

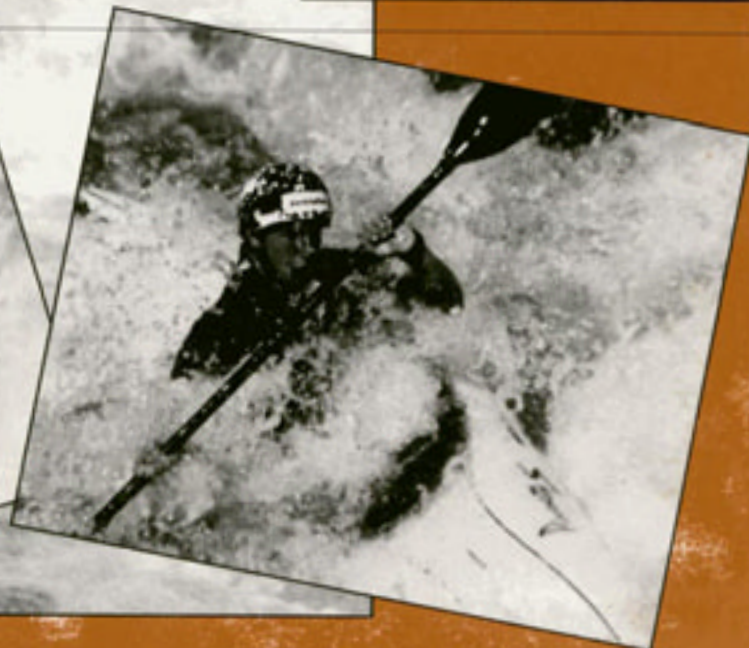
# american whitewater



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September  
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**Top 40 River  
Issues for  
1994** page 24





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# american whitewater

Journal of the American Whitewater Affiliation

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.....  
Front Cover: LaGrange Canyon

Left inset: Dan Wallen dropping into El Horrendo, Russell Fork, Photo by Randy Mohler, (courtesy of Dagger)

Right inset: Team Adventure

Nate LaBreeque, age 13, Upper North Fork Payette, 2000 cfs, somewhere between Steepness and Nutcracker, 1994 Cadet U.S. Team C-1.

Back Cover: Ted Rowe, AWA printer, somewhere in Lost Paddle, Upper Gauley. (photo by Dave Shannon)



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# Beyond the White Holes

by Bob Gedekoh

Experts agree that Stephen **Hawking**, the famous British mathematician and physicist, is the smartest man **alive**. Unfortunately **Hawking** suffers from ALS, a progressive **neuromuscular** disease, and is confined to a wheelchair, unable to move or even speak without mechanical assistance. Nevertheless, it has been speculated that if **Hawking** lives long enough, he will succeed in developing the "Unified Theory", a mathematical formula that will explain the relationship of the four forces that hold the universe together: gravity, electromagnetism, the weak force and the strong force.

Supposedly if **Hawking** develops this theory he will be able to explain everything... to answer every question. He will be able to tell us whether there is life on other planets. He will be able to tell us if there is life after death. He **will** even be able to tell us how **Bubbles**, the monkey, feels about the **marriage** of **Michael Jackson** and **Lisa Marie**!

Of course, because of his disability **Hawking** will never be able to experience whitewater. **That** is a shame, because I think he could learn a lot from our sport. Certainly most of the whitewater boaters I know have deep intellects and a keen interest in applied and theoretical physics. Why else would there be rapids named the Cyclotron, the Particle Accelerator and the Time Warp on rivers just an hour from my home?

**So** what exactly could **Hawking** learn from whitewater and whitewater boaters? Well, consider this. Much of **Hawking's** work has dealt **with** Black Holes... those mysterious points in space that suck in **matter** and energy.



Once an object, or even a beam of light, is drawn into a Black Hole, there can be no escape. But according to **Hawking** that doesn't necessarily mean **annihilation**. He believes that time gets stretched more and more the closer one gets to the center of the Black Hole. Actually, he can't prove this, because no one **can** see what goes on inside a Black Hole, and no one who has drifted into one has ever returned to report on the experience.

Well, I've never been drawn into a Black Hole, at least that I can remember, but during my paddling career I have spent more than my share of time trapped in the clutches of White Holes. And let me tell you Mr. **Hawking**, big White Holes can be every bit as treacherous and voracious as their Black counterparts.

Time gets stretched in White Holes, too. For example, on a dare I once dropped into Phil's Hole on the Ottawa I soon discovered that getting out was going to be one hell of a

lot harder than getting in. By my reckoning I spent three and one half weeks trying to claw my way out of that sucker. But my friends, and I use that word loosely, who were standing on shore **laughing**, swear that from their perspective I only surfed the monster for three minutes!

White Holes may not be quite as powerful as Black Holes, but they can still pack a wallop. I was once trapped in a hole on the Magpie River that was so powerful that it sucked **the buzzards** right out of the sky.

Some scientists, including **Hawking**, have suggested that objects drawn into Black Holes actually punch through them and come out the other side... that Black Holes are gateways to other dimensions. I know that White Holes can sometimes act that way; I once recirculated so deeply in a hole on the Upper Gauley that when I surfaced for air I found myself in a hole on the Tigers Leap Gorge of the **Yangtze... in China!**

White Holes **often** swallow complex **objects** and reduce them into elementary particles. A kayaking unit that is drawn into a White Hole may well come out in pieces... a paddler here, a paddle there, a throw rope here, a **sandal** there... float bags scattered everywhere.

But **Hawking** is concerned with more than Holes. In his book, **A Brief History of Time**, **Hawking** poses the question, "If we **can** remember what happened in the past, why can't we remember what will happen in the future?"

Well, Mr. **Hawking**, sometimes whitewater boaters can! During the past decade I have witnessed innumerable episodes of carnage at First Island Rapid on the Big **Sandy**. These resulted in broken paddles, shattered boats, vertical stern entrapments, **skinned** knuckles and cracked heads. I myself spent a week on crutches after a particularly nasty thrashing there.

Now when I reach the top of First Island, I

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"remember" what is likely to happen if I choose to run it. That is why I ignore the jeers of my buddies and sneak down the left. Unfortunately, some of my friends are not as insightful as me and they do not "remember" what is going to happen as well as I do. As a consequence they continue to get their butts kicked there on a regular basis.

Like most theoretical physicists, **Hawking** spends a great deal of time considering relativity and perspective and how they effect the way we perceive the universe. His point is that things are not always what they seem. Of course whitewater boaters already know that.

Consider this. One of my friends recently fell into a humongous White Hole at the top of the **Crunch** Rapid on the North Fork of the Payette. The Hole quickly dismantled his boating unit and my buddy found himself tumbling down the rock strewn, turbulent, mile-long time-space continuum that constitutes **Crunch**. A number of elderly folk traveling in **Winnabago** spaceships witnessed my friend's swim and they stopped to see if they could help. When my friend finally made it to the bank and crawled up to the road, he looked like a half peeled, half boiled potato.

Small wonder that one of the elderly ladies posed the incredulous question, "Son, were

you having fun out there?" Certainly from the vantage of her parallel universe his swim must not have looked too pleasant. She, of course, had no way of knowing just how much fun he had. From her perspective she could never have understood why **later** that day he chose to disregard his innumerable abrasions and bruises to challenge **Crunch** again.

Theoretical mathematicians like **Hawking** are currently engrossed in exploring what they call Chaos Theory, which suggests that if you use powerful computers to study phenomena that appear to represent total confusion, predictable patterns will eventually be revealed. I can think of no better example of this than the chaos surrounding the Gauley Festival. Every year it rains, every year AWA Executive Director Phyllis **Horowitz** manages to create order out of pandemonium and every year we all have one hell of a good time.

But did the universe really start with a Big Bang, as Hawking suggests? And, if it did, what is the relationship between the Big Bang and the Big Splat? Well have to wait for Hawking to give us an answer to that. In the meantime, I going to leave these astrophysical musings behind, and head for the river. ■

## Acknowledgements

Photo credits for last issue's story, "The Evolution of a Hair Boater", were inadvertently lost. Thanks to Joel Serra for those pictures.

## The Kids Are Alright!!! On the Cover

This summer the kids that compromise the "Extreme Squad" from Adventure Quest completed a whirlwind tour of America that included plenty of Big Wahoo Whitewater. Besides attending the Open Canoe Nationals, the Junior World's, several rodeos and the U.S. Team Trials, they tackled three of the toughest whitewater runs in the western United States... the Pine Creek Canyon of the Arkansas, the Gore Canyon of the Colorado and the North Fork of the **Payette**.

This new breed of Hair Boaters, aged 13-16, followed **Chan Zwanzig** of Wave Sports down Gore. "These kids didn't just paddle Gore, they shredded it!" **Zwanzig** said later. Whitewater master **Dan Gavere** led the Extreme Squad down the North Fork- at a phenomenal 2000 cfs!

Humble Pie for the rest of us! Look for photos of these incredible young boaters scattered throughout the special Big Wahoo section of this issue. Special kudos to their guru, Peter Kennedy, for helping these kids along, and for sending us these impressive photos. ■

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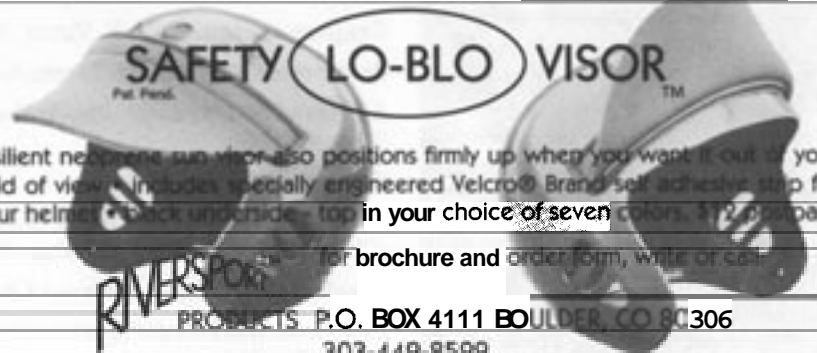
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## Lamenting West Virginia's Fecal Creeks.

Dear Editor.

I don't profess to be a authority on fecal **coliform** and its effects on human paddling maggots like myself.

But as a semi-professional boater and natural **freak**..(Uh?.. nature freak!) I have found, to my very sensitive nose, a plethora of the disfavor on some of West V i a ' s creeks, not to mention **fill** blown rivers, which, to put it bluntly, "STINK!".

If there is any way to get Kokatat to produce an OSHA approved full body, biohazard, gore-tex dry suit, then send me one! Because that's what you need to safely paddle some of Wid and Wonderful's fecal creeks.

If I had one of those suits, I would challenge the fecal hazards of Piney creek-which overflows the deficient sewage treatment facility of Beckley, West Virginia If you haven't heard about this superb class **IV** run, it's certainly not due to any lack of white (brown) water. And it's absolutely not due to a scarcity of natural splendor. It's likely due to its reputation as a fecal monstrosity.

If I had one of those suits, I could finesse my way around the fetor perils of Brush Creek, while **enjoying** it's class III, **IV** and **V+** rapids. Brush Creek's waters sludge into the National Scenic **Bluestone** River. A father we spoke with along this creek said "I brought my son here to show him which creeks not to swim in".

If I had a full body, OSHA approved dry suit, I'd disregard the warning sins of indigent water quality while bopping down **Dunloup** Creek, which passes right by the National Park Service headquarters on it's way to **Thurmond** and the New River.

If OSHA mandated this suit, I could safely paddle the

ferocious, but odorous class **V+** rapids of Mill Creek, down to the confluence of the New River National Gorge, through the **striking** backdrop of Hawks Nest State Park.

Contemplating these and a myriad of other would be great runs, I'm uncertain what to do. Should I write Kokatat and explain my plight? Or write to my local congressperson? The latter seems a more logical way to go about **getting** something done.

But wait? In retrospect, perhaps I shouldn't call attention to this rapidly regressing dilemma It's not as if our congresspeople aren't cognizant of the situation. But if I beget too much "**stink**" about this predicament, the powers that be may proclaim these rivers and creeks inappropriate for human immersion. Since there may be no way to correct this foul quandary, given our national, **state** and local political pecuniary ineptness, the official response might be that boaters would not be allowed to paddle their streams and rivers at all!

So, with pen in hand...

Dear Kokatat...

McCracken Kent  
Virginia West

## Who Decides?

Dear Bob,

By definition, an editor is one who writes editorials in which he expresses his or her opinion. I, for one, appreciate the excellent job you've been doing; I find your writing style informative and highly **amusing**. Your article "The River Decides" elicited many good **arguments** on both sides of the issue, but I didn't think you deserved the **mean-spirited**, personal low blows that were leveled at you by some of the readers. I did agree, however, with the guy who pointed out the spelling error. Too bad that

**American** Whitewater, which **appears** so professional in terms of photography, **story content** and, yes, editorializing, **should** be so jam-packed with **typos**, dropped words, and even faulty grammar. What you need is a good proofreader. (In fact, I'd be glad to do the proofreading if you can't find **anyone** else to do it, and provided I can fit it in between Class **V** river trips!)

One other point. The river decides who the Class **V** paddlers are, without a doubt. But who decides which rivers are Class **V**? I used to hear the **Upper Yough** and Upper Gauley described as classic Class **V** runs, but now that I've become fairly proficient at running them, I hear them described as "nice Class **III-IVs**". I thought Swallow **falls** was Class **VI** until, after I'd run it **several** times, I learned it's a mere Class **IV**. Maybe what's going on is that the envelope of what is doable is being pushed so fast by the extremely good paddlers that the Class **V** "limit of navigability" has to **rise** to keep pace. Have we reached the point where only the Upper Blackwater, the **Narrows** of the Green (doesn't count unless you run Gorilla), **Mann's** Creek and their equals merit the Class **V** designation? Or do we dare taunt the river gods by bandying about the term "Class **VI** paddler"?

Best regards,  
Gib McGill

Editor's Reply:

*In this issue's safety section Charlie Walbridge makes the excellent and valid point that when expert boaters manipulate the river ratings system to gratify their own egos, there are rarely any serious consequences... for them.*

*Unfortunately intermediates and those just making the transition to running more difficult whitewater of **ten** fall victim to this "whitewater devaluation". I*

hope you will find Charlie's discussion of this important topic enlightening.

As for our typos and spelling errors, I try my best, but many of our articles require extensive editing and arrive in my mailbox about a week after the stated deadline. Needless to say, things get a little hectic...

So look out, I may take you up on your offer.

Bob

Gedekoh

WHEN YOU GOTTA GO!  
MARYLAND DNR NOT  
NUMBER ONE WITH  
THIS BOATER

Dear Editor.

I recently had an **unpleasant** experience with a DNR officer in Maryland at the Upper **Yough** put-in. In particular, I was ticketed for **urinating** at the put-in. The whole matter seems rather trivial and **ridiculous** but I thought you or your readers might find it amusing and serve as a **warning** to others. Apparently, the "**establishment**" (DNR) does not think too highly of paddlers. I **suppose** my behavior was not exemplary, but the reality is that everyone "**has** to go" before putting-on Feel free to print all or part of my letter in **future** issues of **American Whitewater** if you feel others may be **interested**/entertained by my experience.

