college physics and fluid

dynamics was all it took for me to realize that I was witnessing something similar to a paddle wheel: lean upstream and the river grabs the upriver edge of the kayak and rotates boat and paddler to the upside down under water position. I resolved that day never to do this. I have failed only twice in this resolution, once in class I water and once in nearly flat water. Both times I was leaning away from a rock that I was trying to "miss". This leads to edict number two...

## 2. Always lean towards rocks and other obstructions

I'm not going to dwell on the consequences of violating this edict (see above). Suffice it to say that I have the distinction of capsizing and swimming in nearly flat water. (Yeah, I blew the roll, too!) Trust me. While it affords considerable memment to your paddling partners (sometimes for months afterwards), it's not a reputation you want to acquire!

## 3. Always follow an open boat when running a rapid for the first time

This one took me a while to figure out. In fact, I realized this fact on a sub-

liminal level long before it percolated into my conscious brain. I noticed that whenever I followed an open boater through a rapid we always seemed to have a relatively calm, uneventful trip. When I followed a kayaker, I often ended up boofing ledges and dodging rocks at the last minute. Gradually, I became aware that I felt a sense of relief whenever open boaters turned up to paddle on club trips. At first I thought perhaps it was because there was a difference between open boaters and kayakers in their very disposition and outlook on life. I mean, they sort of looked different, at least to me, so maybe they actually were different. The open boaters all looked stable and sensible...as though they had spent their youth entering science fairs and taking engineering courses. The kayakers, on the other hand, looked unkempt, as though they might have blundered into a time anomaly and were permanently trapped in the late '60s (even the ones that had spent their youth entering science fairs and taking engineering courses looked like this to me!). However, over time, I realized that it's not the difference in their appearance or their disposition that accounts for the relative calm of following an open boater. Rather, it's that open boaters are positioned high enough to have a better view of the water ahead and they generally choose paths that minimize bailing.

## 4. Never surf a hole called "the mixmaster".

If you need this one explained, it's a sure sign that you've chosen the right sport...

## 5. Never run any rapid with the word "falls" or "splat" in its name.

See 4 above...

## 6. Don't be indecisive when you're heading towards a rock.

Soon after purchasing my beloved boat, I discovered that there is a "rock magnet" secreted somewhere in it. As a result, if there is only one rock in an entire river, I will find it and ram it, scrape it, pin on it or paddle over it! The above advice is the result of a lot of personal experience. When you spot a rock, choose the side of the rock on which you will paddle, preferably the side where the prevailing current seems to be going (assuming no splat rocks, strainers, or other obstacles are in the way). This is no time to vacillate. Once you've picked a side, DONT change your mind. This advice may be faulty in more difficult rapids (I

wouldn't know!), but in beginner stuff, and even most of the Class III stuff I've paddled, this is pretty sound advice.

**7. It's better to run rapids facing forwards than to run them facing backwards.**

This is a "no brainer". But if you're having trouble understanding why this is good advice, imagine driving backwards in rush hour traffic on the Capitol Beltway with no brakes and defective steering. That's what running rapids backwards feels like.

**8. A good brace is as valuable as a good roll.**

Unless you LIKE getting wet and then freezing your stem off for several hours, it's really better to avoid the upside down under water position. And as long as you stay out of holes (see 4 above) avoid killer rapids (see 5 above), don't gravitate to rocks (see 6 above) and don't run rapids backwards (see 7 above), a good brace will minimize the amount of time you spend being the keel of your boat.

**9. When you think you've really screwed up, paddle like crazy.**

I can't tell you how many times this one has bailed me out. From my first involuntary run of Ram Cat to my most recent misjudgment of the strength of the current which left me scraping over a rock and into the side of a grabby little hole, this advice has saved my stem. It works well when you blow your eddy turn, too. Otherwise, you could end up discovering how I figured out number 7!

**10. Choose paddling companions with the same care and discrimination that you would use in choosing a lifemate.**

On a river, as in life, who you're with can make a big difference in how much fun you have. Characteristics that I've found to be good predictors of fun are paddlers with 1) a strong sense of safety; 2) a strong sense of camaraderie; 3) more experience than I have had; 4) no "macho" tendencies; 5) an appreciation for the other "gifts" of the river (i.e., wildlife, geological formations, wildflowers, scenery); and 6) a good sense of humor.

Most important: Enjoy the trip, enjoy the scenery, enjoy your paddling partners, help out whenever you can, leave everything better and cleaner than you found it, and be courteous and considerate of landowners and local residents.

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## 'Easiest Shuttle On The Obed-Emory System'

by Brian Aubin

*Editor's note: On March 1, 1997, a number of paddlers from the Ohio Valley Whitewater Club set out from Crossville, TN, to run Crab Orchard Creek, a beautiful class III stream on the Obed-Emory System. With six vehicles racing down I-40, they initiated the most amazing shuttle since the famous 72 mile shuttle on the St. Francis River in Missouri in 1986. Brian Aubin (vehicle #2) tells this story. Every word of it is true!*

Among the kayakers in our 6 vehicles, we had over 150 years of shuttle driving experience. You would think with that much practice at the art of the shuttle we could quickly figure the most efficient route to the river... wrong! Believe me, this is the whitewater version of the Keystone Cops!

Last names have been deleted to protect the guilty. Vehicle #1 contained Clayton, Jon, Ryan, Wendy and Cathy. Vehicle #2 contained Brian and Maria. In Vehicle #3 were Zeke and Suzan. Vehicle

#4 carried Gary and Jane. Vehicle #5 belonged to John and Nancy, and #6 included Sally and Larry, TSRA paddlers.

Before any vehicle left the motel, Clayton, after studying the map, said, "This is the easiest shuttle on the whole Obed-Emory System!"

Vehicles #1 through #4 get on I-40 heading east with #1 in the lead. Vehicle #2 quickly passes vehicle #1, pulls over on the shoulder; #1, #3, #4 follow. Brian steps out of vehicle #2 and asks, "Where are vehicles #5 and #6?"

Someone answers: "They weren't at Shoney's when we left. They went to Paddle the Tiny Piny." All paddlers get back in their cars and continue east on I-40.

We are looking for Westel Road which, according to Monte Smith's excellent guide, is the exit we need to go to Crab Orchard Creek. Vehicle #1 passes Westel Road as if it doesn't exist. At this point #3 gets upset at #1, passes #2 and pulls up beside #1 just as #1 makes a radical right turn off the highway onto the next exit ramp. At the end of the ramp, #1 gets out and berates vehicles #2, #3, and #4. Clayton says, "Have you people got a !\*?@#! problem?" He finally convinces all members of the party that he knows the way better than guidebook writer Smith. Can you believe... we

follow him. We take a left and go 2.2 miles to an abandoned wooded lot. #1 turns around as #2 passes him. #1 tells #3 to go look for a road in the next half mile. #3, #2, and #4 continue down the road for a half mile and find Sand Flea Road, a dirt road that nobody in his right mind would take.

#2, #3, and #4 check their maps. #3 sends #4 back to find #1. After waiting 5 minutes #2 and #3 turn around to find #1 and #4. They pass #4 coming back to Sand Flea Road. #4 turns around at Sand Flea Road. #2, having passed #3, stops, turns around as #3 and #4 come up the road. #2 attempts to back up to the point where #3 and #4 turned around and almost gets hit by oncoming traffic. #3 and #4 pull over to wait for #2 to catch up. Jane, in #4 says, "I'm getting dizzy!"

#2 pulls up to #3 and #4. #2 now believes he must rescue the entire group from the ramblings of #1 and firmly says, "Follow me to the put in!" Away we go!

#2, #3, and #4 now head back to I-40 to backtrack to the original Smith map turnoff, Westel Road. They pass #1 heading in the opposite direction. He shouts, "We can make it this way!" But the rest of the crew has now lost all faith in #1. As #1 pulls out of sight, he shouts (in frustration and anger), "I'll meet you at the put in!"

#2 is now angry and is determined to quickly find his own way to the put in. He leads at 80 MPH while #3 and #4 follow at 60 MPH. #2 waits for #3 and #4 at the exit ramp. #2 waits for #3 and #4 at the Westel turnoff and at the left turn 2.2 miles down Westel Road. The passenger in #2 (Maria) realizes we have now completed a circle and are back where we originally started with #1. #2 never understands that he has just driven a 5 mile circle at high speed only to end up where he started. #1 quickly flies by Sand Flea Road and then begins to search for the turn off to the river. #3 knows the turn is 4.5 miles down the road because he has Monte Smith's map. #2 passes the turn off to the river; however, he is going so fast that by the time he turns around to head back the other way, #3 and #4 are turning left toward the river. #2, #3, and #4 proceed 1 mile to the put in where #1, #5 and #6 are already in paddling gear. #5 and #6 did not go to the Piny. They were simply way ahead of the other 4 vehicles.

Everything went well on the river that day, but we are still taking humorous salvos about that shuttle!



# "Selling The Real Thing"

by Nathan Lewis

Although whitewater boating has, for the most part, near-perfect media invisibility, it does pop up now and again. A while back fashion magazines were running an ad for a men's fragrance, an ad portraying a kayaker running a creek little ledge. Afterwards, a beautiful woman was draped around his neck, seduced by his powerful aura of **derring-do**. Big business had discovered our sport, captured its "essence" in a bottle, and sold it as an aphrodisiac.

It seemed nutty and sad that the influence of whitewater sport on the larger culture should be that a few **sweet-smelling** city boys got laid. And ironic, since we all know that the true kayaking experience is characterized by smelly gear and a deep-seated aversion to personal hygiene, at least during weekends. Face it, the real essence of kayaking is the stench that comes off your long underwear after it has been marinating under your **drytop** in your own fearful sweat for five or six hours. The real smell is the smell that drafts up after you peel your farmer john down your waist — for at least a few of us, the smell of urine. The real smell is the smell of a jumbo cup of AM-PM coffee and a soggy plastic wrapped danish at one in the morning.

As for the woman in the fragrance ad— beautiful women never turn up on the river. A boating trip usually demands a compromise with romantic possibilities. Most male boaters return home to a dissatisfied wife or girlfriend, who wonders why a silly game of water and plastic should take priority to her own pleasant designs.

Perhaps that's why that fragrance ad hasn't turned up recently. But commercial images of boating are becoming more common. Shoe ads in particular are propagating. Real boating shoes are, of course, highly personalized combinations of neoprene, rubber, and duct tape. Or, in the case of one guy I know, a pair of

Converse Chuck Taylors. Now the shoe companies are actually marketing shoes to wear off the river — spectacularly engineered compositions of nylon and rubber, lugged, buttressed, and reinforced to withstand even the most aggressive fun hog's driving and diner-hopping. Of course, most boaters I know couldn't give a dam about such things. They wear the same shoddy sneakers they always wear around town, with the little bit of sand you can't get out. But the big shoe companies' target market is not a tiny demographic slice of outdoorsy types, but the hordes of urban sedentaries, who will pay big bucks to give the impression that, if they weren't mowing the lawn or shopping at the mall, they would be on the river.

Japan Tobacco has pushed the concept one step further by using kayaking scenes to promote their flagship brand, Mild Seven. A rugged-looking guy with great hair, his boat pulled up on the river-side rocks and still in full paddling jacket/pants, **smoking** a cigarette. A cigarette? I once saw a guy do the entirety of the Ocoee with his dog standing on his **sprayskirt**, but I have never, ever seen a person light up on the riverbank. Does he keep his smokes in a **drybox**! And the hair! My hair always looks like it spent the last few hours **poking** up through the little holes in my helmet.

Japan Tobacco's target market is the urban masses in big Asian cities: Tokyo, Osaka, Taipei, Hong Kong, and Singapore. As far away from Joe Boater as you can get, but the home to countless millions who, while standing on the fire escape and smoking a cigarette, with nine hours of work done and four more to go, take some comfort in the fact that somewhere in a land far away, someone, with more free time and a less noticeable bald spot, smokes the same brand.

Although these commercial images of boating are far removed from reality, per-

haps boaters shouldn't complain. Boaters are adventurers and heroes, out to expand their own limits and conquer the fear of the unknown, (or maybe just **looking** for something a little more stimulating than reruns of the Simpsons). There is hardly anything as gratifying as a good boating trip, whether it be a remote class V-VI, if that's your game, or a classic III-IV. But until recently lay people's reaction to boating has been one of polite disinterest. "Your first time on **Overflow** Creek? Sounds interesting." End of conversation. You could as well tell them that you were **working** on you Bocci game or expanding your bottlecap collection.

But now that your co-workers have been exposed to boating advertisements, you can claim some bragging rights. They imagine you spend your weekends smelling great and propping up hardbodied models in cutaway swimwear. They're envious — they can only smoke the cigarettes or wear the shoes, but you do the real thing, whatever that is. Something to do with water, mountains, **functional-looking** outerwear, and driving around town with those rugged, sexy river things strapped to the top of your car. It must be cool to be a boater.

## Kayak Festival

by Alison Snow Jones

Bright-colored kayaks,  
Odd-shaped party balloons,  
Float on cars, hover in parking lots,  
Bob eagerly at water's edge.

Radiant, ecstatic faces  
Reflect the soul's most perfect space.  
Excited voices eddy round roof racks,  
Joyous counterpoint to the river's leitmotif.

Perfect summer day,  
Witness to enduring grace;  
Blue crystal sky, bright golden sun,  
Tendrils of cool breeze, luminous leaves.

Exuberant, exultant river,  
Impetuous from mountain rain;  
**Tumescant**, unpent, uninhibited:  
Thrusting, **sucking**, plunging big water.