Sincerely,  
A1 Fylak  
Rochester Hills, Mi








TEXT OF LETTER

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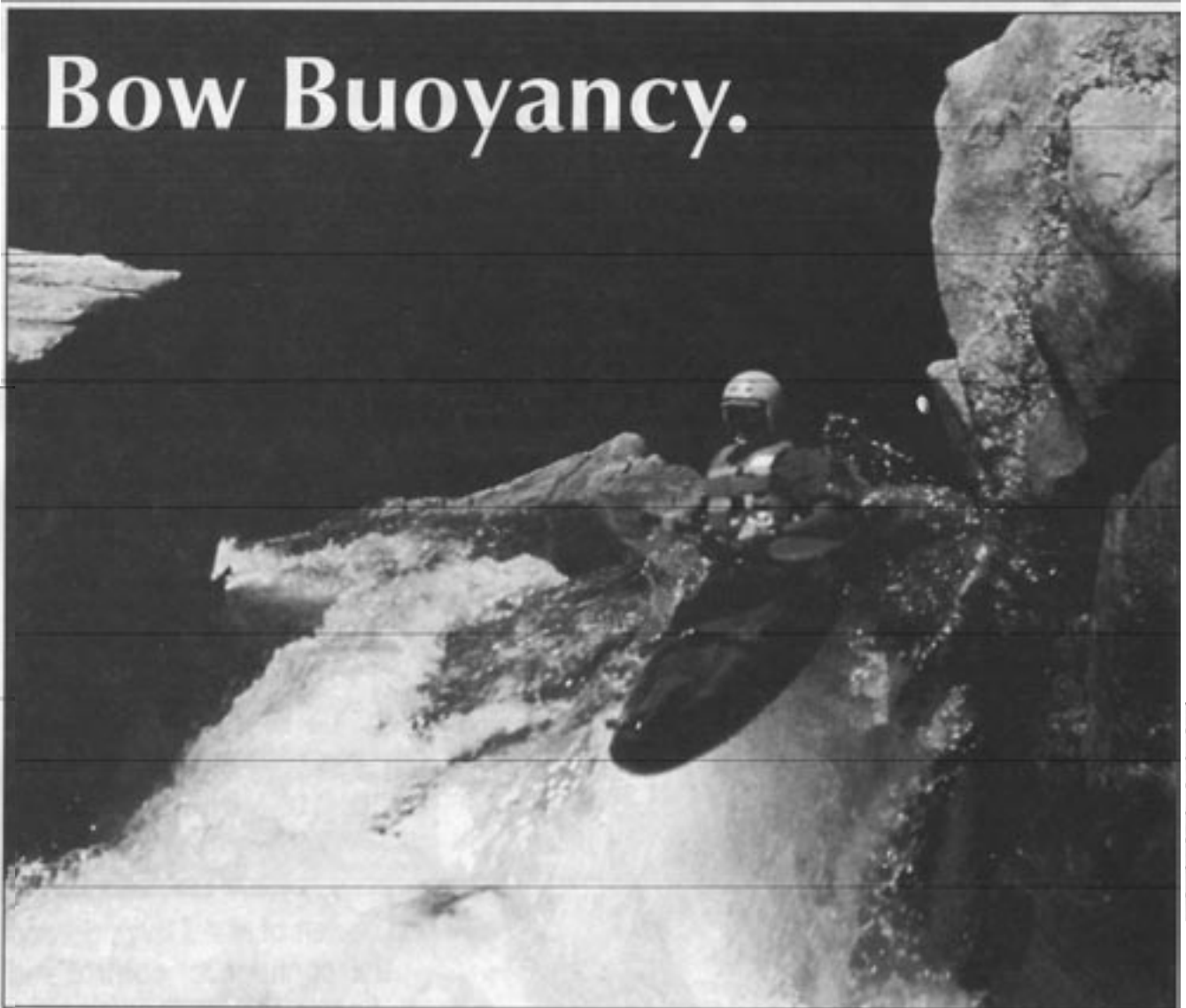
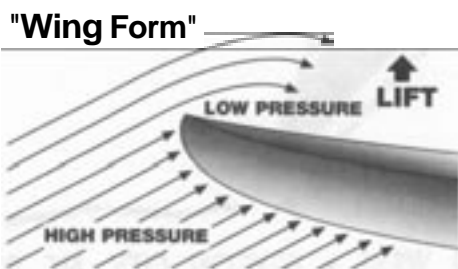


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I do not admit guilt for "disorderly conduct" for the attached citation. Since I live in Michigan, appearing in court in Maryland is not reasonable considering the non-serious nature of this offense. I am enclosing the \$65 fine to close the matter only, and **am** not admitting guilt. If you decide to reduce or drop the fine, please return the difference.

The attached citation for disorderly conduct is a perfect example of harassment of the general public by DNR officers. Although not specified on the citation, the "disorderly conduct" was for urinating in an open field at the put-in for the Upper Youghiohgheny River. The details of this "offense" are described below.

It was a warm sunny day as I was preparing to kayak the Upper Youghiohgheny River. There was lots of activity in the parking area as people were unloading and making preparations to get on the river. As

part of my preparation, I found it necessary to urinate. Since there were no public facilities, I walked approximately 20 yards into the open field adjacent to the parking area, turned away from the parking area, and took care of my business.

In retrospect, I could have walked further into the field or into the woods near the river bank; however, at the time I really didn't give the matter much thought and 20 yards into an open field seemed sufficient. I didn't think anyone would be offended. The entire event took about 15 seconds. I doubt if anyone even noticed.

Well apparently the young zealous DNR officer did notice as he approached me and demanded to see my driver's license. I stated that I did not have my license with me since I had **not** driven to the river. He again sternly asked a second time to see my license to which I gave the same reply.

Finally, he accepted my explanation and took my name, address, phone number, and social security number; and proceeded to "write me up".

Several things bother me about this event:

1. I had to urinate somewhere since there were no public restrooms at the put in. The open field seemed like a reasonable place.

2. The DNR officer was unnecessarily rude and angry about the matter. I was treated as though I had committed a heinous crime. I **half** expected to be hauled away in handcuffs after not being able to produce a driver's license. Possibly, kayakers have a bad reputation in Maryland. I don't know how else to explain the officer's angry demeanor.

3. There was no trouble at the put-in and no one was complaining. Why was the officer there seemingly "looking for trouble"?

4. The fine of \$65 seems

overly excessive for the crime (if urinating in an open field is really a crime).

I hope the above explanation does not sound too cynical; however, I am quite angry about the entire situation. I drove a long way from Michigan to enjoy the Upper Yough and did not appreciate how I was treated. I pay a lot of federal and state taxes and **am** a retired naval officer. As a result of my military background, I **am** quite familiar with authority and feel that the citing DNR officer was abusing the authority vested in him by the state of Maryland. I hope other guests to your state are treated better than I was.

Sincerely,  
Alexander M Fylak

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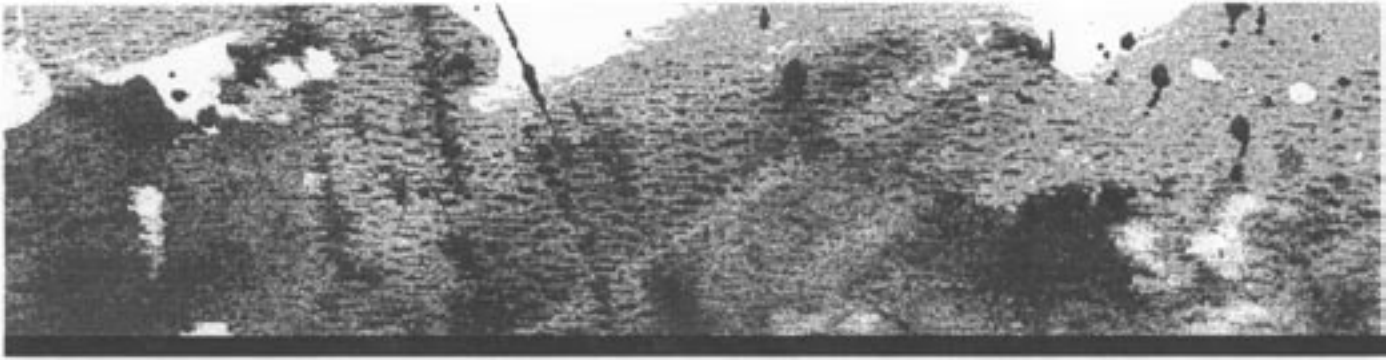
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C O N S E R V A T I O N

# LaGrande Canyon — from Humble Beginnings

by Rich Bowers

In early 1992, a newly hired staff member of the AWA was locked away in the heart of the public reference room at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), deep in the bureaucratic heart of Washington, DC.

The mission — to research over 160 projects and 200+ dams up for relicensing in the upcoming year. The Penobscot and Basin Mills projects in Maine were over 20 volumes each, and the combined applications filled a space the size of a small room, waist deep.

In a little under one hour, this person realized exactly how little he knew about the FERC process, and that this job was not quite the high profile opportunity originally envisioned!

Undaunted (and unwilling to lose this new job in the first week), he proceeded to attempt to correlate hydro-engineering terminology into whitewater drop, gradient, and "fun".

Several weeks into this, one river segment stuck out from the continuous discussions on power generation, turbine capacity, and mitigation measures. A small canyon in the Northwest, locked away from the public eye since 1912 (the year that the original LaGrande project on Washington state's Nisqually River was completed), offered the following description: "The width of the floor rarely exceeds 200 feet but frequently narrows, occasionally to less than 20 feet. During routine spills, these points become impassible to fish due to the extreme

velocity of the water... the high gradient of the reach and ...frequent spills from the dam".

**Bingo!** A possible whitewater run and the process begins. In February, 1992, the AWA requested that FERC require Tacoma City Light to conduct flow and feasibility studies in this canyon, look at improvements for whitewater on the popular downstream McKenna to Tank Crossing section, and address a comprehensive review of recreational opportunities on the Nisqually.

Tacoma was not pleased! What ensued was two and a half years of contention, delay, and misinformation. First, Tacoma claimed that anyone paddling the canyon would never come out. This changed (when it was realized that we could run it) to concerns over liability and safety, and then continued to mutate into statements about whitewater flows destroying fisheries, drawing down lake levels, and costing the ratepayers over a quarter of a million dollars. Finally, Tacoma stated that even if ordered by FERC to conduct whitewater studies, they weren't going to do it (a kind of "I'm taking my river and going home" attitude).

On June 28, 1994, many of these questions were finally answered when the AWA, Tacoma, and Tacoma's consultants Harza Northwest conducted a joint whitewater study in this 1.7 mile canyon. While the applicant may still not be pleased, many of the concerns held by local search and rescue personnel, upstream lakeowners, FERC,



Left: View from put-in: Nisqually River; rapid called "Hang Nail."

FERC consultants, boaters and others were addressed during studies at 800 and then 1000 cfs. Final results from fishery studies on possible fish stranding in the canyon are still pending.

Results from this test show that whitewater boating is entirely feasible in this canyon, and that in fact, this may be one of the best runs in the state of Washington! The combination of aesthetic beauty, abundant play spots, good Class IV and V drops (depending on flow volume), available portage routes, and scheduled release flows make this an issue worth fighting for.

Equally important, it showed that no river section should be ignored — that diverse values exist in each, values critical to the overall health of the watershed (The Nisqually would have been found eligible for state Wild and Scenic, except for this two mile section of totally dewatered river).

Besides determining optimum flows for whitewater and the feasibility of access into and out of the canyon (ropes were used to negotiate the 250 foot embankment at the base of the dam), and eliminating unfounded or exaggerated

safety issues, boaters also prodded other groups and agencies to take a closer look at the worth of the Nisqually bypass. Along with this release, studies were performed to: determine levels needed for continuous flow (currently only five cfs is provided as a minimum flow); how bypass flows could augment fishery and recreation flows downstream of the powerhouse; ramping rates for fish in the bypass and numerous other fishery surveys and tests.

So, did we win? Do we turn to FERC to look through more applications? The answer is both "yes" and "no". Yes, we continue to watch for other whitewater gems (upcoming relicenses include the Klamath and Trinity in CA, Dead River and Indian Pond on the Kennebec, ME, Bear Trap Canyon on MT's Madison River, and many others) — and no, we haven't won yet, although this whitewater test was a resounding success and makes an eventual win much more promising.

In the coming months boaters will need to continue negotiations with Tacoma and their consultants, continue dogging the process through FERC and their consultants, and work with other competing interests to cooperate on a final, equitable, and fair restoration package for the LaGrande Canyon. If successful during these efforts, then we can look forward to a long-term win for the river, as well as for scheduled whitewater releases and a win for boaters everywhere. ■

**A**ccompanying this article is a first-hand, rapid by rapid account of the first decent of the LaGrande Canyon by Mike Deckert, it was written to provide those

involved in the test, and other boaters, with some idea of what is hidden in this canyon. Rapids were named during this test in order to provide all parties with easily identifiable reference points. I hope you enjoy it!

All of the work done by the AWA on this issue, including this whitewater test, was accomplished by volunteers — boaters who provided time, travel, and professional expertise to provide a polished and accurate final package. Without their assistance this effort would have been impossible. In addition to paddlers, the AWA would like to thank: companion intervenors in this project; Harza Northwest for their professional and unbiased help; Pierce County Sheriff's Department for safety assistance; Stone and Webster, consultants for FERC; FERC itself for requesting and participating in this test; and Tacoma City Light for providing flows, access, cameras and other necessities.

## LaGrande Canyon Whitewater Team

Tom Wolf, Jennie Goldberg, Steve Uren, Gary Shillhammer, Randolph Pierce, Mike Deckert, Greg Dore, Pete Flanagan, Rick Williams, Shawn Wickstrom, and Tom Baker (who mysteriously moved to New Mexico immediately after this test).

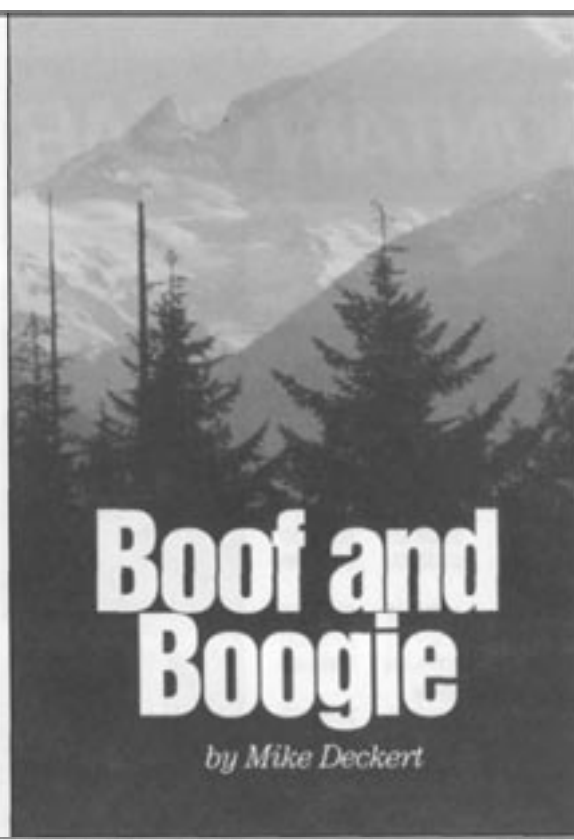
### Supporting Cast:

Brooke Martic, Matt Lutz, Tim Jacobson, and Becky Deckert.

The put in below the LaGrande Dam consisted of a short hike from the road to the head of a scree slope which dropped some 250 feet to the base of the LaGrande Dam. From this point ropes were set to lower the kayaks to the water and provide a margin of safety for the descent. During the second trip, we utilized a single rope to lower all the kayaks lashed together into a single long train. The put in, while steep, is entirely feasible as shown by our two descents.

The river starts with an enjoyable class III rapid we named "Hang Nail." Just as the river disappears around the corner from the dam, it drops through a rapid imaginatively named "Play Hole." This play spot is as outstanding as the internationally famous "Bob's Hole" in Oregon. It would be possible to spend hours here at this one spot (as demonstrated by Rick Williams on the second 1000 cfs run). There are good eddies on both sides of the river allowing access from either side into the play spot. Comparable play spots are rare on other Washington rivers.

Descending downstream, we passed through a delightful rapid called "Kissing Corner." Below "Kissing Corner" is the rapid "Hammer Slammer." The portage route for "Hammer Slammer" is on the river right side. I portaged this rapid during both the 800 cfs and 1000 cfs releases. The portage starts in a large eddy and is an easy walk over flat shelves of rock. The rapid was named for Gary



# Boof and Boogie

by Mike Deckert

*Headwater for the Nisqually River—Mt. Rainier.*

Shillhammer and his canoe. They both spent some time swimming in the hole at the bottom of the rapid.

After "Hammer Slammer" the water flows through the narrowest passage on the river. Following a short pool, the river drops over "X Falls." This drop was run over a ledge on the river right side. If the right side of "X Falls" looks too difficult, another route exists on river left.

"Triple Slide" is an enjoyable collection of three large ledge drops. There are routes available on both the far right and down the middle of the river.

Two other named drops, first "Indecision" and then "Bumper Wall" exist before reaching the old abandoned civil structure about half-way through the run. Both of these are easy but class IV drops.

When approaching the "Civil Structure", the inner gorge unveils itself and the outstanding beauty of the Nisqually becomes apparent.

At 1000 cfs the water starts to crest the Civil Structure.

While an excellent portage route is available on river right, it is also possible to run the Civil Structure by dropping over on far river right. The main flow runs left through a breach in the structure, where it

drops over 15 feet into an undercut boulder, and makes a screaming right turn. This route was not run during either test flows.

Below the Civil Structure, the river enters one of the most beautiful canyons in Washington. This long section boasts 300 foot cliffs rising straight out of the water. The river through this section is class II to class III with large pools allowing us to float through in awe of the magnificent sights.

Standing at the foot of the Civil Structure, I gazed in amazement as the other kayakers dropped into the mouth of the inner gorge. The kayakers and their boats were dwarfed against the backdrop of the sheer canyon walls. After passing through the portals into the canyon, I was overwhelmed with the magnificence of this place. The river becomes class II to class III through this section, giving us time to let all the beauty soak into our consciousness. Even now as I write this five days later, the images come to my mind flooding me again with a sense of awesome beauty. Narrow channels and cathedral-like amphitheaters highlight the inner gorge between the Civil Structure and the "Boulder Field."

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## Boof and Booie continued

One of the concerns before the actual boating test was passage through the "Boulder Sieve." When we reached that area during the first test, we floated in a large eddy at the foot of one of the cathedral-like amphitheatres. Peering downstream, we could see that the river was pooled up and there were multiple easy routes through the "Boulder Sieve" area.

Below the "Boulder Sieve" is the hardest rapid on the river, the "Boulder Field." The "Boulder Field" is a large class V drop. It was hard to get a good impression of the rapid from watching the videos taken last November from 300 feet above the water. During the walk through on Monday, I was convinced that even if the drop was unrunnable, there would be a good portage on river right. This theory proved correct during the whitewater test, and there was a good eddy above the rapid. This allowed us to get out and scout. We spent quite a few minutes looking at this rapid trying to

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

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*Rich. Williams—Boulder  
Field, Nisqually River.*

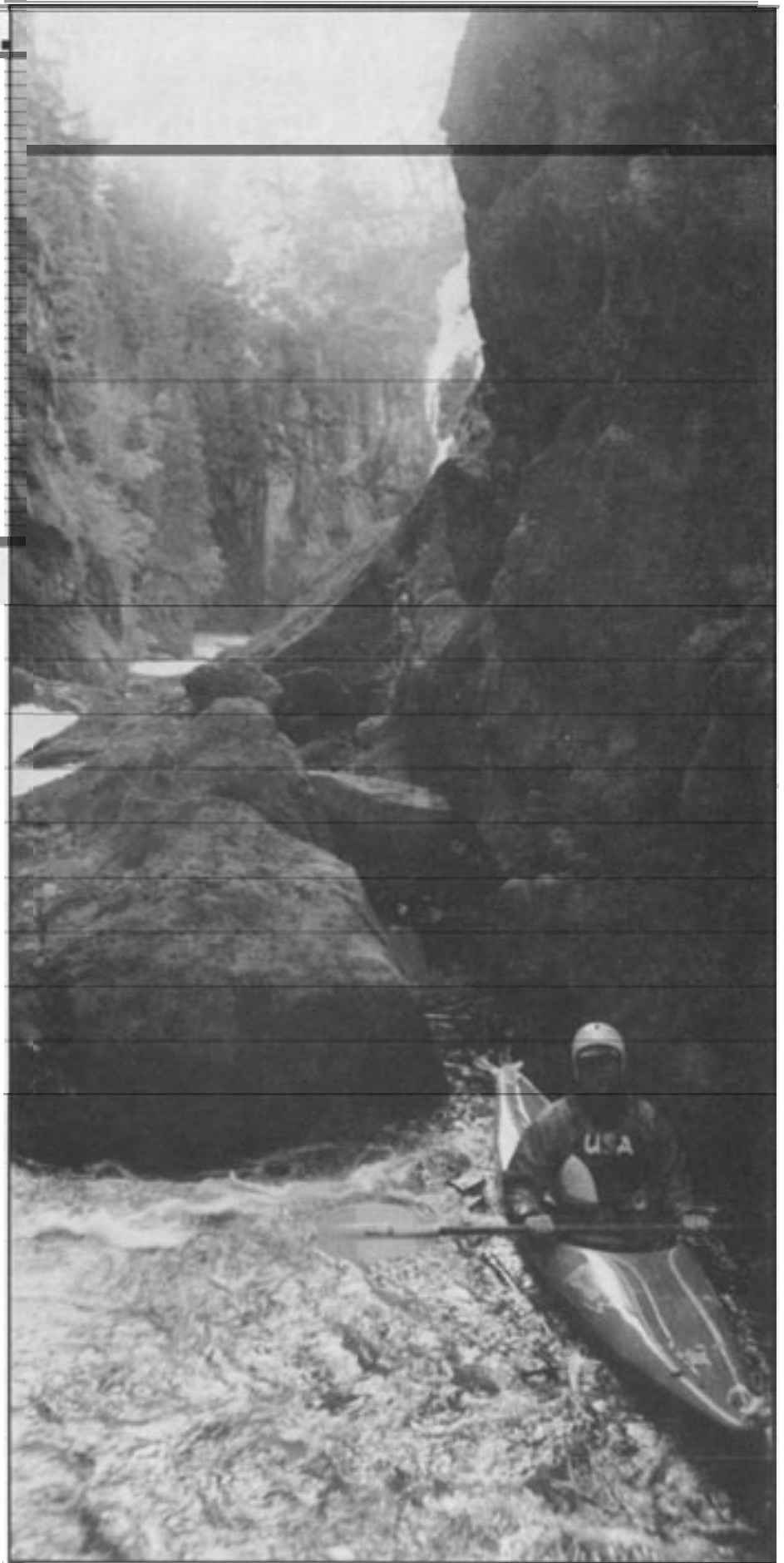
## Boof and Booie continued

determine if we were going to run it or **not**.

There was a lot of room on shore, so we walked up and down the rapid **looking** at it from many angles. After deliberating for awhile, I decided to portage. The portage route is **straightforward** and easy, a wonderful feature to have at the hardest drop on the river.

Rick Williams took a look at the "Boulder **Field**" and decided that he could **run** it. Pete Flanagan and Randolph Pierce **also** decided that they could run the drop. They all had great lines. After watching them, I would give serious consideration to **running** it myself next time.

The canyon through this lower section of river remains impressive. Even though this section is the hardest part of the river and is confined to a narrow canyon, the portage routes **are** **straight forward**, roomy and easy. This fact opens the river up to a large segment of the kayaking public. While individual rapids may be at a person's **skill** level, the ease of portaging the two or three significant drops makes this river accessible to many. I portaged the first half of the "Boulder **Field**" and I **ran** the second half. The second half of the drop is a flying S-turn among three large boulders.



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## CONSERVATION

*Box Canyon—LaGrande  
Canyon of the Nisqually  
River; AWA Whitewater test,  
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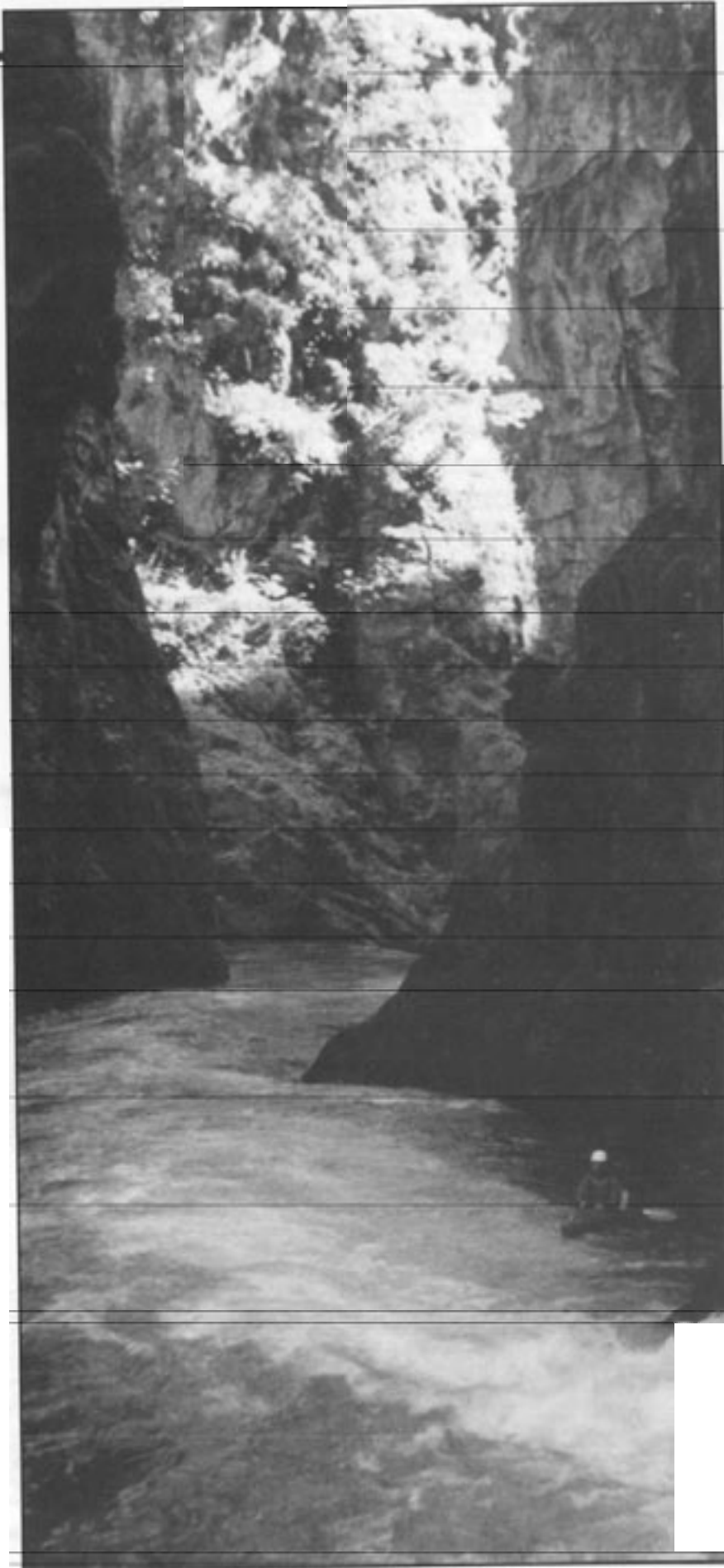
# Boof and Boorie continued

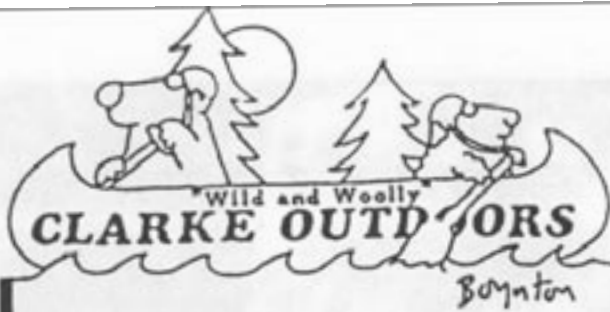
The final rapid before the powerhouse and the end of the canyon is called "Boof and Boogie". The rapid **starts** with a six-foot vertical drop, followed by chute **after** chute of wide open class III to IV whitewater. **This** rapid can be run in a hundred different ways! During the last trip, everybody (except the two who were taking pictures) ran this rapid at the **same** time. There were boats everywhere, each exploring their own **routes—or boofs—through** the rapid.

Below Boof and Boogie, we looked up from the large boulders that dot the riverbed to the vibrant green moss clinging to the canyon walls. **Ouzels** (American Dippers) watched as we passed them by. Osprey and Turkey Vultures soared overhead. Violet Green Swallows **carved** their way through the air in search of insects and a meal. This river has it all. Great **whitewater**, excellent scenery, and wildlife.

The **Nisqually** River's LaGrande Canyon, with its **magnificent** canyon walls and exquisite scenery, is a premier whitewater experience. Importantly, many people in the whitewater community have the **skills** needed to run **this** river; it is a public resource that local paddlers would use if given the opportunity. I am hard pressed to **think** of any river in the area that is comparable to the **LaGrande** Canyon, especially one **within** an hour's drive of a large population center. The **LaGrande** reach of the **Nisqually** is **truly** unique.

Simply put, I loved it. ■





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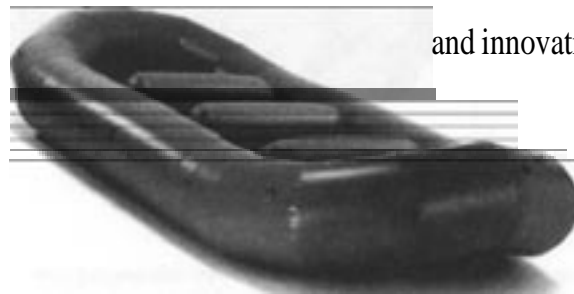
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# Top 40 Whitewater

# Issues For 1994

by Pope Barrow,  
Rich Bowers and  
Rich Hoffman



Despite the fact that Neil Young advised "It's better to burn out than fade away"—advice followed to the letter Nirvana's **Kurt** Cobain—river issues are more likely to do just the opposite. River conservation and access problems are usually resolved only after years of effort. In a truly spectacular example, Kentucky's Red River was finally designated as Wild and Scenic—13 years since it was found eligible.