Bright buoyant boats,  
Laughter from the running river's core;  
Playful, surfing, hydraulic harmony  
Dancing free of land-locked limits.

Bright colored boats celebrate  
The soul's most perfect space!

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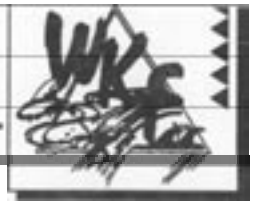
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**Scott Shipley**, started paddling with Werner paddles when he was twelve. Today he's a two-time ('93 & '95) World Cup Champion and US National Slalom Champion.

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# Learning

## "The Way" (and "The Truth")

by Gary A. Oelberg

I recently undertook the challenge of teaching a friend to kayak. You know the story: You start at the pool, then you graduate to a very forgiving section of whitewater, where your friend struggles to master the most basic element of kayaking—keeping the boat upright. After a few swims, your friend washes up on some lonely shore, frustrated and cold, like some forlorn castaway from a sunken ship. Dejected and dispirited, your friend turns to you for hope and guidance, asking, "Master, what must I do to become an expert kayaker?"

If you are like me, you never thought about it much. You took the passage from beginner to expert boater for granted. But there truly is a series of phases everyone must pass through before becoming an expert boater. As surely as a child will pass through beautiful and difficult life changes to become an adult, a kayaker must grow to become an expert boater. With this in mind, I present you with the answer to that all-important question: "Master, what must I do to become an expert boater?"

The Ten Stages in the Passage from Beginner to Expert Boater

1. Perfect that eskimo roll without the aid of a diving mask and snorkel.

2. Get royally trashed on a placid section of whitewater, like the Nantahala River, and then go into work bragging how you almost died on the "most heinous" section of whitewater. "It was the most heinous," you say, "Most HEINOUS!" Watch the astounded jaws drop to the floor. Bask in the glory of it.

3. Park your boat beside a playhole and watch the "expert boaters" shred it up. Yearn to be like them. Wipe the slobber off of your greenhorn chin. At this point, you still aren't good enough to paddle a 2 year old child's butt.

4. Run the Lower Yough and know that you are God's gift to intermediate paddling.

5. Run the Upper Yough and spit on the slobbs still stuck on the Lower. Believe you are a true "Class 5 shredding, creekin, deep thinking, kayaking machine."

6. Run a West Virginia steep creek at "nanagerable" water levels. Start thinking to yourself: "Hey, I might be getting good at this sport."

7. Run a steep creek at "UNMANAGE-

ABLE" water levels and almost die doing so. After the post-traumatic stress disorder has worn off, say to yourself over and over again: "God I love this sport. God I love this sport."

8. Laugh out loud every time you meet a kayaker from the Ohio.

9. Get so good that you feel compelled to scoff at those who run "Class 5". Tell 'em you could run "Class 5"

whitewater with your butt stuck in an old a religion.

inner tube, trailing a six pack of beer, holding a cocktail cup in your hand, and never spill a damn drop of your drink.

10. Quit your corporate job to join a elite team of expert boaters who are planning to run a "virgin river" somewhere in the Himalayans. Know you may never return from this venture and acknowledge "the Truth". Kayaking is not a sport and it's not an adventure. Kayaking is

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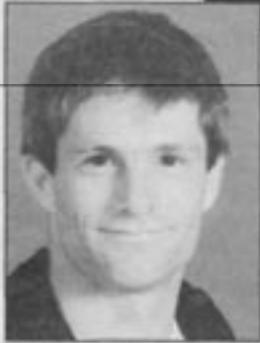
Photo: Eric Evans





# The innovators

or



## The upside to raping the wilderness

by Rich Weiss

*Just as this issue went to press we received the sad news that Rich Weiss, the author of this article, died in a kayaking accident June 25th on the White Salmon River in Washington. Weiss, age 33, was a highly regarded slalom racer who competed for the United States in both the 1992 and 1996 Olympics. He also became the first American to medal in men's kayak at a world championship when he won the silver medal in 1993 in Italy.*

*Weiss, who had a doctorate from the University of British Columbia, had recently established an environmental consulting firm in Oregon. His wife of eight years, Rosanna, is expecting their first child this fall. Look for a more detailed article on the life and accomplishments of Rich Weiss in the next issue of American Whitewater.*

**T**he cutting edge of whitewater paddling can develop almost anywhere. Who would have ever thought that some hillbillies from a remote corner of West Virginia would develop the innovative squirt, splat, and blast paddlestyle? A whitewater subculture was **born** there, evolved over a period of 10 years, and then **surged** into the mainstream **full grown**.

**The** amazing thing about that subculture was that it remained isolated so long. Oh sure, some racers used those moves on other rivers, in other parts of the country, but they never really caught on. Yet in Friendsville, everyone and their brother could pull off **these** moves.

**The** rest of the paddling community could have cared less. Big, fat, plastic boats and nobody even wanted to look at anything new. Then it changed.

**You** would never think something like that could happen today. But it is. A new boating subculture is growing. Unthinkable new moves are being developed in an even more unlikely place.

Ralph had done first descents in British Columbia before, and he talked me into going **along** on this one. He hinted that this expedition would be a little different. "Fred," he said, "You're going to see some stuff on this trip that you've never even dreamed about!" I was sure he was exaggerating. I don't want to sound arrogant or anything, **re** done my fair share of paddling through the years. I thought I had pretty much **done** it all, and seen most everything else, and certainly dreamt about anything possibly **related** to whitewater. "How do you know what we are going to see?" I asked, "I **thought** nobody had ever run this river before."

"**Y**ell, only part of the trip is a first descent," he admitted, "The really interesting **stuff** is below that. I got to run it last year, and can't wait to get back. It's **unbelievable!**"

"**W**hat's so great about it?" I asked.

"**Y**ou'll just have to wait 'till we get there," he grinned, "because I couldn't describe **it** if I wanted to." I kept badgering him, but he wouldn't tell me anything else.

**O**ur target was an unnamed tributary of the Klinaklili River. The **topo** maps showed a respectable gradient, about 300 feet per mile. It took us a while to figure that out, since the maps were Canadian, and had everything in meters and **kilometers**. Ralph **esti-** mated that we would spend three days on the tributary, hit the main Klinaklili, and spend another three days traveling down to Knight Inlet, where we would be picked up. **The** "first descent" part of this trip was the tributary. The "unbelievable stuff I'd never **before**" was on the Klinaklili. Everything we needed for this trip had to be packed **neede** into two kayaks. Ralph is one of those equipment fanatics, so he had everything we **neede** d in a super-light, ultra-small version. We didn't have much room left over, so we were **carrying** more fishing supplies than food. Ralph laughed, "I think you'll be pretty sick of eating salmon by the end of this trip."

**T**here was only one complication to our schedule. The Klinaklili was used for **trans-** porting logs from the "managed forests" (in other words, massive clearcutting **opera-** tions) upstream to the pulp-and-paper mill located downstream in Knight Inlet. There **were** **times** when the river was so choked with logs that it was impossible to paddle **witho** ut getting crushed. If we hit the river during one of these times, we would just **have** to wait it out. It could take days. We had to schedule alternative pick-up days to **account** for this contingency.

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# boat control



Ralph had bragged about the scenery for weeks before we left. "It is beautiful," he gushed, "Just flying in is worth the trip. When the sun comes up over the horizon, the whole sky is filled with glacier-sculptured peaks silhouetted against the most incredible shades of red. You'll think you've died and gone to heaven."

We never had that spiritual experience. It rained. It was sprinkling when we loaded the float plane, drizzling when we took off, pouring the whole time we were in the air, and a virtual monsoon when we landed. I stared out the window during the entire flight, and was rewarded with a beautiful view of grayish-white mist. I was just praying that one of those sculptured peaks Ralph had bragged about didn't suddenly materialize right in front of the plane. Somehow the pilot found his way through the rain and fog without running into any mountains.

Amazingly, the rain dwindled to fine mist shortly after we landed, and we were able to set up camp and get prepared for our first day on the river.

#### The Tributary

Our descent of the tributary was, with one minor (but painful) exception, truly awesome. First of all, the weather was about as perfect as it gets in this part of the world. The rain was never more intense than a steady drizzle, and was often just a feeble spray. Ralph thought he saw a glimpse of the sun once, but I think it was just a *mistage* (a mirage caused by the mist off the river).

The tributary had a series of short, steep, gorges with easy water between them. Nothing was outrageously hard, just solid class **N-V** drops, one after another. We skipped and boofed our way down gorge after gorge. We did have to carry a couple of drops because of logjams, and we had to portage one entire gorge on our third day. Actually, we only had to portage half the gorge, but starting a portage in the middle of a gorge is not the preferred alternative. This particular gorge was straight, with nearly vertical walls of smooth, dark metamorphic rock. Slippery green moss grew out of the cracks and covered the surface of the rock.

We got out at the start of the gorge and climbed around to get a good view. There were no good views. The misty rain didn't allow for a great deal of visibility. As far as we could see (and that wasn't very far) the gorge just got deeper and steeper.

"If we start down this gorge and find a drop that we can't run, it will be impossible to portage," Ralph stated, "You just can't climb those moss-covered walls. Especially when they're wet like this!" "Like they're ever not wet?" I shot back, sarcas-

tically. I couldn't let him forget that it had been raining the whole time we'd been on the river. Not after his "sunshine on the glacier-sculptured peaks" story.

Ralph just ignored my comment. "Do we go for it, and risk getting stuck in the middle with no way out?" he mused, "Or do we play it safe and carry around this entire gorge?"

I thought for about two seconds, then said, "Go for it." If I had a dollar for every time those famous last words backfired on me, I could retire to Costa Rica right now.

The first half of the gorge was straightforward, but then the whole river turned left, and flushed down a long slide. Beyond the slide, the water was flowing placidly down the rest of the gorge. But there was no way to see what lay at the bottom of the slide. It might be just a nice clean vertical drop into a deep pool. Or it could be a nasty tumble onto a pile of rocks. We couldn't climb down to look - there was no way to get there.

I was about to say, "Let's go for it!" again, but an unsettled feeling in the pit of my stomach stopped the words from coming out. We had to resort to "scientific paddler" experiments. You never read about these experiments in river safety books, but they are invaluable. Flood debris was piled on a ledge just above our heads. We were able to pull out two logs - a small, fat one about three feet long, and a 12-footer with the dimensions of a kayak.

The first stage of the experiment involved the small log. We maneuvered it into place above the drop with our paddles, then shoved. It went shooting down the slide and over the horizon line.

"Plumph." It was a good sound for a small log.

About 20 seconds later the log came into view, bobbing gently down the calm water past the bottom of the drop. It was a very promising result.

The 12-foot log was stage two of the experiment. We tried to push it down a slightly different line, but it ended up going over the drop in the same place as the small log. It had a bit more speed, though. "Thump. Crack. Plumph. Plumph." A not-very-promising series of sounds.

We both stared at the current emerging from the bottom of the drop. A 6 ft piece of log drifted slowly past. Then another 6 ft piece of log, with a big gouge down the side, came into view. The log had impacted dead center, and broken neatly in half. The scientific method proved it's worth once again. We both started looking for a way up the canyon walls.

Five hours later we reached the top. I can't recall any details, other than it involved ropes, carabiners, pitons, about five thousand swear words, and, of course, rain.

But the ascent of the gorge walls was a walk in the park compared to trying to get back down to the river at the other end of the gorge. We really wanted to get back down close to the river to set up camp for the night. Dusk was about 2 hours away.

It was a steep descent, but not a cliff. The undergrowth was typical of your average northwest rain forest - lots of tangled bushes and vines, many of them blackberry vines with flesh-eating thorns. The ground was soft moss-covered mud. And, of course, it was raining. One other element added excitement to the descent. A particular type of flora has evolved in these forests. The common name for this plant is the devil's club, but I've never heard it called anything but an *Owl!@#\*er* tree. It basically looks like a broom handle stuck in the ground. It has a single trunk about head height, and as thick as a paddle shaft or baseball bat. Its most charming feature is that it is covered from top to bottom with inch-long porcupine quills radiating directly outward, about 5000 per square inch.

Imagine Ralph, standing at the top of the slope, peering down. His boat, filled with gear, is balanced on his left shoulder. He uses his paddle as a support stick in his right hand. He takes a couple of steps down the steep, moss-covered muddy slope, slips, and starts to lose his balance. Instinctively, he reaches out for anything to keep from falling on his ass and sliding down the mountain. The nearest and most convenient thing to grab hold of is the paddle-shaft sized trunk of a *Owl!@#\*er* tree.

"OOOOOWWWW!"

"@@@#@#####\*ER!!" His blood-curdling yell shatters the steady rhythm of the raindrops drumming on the underbrush. He lets go, and finally stops sliding a few hundred feet later. Boat, paddle and gear are scattered everywhere along his trail. Of course, I'm standing above him, laughing my head off. He doesn't even bother to glare up at me. He spends the next 10 minutes picking quills out of his palm, and trying to locate and gather all his equipment.

I'm still chuckling as I throw my boat on my shoulder and start down. Of course, I take one step down the hill and start to slip. The very same thing happens to me.

"OOOOOWWWW!"

"@@@#@#####\*ER!!" I shriek, in an octave I didn't even know my vocal cords could produce. As those inch-long



quills sink into the flesh of my palm, the pain neurons transmit the impulses directly to my lungs and vocal cords, bypassing the brain. I bellow out "Ow!@#\*ter" before my brain even realizes anything has happened.