What distinguishes 1994/5 will be AWA's increased focus on river access issues. Spearheading this effort will be Rich Hoffman, AWA's newly hired Access Program Coordinator. The 1994 Top 40 reflects this trend, weighing in at 15 extremely noteworthy access problems. Among the access problem heavyweights are all rivers in the state of Georgia which are governed by particularly restrictive state laws. In addition, Rocky Mountain boaters face access problems on three of the best whitewater runs of the area: the Arkansas, Gore Canyon, and Utah's Westwater Canyon. Access to the Yellowstone River also ranks at the top of AWA's project list.

AWA's upcoming agenda will include ongoing efforts to restore whitewater

through the hydropower relicensing process. While traditional river conservation fights center **around** maintaining the status quo by fighting off new threats, the hydro dam relicensing process gives boaters a chance to win back previously lost **whitewater** stretches. AWA's July whitewater study on Washington's **Nisqually** River unlocked a stunning gorge that has been off-limits to boating since 1913.

On the policy level, river conservation efforts are seeking **new** solutions to the ever-growing array of problems that rivers face. One particular need is a shift **from** a focus on river corridors to watersheds. AWA is monitoring the progress of several new legislative efforts that attempt to **re-direct** this focus. Another important effort that AWA has participated in is HR 4213—**nicknamed** the River Registry Bill—which has the potential to provide a key **bottom-up** counterpart to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Whitewater threats, however, **are** not limited to the U.S. The permanent loss of Chile's Bio-Bio and current threats to the **Futaleufu** (Chile), **Pacuare** (Costa Rica) and Reventazon (Costa Rica) offer just a glimpse of some of the upcoming fights to

protect **international** whitewater rivers.

To end on a positive note, AWA hydrologists have developed a model—by taking into account the probable positions of the Jet Stream, the El Niño effect and butterflies flapping their **wings** in **China**—that can accurately predict weather conditions and stream flows across the country for an entire year in advance! They tell us that 1994/5 promises to be one of high water for rivers throughout the U.S.! See you on the river....

(Please note that the Top 40 list is not ranked in order of importance. We decided to move from West to East Coast this year to make it look better on our **map**!)

To help with some of the jargon, here is an incomplete **list** of what various acronyms stand for

FERC = Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

BLM = Bureau of Land Management

NPS = National Park Service

TVA = Tennessee Valley Authority

DNR = Department of Natural Resources

EIS = Environmental Impact Statement

NIMO = Niagara Mohawk



# Top 40

## 1. Clavey River, California

Issue: Hydropower dam; Wild and Scenic Designation

Current Status: A 1990 proposal for a \$700 million five dam power project by the Turlock Irrigation District is being evaluated through an EIS which is due in mid-summer; a FERC licensing decision may follow as early as 1995. In the meantime, the Tuolumne River Preservation Trust, along with AWA, the Sierra Club and American Rivers is seeking Wild and Scenic status for this outstanding fishery and recreational stream. The Clavey is one of California's few remaining free-flowing rivers and offers over 20 miles of Class IV-V whitewater. Please see separate Clavey article in this issue!

For more information, contact Johanna Thomas at (415) 292-3531 or AWA Regional Coordinator Susan Scheufele at (408) 459-7978.

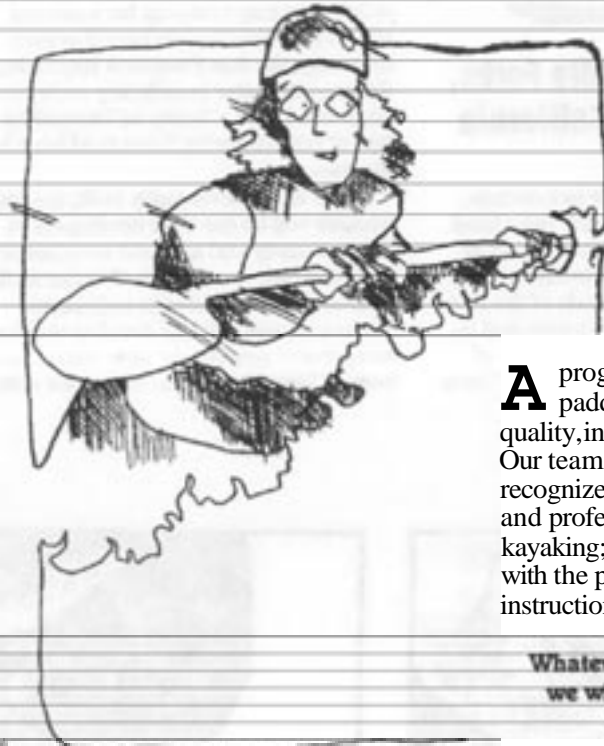
## 2. Mokelumne, California

Issues: Hydro relicensing, access restrictions, proposed hydropower project

Current status: Whitewater flow tests were conducted on the Class IV-V Devils Nose and Tiger Creek Dam runs, the Class III Ponderosa run, and the Class II Electra run last summer. Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) has offered recreational flows on the Electra run, while AWA has requested recreational flows on all the runs. FERC is still ruling on the relicensing of these PG&E dams. Meanwhile the Middle Bar run remains closed to all recreational use due to restrictions by the East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD). This is a navigable waterway but EBMUD is reluctant to let boating get a serious foothold on this run since they want to keep the option open of raising Pardee Dam to bring more water to Oakland. The Devils Nose Dam project was turned down by FERC, but Amador County is appealing the ruling.

For more information, contact AWA Regional Coordinator Susan Scheufele at (408) 459-7978 or Nancy Dagle at (510) 237-6976.

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# Top 40

## 3. North and Middle Forks, American River, California

Issue: dam proposal

Current Status: For the last decade, various "old water dinosaurs" have tried to resurrect the Auburn Dam project at both the federal and state levels, and the California river group Friends of the River has had to spend most of its time and resources fighting off these legislative efforts. The latest version, a so-called "envi-

ronmental dam", stalled in the California State Assembly earlier this year and also failed to pass the California State Senate in July, but may come up for a second vote in the State Senate later this year. Ironically, the San Francisco Bay/Delta, the primary water beneficiary under the latest bill, could actually be harmed by the loss of normal spring flows held back by the dam.

If the dam is eventually built, the big winners **will** be the local developers in Placer County and adjacent counties who **will** get a free new source of water as the second and third water beneficiaries. These counties can still develop relatively inexpensive sources for new water, but most of them don't want to pay for water

development because they believe that the federal government promised them this water two decades ago as part of the original Central Valley Project. The losers **will** be the state taxpayers, who **will** be subsidizing (to the tune of \$2.2 billion dollars) a water supply that the local counties are unwilling to pay for, and boaters, who **will** lose the Class IV and Class II runs on both the North and Middle Forks of the river (24 boatable miles on each fork).

For more information, contact Charles Casey at Friends of the River, at (916) 442-3155.



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## 4. Stanislaus River, California

Issue: Water project

Current Status: The **Stockton** East water district has almost finished building a \$52 million tunnel and water conveyance facilities to remove up to 160,000-acre-feet of so-called "surplus" water from the New Melones Reservoir, based on a secret 1984 contract with the Interior Department. Cal Trout is currently litigating the 404 water permit due to the failure of the Corps of Engineers and **Stockton** East to do an **EIS** before the permit was issued, as per the federal Clean Water Act and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) guidelines. **Stockton** East says it wants to replenish the underground water supply, but in reality some or all of the water is likely to be used to heavily urbanize **rural** areas in **San Joaquin** County, and there has been no public involvement in this attempted water grab.

The **Stanislaus** River below the tunnel has the Class IV **Goodwin** Dam run (the mitigation for losing the Camp 9 run when New Melones dam was built), and the Class II **Knights Ferry** run. A million people a year use the Stanislaus from **Goodwin** to the ocean. The Stanislaus River Council, comprised of representatives of various environmental groups, is **working** to keep water from being diverted out of the river. The New Melones Dam contract specifies that water should not be diverted "out of basin", and there **will** be state Water Board hearings held on this issue in the next couple of years. Also, there will be a supplemental EIS proceeding on the **Stockton** East water diversion. River activists should get involved with both the Water Board hearings and the supplemental EIS. For further information, contact John Murphy of Cal Trout at (209) 527-6242, Richard **Roos-Collins** of the Natural Heritage Institute at (415) 288-0550, or Laurie **McCann** of the **Stanislaus** River Council at (916) 448-0326.

## 5. Kern River, California

Issue: Relicensing

Current Status: Southern California Edison is applying to FERC for a new 30 year license for Kern River Number 3 (KR3), a hydroelectric project on the Upper Kern which controls flows for 22 miles of Class III-V water! AWA is **working** to secure more whitewater releases for this stretch. The juxtaposition of incredible whitewater and a large population center (L.A.) could result in a huge economic windfall to the state of California from expanded recreation. During June, AWA participated in a **whitewater** feasibility study

to determine **boatable** flows and safety issues. (See article in **May/June Journal** for a more complete update.)

On the upper "Forks" run, the Forest Service has initiated a new **permit** system designed to limit impacts on the canyon. Under the new 1994 program, use is limited to only 15 boaters per day, and all applicants need to enter a lottery for permission. This system severely restricts private, day-use boaters from accessing a great run.

For more information, contact AWA Conservation Director Rich Bowers at (301) 589-9453.

## 6. Trinity, California

Issue: Access and Relicensing

Current Status: Developers have erected a fence and gate across a key river point on the Wild and Scenic South Fork of the Trinity River in California. The fence eliminates river access for the two principal **runs** in this river canyon, including the Three Bears section. The public has accessed the river here since 1948 over what has always been understood to be public land. The Forest Service is trying to negotiate a land swap with the **developers** to obtain an alternative river access. If the land swap proposal fails, litigation **will** be necessary to protect public access to this river. Both the AWA and the Six Rivers Paddling Club are preparing to act as **co-defendants** should a lawsuit prove necessary. The South Fork has whitewater ranging from Class II through IV.

Central Valley Project Dams which control flows to the Trinity (including Burnt Ranch Gorge) are up for relicensing in 2006. Discussions are beginning now on how to increase flows for recreation and fishery purposes. AWA **will** work with federal and state agencies, as well as local **environmental** organizations to improve boating flows.

For more information, contact Dave **Kruger** at (707) 442-9598 or AWA Access Coordinator Rich Hoffman (301) 589-9453.

## 7. Klamath River, Oregon

Issues: Hydro development, Wild and Scenic

Current status: The City of Klamath Falls has applied for a new project on the Upper Klamath which **will** require a new 401 certificate under the Federal Clean Water Act as the first step. The Interior Department's draft EA found the river to be eligible for Wild and Scenic status, and the final EA is waiting to be released, but is believed to be **stalled** within the department due to political reasons. You can write to **Bruce Babbitt**, and ask him to sign

it, at the following address: Secretary Bruce Babbitt, Dept. of the Interior, 18th and C Streets NW, Washington, D.C. 20240

In July, the AWA presented testimony to support the eligibility of the Klamath as a National Wild and Scenic River. The **Upper** Klamath offers Class IV whitewater (some 74 major rapids) and year round boating flows.

For copies of AWA testimony contact AWA Conservation Director Rich Bowers (301) 589-9453 or for more information, contact Louise **Bilheimer** of Pacific Rivers Council at (503) 345-0119.

## 8. Elwha River, Washington

Issue: Dam Removal

Current Status: In 1992, Congress passed the "Elwha River Ecosystem and Fisheries Restoration Act." It is an awesome success that all parties—including James River Co. (the dam "owner"), **Daishowa** mill, City of Part Angeles, the Lower Elwha Tribe, environmental, recreational, and fishing groups—came to this legislative consensus in 1992 to remove the dams and restore the Elwha River! The just-released Interior Department "Elwha Report," has determined that "dam removal is feasible and is necessary for the full restoration of the ecosystem and native anadromous fisheries."

So what's the catch?—money! The "Elwha Report" concludes that "the costs to fully restore the Elwha...are **generally** on a par with the restoration activities elsewhere in the region." **This** is a **bargain** when the end result will be removal of the two dams and the release of more **than** 70 pristine miles of **anadromous** habitat in the Olympic National Park! It would be a tragedy if this whole, enlightened process is washed down the tubes due to lack of funding!

For more information contact Friends of the Earth at (206) 633-1661 or AWA Regional Coordinator Carol Volk at (206) 876-6780.

## 9. Skokomish River, Washington

Issue: Relicensing

Current Status: This FERC relicensing **will** be a doosie! The **Cushman** project provides a perfect example of just how **en-**

# Top 40

Environmentally destructive hydro project can be. The ancient Cushman project twice dams the North Fork of the Skokomish, with no provision for fish passage, then virtually dewater the remaining riverbed by sending the water through tubes to a remote powerhouse on the Hood Canal.

The debate is already heating up...because there is a large group of local residents who want to keep the dams functioning exactly as they have been. It is ironic that these residents live on Lake Cushman, and lease their land from the project owner, Tacoma City Light! If FERC requires Tacoma City Light to release some water into the North Fork below the dams, an intermediate kayak run would be born.

For more information contact AWA Conservation Director Rich Bowers at (301) 589-9453 or AWA Regional Coordinator Carol Volk at (206) 876-6780.

## 10. Wynoochee River, Washington

Issue: Whitewater Releases

Current Status: This is a scenic gorge run that is runnable year-round, because of an upstream "flood control" dam that provides a minimum flow of 190 cfs. Several years ago, the cities of Tacoma and Aberdeen obtained a FERC license to add hydropower facilities to the existing Wynoochee dam. It made sense. For one thing, it may prevent another free-flowing river from being dammed. For another, we were assured that hydropower generation on the Wynoochee would have no negative effect on recreational flows or fish habitat. Now that the hydro facilities are completed, the licensees have changed their tune, and want to operate the Project to maximize power production—and there goes our minimum 190 cfs to boat on!

For more information contact AWA Regional Coordinator Carol Volk at (206) 876 6780.

## 11. Cispus River, Washington

Issue: Access; Hydro dam construction?

Current Status: The "Lower" Cispus is a popular, playful Class III run. Boaters

like to take out at the confluence with the Cowlitz River, or RM 1.5. Access to the lower few miles of river has been denied since the access road was gated. Worse yet is the possibility that FERC will license yet another project on the Cispus. We've already lost a mile of the Cispus (and the Cowlitz Falls run!) to the Cowlitz Falls project. This project, if approved, would take another 4 1/2 miles of the Cispus! Proponents of the hydroproject

have "agreed" to have "recreational releases" SIX DAYS per year at 1400 cfs—and only if we give them 24 hour notice in advance!

For more information contact AWA Conservation Director Rich Bowers at (301) 589-9453 or AWA Regional Coordinator Carol Volk at (206) 876-6780.

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## 12. Nisqually River, Washington

Issue: Relicensing and Access

Status.. On June 28, AWA conducted a whitewater study on this river. The results were wildly successful, as the **Nisqually** proved to be, in many ways, one of the most outstanding runs in this state of already outstanding whitewater. The Nisqually Gorge offers a two mile, Class IV-V wilderness run which combines **fantastic pool-drop** rapids (every rapid can be portaged), play spots, and one of the most stunning box canyons in the state. In addition, due to the existing hydro project, the Nisqually can provide **whitewater** flows when other rivers are too low. **The** City of Tacoma has stated that it will fight whitewater releases even if **the** gorge proves **runnable**, so the next step is to work on providing scheduled, dependable flows on this reach through the **FERC** process. Working with fishing interests and lake owners will be critical in establishing appropriate times for whitewater flows. See separate Nisqually article in this issue!

For more information, contact AWA Conservation Director Rich Bowers at (301) 589-9453.

## 13. Alaska Rivers

Issue: Wild and Scenic

Current Status: As part of the process of updating the Land Use Management Plans for the **Tongass** and Chugach National Forests (our largest **national** forests at 16 and 4 million acres respectively), the Forest Service is studying rivers that **are** eligible for Wild and Scenic designation. In the **Tongass**, the Forest Service has considered 112 rivers and found only 24 as both eligible and suitable. Forest planners are just beginning to review Chugach rivers. Whitewater and other river users can play a vital role in the eventual Congressional consideration of qualified rivers. Basic information is needed on the whitewater rivers of these forests. If you can contribute to this effort or need more information, contact AWA Volunteer Jack **Hession**, Sierra Club, 241 E. 5th Ave. #205, Anchorage, AK, 99501, (907) 276-4048; and Chris **Dillon**, Conservation Chair, **Knik Canoers** and **Kayakers**, P.O. Box 101935, Anchorage, AK, 99510.

## 14. Mid-Snake, Idaho

Issue: Wild and Scenic; Recreation Flows

Current Status: After a six-year campaign by Idaho Rivers United, the Comprehensive State Plan for the Middle Snake River was passed by the Idaho legislature. 71.5 miles, including the **outfitted Hagerman** and Murtaugh **runs**, are now protected from new dams, although subject to federal override. **BLM** recently recommended wild and scenic studies for the Murtaugh, **Milner** and **Hagerman** reaches.

In 1988, **FERC** required (as part of a new license for the hydropower dam which controls flows for the Murtaugh section) at least 8 days of releases annually for whitewater boating. **Since** then, the applicant has failed to do these tests because of a lack of water. When there was water (last year), they claim that they were unaware of this fact since the Bureau of Reclamation manages for flood control

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# Top 40

on the Snake. AWA hopes to resurrect required flow studies in the future so that required releases are made available.

For more information, contact Liz Paul at Idaho Rivers United, (208) 343-7481, or AWA Regional Coordinator Mark White at (801) 582-3445.

## 15. North Fork Payette River, Idaho

Issue: Hydropower prevention

Current Status: AWA was present on Capitol Hill during testimony for H.R. 233 introduced by Representative **Larry LaRocco** (Idaho). This bill—an amendment to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act—would ban dam construction on the Class V North Fork of the Payette, but would produce no other changes in river or land management. Sentiment to keep the North Fork wild has widespread citizen support, leading Idaho to adopt a state water plan in 1992 that protects the North Fork. Despite this clear message, FERC has continued the review of Gem Irrigation District's proposed dam that would divert almost all of the North Fork's water.

For more information, contact Liz Paul at Idaho Rivers United, (208) 343-7481.

## 16. Lower Salmon River, Idaho

Issue: Wild and Scenic designation

Current Status: Another Idaho river bill, H.R. 4083, would add 112 miles of the Lower Salmon River to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, connecting it to the upstream Wild and Scenic Main Fork and Middle Fork. Unfortunately, power boaters are not supporting this bill out of fear that they **will** be outlawed from this stretch, despite language in the **bill** that supports "traditional" uses.

Hats off to Idaho Rivers United for their persistent and dedicated effort!

For more information, contact Liz Paul at Idaho Rivers United, (208) 343-7481.

## 17. Yellowstone River, Wyoming/Montana

Issue: Access; Wild and Scenic designation

Status: The Yellowstone—the longest free-flowing stretch of river in the continental U.S.—is being pushed towards Wild

and Scenic classification by several river groups. This designation would eliminate the threat of acid mine drainage from the recently proposed New World copper mine just outside of the Park's boundaries. AWA supports Wild and Scenic designation, and **will** address the inequitable treatment of boaters with respect to access in the Yellowstone canyon. Currently, fishermen, hikers, and pack trips can access this canyon and the upstream Yellowstone Lake sees heavy motorboat and sailboat use. A new park superintendent will take office in October, and AWA has opened discussions with him regarding boater access.

For more information, contact AWA Access Coordinator Rich Hoffman at (301) 589-9453.

## 18. Arkansas River, Colorado

Issue: Access; Dam proposal

Status: Once again, the Arkansas makes the AWA top 40! In June, no trespassing signs were posted (along with a guard) at the put-in to the Numbers section of the Arkansas. Later, signs were removed and boaters were allowed to access the river at this site, but the long-term fate of this put-in remains in question.

AWA is **asking** state and federal agencies to either buy this 50 acre tract outright or to purchase an easement that will secure boater access. If this effort is unsuccessful, AWA may buy the land. A proposed dam that will supply Colorado Springs with a future water source also threatens the Arkansas below the Numbers, and to date the city has not released information indicating how lake levels or lake fluctuation will impact whitewater recreation.

For more information, contact AWA Board Member Ric Alesch at (303) 985-8620 or Access Coordinator Rich Hoffman at (301) 589-9453.

## 19. Gore Canyon, Colorado

Issue: Access

Current Status: The Grand Ranch and the railroad, who control access to the canyon, seem to have combined forces to eliminate all legal and reasonable access to the Class IV-V Gore Canyon of the Colorado River. Currently, boaters access the river by consent of a local landowner, but must paddle over an hour of flatwater before even reaching the canyon. AWA will work **with** boating interests, local landowners, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to seek a solution.

For more information, contact AWA Board Member Ric Alesch at (303) 985-8620 or Access Coordinator Rich Hoffman at (301) 589-9453.

## 20. Animas River, Colorado

Issue: Possible Irrigation Diversion and Access

Current Status: The proposed \$640 million Animas La Plata Project, an environmental concern for many years would divert water from the Animas near **Durango** into the **LaPlata**, may well die from its own economic infeasibility. The Government Accounting Office recently issued a summary report which found this project to be far too costly for the public to underwrite. Further opposition to this project comes from the local Riverfront Task Force, who oppose this project because it is not in line with proposed riverfront plans for the city. **Local grassroots** groups are pushing for public meetings to offer further opposition and to seek alternatives.

From Gateway Park in **Durango** to the New Mexico border, there is currently no legal public access to the Animas. In a proposed land swap between the county and the city, a 17 acre parcel may become available for a city park. If successful, this park would include public access to the river for whitewater boaters. Several private land holdings are also up for sale in this area, and could eventually offer another answer to this access concern.

For more information, call Nancy Jacques at (303) 259-3209.

## 21. Wolf River, Wisconsin

Issue: Proposed Mine

Current Status: The proposed Crandon copper mine could potentially reduce and pollute groundwater flow to the headwaters of this 25 mile Class II-III river. This application is particularly distressing because it occurs upstream of a section that is designated as Wild and Scenic, and highlights the concern that even our most outstanding rivers are not fully protected from development pressures. In May the AWA supplied testimony to the Wisconsin DNR who is reviewing the mine application.

For more information, or for copies of AWA testimony, contact AWA Conservation Director Rich Bowers at (301) 589-9453.

## 22. Pine River, Wisconsin

Issue: Relicensing

Current Status: This project highlights a real problem in the current relicensing process—the double standard that FERC upholds regarding the financial capabilities of the applicant. Since the Pine is a small and uneconomical project, FERC has ruled that the applicant does not need to provide the level of mitigation required at other sites. For boaters and fishermen,

this means no scheduled whitewater releases and no year round **minimum instream** flows. The applicant, however, will need to provide access and a flow phone **gauge** to make this short Class IV-V section available to boaters. AWA is involved with both federal and state agencies in **overturning** this decision and pushing for stronger compliance.

For more information, contact AWA Conservation Director Rich Bowers at (301) 589-9453.

## 23. West Branch Penobscot, Maine

Issue: Relicensing

Current Status: After almost a year of negotiation between **conservation/recreation** interests (including AWA) and **Bowater/Great Northern Paper**, no agreements have been reached. In the latest set of events, the paper companies have attempted to circumvent the entire FERC relicensing process, and to politically pressure state representatives into granting them a new license with no environmental or recreational strings attached. Last year, just prior to public scoping meetings,

these companies laid off several hundred workers, thereby fueling a jobs vs. the **environment** debate.

For more information, contact AWA Conservation Director Rich Bowers at (301) 589-9453.

## 24. Moxie Stream, Maine

Issue: Dam removal

Current Status: Central Maine Power (CMP) has sold this storage project to the town of The Forks (population **38**), and has stated that it no longer has responsibility for safety, conservation, or recreational concerns on this river. In doing this, CMP has elevated this small project to national **prominence**. Moxie's outstanding recreational and ecological values, together with questions on future dam safety, could make Moxie the prime example of why dam decommissioning is so critical to the future health of rivers. Moxie stream provides a gorgeous two mile, Class IV **run** during winter **draw-down**.

For more information, contact AWA Conservation Director Rich Bowers at (301) 589-9453.

## 25. Kennebec River, Maine

Issue: Relicensing; Access

Current Status: FERC will address the cumulative impacts of 11 separate hydro projects on this watershed, including whitewater impacts below Moosehead Lake and on Moxie Stream. Cumulative impacts has been a major focus of the AWA and the Hydropower Reform Coalition and **will** set the stage for future studies on this issue. Unfortunately, the Indian Pond project, which controls whitewater access to the Kennebec Gorge, has not been included in **FERC's** study. Therefore, Central Maine Power's \$1 fee for river access will not be addressed **during** this study. AWA is continuing to work with CMP on eliminating this fee through other discussions.

For more **information**, contact AWA Conservation Director Rich Bowers at (301) 589-9453.



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## 26. South Branch of the Moose, New York

Issue: Access

Current Status: Paddlers are awaiting a decision on the appeal of an earlier New York State Supreme Court decision about paddling rights to a Class II segment of the upper Moose River. An adverse decision would require a lot of effort to appeal. A decision favoring paddlers will likely result in more litigation, this time on whether the run is navigable: a hydrologist for the opposition has claimed that the run has too many rocks and rapids to be paddled. AWA's Charlie Walbridge will be the Star Witness for paddlers. Regardless, we are looking at years of more litigation.

For more information, contact AWA Board Member Pete Skinner at (518) 585-7580.

## 27. Grasse River, New York (Tooley Pond Segment)

Issue: Access

Current Status: Rivaling the Bottom Moose's spectacular waterfalls, this segment of the Grasse in Northern New York offers a unique whitewater run. Unfortunately, a hunting club owns both sides of the river and maintains a police presence to chase away boaters even thinking about putting in. Since one of the falls requires a portage above the mean high water line (the Moose River Decision--see above-- says that it is OK to portage as long as you are below the high water line, but is silent about upland portages), portagers will be arrested for trespassing if they are caught. Exactly how to deal with this site from legal and other standpoints has been the subject of much debate among the river access cognoscenti. Many have argued that litigating the issue of what rights the public has to portage about the high water line should wait until the Moose case is resolved.

For more information, contact AWA Board Member Pete Skinner at (518) 585-7580.

## 28. Salmon River, New York (near Pulaski)

Issue: Whitewater releases

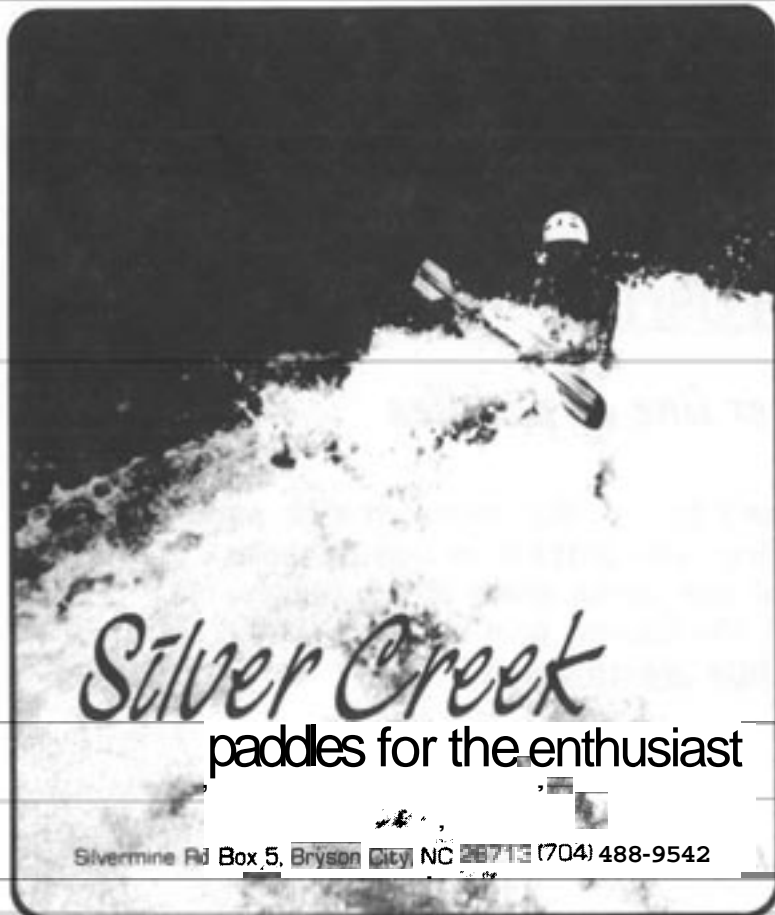
Current Status: A hard fought battle for 57 summer releases on the Salmon are now part of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which we hope that FERC will adopt as conditions in their dam license. Part of that MOU is a "Flow Advisory Panel" made up of lots of stakeholders. Paddlers will have to participate on this panel to assure that other interests don't gobble up these releases for other purposes, that Niagara Mohawk Power (NIMO) lives up to its part of the bargain, and that FERC does all the right things.

For more information, contact AWA Board Member Pete Skinner at (518) 585-7580.

## 29. Sacandaga River, New York

Issue: Whitewater releases

Current status: AWA and commercial rafting companies are fighting New York Department of Environmental Conserva-



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# Top 40

tion proposals to shave much of the 4000 cfs multi-hour release patterns that we enjoy on the lower Sacandaga for the creation of major continuous flow regimes (e.g. 600 cfs all the time). Although boaters recently celebrated (mid-July) the opening of NIMO's Sacandaga Whitewater Recreation Area, the flows that make this a family paddling destination may end up evaporating into fish habitat maintenance. There is no doubt that a lot of time and advocacy will be needed to maintain the status quo.