Very shortly afterward, my brain realizes something has happened. An immense amount of pain is involved. My hand jerks away from the Ow!@#\*ter tree, and I start tumbling down the mountain again. Instinctively, I reach out my other hand to grab something to slow down my death plunge.

"OOOOOWWWWWW!  
 @@@@#####\*\*&&&&&&ER!!"

Sure enough, I had latched onto another Ow!@#\*ter tree trunk I eventually tumble to a stop. Ralph is laughing so hard, he has to cross his legs to keep from peeing in his pants.

A painful three hours, and roughly 200 Ow!@#\*ter trees later, we finally reach the end of the gorge. We spend the next three hours trying to pick Ow!@#\*ter quills out of our palms by the flickering firelight. It was not one of the more pleasant evenings of our trip.

The day after portaging the gorge, we had several close calls. This was actually the easiest part of the river, but we could barely hold onto our paddles due to our swollen palms. We got to be very good at Tao One Stroke, the ancient Chinese art of navigating a whitewater river with as few paddle strokes as possible.

**THE KLINAKLILI**

We reached the Klinaklili about noon on our fourth day. We decided to set up camp, and let our bodies heal for a while. I was not in one of my best moods.

"Look, Ralph," I started, "We've been on this trip for four days. It has rained continuously. I can't even paddle, my palms are so bloody and swollen from those damn Ow!@#\*ter trees. My legs are a mass of cuts and scratches from those damn blackberry bushes. With my luck,

poison ivy got into those cuts, and in three days my legs will be one massive oozing scab."

As I opened my mouth to continue, Ralph just cut me off. "Trust me," he said, "It will be worth it. Just wait and see." He turned away and said under his breath, "I hope!"

No response was possible.

The next day was much better. I was able to grip my paddle and we headed on down the river. I must admit, it was pretty awesome. There were huge, river-wide waves and big, mushy holes all over the place. Eddyline whirlpools sucked a boat and paddler completely out of sight. We were playing so much, we didn't make much progress.

That night we camped just above a big drop. The river narrowed way down and

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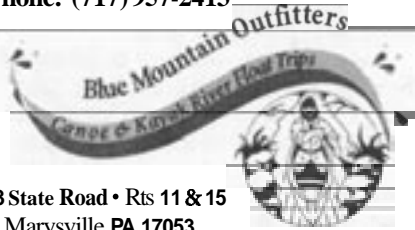


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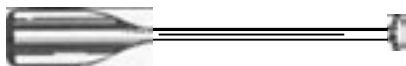
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plummeted between two huge boulders on either side of the river. All we could see was foam at the bottom of the drop. It was approaching dusk, and we decided to wait until morning to scout.

As we set up camp, I kept glimpsing movement in the river below the drop. It looked like flashes of light through the mist. At one point I swear I saw the front three feet of a kayak pierce the horizon line.

"You're hallucinating," Ralph said. "It is probably just salmon jumping, trying to make their way up the drop."

If it was a salmon, it was the biggest one I'd ever seen. That night I had dreams of huge angry salmon attacking as we paddled downstream. These salmon were bigger than our boats, and they were pissed because we were floating downstream while they had to go upstream. They kept bumping into our boats, trying to push us back upstream. The biggest one came directly at me, opened its deformed mouth, and chomped down on the bow of my boat. The whole front of the boat was gone, right up to the footbraces. I woke up with cold feet. The next morning the river was filled with logs. "We're stuck here for the day. This log release should start thinning out around mid-afternoon, so we'll have to wait until then," Ralph said with a smile. I didn't understand his attitude. We couldn't get on the river, it was raining hard (as usual), we didn't have much food left, and after last night's dream, I wasn't about to go fishing for salmon! And Ralph was happy! Go figure.

After breakfast, the rain turned into a slow drizzle, so we decided to scout downstream. I expected that the logs would get pinned across the boulders above the drop, and a big logjam would form. But that didn't happen. The logs came around the corner above the drop, caught the edge of an eddy, swung around and bounced off the river right rock, and headed straight over the drop pointed downstream. At the bottom of the drop was a large hole, and the logs sometimes got trashed in the hole and did enders. Most of them, however, just flushed right on through and traveled merrily down the river.

We scouted a couple miles farther downstream, but really couldn't see much except logs and rain. As we were walking back upstream around noon, the logs seemed to be thinning out somewhat. Our pace quickened - back to the boats! As we approached the drop, I saw the most unexpected thing. Four boaters were on the water, paddling below the drop.

"What in the hell?" I asked. "Where did they come from? How did they get

here? The river has been full of logs all day. They couldn't have paddled down!"

Ralph was grinning so broadly I thought he would split his face open. "Oh, they've been here a couple weeks," he said nonchalantly. "You don't have long to wait now. You're about see the whole reason for this trip."

We scrambled up towards an outcrop which provided a view of the river, and I watched with growing amazement. These paddlers were in some weird boats, doing some even weirder strokes!

**Their boats were unlike anything I'd seen before. They were huge, bigger than those old Holloform plastic hogs, and made of some type of fiberglass composite. The nose came to a very sharp point, kind of like a race boat. I even thought I saw spikes sticking out from the very tip of one boat. The deck had a large flat depression in front of the cockpit. The sterns were ducktailed - wide right up to the very end, and almost squared off. As one of the paddlers rolled, I saw a "V" shaped notch cut completely across the hull just behind the cockpit. I saw the bottom of a second boat, and it had two "V" shaped notches in the hull, about a foot apart.**

I alternated staring at the boats in the water below us, and glancing questioningly at Ralph. He was enjoying my total bafflement. "So, have you seen these types of boats before?" Ralph mocked.

"Of course not." I responded. "What the hell are they for? Those "V" notches are the worst possible design feature I can think of - they must slow the boats way down!"

"The boats aren't exactly made to go fast in the water," he said. "Those notches have their use." Ralph was enjoying himself immensely. Someone was limping along the bank below us. We yelled out and climbed down to him.

"Bruce!" I exclaimed. In the old days Bruce was one of the most hyper paddlers I knew. But he had faded from the paddling scene, and I hadn't seen him in

many years. "Long time no see."

"How's it hanging, Fred?" Bruce said to me. "Nice to see you again, Ralph." Bruce pointed to the river. "Look, the conditions are perfect, and we don't know how long they'll last. Come with me to the lookout rock."

I was confused, and these guys obviously weren't going to answer my questions until they were good and ready. I just followed their lead. We turned up the path and headed toward the top of the drop. Bruce was limping noticeably. "I hurt myself a couple days ago, so I've been the designated spotter the past couple of days."

I looked at him questioningly. "Spotter for what?"

He didn't answer, and motioned for us to follow him. We climbed up on the huge rock at the top of the drop, and looked out over the river. The logs had thinned out quite a bit by now, and were coming down the drop one at a time.

Ralph could barely sit still from anticipation. "You'll enjoy this," he whispered. "I'm gonna let Bruce explain it to you, though. He knows a lot more about it than I do."

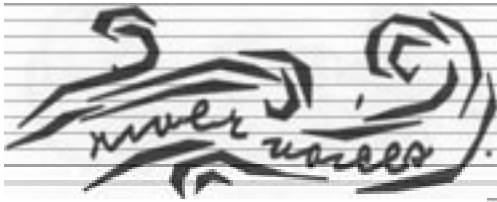
Bruce gazed upstream, and watched as a 15-foot log headed toward the drop. "WATERMELON. SLOT FOUR," he yelled out.

At this cue, one of the boaters paddled furiously up the eddy and cut out into the hole at the base of the drop. He surfed out about halfway, then spun back balancing his bright yellow boat on the backwash, bow pointed upstream. He waited there until the tip of the log came into view, then he dove down into the bottom of the hole, right in front of the log! The log came over the drop, tilted vertically, and the end slammed into his boat just in front of the cockpit. He disappeared, the log driving him to the bottom of the river.

I cringed, and turned to Bruce uncomprehendingly. He shook his head, and pointed at the river.

I turned back to the river, sure that blood from the boater's mangled body would stain the water bright red. The log that had plowed into him drifted back to the surface. The other paddlers were just sitting in the eddy, watching. Suddenly, about 20 feet downstream of the drop, a projectile shot vertically out of the water. It was the yellow boat that had been crushed in the hole! It shot straight up, cleared the water by at least a boat length, rotated forward, and landed upside down. It was the biggest ender I'd ever seen!

Bruce and the other boaters shouted enthusiastically, "Yeeeeehaaaaaaw!! Slam it baby! A perfect watermelon



seed!!"

I just sat there stunned. I eventually picked my jaw up off the ground. "That was unbelievable!" I uttered.

"WATERMELON. SLOT ONE," Bruce suddenly shouted out, glancing upstream.

Another paddler jumped into the hole, and sat on the backwash right next to the eddyline. A log slid over the lip of the drop. The boater darted to the bottom of the hole just in time to get hammered by the log and disappear. This time I was ready, and I looked downstream. In a few seconds, the boat shot out of the water at an angle, stern first, and kept rising until the paddler was 10 feet above the surface. The boat then nosed down (actually sterned down) and skittered back to the surface, landing 20 feet from where it emerged.

"We call that the 'back-ass missile'," Bruce laughed. "It happens when you don't get vertical during the release from the log. It is fun, but a bit disorienting. It is like riding on a party balloon that someone blew up, then let go. It goes shooting around the room in random directions. Only you can't see where you are going."

I was a bit slow in comprehending what was happening. "You mean you guys try to get hit by the logs?" I asked.

Bruce looked at Ralph, and their grins grew wider. "Yep," he replied. "I know it looks nuts, but we've had quite a few years to figure this out. The boats are specially designed and reinforced to take the stress of getting hit by logs."

"O.K." I answered slowly, trying to grasp what he was saying. "So what do you do, just go out and wait for a log to hit you?"

"No, no," Bruce said impatiently. "We're much more sophisticated than that. First of all, we have a spotter. The spotter tells you where the logs are coming down, and what size they are. The logs you've seen so far are watermelons."

"Watermelons?" I interjected.

"Watermelons are logs between 10 and 15 feet long, and not too fat," Bruce continued. "We call them watermelons because they are perfect for doing watermelon seed squirts. They land on your deck, and force your boat way beneath the surface. Once you're down there, you have to release from the log. Then the buoyancy of the boat shoots you back up into the air. If you do it right and get shot up vertically, you get a pretty awesome ender. If you don't quite get vertical, you get a 'back-ass missile'."

I shook my head. "Who in the hell thought of doing something like that?"

"Actually, the watermelon seed squirt was one of the moves we learned later on," Bruce answered. "You can do it with quite a few logs, you just have to be careful with the big ones. Plus, you want to make sure you catch the log square in the middle of the boat. If it hits the side, you just get knocked over."

"Wait. Back up. You've got other moves with logs?" I asked.

"Of course," Bruce said gleefully. "I'll find the right log, and show you."

We all turned and looked back upstream. Several logs were floating down, but Bruce just shook his head and let them pass. He finally spotted what he was looking for. "SPAWN. SLOT FIVE," he yelled.

The spawn log was about 25 feet long, and considerably thicker on one end than the other. A pony-tailed boater slid across the back of the hole, about two-thirds of the way to the other side.

**"There are two things you can do with a spawn log," Bruce explained. "The first is a 'butt-launch'. It is actually the first move we pulled off out here. Liz is the master." Bruce pointed to the boater sitting on the back of the hole.**

The spawn log went straight down the drop and disappeared. Liz was still surfing on the very crest of the backwash, keeping her boat flat. She pulled her boat slightly to the left, directly in line with where the log had disappeared. Suddenly, her boat jolted, and started rising out of the water. One end of the log had squarely impacted the hull of her boat, right beneath the cockpit. The hole must have pulled the heavy end of the log toward the bottom, and stood the log on end. The log shot into the air, and then bobbed back down. Liz was shoved into the air by the log, her boat still flat. She was 15 feet out of the water, and flying upstream! She landed just upstream of the hole, and drifted back into the hole. She did a couple of cartwheels and then flushed out. The other boaters went wild.

"That was a 'butt-launch' with a bit of a spawning move thrown in," Bruce explained. "The 'butt-launch' is pretty self-explanatory. The log comes up underneath you, smacks you in the butt, and throws you in the air. You need the right

type of log, though. It has to be the right length, and heavier on one end than the other, because the hole has to be able to turn it on end and recirc it a bit. If it is too long, or too regular, it just flushes through the hole."

"And the spawn?" I asked. "You know how salmon spawn - jumping upstream," Bruce went on. "Any move where the boat flies upstream is a bit of a spawn. But a true spawn is when the boat lands completely upstream of the drop. It is the ultimate attainment!"

"Wow," I shook my head. "That would be awesome."

"I don't know if we'll get any true spawns today," Bruce said. "Liz is the only one who does them well. I think it is because she is so light, but don't tell her that! You also need a perfect tree - about 25 feet long, preferably with roots on one end. The roots help keep the base of the tree in the hole, and the other end whips out and up. We've re-designed the boats this year to help with the true spawns. The 'V' slots in the hull help the boat stick to the log, and launch it upstream."

We sat there all afternoon, watching these incredible moves. It was the first time in my life that I was not eager to jump out into a boat and try something new. I just couldn't get over the suspicion that the logs would hit me in the head and bash my brains in, or crush some other, even more vital, body part. I mentally cringed each time a log smashed into a boat. But somehow, everyone survived intact.