For more information, contact AWA Board Member Pete Skinner at (518) 585-7580.

## 30. Raquette, Beaver, Oswegatchie, Hoosic Rivers, New York

Issue: Whitewater Releases

Current Status: Colton, Hannawa Falls, Sugar Falls, Norfolk and East Norfolk are all very paddle-able hydro-developed sites on the Raquette in northern New York. Feasibility studies already completed have shown that several of them are very attractive. Studies on other rivers listed above have shown that New York state paddling need not be limited to the Hudson. AWA is negotiating an agreement with NIMO (perhaps through relicensing, the 401 process and/or the system wide whitewater plan approach) which will make periodic releases available in the future.

For more information, contact AWA Board Member Pete Skinner at (518) 585-7580.

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## 31. Mongaup River, New York

Issue: Whitewater releases

Current Status: The Kayak and Canoe Club of New York and AWA continue to fight for 2 turbine releases on the Mongaup, while other interests are trying to eliminate the single turbine releases we already have. Safety concerns have been voiced about the Mongaup wave—a standing wave formed at the confluence with the Delaware—that forms at 2 turbine releases. However, the utility which operates the hydro dam on the Mongaup has been generating 2 turbine releases for years. The FERC has supported additional whitewater testing for this summer, but the National Park Service Director on the Delaware is attempting to have this decision overturned.

For more information, contact Ken Fischman at (212) 228-5753.

## 32. Upper Youghiogheny, Maryland

Issue: Recreation Flows

Current Status: Maryland's Department of Natural Resources issued a final permit for the Deep Creek Project on Maryland's Upper Youghiogheny River on April 5, 1994. The permit will last 12 years. However, one key feature of the permit was left to further study: the "temperature enhancement" requirement. This is a mandate to release water on hot summer days to cool off parboiled trout. Unfortunately, the scheme could reduce flows available for whitewater. According to AWA's lawyer, Dave Plott, the temperature enhancement provisions of the permit are illegal under Maryland law so AWA has appealed this portion of the permit. Currently the appeal is being "held in abeyance" by the State until more work is done to improve the temperature enhancement plan. In last-minute negotiations, however, AWA did succeed in gaining other changes in the permit (through the cooperation of the Penelec Company). Penelec agreed to a longer whitewater flow season (from mid April to mid October), to increase whitewater flows in April and May, to make more Monday releases, to make all whitewater releases three hours long, to generate at maximum discharge levels during low water, to make water available annually for an August Upper Yough race release, and to provide weekday releases during Gauley season.

For further information, contact AWA Board Member Pope Barrow, (202) 546-3766

## 33. Lower Youghiogheny, Pennsylvania

Issue: Access

Current Status: Through negotiation with PA State Parks, the AWA, ACA and Friends of the Lower Yough have agreed upon an interim plan which allows for access with no fees during non-holiday weekdays. These groups will have an opportunity this summer to develop a more comprehensive, permanent plan for the future of this river. Meetings will be held in August to flesh out this plan, which will include the issues of access fees, running Ohiopyle Falls, and an equitable user allocation system.

For more information, contact AWA Conservation Director Rich Bowers or AWA Access Coordinator Rich Hoffman at (301) 589-9453.

## 34. Cheat River, West Virginia

Issue: Water Quality

The water quality of the Cheat has gone from bad to worse. In May, a coal mining company introduced a new source of acid mine drainage into the river which left paddlers with a none-too-subtle metallic taste in their mouths, and, according to well-known local Jim Snyder, left large orange "eddy-muffins" all along the river. AWA, West Virginia River Coalition, the newly formed Friends of the Cheat, and local landowners are joining the state in its effort to make mining companies assume the costs of mining cleanup, as is required by West Virginia Law. Currently, the burden of cleanup is passed onto the taxpayers.

For more information, contact Roger Harrison at (304) 472-0025 or AWA Conservation Director Rich Bowers at (301) 589-9453.

## 35. 13 Rivers in West Virginia

Issue: Wild and Scenic Designation

The West Virginia Rivers Coalition (WVRC) has been working hard to establish permanent protection for 13 outstanding streams in Monongahela National Forest, including the headwaters of the Cheat (Shavers Fork) and the fruitbasket (Cranberry, Cherry). These streams were found eligible in 1991, and we are now awaiting the Forest Service draft EIS as part of the "suitability" phase. WVRC hopes to have a bill to Congress within two years.

For more information, contact Roger Harrison or Pam Merritt (new full time Wild and Scenic Coordinator) at (304) 472-0025.

## 36. Gauley River, West Virginia

Issue: Access

**Current status:** As part of their mandate for establishing the Gauley River National Recreation Area, the National Park Service has drafted a proposal of their plans for the area that is subject to public comment. While the Park Service recognizes that public access to the river is critical, the preferred access roads to the river are owned by commercial outfitters. AWA hopes to gain legal access at Mason Branch (Panther Mountain Road) and Bucklick. Please see separate article in this issue!

For more information, contact AWA Access Coordinator Rich Hoffman (301) 589-9453.

## 37. Clear Creek and Crooked Fork, Tennessee

Issue: Water supply reservoirs

**Current Status:** In part a result of dedicated **grassroots** activism, the Farmers Home Administration has decided to conduct a full EIS before loaning and granting \$3,370,000 to the **Catoosa** Utility District's proposed water supply reservoir. Catoosa plans to dam a tributary of Clear Creek up stream of the National Wild and Scenic boundary line. This **win**, however, is overshadowed by a similar water supply project that is proposed on Crooked Creek, a tributary to Clear Fork (Class I-II) which in turn is one of the **mainstems** of the Big South Fork (Class III-IV). In this case, the **Fentress** County Utility District—again with financial support from the Farmers Home Administration—plans to build a water supply reservoir just above the National Recreation Area boundary.

Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning has requested that TVA be the ones to conduct the EIS on Clear Creek and to include a plateau-wide water budget analysis that would analyze the true needs and costs of water supply for the Cumberland Plateau and eliminate the **assault** of small, piecemeal projects. This strategy parallels AWA relicensing efforts to require basin-wide, comprehensive management plans for all watersheds.

For more information, contact Lee Russell (615) 574-0860.

## 38. North Chickamauga Creek, Tennessee

Issue: Wilderness designation; development

**Current Status:** Last year, the entire river left side of this 12 mile Class IV-V creek was protected under Bowater Inc.'s "Pocket Wilderness" Program. However, there are plans for development along unprotected segments, specifically at the traditional put-in.

Both the AWA and local interests were involved in soliciting funds for a strategic management plan, and the AWA supplied partial funding for a video of the gorge. Please see separate article in this issue!

For more information, contact AWA Board Member Ron Stewart at (615) 756-3170.

## 39. Pigeon River, North Carolina

Issue: Water quality; hydropower relicensing; future access

**Current Status:** Champion Paper Company has recently completed a \$330 million project that has significantly reduced pollution into the river. Whether this

project will bring the Pigeon in line with state water quality standards or whether Champion must still get a variance remains to be seen. Although the jury is still out for future whitewater releases, it looks hopeful that three releases a week **will** be a condition of **Carolina** Power and Light's license with **FERC!** For the present, there is a **hotline** that informs boaters about the weekly release schedule (call 1-800-899-4435). Highway convenience and a Class III-IV difficulty may even offset extremely poor water quality conditions on this section of river, and has the potential to become as popular as the Ocoee. In the future, access and **parking** will need to be secured to accommodate private boaters: most take-out land is owned by commercial outfitters.

For more information, contact AWA Board Member Joe Pulliam (615) 882-0404 or AWA Access Coordinator Rich Hoffman (301) 589-9453.

## 40. Tallulah River, Georgia

Issue: Relicensing

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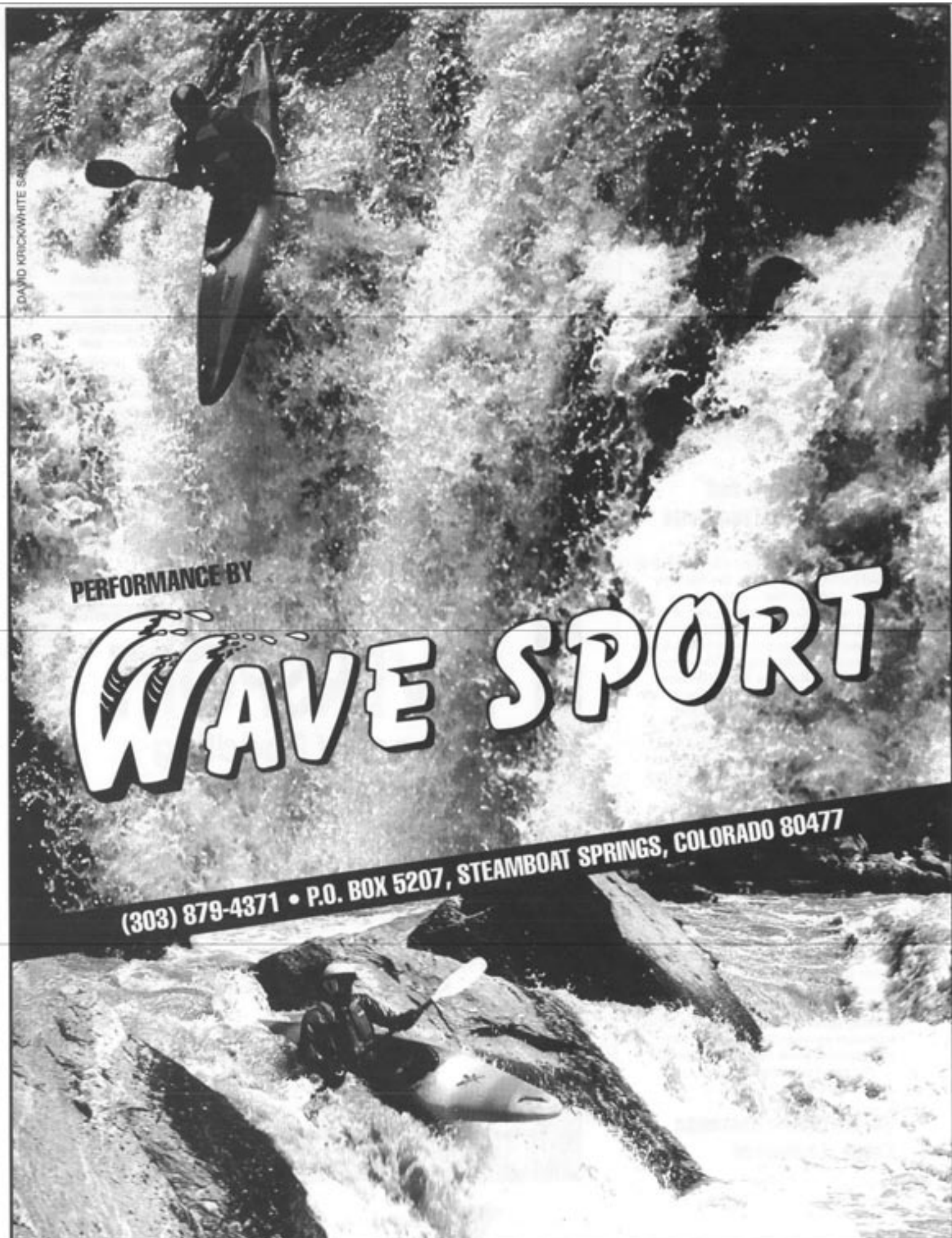
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## OUTSIDE THE U.S.

### A. Futaleufu, Chile

**Current Status:** After last year's highly successful whitewater test of this previously un-run gorge, the AWA and Georgia Power have drafted a memorandum of agreement which provides for 5 weekends of releases, and the possibility of running this river during natural flow or maintenance spills. To facilitate whitewater runs, Georgia Power will **install** a flow phone for boaters.

Although whitewater boating interests and the utility have reached an agreement, the FERC relicensing process has been delayed. Due to upstream lakeowner concerns over lake **drawdowns**, FERC has decided to conduct a full EIS on this project. The **Draft** EIS is not expected until **February** 1995, which could delay all minimum **instream** flow and whitewater release schedules.

Whitewater interests and Georgia Power are also negotiating stronger protection measures for **Tugalo** Lake, the **take-out** for both the **Tallulah** Gorge and Section IV of the **Chattooga**. This includes a moratorium on new access roads, stronger protection for lands in the watershed, and hopefully, a future reduction in horsepower size allowed on this lake. Considerations are also being given to improving the current **take-out** for Section IV.

For more information, contact AWA Conservation Director Rich Bowers at (301) 589-9453.

### 41. All Rivers in Georgia!

**Issue:** Access

**Current Status:** The fate of access for ALL rivers in Georgia is still being decided. Georgia Canoeing Association is a co-plaintiff in litigation concerning access to **Armuchee** Creek. They are awaiting a bench trial in October which **will** center around what criteria to use for the determination of public waterways open to passage (i.e. boating). Another **parallel** course of action is an effort to pass legislation that **will** establish an objective standard to determine **boatable** rivers. Last year's Georgia Family Rivers Act was "bush-whacked" in the Georgia State Legislature.

Scheduled for late summer is a meeting which **will** bring boating interests together to coordinate how to address access issues in the state of Georgia

For more information, contact Dan **MacIntyre** at (404) 870-1800 or AWA Regional Coordinator **Andy Warshaw** at (404) 373-6683.

**Issue:** Hydropower development  
**Current Status:** Will this world class river suffer the same fate as the Bio-Bio? Earlier this year, **Endesa**—the power company which is building the **Pangue** dam on the Bio—and two other companies filed papers to acquire all water rights necessary to build a huge hydroelectric generating station on the **Futaleufu**, a fabulous wilderness river in the **Patagonia** region of Chile. This project would flood the entire upper gorge section. An organization called the **FutaFund** has been organized in the U.S. to help the **CODDERFU** (Committee for the Advancement and Defense of the **Futaleufu** and its Ecosystem)—a Chilean group composed of local inhabitants of this magnificent area. The larger question that surrounds this issue is whether building huge hydro **dams** raises the living standards of developing countries. Research has shown that large-scale, capitol intensive dams **often** saddle the country with a **back-breaking** debt that actually reduces living standards. Another important point is that Chile is rich enough in wind resources to derive all of their electricity from wind-powered technology. The cost of wind energy is already competitive with hydro at 5-7 cents/kilowatt-hour.

For more information, call Tamara Robbins at (209) 572-FUTA or write to P.O. Box 4536, 1314 Coldwell Ave., Modesto, CA, 95350.

### B. Pacuare and Reventazon Rivers, Costa Rica

**Issue:** Hydropower dams

**Current Status:** The fight to save the Pacuare River from a 205 MW dam is becoming more imperative, particularly after

the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington, D.C., approved a loan last December to ICE, the Costa Rican power authority, for a dam on the nearby Reventazon. The next phase of the project, not yet proposed for funding (but expected soon), **calls** for another dam on the Reventazon as well as the damming of the Pacuare. The two drainages would be connected by a tunnel, allowing the much dirtier Reventazon water to **fill** up the Pacuare dam in the dry season in order to **turn** the **turbines**. If you are interested in helping Costa Ricans fight for the Pacuare, contact Steve Gates at the One World One River Trust at (819) 822-7857. ■

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**CONSERVE** .....

## West Virginia Symposium "A Smashing Success"

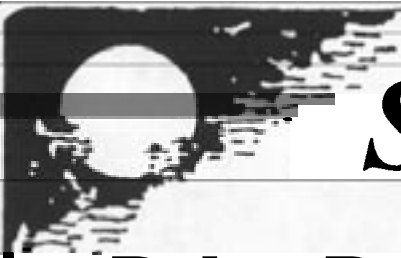
The Appalachian Rivers and Watershed Symposium, hosted June 3 through 5th by West Virginia University's Division of Forestry, was a smashing success for the scientific, grassroots, and agency interests involved in conserving West Virginia's rivers and streams.

The symposium was sponsored by the WV Rivers Coalition and WV Department of Commerce, Labor, and Environmental Resources, and co-sponsored by over 30 organizations, including the AWA.

Highlights included an amazingly well run conference, stellar speakers, and a



*Rich Williams, AWA discusses Public Access at West Virginia Rivers Symposium.*



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wide range of topics dealing with river issues and concerns. Discussions and panels were held on water quality and quantity, public use, watershed management, and rivers and people. Most outstanding was the panel discussion on the perceived differences between conservation and private property rights, and Georgia Power's **presentation** on the conference theme of "Shared Perspectives, Sharing Solutions".

As befitted the Mountain State, recreation and **whitewater** played an important part in this symposium. AWA staff, board members and regional coordinators participated in panel discussions on both public and private land access, and on hydropower development. Other panels discussed commercial outfitting and river economics.

On Friday, June 3rd, keynote speaker, AWA invitee, and native West Virginian Royal **Robbins** gave an inspirational address and slideshow on the importance of "connecting" with the outdoor experience. On Saturday, Tim Palmer concluded the symposium with an equally impressive **slideshow** on river "Lifestyles".



*AWA invitee speaks at the 1994 West Virginia Rivers Symposium.*

## River Network publishes new book "How to Save a River"

As a handbook for Citizen Action, author David **Bolling** highlights river saving success stories, campaign strategies to save rivers, and lets ordinary citizens in on how to effectively organize and plan a **campaign**, build public support, and implement a plan of action.

David Bolling is a award winning **journalist**, a paddler, and the former Executive Director of Friends of the River in California.

Paperback copies of this book are available for \$14.00 from River Network at PO Box 8787, Portland, OR 97207-8787, or call at (800) 423-6747..



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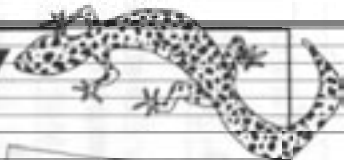
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## National Rivers Inventory (NRI) Update

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## CONSERVATION

NRI is a listing of all remaining **free-flowing** river segments in the United States which could potentially qualify as national wild, scenic, or recreational rivers under the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The NPS is soliciting boater input into this update, in order to **incorporate** additional high quality rivers. Nowhere is this knowledge more readily available than to recreational river users, boaters and

**fisherpeople**, who visit outstanding rivers and **streams** on a daily basis. The AWA encourages boater participation in this update.

For copies of the nominating procedures for State rivers and contacts, please contact the AWA Conservation Office at (301) 589-9453, or contact Dan Meyer (NPS) at (202) 343-3779. ■

## North Chickamauga Creek Update - by Ron Stewart, AWA Board member

A few years ago, North Chickamauga Creek was on the cutting edge of what was being run in the southeast. Today that distinction has passed to steeper and more difficult runs, but the North Chick remains a premier whitewater run. At high flows, it is one of the most challenging runs to be found.

The watershed which drains North Chickamauga Creek encompasses some of the most pristine wilderness east of the **Mississippi** and yet is within minutes of downtown Chattanooga, TN. It is rare to find such undisturbed wilderness so close to a major city, and this proximity is one of the most important aspects of the gorge.

For several years, AWA and other conservation organizations have directed their attention towards some sort of permanent protection for the watershed. There has been significant progress in this area but the rapid growth of development within the watershed makes the need for protection even more pressing. In June of 1993, Bowater, Inc. designated 1095 acres as a Pocket Wilderness, in effect protecting the entire river left corridor downstream of the confluence with **Cain** Creek. After this win, attention focused on land on river right and the upper watershed. The Conservation Fund conducted a major study of the area, utilizing modern computer graphics to do an enhanced analysis of the gorge. AWA was active in this study and assisted a local organization, The Friends of North Chickamauga Creek Greenway, Inc. in obtaining a grant of \$8000 from a private foundation to prepare a strategic management plan for the gorge. AWA joined the Conservation Fund, The Friends group and the National Park Service as partners in the project. AWA board member Ron Stewart represents AWA on the steering **committee** of the project. AWA also allocated money to be used in developing a video of the gorge and to support activities of the Friends group. The video was recently completed and highlights the value of all aspects of the gorge.

In a recent development, the Office of Surface Mining targeted North Chickamauga Creek as one of three potential pilot projects that could receive major funding towards water quality restoration from acid mine runoff. A grant application has been submitted for this project.

That's the good news. Many problems remain, however: major funding for land acquisition of the unprotected critical areas is still in question; the area which has been traditionally used as a put-in on the Signal Mountain side of the gorge has recently been targeted for development; access issues on river right are arising. In addition, rapid development within the watershed from other sectors could pose a problem to water quality and the wilderness nature of the gorge, and could cause future access problems. Vandalism and related problems in the popular blue hole areas near the bottom of the gorge have been an on and off problem, a situation similar to those at other rivers when they first began to be protected. Concerns about chip mill operations in the area have raised several questions about the impact on the North Chick gorge as well as several other important watersheds in the area.

AWA has played a major role in protecting this significant southern stream. If considered for Wild and Scenic status, North Chickamauga Creek will forever be one of the true gems of boating in the **Southeast**. ■

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# FAST AND CLEAN ON THE CLAVEY

by Richard Montgomery, technical support: Lars Holbek



One Saturday this May, drifting down the eddies at the top of Clavey Falls on the Tuolumne River, I inspected the last section of the Clavey river as it makes its final tumble into the Tuolumne. I hadn't run the Clavey in years and wondered whether there was enough water to run it. Sure enough. For soon after our group got to the bottom of the Falls a trio of paddlers, Scott Lingrin, Mark Holcomb, and Charlie Muncie, came charging by. They'd run the whole lower Clavey in four hours.

This is remarkably fast considering that the alleged first descent of the Clavey involved over twenty-five portages and took two days. This was made by Dennis Johnson and Rob Kirby in a secretive run in 1980. Dennis had a strong belief that you shouldn't tell people about your first descents because you "would ruin the wilderness experience for the next group down." So only the vaguest rumors came out at first.

The rumors made the run sound like a horrendous portagefest. The next descent was four years later. These paddlers trimmed the portages down to half a dozen. By the late 80's the Lower Clavey was being run more than a dozen times during a good water year.

Last year I ran the Upper Clavey for the "nth" time in a decade. I was with a

Left: Unknown boater: Clavey River.

## Cheat River Update

AWA has joined West Virginia Rivers Coalition, West Virginia Mountain Stream Monitors and the newly formed Friends of the Cheat—including resident Jim Snyder—as intervenors to Appeal No. 94 27-RBR before West Virginia's Surface Mine Board. T & T Fuels, a mining company that is responsible for much of the Cheat's poor water quality, has applied for relief (i.e. money) in cleaning up the Cheat. The intervention is an attempt to thwart T & T's attempt to pass on clean-up costs to the taxpayers. ■

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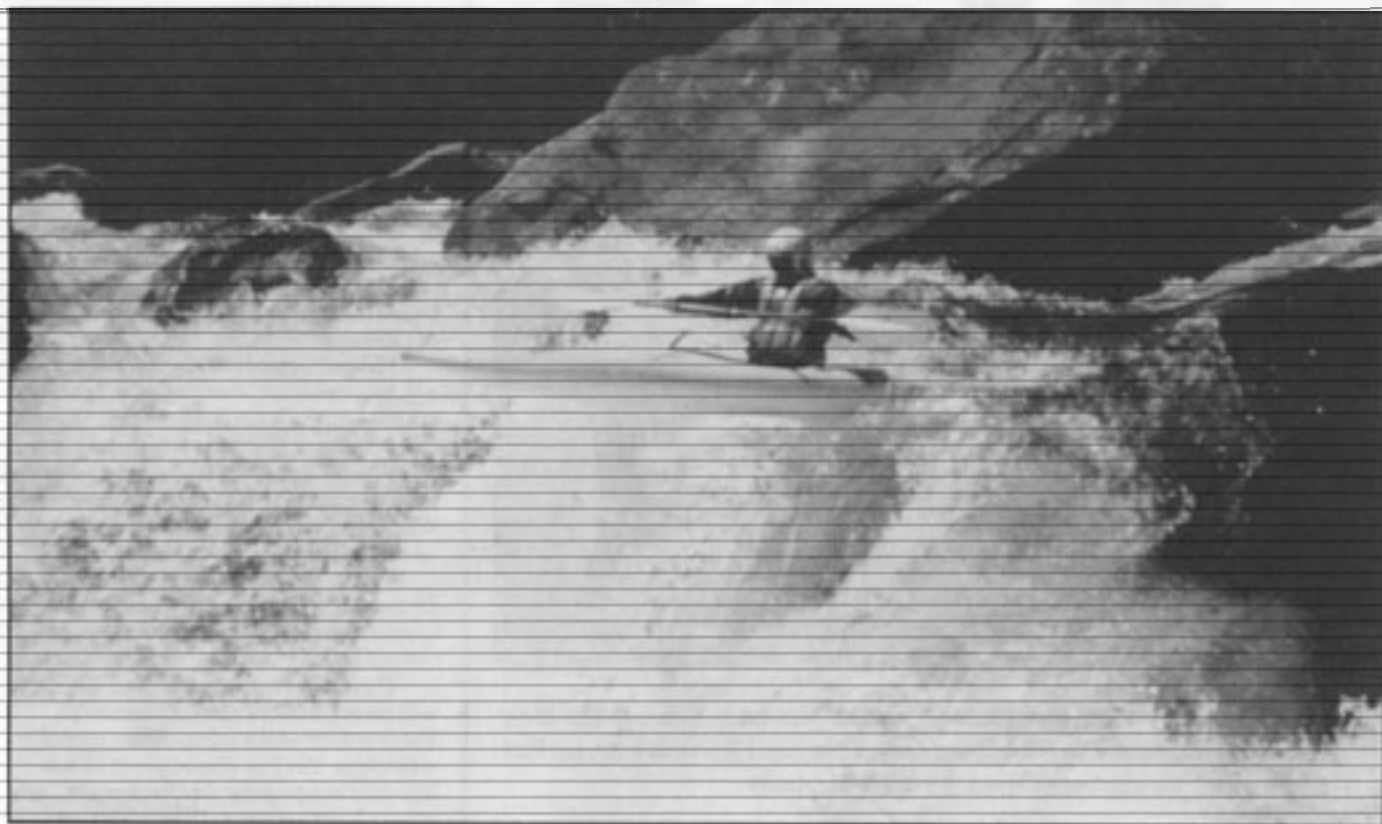
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Above: Unknown boater: Clavey River.

One particular wipeout comes to mind. Gordon Patchen pinned in the middle of a drop, got half stuffed under water and waved while people took his picture.

While we're on the subject of wipeouts here is one that occurred several years later at a natural slalom gate on the Lower Clavey where the river becomes so narrow that a person can easily span the gap with a foot on each bank. One unfortunate individual forgot to take his paddle out of the way while running the gate. His penalty for hitting "the poles" was a broken blade on his kayak paddle. He flailed down the bottom of the drop, trying to use this broken blade, and then staring at it after it sliced uselessly through the water. His consequent swim set off a string of swims which Chuck found quite unforgivable. So Chuck engaged him in spontaneous boot-camp style roll sessions in the tiny pools between drops to try to insure that he would regain his lost eskimo art and that we would not have to pick up the pieces.

My all-time favorite confluence is where the Clavey hits the T (Tuolumne). You come off of this incredible white staircase of a creek into the T just above Clavey Falls. The T is typically running high if the Clavey is runnable, so the falls

are pumping. The remains of the pool above the Falls where the Clavey comes out seems like a sizable stretch of flatwater after all those horizon lines on the Clavey. And the Falls becomes less intimidating, seeming like a minor drop in elevation and completely wide-open in comparison to the drops on the Clavey.

## RIVER DATA

Both the upper and lower put-ins are outside Tuolumne city. The upper put-in is the second bridge up from the confluence with the Tuolumne. The upper take-out is the first bridge up from the confluence which is also the lower put-in. The gradi-

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## CONSERVATION

ent on the upper is over 120 feet per mile. On the lower it is over 130 feet per mile. There is a gauge on river right just below the Lower put-in. The low end of **runnable** is 5.67 feet is an ideal level and the high end is around 8.5. These figures translate out to about 400,800, and 1,500 cfs. The lower takeout is the takeout for the main **Tuolumne**—the Ward's ferry bridge.

For more complete information see Chuck and Lars' guide and joke book "A Guide to the Best Whitewater in the State of California".

The geology of the rapids on the lower run alternates between big round granite boulders and a hard red bedrock. There **are** so many major drops that only a few have been named. An amazing number can be boat scouted without prior knowledge. We named some of them way back when — really intelligent names like

"Super-Bad-Ass-Wicked", and "Wicked Undercut". I doubt anyone uses these names anymore. Some other names **are** "Island Rapid", "Mother", and "Landslide".

There are two mandatory portages, and most paddlers carry a few more. There are several **medium-sized** runnable waterfalls. The last one is about 15 feet high and is a popular destination for rafters **hiking** up from Clavey **Falls**. It is within a quarter mile of the confluence with the **Tuolumne**.

The canyon is quite remote and untouched, despite being a three hour drive from the San Francisco Bay Area. I have never seen any other person outside of our paddling group during my runs. It is renowned for fishing and is one of the few remaining native trout streams in the state. Cougar and bald eagles have been spotted.

The Clavey is definitely a world-class creek run. Come on out and run it. And write a letter protesting the misguided dam plans on the Clavey. See conservation box alongside this **article**. ■



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# Clavey River Issue

The Clavey is a tributary of California's Tuolumne River, it is considered "one of California's last wild rivers", and is one of only four remaining free-flowing rivers in the Sierra Nevada. It has become the focus of a major battle between conservationists, recreationists and a Central Valley irrigation district.

The Clavey flows for 47 miles, and is located just west of Yosemite. Thousand foot canyon walls, old-growth forests, swimming holes, waterfalls, and Class IV and V whitewater characterize this river. This is an unequalled expert wilderness run, and is a CA Wild Trout Stream.

In 1990, the Turlock Irrigation District submitted an application to FERC to construct a \$700 million five-dam project on the Clavey. With an irrigation district as the applicant, one would think the primary motivating would be water for irrigation, but the proposed project provides no water, only high cost electricity to district residents, farms and businesses. High cost because electricity generated by the Clavey Project would ring in at 13 to 14 cents per kilowatt hour, more than three times the market rate in CA.