Bruce explained some of the other moves. "Last year we went to the pointy bows with spikes on the end to try to work with some of the really big and really small logs. The small logs often get stuck in the hole. They were a nuisance at first, because they kept boinking us in the head when we tried other moves. But with the bow spike, you sit on the backwash, then dive down and spear the small logs getting recircled. You get some really interesting enders that way, plus it helps clear out the hole."

"And the big logs?" I asked.

"The big logs almost always get flushed straight through the hole. Initially we had to stay away from them. But now, we try to bury the bow spike in the front end of the log as it comes up the backwash of the hole. Depending on how you hit it, you either get the fastest ender you've ever felt in your life, or you get a variation on the 'back-ass missile'. It is a bit dangerous, though."

"No kidding," I thought.

"You guys are lucky," Bruce exclaimed. "You got here at prime time. We



can only do this when the river isn't too full of logs, usually near the end of a log release. During the summer they generally have three log releases a week, but they aren't at any standard times. It is a real bummer when the log releases finish at night, because we miss them."

"How long have you guys been doing this?" I asked.

"About five years. Every year we re-design boats, and then come out here for a month to see what they can do." Bruce answered.

"So how come I've never heard about it until now?" I asked.

"The only people who know about it are the people who have been here. Counting you, that makes a total of 10 people so far. We like having the place to ourselves, and want to keep it that way." "Why?" I asked. "This stuff is incredible. Just imagine the videos you could put out. They'd be more popular than 'Southern Fried Creekin'."

"If word got out about this place and what we do, it would be ruined almost immediately," he replied. "Look at those places that used to be great. The Upper Yough was our playground, and now you can't even blast National Falls for five seconds without getting run over. Then we found the Russell Fork, and two years later it's full of class III boaters pretending they know how to run class V drops, getting hurt and messing it up for the rest of us. Then the Green - same thing. It's a joke. Well, now we've found something that no-one else knows about, and it is unique. I don't know anywhere else in the world that has the logs and drops like here. Just imagine if people knew about this place. They'd flock up here and spoil the surroundings. They'd try these moves in plastic boats and get crushed. We'd all be forced out. No way!"

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Needless to say, we spent the next three days at that spot. Ralph and I missed the first rendezvous with our plane back to Vancouver, but we didn't really care. There were more important things to do, like get smashed by logs!

**Two more log releases occurred, and I was able to try out some of the moves. Ralph had some of them down already, but he was still learning, too. Getting hammered by a log is not as easy as it looks! I kept missing the logs entirely (or having the logs miss me!). Even when I was positioned correctly, I never got a square blow - I kept getting knocked over. Everyone kept laughing at me, but encouraging me in the same breath.**

"What do you expect," they would ask "We've spent five years learning how to do this. Did you think you'd be an expert in two days?" Actually, I did, but I didn't say it out loud. When I did finally get a watermelon move right, it was like nothing I've ever experienced. The force of the log hitting the boat was shocking, but there was little time to think. I got pushed down into blackness, way below the surface. Water forced its way up my nose. Then I felt weightless as all the forces canceled out, and I was able to push away from the log. As soon as I was clear, buoyancy took over and I got pushed back towards the surface, gaining speed the whole way. By the time I reached the surface, I was going fast. As I cleared the water, the g-forces snapped my head forward. By the time I was able to lift it back up, I was fifteen feet above the water, and feeling weightless once again. But gravity took over, and as I dropped back toward the water, face first, I remember thinking, "I hope the landing doesn't hurt too bad."

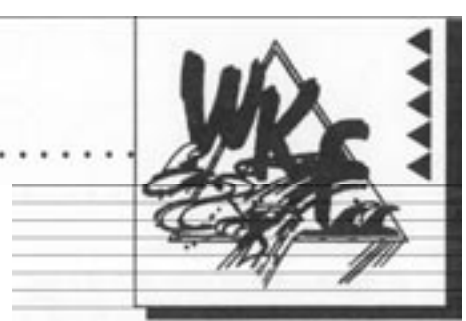
It didn't. From then on, I was hooked. I made Ralph stay out until dark as my spotter, so I could do it again and again.

A thought kept nagging at my subconscious, and I had to get it out. "Does it ever bother you that you are using these logs, logs that someone has clear-cut just a couple days ago, to get your enjoyment?" I asked Bruce one day. "I mean, environmental groups are chaining themselves to trees to stop this type of logging in some parts of BC." "Hey, we're just using what is coming down the river," he answered.

"Yeah, but what if they stop logging, or run out of forests to log?"

"Then we will have to retire, and let this part of the sport live only in our memories," he said. "Look, it's not like we haven't thought about this. Someone has come in here and raped the wilderness, making huge clear cuts, and potentially wiping out fish and wildlife in doing so. And we are making a sport out of their spoils. But paddlers have always done that. Many of the rivers in the US are runnable only because of flood-control or hydroelectric dams. These dams ruined the environment, but they sure made it convenient to paddle. Look at the Ocoee. That river would be runnable maybe 30 days a year, mostly in the middle of winter, without the dams. But now it's runnable all summer long. There are pros and cons to everything. We are just using the silver lining in this otherwise bleak situation."

The next day we had to leave to make the plane back home. As we paddled down the flatwater of Cook Inlet toward the raindrop rings on the water's surface started to dwindle. There came a sound unlike anything I'd heard the entire trip. It took a while to figure it out. It was the sound of silence, the absence of rain. Then suddenly, the mist lifted, and the sun broke through. After 8 days of continuous rain, it was heavenly. Though I had experienced many incredible things on this trip, the sensation of paddling across that glassy bay with the sun in my face, green mountains rising to great heights on either side, was a feeling that will live with me forever. It was a time of reflection, and I thought about the people we had met. I really admired their innovation. They deserve to be acknowledged for these incredible things they were doing. I wish I could tell the whole world who these people are, so everyone can admire their genius and talent. But I can't. They won't let me. They are afraid that if anyone knows who they are, they will be pestered to share their secrets. But I can give you a hint. They have been on the cutting edge before. They are the true whitewater innovators.



# Heaven's

# Devils

by Graeme Addison

Graeme Addison is the chairman of the South African Rivers Association, was the first commercial tour guide operator in the country, is a class five kayaker, and is a professor of communications. He has three sons (that he knows of), Brinyth, Emlyn and Corran, all of whom kayak, and none of whom is likely to be able to support him in his dotage. . . if he makes it that far.

This is the true story of how I came to be sitting in a bar in **Rockey Street**, Yeoville, at high noon one cold midwinter Saturday, ready to defend my son, a mildly famous heavy metal lead guitarist and singer, against the combined forces of the Hell's Angels of greater Johannesburg. It is the unexpurgated version of a tale I would not tell my granny or anyone respectable like that in case they thought I was the kind of father who encouraged his son to get into bar-room brawls. I don't actually, and I have tried to avoid them myself, but there comes a time in every man's life when some sort of statement of family values becomes morally imperative. That's the time when saloon shoot-outs with the bad guys are most likely to happen. Anyone who has read Hunter S. Thompson's classic of Californian biker thuggery, Hell's Angels, would question the sanity of a man sitting at a table in Rockafellas sipping his third tankard of beer and awaiting the entry of an adversary with the chilling name of McEvil.

But there I was, no shit, seated **back-to-back** with my son whom I pretended not to know for reasons of surprise, and we waited. I was slouched back like the guy in the Doom advert, nonchalant, with only one niggling little **worry** to cloud my otherwise perfect resolve to die like a hero. My bladder threatened to unman me. By the time I had put away several litters of lager - and as I say, it was a chilly day which causes constriction of the lower abdomen - the pressure to get up and go was almost unbearable and I whispered over my shoulder that the show-down had better come soon or I would piss myself. So we waited, and the

pressure built.

Before this saga continues, a few introductions and a little background are in order. Brin Addison had registered a ripple or two on the dark and stormy pond of South Africa's music scene by launching a band called Two Dogs **F\$@!king**. He is better known in the USA for his driving music on films such as Paddle Quest, Paddle Frenzy and Water of Wisdom. The brother of kayaking crazyman, Corran Addison, Brin is also an avid paddler, and surprisingly, spends as much time getting thoroughly trashed in large holes as his more reputed brother: he just concentrates his press efforts in the music scene, and has thus remained somewhat of a dark horse in the world of **kayaking**.

Two Dogs **F\$@!king** had held its inaugural concert in Dylan's Midnight Dive just a few weeks earlier. The **DJs** on the radio seemed to find the last word a bit of a tongue-twister, so the band now billed itself Two Dogs Funcking, or more simply, **2DF**. (This was before someone started marketing an awful alcoholic lemon beverage in a green can under the name Two Dogs, so what I am describing really is historic. For those readers wondering about the origins of the name, I can only repeat the question on the can: Why do you ask?)

In terms of musical culture, **2DF** were about the size of sausage dogs but they could make a splash when they wanted to in the muddy pond that was South African metal and grunge. Indeed, Brin had been featured in Blush magazine as the coming thing in fast-fingered riff excellence, something like a spiritual descendant of Jimmy Hendrix and Mark Knopfler combined, and the fact that he wore his straight black hair to below his shoulder blades with a day-glo green stripe down one side, was a special sign of his talent.

**As** for me, I have kayaked for about twenty years, and guided rafting tours for about eight. I could still feel my biceps if I really concentrated on flexing them. Life as a university professor was scary **com-**

pared with braving the rapids - I mean, it was **terrifying** to think that we actually gave some students their degrees - but a life of lecturing and clacking away on a keyboard didn't do much for the muscle tone. I began to regret this while we waited for McEvil, who was late.

Now as for McEvil, there was an enigma wrapped up inside a conundrum surrounded by a mystery, with a beard and black leather jacket a la **Marlon Brando** for the outer-layer. Who was he? How did he function? I had only caught a brief glimpse of the man one day in the Ba-Pita restaurant and he struck me as a decent type, at least as far as the legends of hell had prepared one for a brush with its angels. He was the gang leader, the Numero Uno of Satan's satraps on wheels, so there would have to be something very sinister about him especially after what had happened at Dylan's that first night.

Let's come to that. I would not have been sitting in Rockafellas on a Saturday if the bouncer at the rock concert had kept his head while all about him were losing theirs. Unfortunately these things never work out neatly. The bouncer displayed slightly excessive zeal in drawing a weapon and popping off a few shots after the Hell's Angels amved in a blast of fumes (mixed from fresh monoxide and stale beer) and allegedly proceeded to wreck the concert by smashing the equipment, beating up the players, cursing and farting and guzzling more ales, and indiscreetly waving broken bottles in the faces of the cowed metal headbangers who by now had retreated into the **loos** and under the tables. After this performance the Angels were said to be quietly leaving when the bouncer exceeded his duties. Then only, all hell broke loose, would you believe it?

By the time the police amved there was an Angel lying bleeding in the street with an extra hole in his posterior while the sausage dogs and surviving wallbangers wandered about **picking up** the debris of **2DF's** grand opening. The band members themselves were pretty badly messed up and counted amongst the wounded. I'd heard about stage-diving and moshing, but this level of injuries was ridiculous. The bouncer was arrested and carted off to John Vorster Square for a weekend in the cells before being arraigned on a charge of attempted murder. And this was not the worst news. The Angels followed their man to the hospital where he was pronounced to be out of





danger, but the damage was done and they put out word that any member of 2DF found skulking in the streets or alleyways of Yeoville or anywhere else would be dealt with in a severely unkind manner.

When I visited Brin at his flat the next morning it was to find him nursing several very bruised ribs and talking of getting out of Johannesburg for the time being. Well, I said, join me at the university in Mafikeng and take a rest cure by the waters of the Molopo River. He agreed. With him lying in the back of my truck to avoid being spotted as much as to sleep off the effects of stress and assault, I drove 300km through the night, hoping that Hades didn't have a spy system alert enough to spot our movements.

Mafikeng requires its own little description. Located hundreds of miles from anywhere, it features a university, a soccer stadium that seats over 100,000 people (and has never been used, except to hold hostages during the siege of Mafikeng which is another tale all-together), a multi-million dollar recording studio, a million dollar TV studio, and then thousands of ram-shackle huts and squatter settlements. Perhaps the largest and most obvious separation of the classes in the world, and the place of my employment.

For two weeks Brin hung out at my pad. It was a bitter winter, snow and sleet swirled about in the dusty streets of the town, and he had nothing to do but watch soap operas on Bop TV, design posters for 2DF (a sign of defiance), and make secretive long-distance calls to other band members who had similarly gone to ground. One peculiarity of the university apartment was that it had a pay phone with a limitless appetite for 20c pieces, so my salary was converted into plastic bags of coins that were quickly gobbled up in pursuit of the latest intelligence regarding the enemy's disposition.

War, as everyone knows, is the harbinger of poverty. I was being bled white in a stream of 20c pieces and finally was forced to demand that truce talks be opened. A message was passed to the Angels: word came back, noon on Saturday at Rockafellas, just Brin, alone, to meet McEvil. McEvil didn't know me, so that was how I came to be sitting incognito as a father-protector seemingly minding my own business while I leafed through foreign magazines. Behind me at another table Brin perched nervously on his chair under a figurative white flag (his drained face was good enough). The agreement

was that I would bear witness to whatever happened, and if there was violence I would either (a) mix in or (b) call the cops. I flexed my ossifying biceps and thought about hospital food.

Over **Rockey** Street in the bay window of Ba-Pita a group of 2DF well-wishers watched the scene. They were just groups actually, with nothing better to do than witness misfortune in whatever shape it happened to present itself, and this was the best show in years. Ba-Pita was a story in itself, a subcultural vortex sucking into itself all the wretched musicians, electricians, bikers, barbers, **dickheads**, whores and police **impimpis** who found Yeoville a convivial place to practice their specialties. It was here several years ago that Brin formed his first band, *Odyssey*, that went on to record an album by the same name that today is a collector's item for anyone interested in brilliant failures. In cuts that lurch from primitive incoherent grunting ("The Wordless One" - Paddle Frenzy) to neo-classical guitar cadences ("Opus No 1"). *Odyssey* expressed the confusion and optimism of a society on the brink of chaotic change just at the time that Mandela was freed. The album bore a resemblance to the first release by the Australian group, *Silver Chair*, at roughly the same time, but was far more adventurous in building complex walls of noise.

I hung out in Ba-Pita with Brin and the boys from *Odyssey*, leeching at the ripe redheads who doubled as girlfriends and waitresses. They'd lean right over you with their heated breasts to ask if you were done or just warming to the flame. **Shuvarma** crumbs littered the table and cleavage warped your vision, a nice place altogether, horny and heavy with the thunder of Soundgarden and Vanilla Ice throbbing through the chair into your groin. Ba-Pita was where to go when Joeys made you sick, which was most of the time.

The minutes dragged on. I squirmed in my seat as the beer coagulated into an icy rock pressing hard against my lower gut, but the urge to seek relief competed with a sort of frozen pride. If I got up to run for the urinal and McEvil walked in guns blazing or rusted chains whirling, how would that look to the assembly in Ba-Pita or to Brin? "Cowardice!" I believe, I said to myself, "is Superglue, the bond that ties a father and son, the chemistry of family that seals us in an eternal pact of loyalty come hell or high water." Something like that anyway. It was purely a matter of how long loyalty could hold out against other natural imperatives. We continued sitting there, both visualizing how a gang of stinking and studded Angels would sweep through the

door like Hunter Thompson's demons to dismember us and daub the walls with our blood and faces.

But there was no sign of anyone. Tentatively, I whispered that McEvil was an hour late and maybe not coming. Brin nodded, I thought with an air of relief. As far as I was concerned this was becoming a non-event and it was all over, bar the **pissing**. Then to my eternal shame in the annals of fatherhood I rose, straightened myself for the redheads over the road, and fled for the toilet for an experience that can only be described as insanely blissful and it took a long time too. I was zipping up when a low growl met my ears and as I re-entered the cavernous saloon I was confronted with the sight of what looked like about 50 Hell's Angels clustered around my invisible son, and the place where I had sat so long was unreachable in the thick of the crowd.

The rest happened quickly. There was a yell, a table was pounded loudly, the crowd rippled outwards like wild dogs at a dying kill, and as I stood paralyzed on the spot I guessed that Brin was about to breathe his last. What a betrayal from the one person he had a right to hope would stand by him and defend him against these barbarians from the lower depths of Bez Valley and Orange Grove. Then the crowd parted. McEvil, sitting at the center, **looking** stem but satisfied, quaffed his foaming ale against my son's raised glass and the two of them smiled in agreement. The Angels applauded. Even the Ba-Pita crowd, though they couldn't quite figure out what was going on at a distance, cheered.

It was over. The apology for the shooting had been given and accepted. The attempted murder charge would be bargained down to something mild. The Angels were at peace, and 2DF, to pay the hospital bills for the injured biker, would hold a number of benefit concerts in downtown Johannesburg over the next two months until the debt was liquidated. This all emerged after the gang melted away and I was introduced to "Mr. McEvil" - nickname or real I never did find out - who complimented me graciously on Brin's musicianship.

We walked out into the mid-afternoon sun and realized that South Africa really is a miracle of negotiation and compromise, with the devil and his dam if need be. Since then I have thought a lot about my paternal duties and decided that there is no organic bond between a father and his progeny, not like a mother who can remember the pain of giving birth. Waiting and watching over your son is pain enough. For those who wonder why a man should run away just when his son needs him, I can only say: Why do you ask?



## Corran's Column



# Choose Your Weapon

by Corran Addison

Everyone can see the difference between a sea kayak and a rodeo boat and everyone has his or her particular fetishes when it comes to boat design. But the real story on boats, and the one that leads to many of the most heated arguments among boat manufacturers—and experienced paddlers—centers on how a boat is made and what it is made of. There are as many ways to make a kayak as there are designs. If fact, the variety of materials, designs and manufacturers is so varied, that it would be impossible for any retail outlet to **carry** them all.

Chances are that your local retailers carry relatively few of the endless numbers of kayaks that are commercially available, and know probably no more than the average paddler about the properties of the various fabrication styles being used.

There is no perfect way to make a kayak, period. All of the processes have their advantages and disadvantages, some more than others. In an attempt to maintain true journalistic professionalism, I have tried to be as neutral as possible in my analysis and presentation of information. As a part owner of Riot Kayaks it might seem that it would be in my interest to promote one or the other methods, but other than blow-molding, we make kayaks using all the processes and materials I will discuss, so there is no point in my being biased. My goal is not to compare manufacturers or their designs, but rather to discuss the kayak manufacturing processes and materials in general.

The most notable distraction between manufacturing processes is whether a boat is mass produced or custom built. Custom built kayaks are for a limited and specialized market; mass produced boats are made for the greater populace.

Custom kayaks are usually composite

(aka fiberglass, though this is a limited and unimaginative way of **looking** at it). **As** with plastics, the variations in composites are endless, as are the performance characteristics, and price. A few other methods have been experimented with, but since none are commercially available, I shall ignore them for now.

One of the main advantages of composites is the ability to reflect state of the art technology. Unlike plastics (I use the term plastics as a reference to rotationally or blow molded kayaks, though in reality composite kayaks are also 'fiber reinforced plastic'), tooling time is about a week, so a kayak can go from concept to production in less than two weeks if the manufacturer is on the ball. Also, mold costs are minimal compared to molds for plastic kayaks. The end result is that the designs can be changed every few boats if need be. **As** the end user, this puts you on top of the very latest ideas and technology.

A second advantage to composites relates to the properties of the materials. Generally speaking, composite boats are very stiff, and can either be very light or exceptionally strong. In the case of rodeo designs, as much reinforcement can be added to the nose and tail, the major impact areas, as is needed. A composite kayak constructed out of the best materials, in the right way, can easily be as strong or stronger than a plastic kayak of the same weight. The important thing in a composite kayak is that the laminate be neither over- or under-saturated. **Over**-saturation results in the laminate being brittle, and decreases strength, as does under-saturation, which may cause the layers to de-laminate.

The importance of fabric and resin ratios, weight and style, is a consideration that is most often neglected. Failure to

consider saturation makes choosing a material such as Kevlar, which can have an elongation of about 30% (depending on the weave and fiber thickness), compared to most polyester resins (about 12%), pointless. If the resin breaks long before the Kevlar starts to absorb the load, then the whole point of using the fabric has been lost. Conversely, using an epoxy resin, that has a molecular elongation of about 25%, with cheap fiberglass is just as pointless. Thus, for a composite kayak to provide the ultimate in weight, performance and impact resistance, the fibers and fiber weave must be **carefully** matched with the resins. Vacuum bagging has proven to be the most economical way to maximize the fiber weight to saturation ratio, although **pre-impregnated** fabrics that are heat cured are, by far, superior. Tooling costs, however, generally make this prohibitive.

In addition to production time, the most notable advantages to composite boats are weight and stiffness. Last year I was paddling a 16 lbs foam core carbon **kevlar** Fury. I could do moves in this boat effortlessly that I could not even begin to do in the plastic version, simply because of weight and rigidity. I was able to throw the boat into multiple cartwheels without taking a paddle stroke, and 'oli' (jump) the boat several feet off the face of a wave with no more than weight shifts. If you are really serious about performance, then composite is the only way to go. The downside is cost, and in the case of a 16 pound carbon boat, strength. At \$1600 for a dream-boat, the cost is steep - especially when you consider that all you will get out of the boat is a year or so. However, even glass-kevlar boats, that weigh about 28 lbs and are super stiff, have many of the performance characteristics of the lighter boats... but for several hundred dollars less. And they are very strong.

I took a Glass-Epoxy Rage to South Africa with me this winter and beat the thing senseless. Several plastic boats broke where we were playing. My glass boat didn't even have stress cracks in the laminate (though the gel coat was aesthetically destroyed). A serious downfall of handmade glass boats is that their small manufacturers are often unable to advertise their products, so knowledge of their existence, and design breakthroughs, is often very limited. A second problem can be delivery of product. You can wait as much as three or four months, depending on the supplier. They truly are cus-



tom built.

The alternative to glass is plastic. 'Plastic' kayaks are generally made of linear or cross-linked plastic, from two different manufacturing processes. The first process is rotational molding, where a polymer powder is dumped into a mold, and spun slowly in an oven like a pig on a spit. The plastic heats, turns to a molasses type goop, and slowly coats the inside of the mold. The second is blow-molding. Here the plastic is extruded out of a giant reservoir like a tooth paste tube. The mold shuts around the plastic, and air vents blow the plastic against the surface of the mold under great pressure. Both systems have advantages and disadvantages.

Let's start with roto-molding. Two types of plastic that are commonly used, though in reality the options are endless. The primary factor is cost. Remember, roto-molded boats are mass produced. Tooling costs are high, overhead is high, but production cost per unit is low. Delivery of product is timely, for a reasonable price.

Within the two plastic types used, the primary concerns for a manufacturer are as follows:

1. Melt. This is how viscous the plastic becomes in the mold. The higher the melt, the better the plastic flows, and the more control you have over its distribution and thickness.

2. Notch test. This is the plastic's ability to withstand flexion or impact after it has been scratched.

3. Rigidity. This must not be confused with memory. The rigidity of a plastic determines the stiffness of the part once it has been molded. Memory is the ability for the plastic to return to its molded shape once it has been deformed.

4. Plastic cost. Simply, the price per pound of the raw material.

5. Molding time. How long it takes to make the kayak, from when the mold is closed to when it is opened.

With linear plastics there is, unfortunately, a problem with the first three considerations on my list. When molding linears (super or otherwise), you can only have two of the three. Either the sacrifice is the ability to control the boat's thickness (for impact and rigidity) or restrictions in the complexity of the design. Because of a low melt, you must lose one of the other two. This can be compensated to some degree by simply loading the mold with extra plastic, but the price is

decreased performance. The advantage of linears over cross-links is that they take less than half as much time in the molding process, and the plastic costs almost half as much per pound.

What this means to you, the user, is that linear boats are cheaper, and availability is high. This makes a new model available to the masses in far shorter time than the crosslink alternative. The downside is the significant loss of impact resistance. Unfortunately, the statistics provided by plastics companies are only accurate when the plastic is new. Linears do not have the UV degradation resistance that cross-links do, and they are very susceptible to molecular attack by alkalis. Alkalis can, over a very short period of time, degrade the impact, elongation, notch test and rigidity of the plastic.

Water is an alkali, particularly polluted water. Unfortunately, many of the rivers that we paddle are really polluted, so this is a concern. Other substances like household soap can speed the degradation process by up to 500%. However, with the fast turnover of models, this is less of a concern, because most owners of boats purchase a newer model every year or so. This seems to be about the time that the degradation of the plastics properties start to become noticeable.

The other alternative in roto-molding is cross-link. The melt of cross link plastics is not consistent. During the molding process, the melt becomes progressively lower, and the impact and rigidity increase. This allows the molding of parts that are far more complex in shape than can be achieved with linear plastic, while maintaining high impact and rigidity ratings.

Cross link has several other advantages. The first is the notch test. This is the amount of stress the plastic can withstand after it has been cut or scratched. It is almost twice that of the best linears (tested against linears that have not been exposed to environmental elements). Another is the elongation of the molecules. The best linears only have an elongation of 400%, while the cross links have up to 800%. When you start to continuously flex the ends of your kayak from playing, this begins to add up. Cross links also have a greater ability to retain their shape.

While the new super linears are similar to cross link in rigidity, they are what is known as Thermo plastics. This means that you can heat the plastic, and re-work it (it means that if your boat deforms in the sun, it will retain the deformed shape). Cross link is a thermo setting plastic (as are composite resins), once cooled it cannot be reworked. They will,

therefore, always return to their original shape.

Cross link materials have their disadvantages. First, cost. The molds are more expensive, and mold designers that can produce molds for cross-link are harder to come by. Because porosity in the mold surface, (e.g., from gasses or contaminated aluminum) will result in blow holes in the boat as it molds, the life of a mold may be only a third as long as linear molds. Moreover, the bond of each plastic molecule is so strong that they even try to bond to the mold. The result is a very strong product, but one that systematically destroys the mold with each cycle. The plastic itself is expensive. Very expensive. It is a specialty polymer, and very few people make it. Cross link also takes about three times as long to mold.

The result is often that demand exceeds supply, for the ability to get the product onto the market is limited. Often, customers wait months to receive a new model. Lastly, the 'window' in the molding process is very small. Cook time, temperature and hull thickness must be very carefully calculated. Any error can result in a boat that is insufficiently gelled (cross-linked) or crystallized (over cooked). The end product is a boat that rapidly deteriorates and ultimately falls to pieces before your eyes. Over cooking in initial stages can result in the outer layer being crystallized, while a drop in temperature can result in the inner layer being under cooked. The variations are endless. Most manufacturers, however, will warranty such a faulty product, no questions asked. But that doesn't help you if you are on day one of a 22 day Grand Canyon trip. In this sense, linears are more forgiving. What you see is what you get.

The other molding process is blow-molding. Cross links cannot be blow-molded, but low melt plastics are not an issue because the plastic is forced into the mold by pressure. The result is a product with high rigidity and high impact resistance. Another important benefit to blow molding kayaks is that it takes less than a tenth as long to produce a kayak using this method (as opposed to a roto-molded cross link). The result is a rapid availability of a new model on a large scale, and a product that has some of the material advantages of composite kayaks, like rigidity, for far less money.

The disadvantages of blow-molding are debatable, as it depends of the company's financial state. Tooling costs are exceedingly high— about five times that of any roto-mold. However, with manufacturing costs being lower, the end result can be a kayak that is only margin-



ally more costly than roto-molded linear. Unless the manufacturer can afford it, new models are generally not developed as fast as in the roto-molding industry. As a result the designs tend to be mass-market targeted. There are also some design restrictions; edges tend to become thin, so extra plastic must be added to the entire boat to compensate. Less control is available of plastic placement, so as a general rule, the blow molded boats are heavier. Theoretically, the same concerns of environmental degradation would apply to linear blow-molded boats as to

roto-molded boats, but this does not seem to be the case in practice.

No matter which weapon you choose, there are sound reasons why the manufacturer selected that method of manufacturing. Rare is the case when the maker of the kayak chose the system through ignorance, rather than for a specific reason.

It is up to you, the paddler, to choose the boat that is best for you, considering design, cost, and manufacturing process.

WKF Pro Team Member Corran Addison has been working in the kayak

industry for fifteen years and is currently an owner of RIOT Kayaks. He has worked for companies that manufacture kayaks using all the processes discussed above, and has done extensive research over the years on the advantages and disadvantages of each. As the World Silver medalist in rodeo, and world waterfall record holder, he is also the end consumer and ultimate tester of such kayaks.

# A PADDLER'S GUIDE TO RIVER RUNS:

## Outhouses and Alternatives

In the past, American Whitewater has eschewed the prejudices inherent in reviews in favor of a **let-them-sort-it-out-for-themselves** attitude. Just recently, however, I've convinced the editors to probe into virgin waters (as it were) with this scholarly treatise reviewing a shared experience of all paddlers: outhouses.

Every paddler I know has used an outhouse at one time or another. Personally, my experience has been both local (I once used the same outhouse for two months) and far-flung (from Maine to Idaho, Florida to Alaska). I make no claim for the completeness of this review; no doubt there are thousands of these fine edifices left for you to explore and evaluate yourself.

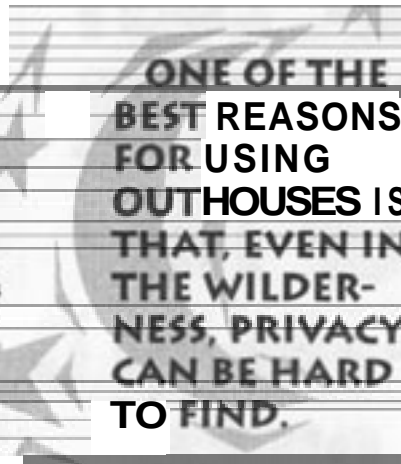
My first experience with outhouses was as a child at Boy Scout camp. Running through those memories, is the odor of the outhouse, lurking malevolently at the edge of camp. Older campers regaled the tenderfeet with scatological stories in the weeks leading up to camp, but the romance, wonder and mystery evaporated in a twinkling with the first visit. Each trip thereafter became a study in conservation of motion

and breath. One robust lad, not coincidentally the camp underwater swim champion, claimed the distinction of completing a round trip, start to finish, in only three breaths. Personally, I credit my camp experience for my ability to hang in there during prolonged roll attempts. A favorite ploy of my buddy John was to open the back trap door of the camp three-holer and lob in granite grapeshot from ten paces, much to the consternation and discomfort of the occupants. Eric, another friend with an aversion to reptiles, entered the outhouse just after a five foot blacksnake had settled onto the overhead rafters for a siesta. Much of the camp gathered to witness the anticipated storm, but no one warned the poor guy. The explosion which ensued was stunning; the air turned blue with curses, and Eric, shackled by pants like leg irons, waddled out the door, tripped on the sill, and fell face down in the mud.

Since my Boy Scout days, I've come across many a humorous incident involving feces disposal in the wilderness. On multi-day river runs in the western United States, plastic-lined rocket boxes take the place of permanent outhouses.



Although these **honeypots** fit nicely into oar-rigs (I always **knew** rafts were good for something), they're out of the question for self-support kayak trips. In keeping with our hard-core, Spartan image, we kayakers have to use plastic bags (a considerable gymnastic feat in and of itself) that we haul out in our boats. On such trips, I often ask myself the same question: "why am I squatting here in the wilderness, aiming for a way-too-small plastic bag, when the whole area around me is covered with horse shit?" It's all over the trail paralleling the river, and the Forest Service makes me carry mine with me.



One of the best reasons for using outhouses is that, even in the wilderness, privacy can be hard to find. On a West Virginia paddling trip, we were camped in the Monongahela National Forest. Experiencing the call of nature, my paddling buddy Warren trundled off a good hundred yards into the mountain laurel. No sooner had he squatted than a couple of turkey hunters—the only people for miles around—crashed through the bushes, wished him well, and continued on. "Sort of ruined the magic of the moment," Warren said later.

Well, since I began this with the promise of a critical look at various types of outhouses, its only fair that I give you some:

As you may have gathered, Scout camp latrines are uniformly dark, dank and drafty. Only their consistency commends them, allowing the user time to make the necessary mental adjustments before hand. Outhouses in the National Parks tend to be almost as bad, primarily because of their age and remote location.

Forest Service latrines are invariably of a higher quality, being cleaned daily by bright young college students eager to spend a summer in the great outdoors. A team in the Dixie National Forest informed me that they kept the smell down by covering each day's contribution with a coating of a wax-based spray. Visit these facilities, therefore, in the early morning, before the hermetic seal is broken. These outhouses do have one drawback, however: men's and women's sit back to back, sharing a common pit. Thus, should you partner shut his or her door while you're seated, the resulting compression of air will give you whole new understanding to the concept of whoopee cushions.

My award for best wilderness bathroom goes to that of a young Maine wildlife officer I visited on a trip down the St. John River. Situated on high bluff, shaded by spruce trees, this outhouse features a large picture window overlooking several miles of winding river below.

The pits, literally and figuratively, I found to be the Alta ski resort in Utah, of all places. The paying patrons used the flushers in their hundred-dollar-a-night condos, while we hikers were relegated to a tumble-down shed pinned between the road and an avalanche slope. Between the filth, the smell and the mosquitoes, this place was unbearable. The seat had apparently been shaped with an ax, and I

got splinters. I left with the fervently bitter wish that its cesspool might overflow into the resort's water supply.

After this litany of digressions and diversions, a few words of summary are in order. You will probably never find the perfect outhouse, despite your most diligent search. Like the Model T and the nickel cigar, it belongs to another age. But don't let that discourage your grailquest, for there is nobility in the search alone. And, if someday you happen to find the ultimate outhouse, please feel free to drop me a line. But don't expect to ever find me out there because I've abandoned the search in favor of the heat and comfort of plastic.



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## MAIL'S IN THE LAST CHAPTER OF THE DEERFIELD RIVER SUCCESS STORY:

by Tom Christopher

I opened my mailbox last week and what do you suppose amved in the mail? Of course there were the usual bills, some junk mail, a couple of checks from my customers and an average pile of correspondence relating the relicensing projects here in New England. I reached in, scooped up the mail and made my way back to my office to perform the ritualized task of opening each envelope and packet. Boring stuff, not always satisfying if I get more invoices instead of checks, and of course there is always plenty of correspondence or thick studies relating to relicensing projects to review by some impossible deadline.

But today was different. It was special. It was victorious. At the bottom of the pile was a package from FERC that contained the operating license issued to the New England Power Company for the Deerfield River Projects. I couldn't wait to rip open the envelope to see what provisions from the historic Deerfield Settlement Agreement had been incorporated into the license as articles, and whether or not FERC had treated the whitewater boaters well.

The license was 67 pages long and the whitewater community hit a grand slam home run.

When all of the different negotiating parties sat down to sign the Deerfield Settlement Agreement with New England Power in October 1994 we had a sense that we were on the threshold of signing a document that would change the way hydroelectric projects would be relicensed forever. While we were all comfortable with the way the agreement was structured and felt good about each other and the work we had done, there was still a great uneasiness about how FERC would view this agreement. We knew that historically, even when parties agreed on issues, FERC would sometime step in and change settlement agreements to the detriment of the parties involved.

Several outside parties had not agreed with the mitigation package and were objecting because they had issues which they felt were more important. They had no interest in a comprehensive package that represented balanced use and would provide benefits to many parties rather than just to a singular interest. New England Power was nervous and so were the signatories to the agreement. We knew that if the Settlement Agreement was legally challenged, there was the potential the courts would set aside the agreement

and FERC would then craft a license that would not take the Settlement Agreement into consideration.

As FERC began the analysis of the agreement all of our worst fears were realized as one party mounted a legal challenge. This actually took place in early 1995 and only became settled a few short weeks ago, delaying the license for almost two years. Much to the credit of FERC, they continued their analysis of our work and proceeded on the basis that the legal challenge would fail, and fortunately for all of us it did. Setting aside our jubilation momentarily, there still remained the question of how FERC would finally craft the license. For all of us as individuals representing various regional and national organizations, we could not have been more pleased, for FERC had accepted all of the elements of the Settlement Agreement and incorporated them into the actual operating license.

FERC then used their authority to reopen the operating license to the Bear Swamp Project, a 640 megawatt pump storage facility located on the Deerfield River that was not up for relicensing, and incorporated the provisions of the Settle-

ment Agreement into the Bear Swamp license. For the first time in New England relicensing we had a project that was being licensed based on the concept of basin wide cumulative impacts. Truly a remarkable achievement and one for which FERC should be commended.

By now you are probably wondering about what makes this such a great victory for boaters. Here are the highlights that mean the most to our sport:

32 releases on the class IV Monroe Bridge section of the Deerfield at varying flows between 900 cfs and 1,100 cfs. Essentially every weekend and holiday throughout the summer and includes 6 Friday releases.

50 releases on weekends and 55 releases on weekdays on the class II-III Fife Brook section of the Deerfield at varying flows between 700 cfs and 900 cfs. Essentially this reach of the river is now available almost every day throughout the summer.

In the event of low water years, representatives of New England FLOW, AWA, and other boating organizations will meet with NEPCO staff to work out reduced schedules. Any canceled releases will be made up over a 2-year period.

A 24 hour- a- day informational FLOWPHONE that will provide data on river levels and release schedules during the boating season. Improvement of existing recreational facilities and installation of additional facilities to include picnic areas, launch sites, and hiking trails.

Canoe portage trails throughout the Deerfield River system extending from its reservoirs in Vermont into Massachusetts.

Guaranteed minimum flows in **dryways** to establish fisheries and increased minimum flows to enhance existing fish and wildlife habitat. (Some boaters like to fish also.)

Conservation restrictions on over 18,000 acres of land extending from Vermont through Massachusetts. This will permanently restrict development and insure that boaters and fishermen will have clean water and less pollution.

The establishment of a \$ 100,000 dollar Enhancement Fund to finance watershed conservation, development of low-impact recreational projects, and educational projects within the water shed. These funds would not be used for other various NEPCO obligations set forth in the settlement provisions of the agreement.

## THE LAST CHAPTER OF THE DEERFIELD RIVER SUCCESS STORY

Since I received the license in the mail, I've had lots of time to reflect on the what this means to boaters and other outdoor recreationists that use the resources of the Deerfield River. This was a journey that began nine long years ago in the New England Power Company offices in Lebanon, New Hampshire and ended, finally, at my mailbox. Who would have thought that this journey would take so long? Those of us that worked through this process certainly would not have believed that it would take so long when we first started, and I sometimes wonder if we would have ever started if we knew then what we know now.

The length notwithstanding, this journey has been one of the most rewarding and intense experiences of my lifetime and I am sure my conservation colleagues feel much the same way. From the beginning I don't believe that any of us who participated in this process ever thought that we would fail and we certainly were undaunted and unintimidated by the work load and thousands of volunteer hours that were necessary to get this project completed.

Our efforts took on the same appearance as a military operation complete with strategic plans, intelligence information gathering, logistic support, battle plans, and all of the collective subtle efforts that it takes to eventually end in victory. NEPCO agreed to do a boating study in 1992 and New England FLOW and American Whitewater had the daunting task of delivering boaters to the river on six study weekends throughout that summer. And deliver they did!! Each test day had over 600 boaters enjoying the river at the Monroe Bridge section of the Deerfield for the first-ever scheduled releases.

FLOW coordinated the entire operation, renting 3 vans to shuttle boaters from the parking area at Dunbar Brook to the put-in in the morning and from the take-out throughout the entire day. Dozens of volunteers wearing orange vests and coordinated with 2-way radios kept the boaters moving with no traffic jams, no conflicts, no harsh words or hard feelings, just total cooperation amongst all of us that have come to love this river. It was amazing. At the end of the first day there was a look of solemn resignation on the faces of the NEPCO staff that were there to observe.

They must have realized then, that the boaters were a force that had to be dealt with and from that point our negotiations took a more positive and professional turn. NEPCO had come to realize that they were not dealing with a rag-tag bunch of whitewater, out of control

crazies. The boaters were well organized, articulate, and had become skilled in dealing with the science and economics of the relicensing process.

To their credit the New England Power Company answered the wake up call with a level of responsibility and dignity that is yet to be observed in other public utilities in the relicensing process. Certainly our negotiations were not any easier, but instead proceeded in a direction that provided honest and accurate information to our questions and also developed an atmosphere of respect for each other's positions.

NEPCO's negotiating team of Cleve Kapala, John Ragonese, and Mark Slade put together a solid effort of detailing operational constraints that were limiting to our requests, but were also open and creative to the solutions that our negotiators would put forward. In the end both parties realized that they would have to compromise and work to solve problems together if they wanted to be successful. This was the first step in developing the Deerfield Settlement Agreement. Once the boating issues were resolved FLOW and American Whitewater worked collectively with NEPCO to bring the other organizations and stakeholders to the table.

NEPCO has long been recognized for its innovative and socially responsible perspective by different members of the environmental community in New England. However, by breaking ranks with the rest of the hydro industry and dealing with us and our conservation allies, they took their commitment to the environment and protecting natural resources to an entirely higher level. They should receive as much credit for what we boaters have on the Deerfield River as what our negotiating team deserves.

I would not be able to submit this article to the Journal without devoting some time to recognize some of the people who formed New England FLOW with the help and financial support from American Whitewater.

They include:

Bruce Lessels, of Charlemont, MA.

Founder of Zoar Outdoor and former U. S. Team Member. Co-author of the Deerfield River Guidebook.

Rick Hudson, of Northampton, MA, AMC Deerfield River Task Force, Whitewater Advisory Board. Employed at University of Massachusetts Advance Computing Center.

John J. Valera, Hillsborough, NH. Past President, Kayak & Canoe Club of Boston. New England whitewater guru & pioneer. Employed by the U. S. Postal Service.

Chuck Peabody, The Forks, ME. & Charlemont, MA. Founder of Crabapple Whitewater.

Jennifer & Frank Mooney, Charlemont, MA, Daughter & Son-in-law of Chuck Peabody. Owners of Crabapple Whitewater Massachusetts.

Tom Foster, Millers Falls, MA. Founder of the Outdoor Centre of New England, former ACA Chair of Instruction.

Bill & Joan Hildreth, Cohasset, MA. Owners of Buddha Bear Boats, and New England Mobil X-Ray

Jim Dowd, South Hadley, MA. Former President of Trout Unlimited's Pioneer Valley Chapter, Co-author of the Deerfield River Guidebook, and Vice-president of Dowd Insurance.

Norman Sims, Amherst, MA. Board Member of the Appalachian Mountain Club, Co-author Deerfield River Guidebook Head of the Journalism Department at the University of Massachusetts.

These individuals are your whitewater heroes and they deserve thanks and respect for the collective efforts they put forward. At a time when our sport is growing so rapidly with young folks coming in, it is easy to take our whitewater fix for granted. It is important to remember as we go forward with other relicensing projects that the examples set and the goals achieved by these people will serve as a standard that must be met in the future.

The more I think about what has happened over the last nine years, the more I consider the importance of citizen participation in the process of democracy. It is so unique in this world of totalitarian governments and perverse politics to have a small group of individuals committed to changing the status quo, radical at first, but willing to grow, learn, and work through the system. Is it harder and more frustrating? Yes! Does it take more time, effort, and money? Yes! But in the end the system works if you have the stamina and fortitude to see it through.

When you think about it, our democracy makes it possible for one person or one group to make a difference and change our world forever. ~~uring~~ the spring of 1996 I was contacted by a Japanese gentlemen from New York City and asked if I would participate in a meeting with NEPCO and a group of environmentalists from Japan. They read about the Deerfield Settlement Agreement in the Science Section of the Sunday New York Times and were curious to learn about the process that took place. I agreed to participate in the meeting in the morning and arranged for them to have a raft trip

## THE LAST CHAPTER OF THE DEERFIELD RIVER SUCCESS STORY

to tour the Fife Brook Section of the river later that afternoon.

I arrived at the Shelburne Falls, MA, offices of NEPCO a little late and found to my surprise, seven Japanese gentlemen of which only one could speak English who would serve as an interpreter. They set up video cameras, turned on tape recorders, and took many pictures throughout the session. It seemed incredible to the Japanese that such bitter enemies as NEPCO and the conservation allies could work together to solve their problems and come to agreements that would benefit the environment yet still allow the generation of hydroelectric power. This was unheard of in the Japanese corporate culture.

Just to put things in perspective there are slightly more than two thousand dams in the entire United States. In Japan, a country the size of the State of California, there are over 3,200 dams. Every free flowing river in their country is reduced to a trickle and the riverine environmental damage caused by these dams is enormous. The purpose of their visit was to document our success and present it to the Japanese government in the hopes that our example would stimulate dialogue and an effort to begin protecting river resources.

I asked these men if there was a process in Japan that would allow citizen participation. They replied that there was none. Public utilities were controlled by the central government and any policies were weighed heavily in favor of economic growth, industry expansion, and commerce. There were no opportunities to go forward in any process unless it was driven by hydro industry and governmental bureaucrats.

Much to the dismay of NEPCO staff I reminded our Japanese visitors that the central form of governmental control over resources caused the ultimate collapse and downfall of the Soviet Union. After the interpreter translated my comments there was a great deal of laughter and obvious agreement. It made me realize how lucky I was to even have a place at this table and how well our system of government works, regardless of its shortcomings.

Our trip on the river was delightful. We had only one person in the raft who could respond to commands and had to interpret them to the others. I took my cherry-red Vampire which has a design of the Japanese rising sun and lightning bolts in bright gold on the deck. The boat was an obvious hit. I was amazed at the interest these gentlemen had in our wildlife. None had ever seen a beaver or the damage they do to trees, although they had seen pictures. There are no beavers in

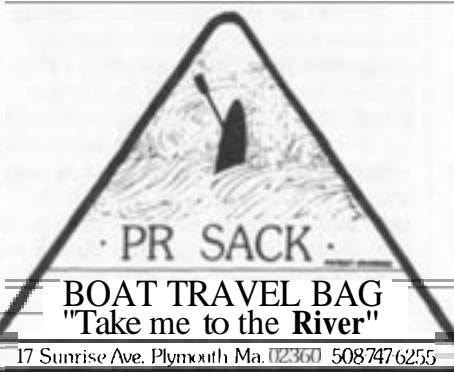
Japan, but apparently there are otters. Their knowledge of our native birds was fascinating and it seems the Japanese are avid birders. At the end of the day we exchanged gifts to commemorate our meeting. I provided them with several copies of the Deerfield River Guidebook and they gave me a bandana with pictures of river creatures found in Japan.

The Deerfield journey which began in 1988 was a long hard road but it was the best road trip I ever had. I met many new, wonderful people, learned much about the world I live in, and shared the opportunity with some good friends to make a difference. I came to realize that this would be the last chance in my lifetime to make this river a better place for all people not just boaters. How could I pass up a chance to do this, after all the entire world was watching us.

As a footnote to those who pioneered American Whitewater activism—Pete Skinner, Pope Barrow, Bob Glanville, Charlie Walbridge and many others, this

is the world we live for. So next time you have a chance to get involved—take it. There are many roads that are worth spending the rest of your life traveling.

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# From the Desk of the WKF President 1997 EXTREME RACES

by Eric Jackson

1996 saw two major Professional Extreme Kayaking Events: the WKF Gorge Games Extreme Race and the 1996 WKF Pre-World Extreme Championships. Both took place on exciting class V whitewater, with significant prize money, and lots of fun for athletes and spectators.

1997 promises even more! CBS will cover the 1997 WKF Gorge Games Extreme Race on the Upper White Salmon, making it one of the most visible kayaking events ever. With over \$5,000 in prize money, the race will also be financially rewarding for the top boaters. Overall Gorge Games organizer, Peg Lalor, has put together everything that is needed for a WKF extreme race to become a major sporting event. The Gorge Games itself is part of the 100% All Natural Sports

and Music Festival. It is an event to see—and experience—so get out there.

The WKF Gorge Games Extreme Race will be held during the Gorge Games, July 12-19 (extreme downriver, Thursday July 17). The race will be held on the Green Truss Section of the White Salmon River in Washington State. To register for the race, contact WKF Gorge Games local organizer John Trujillo at Cascade Whitewater Company: 541-386-4286; Hood River, Oregon.

Remember: The 1997 WKF World Extreme Kayak Championships will take place on the Great Falls of the Potomac, Washington, DC September 13-14, 1997.

For information on either event, please email the WKF at [wkf@worldkayak.com](mailto:wkf@worldkayak.com) or write to P.O.



Box 15430 Washington, DC 20003.

EJ TIP: If you want to race extreme—and race well, EJ suggests the following training: paddle long and hard every day you can. Paddle class V drops whenever possible. Pull out your old, longer boats.

(Also in this issue, WKF Pro Team Member Corran Addison talks a bit about what goes into the boats we paddle and what that means to you. Corran's father also steps up to the plate first by admitting his paternal link and then to revealing that boating skills are not all that runs in the Addison family!)

## Kent Ford, Joe Jacobi Join Staff At Wolf River Kid's Camps

by Bob Obst



This Summer kids from the Midwest will have the chance of a lifetime to learn canoe/kayak skills from two of the world's best whitewater paddlers, Olympic Gold Medallist Joe Jacobi and World Champion Kent Ford. The Wolf River Paddling Club camps/workshops are for youths ages 8-18 on the Wolf River near White Lake, WI.

Between June 28 and July 1, Wolf

River Paddling Club instructors Joe Jacobi, Bob Obst, Cynthia Grimes, Jana Stewart, Todd Leigh, Tam Fletcher, Will Stahl and others will teach advanced youth paddlers on this beautiful river. Barry Grimes, Director of the AWA National Film Festival East, will video tape this event. Intermediates will learn in moving water and progress to class 2

rapids. Advanced paddlers will begin in class 1-2 rapids and progress to class 3 or harder rapids. Joe Jacobi will also coach Gold Medal Whitewater Slalom Clinics for advanced slalom paddlers and USA Junior Team members.

Between July 19 and 21, instructors Kent Ford, Mitch Beales, and others will coach whitewater paddling clinics for beginners and intermediate youth paddlers. First-timers are welcome. Beginners will take lessons on nearby lakes and graduate to class 2 and 2 rapids as their skills develop. The intermediates will begin in moving water and progress to class 1 rapids on day 1, class 2 rapids on day 2, and class 3 rapids on day 3. Kent Ford will also lead ACA Instructor Development and Methods Workshops for workshop staff and other interested individuals July 16-19.

The Wolf River Paddling Club, Inc., a non-profit organization, operates a USA Canoe/Kayak Junior Olympic Program, and organized paddling camps/workshops for kids on this National Wild and Scenic river. Contact: Bob Obst, PO Box 5212, Madison, WI 53705-0212, Tel: 608-233-6728, [WRPINC@aol.com](mailto:WRPINC@aol.com).

# Team To Explore Borneo By Kayak

by John Weld  
Contributina Editor

We'll, we're at it again. Fellow Washington DC. paddler Mark Moore and I, along with Andy Bridge from Dagger and fellow U.S. Downriver team member Nelson Oldham of Carbondale, CO, are embarking on another major whitewater exploratory expedition, with the help of W.L. Gore and Associates, Inc.'s Shipton/Tilman Grant. This January, we plan to cross Borneo, the third largest island in the world, in whitewater kayaks.

You may remember that Andy and I, along with Hayden Glatte and Phil DeRiemer, executed a similar trip on Baffin Island in the Arctic Circle during the summer of 1994, also funded in part by the Shipton/Tilman Grant. That trip went so well that we scanned the globe for a new challenge, and we stumbled on Borneo. We're calling our latest trip the Trans-Borneo Whitewater Exploration. If we pull it off, we will set a new standard for whitewater exploration.

For those of you who do not have a globe handy, Borneo is the large island between Australia and Vietnam. The island is divided by three countries: Malaysia, Indonesia (Kalimantan) and Brunei. The island rests on the Equator.

In brief, our itinerary is as follows: After entering Sarawak, Malaysia, we plan to use local transportation to ascend the Baram river as far as possible. At the limit of power boat travel we will paddle, drag and carry our whitewater kayaks and 238 upstream miles to Lio Matoh. From Lio Matoh we will carry our kayaks and provisions for several days across the island's mountain divide into Indonesia, the Kayan-Mentarang Preserve, and the Iwan River drainage.

Once on the Iwan, we will negotiate steep and remote rapids as we paddle 90 miles downstream to the Kayan River. On the Kayan we will paddle 267 miles to Tanjungsilor, passing through more of the rapids that have isolated this region from logging and development and given the area its name, Apo Kayan (land above the great rapids of the Kayan). All in all, we will travel about 600 miles, and in the process cross the island coast to coast.

During our Borneo trip (as well as in the numerous other expeditions that our

team has participated in around the world), we are developing an "alpine style" method of whitewater exploration. By traveling light, we can live for weeks out of our whitewater kayaks. We can explore the most rugged and remote river canyons that would be otherwise inaccessible. Unlike large, cumbersome raft-supported trips, we can run class V whitewater, portage rapids very quickly, and cover up to 30 miles a day.

The evolution of kayak expeditioning parallels that of mountaineering. Mountaineering trips use to employ hundreds of porters carrying huge amounts of gear. Modern climbing trips rely on small teams of experts using teamwork and speed to cover ground with amazing efficiency. It used to be common to use rafts to support multi-day whitewater expeditions. But rafts are slow in every respect, and they lead to a vicious circle; the raft will take more time, so we need more gear, so we will need more rafts, etc. A well-packed, large whitewater kayak can carry at least two weeks worth of gear.

Although this is a whitewater trip, we are obviously going to have bigger problems than choosing what lines to take down through a class V rapid with a boat full of gear. Tropical diseases like malaria, dengue fever and typhoid, along with pests like leeches, mosquitoes, swarms of bees and a host of fungi and bacteria are on our list of problems. Furthermore, we will be crossing an international border at a point where there will be no formal crossing station. Red tape and bureaucratic hassles will abound. We expect to encounter armed military police, demanding to see non-existent papers. As one Borneo travel veteran put it, "They make up red tape over there as you go along". Being lost in the middle of one of the world's largest rainforest is also of some concern, because, to date, we have not found any maps for huge portions of the trip.

Sounds impossible? Well, it's not quite as bad as it seems. We are trying to anticipate as many problems as we can before we step foot on the island. Through vaccinations and careful treatment of all cuts, we can cut down on disease. And we're still looking for map. In the end, we will have to rely on resourcefulness, team work and a little luck to get us across.

Our trip is slated to depart at the end of December and we will be gone about five or six weeks. I've created a web site that you can visit at <http://www.shol.com/borneo/>. There you can follow up on regular trip updates, read short biographies on team members, and check out our sponsors. American Whitewater readers can expect a full article when I get back.

Anyone interested in seeing a post

trip slide show for their organization or canoe club can contact me either through e-mail on our web site, or by calling me at 814-395-3028. Until then, wish us luck, and remember, as climber-explorer H.W. Tilman once said "Anything beyond what is needed for efficiency and safety is worse than useless".

## Army Corps Slates Open House On Gauley

Words simply can not describe the sensation of a float down the Gauley River. However, this is not possible for everyone. So if you're stuck running shuttle or for some other reason not able to be on the river on Gauley Fest Saturday, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has something for you.

We at Summersville Lake are inviting you to our third annual Open House, Saturday, September 20, from 8 am to 4 pm. The Open House will be held at the Visitors Center located in the Information Office at the top of the canyon rim, on the west side of the dam. On display will be never released pictures of the construction of the dam along with refreshments.

Encounter the fury of Gauley River from the Outlet Structure platform with a guided tour from noon to 4 pm, starting from the Visitors Center. Once on the platform, you can experience the Howell-Bunger valves in operation and feel the force of the river as it reverberates through the concrete beneath your feet. This is the only time of the year when the Outlet Structure is open to the public.

Make your trip to our area a unique one. Load your camera and visit us during our Open House on Gauley Fest Saturday.

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# Top Contestants for 1997 Potomac Festival

## RODEO EVENT (ADVANCED FREESTYLE)

### Women

Deb Ruehle  
Allison Steiner  
Aleta Miller

### Juniors

Nejc Poberaj  
Sabastian Zimmer  
Danny Stock

### C-1s

Ryan Bahn  
Dirk Young  
Andy Bridge

### Men

Eric Jackson  
Kurt Braumlich  
Luke Hopkins

## GREAT FALLS RACE

### Women

Deb Ruuhle  
Harriet Taylor

### K-1 Juniors (under 18)

Sabastian Zimmer  
Andrew McEwan  
Kyle Marinello

### C-1s

Ryan Bahn  
Andy Bridge  
Adam Boyd

### Masters K1 (over 40)

Mike Hipshir  
Tom McEwan  
Jerry Lechowick

### Senior K-1

Eric Jackson  
Jason Beakes  
Brent Weisel

## ADVANCED ATTAINMENT

Jason Beakes  
Jerry Lechowick (a mas-  
ter)  
Gil Rocha

## INTERMEDIATE ATTAINMENT

Jim Long  
Seth Wechel/John Mein  
(juniors in C2)  
Amy Gibbson/Steve  
Stothers (in C2)

## DOWN RIVER SPRINT

### Women

Cathy Hearn  
Jennifer Hearn  
Aleta Miller

### K-1 Juniors (under 18)

Kyle Marinello  
Ethan Winger  
Sebastian Zimmer

### C-1

Davey Hearn  
Ryan Bahn  
Adam Boyd

### C-2

Jocelyn Henreid/Mike  
Sloan  
Sarah Anderson/Steve  
Stothers  
Gail Richards/Mike Cox

### Wildwater Boats

Chris Norbury  
Andy Bridge  
Chris Hipgrave

### Masters (over 40)

Jerry Lechwick

# Cheat Festival Race Results

## Cheat River Massacre-ence Overall

Roger Zbel	44:26
Steve Kauffman	47:02
Jeff Snyder	47:10
Brian Homberg	47:45
Rick Gusic	48:55
Mike Herrera	50:17
Phil Coleman	50:46
Pat Reilly	51:09
Scott Stough	51:15
Billy Zollars	52:23
Trip Kinney	52:24
Forrest Callaway	52:44
Tim Friday	52:54
Dan Sarich	53:34
Joe Kendrick	53:38
Mike Rockwell	53:44
Mike Moore	54:20
Robert Miller	54:47
Nathan Limbaugh	55:16
Colleen Laffey	55:18
Mike Kinney	55:26
Joe Brush	56:08
Wally Hatfield	56:15
Nicholas Broskovich	56:19
Jan Steckel	56:38
Adam Webster	56:48
Keith Heasley	57:00
Brian Jelly?	58:34
John Jefferies	58:46
Adam Fawcett	59:46
Julie Wingard	59:54
Campell Johnson	1:00:24
Kris Hanies	1:01:27
Barry Adams	1:01:49
Rich Grape	1:04:49
Jamie Kline	dead last!!!!

## Women's Combined

1.Colleen Laffey	55:18
2.Jan Steckel	56:38
3.Julie Wingard	59:54

## Wildwater

1.Roger Zbel	44:26
2.Steve Kauffman	47:02
3.Jeff Snyder	47:10

## Slalom

1.Phil Coleman	50:46
2.Billy Zollars	52:23
3.Tim Friday	52:54

## Wavehoppers

1.Mikey Herrera	50:17
2.Pat Reilly	51:09
3.Scott Stough	51:15

Skip Brown  
Bob Wallace

### Seniors K-1

Brent Weisel  
Jason Beaks  
Eric Jackson

### Squirt Boats

Tony Reeves  
Hams Hayne  
Jim Forbes

## DOWNRIVER SQUIRT

### Women

Jocelyn Henreid  
Aleta Miller  
Alison Steiner

### C-1s

Dirk Young  
Adam Boyd  
Tony Reeves

### K-1

Harris Haynes  
Steve Strothers  
Kyle Marinello/Tony  
Reeves (tie)

## EDDY LINE SQUIRT

### Junior K-1

Kyle Marincello  
Will Peterman  
Ethan Winger

### C-1s

Dirk Young  
Adam Boyd  
Jon Souter (a junior)

### Women

Aleta Miller  
Jocelyn Henreid  
Alison Steiner

### K-1

Harris Haynes  
Steve Strothers  
Tony Reeves

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# How I Got To Be Younger Than Mayo Grauatt

Having recently proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that **Mayo** Gravatt is old, I have been confronted by a vexing question: If **Mayo** Gravatt is old, what does that make me? I would like to thank my faithless friends for raising this question.

However, I have to admit the question is relevant for I was born on September 5, 1945 (presents, especially cash, accepted gratefully), while Gravatt was born on July 4, 1946. Yet, I am younger than **Mayo**.

How do I explain this apparent violation of the laws of relativity? Simple: I became younger than **Mayo** as the result of a time/space discontinuum.

I don't wish to explore the Theory of Relativity here, so I will merely mention that there are folds in the curtain of time that, when encountered, produce curious results. Let me recount the events that led to this discontinuum and trust you, the reader, to come to the obvious conclusion that I am, indeed, younger than **Mayo** Gravatt.

The events in question occurred this spring on the Watauga River (I think; one cannot be certain about dates or places when discussing a time/space discontinuum). I went to run the Watauga with some friends from Southwestern Virginia. I had it in mind to run both Hydro (a tricky Class IV+ rapid) and Watauga Falls (a trickier Class V-waterfall).

The gauge on the Watauga is screwed up. The old minimum reading of 250 cfs seems hefty nowadays, and there are also reports of inconsistent readings. At any rate, I paid more attention to the 300 cfs TVA report than to the fact that the water was about 2 inches below the top of the bridge piling (which is a hefty level).

We bopped on down to Hydro, negotiating the first two steep boulder gardens without incident. Above Hydro, we all paddled to river left for a scout.

I usually portage Hydro under the high risk/low fun theory (if swimming a rapid will be more likely and more harmful than making it will be fun, portage is indicated). But I did not put this theory into play that day. Instead, I recalled a trip last year when I observed several friends make a tricky move that involves a micro eddy on river left, a ferry to river right above a wicked hole, a spin move, an easy run out to the big river-wide drop, and a boof into the pool below the big hole.

I forgot that my friends made those moves at a considerably lower level. So when I tried the line, I spent my brief time in the micro-eddy fighting to stay upright rather than spinning, setting up for the feny, and peeling out gracefully. Unfortunately, while this epic struggle was going on, I was slipping out of the eddy backwards into the aforementioned wicked hole. Here I was roundly, but briefly, surfed, flipped, and sucked to the bottom of the river. Then, I proceeded through the second hole, over the big drop, and into the cool, green waters below.

None of this fazed me particularly. After all, I have taken swims before. In fact, I have

even developed an argument proving the virtues of swimming (send \$2.95 plus a SASE for a copy). However, as I began to run out of oxygen and realized I was out of my boat and at the bottom of the river, I had a brilliant idea.

"Stick your hands up, Bill, so they can hit you with a rope."

Brilliant. I did so. Unfortunately, when I did so, my hands did not come close to the surface of those cool green waters. At this point, I began to realize I might die. I looked up for help and saw only green and cool and infinite. The water had an ethereal quality, a heavenly glow, and I thought I heard a distant voice calling me home. At that point, I began swimming...toward heaven.

Well, I didn't die. Instead, I surfaced some 40 feet downstream of Hydro, cold, gasping for air, and exhausted...but safe.

Well, not quite. The backwash at Hydro is powerful, indeed, and as I lay there in the water, too tired to swim, I felt my body being pulled upstream toward the hydraulic. This was not a pleasant sensation, but I did not panic. Instead, I looked to the bank where my trusty and expert friend, Doug Cox, stood with a throw rope... stood looking upstream for the next intrepid challenger of Hydro.

At this point, I did panic, but could only feebly wave my arms while croaking like a drowned frog, "Rope, rope. Throw me a damn rope. Please throw me a rope. I'll kill you if you don't throw me a rope."

The river pulled, I croaked, Doug watched the drama unfolding above. Finally, just as I was sucked into Hydro for a final meeting with Destiny, someone caught Doug's attention. He turned, and he tossed me a rope. Me, the rope, and Jesus were soon down on the bottom of the Watauga, together again.

I held on to the rope and let Jesus fend for himself while Doug pulled me out of the jaws of death and onto the slippery rock. There I got to shiver and gasp and look foolish and frail for many minutes while the rest of the

world had fun. No matter, I was alive.

Now, I've seen Jesus before, high on a mountain side outside of Butte, Montana. It was late one night as **Mayo** and I were returning from a trip West. But Jesus only looked at me that time, waving from his perch on the butte in Butte as we passed by in the night. At the bottom of Hydro, our encounter was much more personal and up close. There, at the bottom of the cool, green pool, I offered my life to Jesus. That's right folks, I was reborn.

And this brings us to the timespace discontinuum. As I was saved from the Watauga River, it is obvious that I started life anew. It is equally obvious that I am thus young again. My life re-started this spring at the bottom of the cool, green Watauga. I was baptized, reborn, rejuvenated, revived. Can Gravatt claim the same? I think not, since, while I was undergoing this spiritual reawakening, he was safe at home in Blackstone, Virginia.

But before you go off and swim Ohiopyle Falls, or Big Splat, or even Niagara in hopes of rejuvenation, let me offer a warning. Near death swims do not always result in rebirth. In fact, they rarely do.

Another factor has to be present before rejuvenation occurs. That whom you need to become younger than (otherwise known as your "nemesis"), cannot be present for this experience, or, if present, cannot possess a camera.

Not unexpectedly, **Mayo** Gravatt has placed a bounty on my head, offering a certain sum of money to anyone who captures me swimming on film. To date, the money remains unclaimed.

**Mayo** himself professes to have seen me swim Swallowtail Falls on the Top Yough, but he did not have a camera that day. Dave **McFadden** and Ray Brown have tried unsuccessfully to eject me from my boat forcefully while Gravatt stood on the bank, camera in hand. **Mayo** has heard yams of my swimming on the Maury, and even the James, but where is the proof! There was even one occasion when **Mayo**, standing on the bank with camera in hand, put down his photographic equipment and picked up a throw rope, only to have me swim to shore and jump back into my boat before he could recover his senses and his Nikon.

No photograph, no proof that I am as old as Gravatt; it's as simple as that. As long as the money remains unclaimed, the born-again experience I had on the Watauga, is evidence, not of my advancing age and increasing frailty, but of my capacity for regeneration, rebirth, and rediscovered youth. It is evidence that I am younger than Gravatt.

Ol' buddy, I'll come visit you in Ye Olde Paddlers Final Rest Stoppe (Ye Olde **Pfarts**, for short) just as soon as I get off the Watauga. There's a move at Hydro I want to get down.

Old Boaters Never Die; You Just Wish They Would.

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