The abundance of surplus energy now available in CA, and the availability of cheaper energy alternatives has offered conservation interests a strong tool with which to fight this project. Recently, the CA Energy Commission agreed to conduct an independent economic analysis of the Clavey Project. The CEC's neutral report should help further convince the public of this project's economic infeasibility.

Even some of the largest industrial energy users in the Turlock service area are contesting this project, including local businesses, the Coalition for Better Government, and the CA Farm Bureau.

Earlier this year, the AWA petitioned the FERC to allow for late intervention in this proceeding, in order to represent private boater interests and to offer recreational expertise on this outstanding river. A FERC EIS is due on the Clavey some time in late 1994, which will offer additional opportunities to those interested in intervention. A FERC licensing decision could be made as early as 1995.

Opponents of the project, which includes the Tuolumne River Preservation Trust, the AWA, Natural Heritage Institute, American Rivers and the Sierra Club, are seeking not only to stop this project, but to have this river protected by our strongest



national policy, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

AWA members are strongly urged to send letters of support for a Wild and Scenic Clavey to their US Representatives and Senators. For additional information, con-

tact AWA's Conservation Office at (301) 589-9453, or the Tuolumne River Preservation Trust at (415) 292-3531.H

Above: Unknown boater Clavey River.



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Photo: Michele Werrick/American  
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# Good Gauley Miss Molly!

'Tis the season! Plan to join the American Whitewater Affiliation on Saturday evening, September 24, for the 1894 Gauley River Festival. You'll find the action once again at the Nicholas County Veterans Memorial Park on Route 19 in Summersville. Come on over when you're finished paddling, come for dinner or come late. We'll be cooking for you from 5:00 p.m. until midnight. Admission is still only \$5.

Enjoy all the usual Festival highlights — the Marketplace, Silent Auction, Raffle, Non-Stop Award-Winning Videos, Rocking

Band, Carnival Games, Good, Brant Miller and Tom Joy will also return this year to perform their original collection of whitewater songs and river ballads from *Music River*.

Camping with full bathroom facilities will be available at the Festival site both Friday and Saturday nights for \$4 per person per night.

Please note that no cans or bottles will be admitted to the Gauley Festival. So bring your beverages in cups. See you there!

## Gauley Festival Marketplace



While cruising the Festival, be sure to catch up on all the latest gear. Our fine lineup of exhibitors will be happy to spend time answering your questions — whether you're just window shopping or completely reoutfitting. Here's a partial list of who'll be on hand to display their wares:

ACE Whitewater Aire  
Airtight Inflatables  
Artful Outdoors  
Backlund Paddles  
Climch Paddles  
Cool Ridge Company  
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White Tree Pottery  
Wiggle Stick Paddles  
Wildwasser Sports

## Gauley Festival Videos — Better Than Ever!

As always, the Gauley Festival's non-stop video action will be presented by the Bluegrass Wildwater Association and will include a selection of the their Annual Paddling Film Festival's finest.

Scott Smalley, Gauley Fest Video Coordinator Supreme, invites you to join him in the pavilion to get an eyeful of the following:

Token of My Extreme	7:00
Heads Up	7:40
Roc & Rainbow	8:10
Creeks of the Tennessee Valley	8:15
Boating & the Beast	8:40
Perpetual Motion	9:00
River Gauley	9:30
Wild Americans	9:55
X-Stream Green	10:50

## 1994 Gauley Festival Auction

The Gauley Festival's Silent Auction has earned a reputation for its wide selection of top-of-the-line equipment and incredible bargains. Check it out and place your bids.

The American Whitewater Affiliation thanks these loyal, generous supporters for providing the Silent Auction and Raffle with brand new, quality merchandise:

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Four Corners River Sports  
Gale Force  
Gentry Video  
Gorilla Whitewater  
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Impex International  
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Keel Haulers  
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L'Eau Vive  
Lightning Paddles  
Lunatic Designs  
Man of Rubber  
Menasha Ridge Press  
Millbrook Boats  
Mohawk Canoes  
Mountain Art Glass  
Mountain Gear  
Mountain State  
Mountain Surf  
Music River  
Nantahala Outdoor Center  
New Wave Kayaks  
New Wave Waterworks  
Norse  
North American River Runners  
Northwest River Supplies  
Ocoee Canoe Company  
PD Designs  
Patagonia  
Perception  
Possum Point Productions  
Pro Canoe  
RGP Paddles  
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Starrk-Moon  
Swiftwater Publishing  
Symmetria Sticks  
Wayward Productions  
White Tree Pottery  
Wiggle Stick Paddles  
Wilderness Designs  
Wilderness Systems  
Wildside Images  
Wildwasser Sports  
Zoar Outdoor

## ACCESS Articles

by Rich Hoffman

I'm excited to have recently joined AWA as the Coordinator for their river access program. AWA is an impressive organization; over the years, it has accomplished so much with little money and no staff. Without AWA's **longstanding** efforts, we would no longer have whitewater on such outstanding rivers as New York's Bottom Moose and Black, West Virginia's Gauley, or other outstanding rivers. AWA's Board, regional coordinators, staff and membership represent a wealth of talent and energy. Since I've started work with the AWA, I've come to appreciate the expression that one can see better by "standing upon the shoulders of giants."

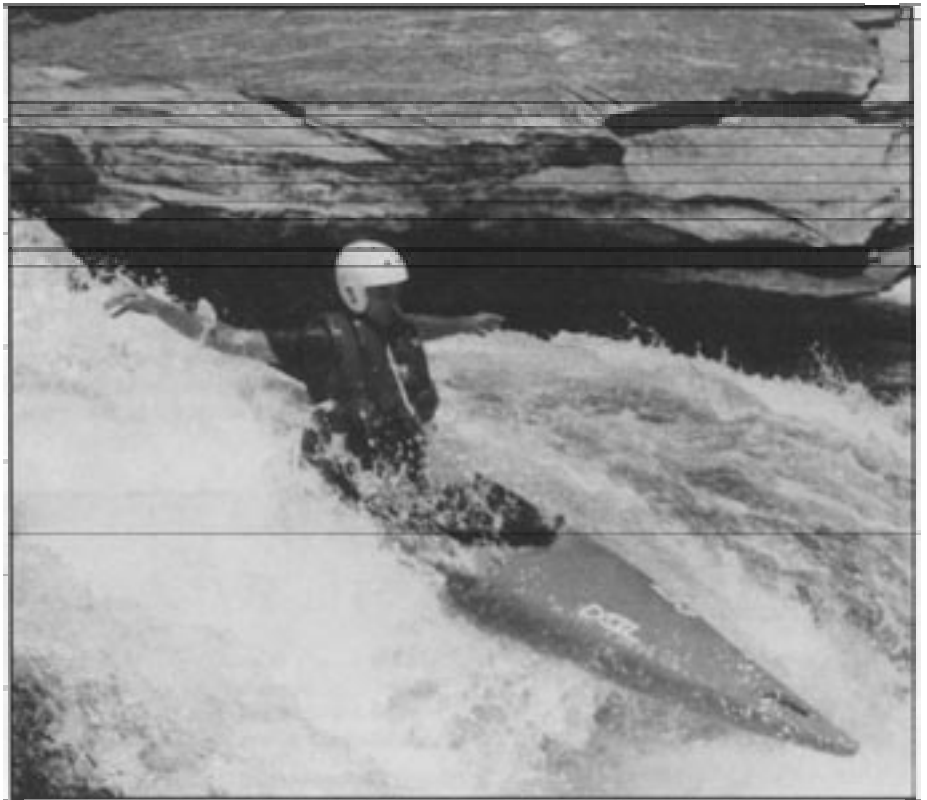
As the new addition to this group, I plan to help AWA's conservation program take giant steps. Developing a full-time staff strictly dedicated to river conservation **will dramatically** increase our accomplishments, helping AWA to help you—our members. Already, we've had some tremendous successes, particularly through the hydropower relicensing process, not to mention our whitewater festivals and rodeos.

The way I see it, my mandate is fairly simple: to get ACCESS! Those of you who know me realize that I have been obsessed with both the word and the concept of...ACCESS! The word **access** seems to creep its way into every sentence, every thought. Wasn't this country founded on the belief that everyone has the right to life, access and the pursuit of boating?

While the prime directive of my job is simple, the solution is anything but. Access problems are everywhere, leading many top conservationists to recognize access as **THE** most pressing problem for whitewater rivers. On the **Kennebec** and Lower Yough, user fees are charged for the use of public streams. In Georgia, gates and barbed wire are being strung across rivers. On private land, boaters are sometimes denied access because of liability concerns, while **government** managed rivers often have inequitable permit systems for noncommercial boaters. To add insult to **injury**, what constitutes a public waterway varies wildly from state to state, and in some states, relies strictly on **anti-**quoted codes that define **navigability** as only those streams that can float barges. Put simply, we do not have ACCESS!

Having said that, let me make an appeal to you, our members. I believe that AWA's energetic and passionate membership is the key to the success of our efforts. I envision my job as Access Program Coordinator to be one that is ultimately guided and driven by YOUR needs. My role will be to serve as sort of an elected representative for private boaters. As such, I need to hear from you! One of my initial goals is to compile a nationwide listing of access problems.

The long-range goals that I have for the access program is to eventually move from a piecemeal, one-at-a-time approach to a broad, comprehensive program. While at first, our efforts will be diluted by the necessity of dealing with access threats one by one, we will eventually develop a strategy that **will** address many rivers at the same time, guaranteeing a higher rate of return for our energy. Please feel free to call me (301-589-9453) any time of the day or night: access issues never sleep!



Rich Hoffman at Chattooga's Soc 'em Dog.

## New FutaFund Address

The FutaFund—the U.S. based organization that is helping Chileans in the fight to keep the Futaleufu River free-flowing—has changed addresses:

P.O. Box 4536  
Modesto, CA 95351  
Phone: (209) 572-FUTA  
Fax: (209) 522-5511

.....  
ACCESS

# Gauley River Access

In the early summer, AWA attended public meetings organized by the National Park Service about the future of the Gauley River National Recreation Area. The Park Service did an excellent job of evaluating what makes the gorge unique: the relative lack of development. Basically, they proposed not to construct any new access roads into the gorge.

Best of all, they have recognized boater access as the number one priority! After all, it doesn't make sense to have a public resource that the public can only access by **trespassing!** At present (and up until mid-November), the Park Service is welcoming public response about their plan. And the Park Service wants input from boaters, specifically about the preferred access points!

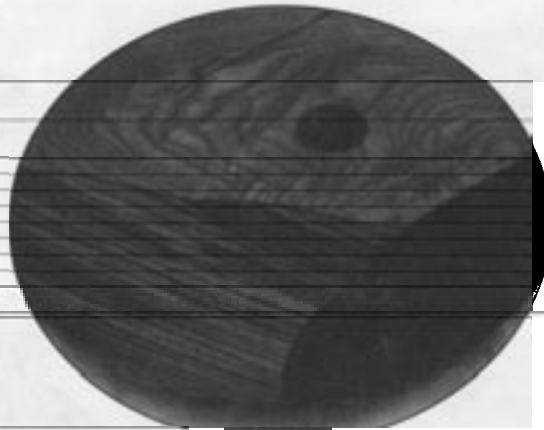
The Park Service's survey in 1991 showed that boaters overwhelmingly preferred:

- Mason Branch (aka Panther Mountain Road) as the **take-out** for the Upper Gauley, and
- Bucklick** Branch as the put-in for the Lower Gauley.

Please consider writing a letter to the Park Service about your access preference. In your letter, mention the fact that you support efforts between the Park Service, AWA, the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, and commercial **outfitters** to arrive at a **long-term** solution that will secure legal access for the public.

Letters should be sent to:  
Superintendent  
Gauley River National Recreation Area  
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**Costa Rica's most treacherous wilderness rivers, ultimately concluding that the pain and strain was worth the gain.**



*Above: Primitive hut near the river.*

*Top left: Piiia, Chris and Scott surveying the hike down.*

*Bottom left: Entering the canyon.*



*Above: The author in a banana grove, looking exasperated after two hours of hiking.*

**Hiking** this trail in sandals was a huge mistake. I had fallen behind by 15 minutes and was faced with yet another fork in the path - not knowing which route to take.

"Which way!" I screamed in frustration....There was no reply.

"Bastards", I **muttered**. Why did they leave me? I stood there for a moment, covered in mud in the sticky hot jungle and wondered if any river was worth all this. Clutching my boat tightly as I looked over the precipice, I thought about John. A few weeks ago, while hiking in, he put his boat down, only to watch it slip away **into** the thick jungle below. The thought of **wrestling** pit vipers for a kayak was not appealing.

The daydream was interrupted by a

sudden rustling in the bushes. The squealing and grunting suggested some poor animal was having an unpleasant experience. An Indian staggered **forward** holding a rope in each hand, tied to the corresponding back leg of his pig. A **hard** tug to the right and he would jerk the back right leg of the pig. The pig would squeal and move to the right. A yank to the left leg, the pig would grunt and move left.

Clever way to clear the **trail** for snakes, I thought, as he steered his pig from side to side.

I gestured in pigeon Spanish, "Which way to the river?"

He pointed me down the correct path and we were on our respective ways. At this point, I wasn't sure who was worse off - me or the pig.

# COSTA RICA



## JUNGLE BOOGIE

In southern Costa Rica, between the Pacuare River valley and Panama, lies the Cordillera De Talamanca mountain range. This remote section of the country houses the Chirripo Volcano (now extinct) and dense jungle, interspersed with minute villages. Drainage the 12,530 foot volcano to the Pacific coast are tributaries of the popular Rio General. The main boatable tributary is the Rio Chirripo - Pacifico. To the east, where annual rainfall measures 200 inches, lie several rivers which are extremely remote - requiring long rigorous hikes or airlifting of gear. Among these rivers are the Fio Estrella, Rio Telire, Rio Coen, Rio Lari, Rio Uren, and the Fio Chirripo - Atlantico.

The most "accessible" river among these is the Rio Chinipo - Atlantico.

Rafael Gallo and Mike Mayfield, authors of *The Rivers of Costa Rica* describe the river in this way: "The initial elation of the group on finding the first 2 miles of the river to contain exhilarating Class IV water was soon tempered by the harsh reality of running endless Class V and Class VI rapids and rapidly rising water levels. There was no way to exit the canyon except continue down stream, and each tributary added to the woes of the run....."

"We do not recommend the Chirripo del Atlantico. Despite it's beautiful mountain scenery, challenging rapids, clear water, and splendid isolation, the difficulties and hazards associated with running this river are simply too great".

*Above: Chris in the midst of Euthanasia Falls.*

# COSTA RICA

## I CAN'T RESIST

Well, how could anyone resist a stirring guidebook description like that?

Based in **Turrialba**, we were having a great time on the Upper **Pacuare** - running it three times and finding Bobo Falls no more difficult than **Watauga** Falls or Hammer Factor on the Green. The **Pasqua** and **Peralta** sections of the Reventazon were nice, but the water quality was just too nasty. "Jungle Run", the definitive rapid on the **Peralta** section, had been grossly altered by the December 1993 flood, rendering it unrecognizable. We were ready for a change of scenery. We had heard of a recent descent of the **Chirripo Atlantico**, featuring 10 miles of exciting whitewater after a grueling hike-in.

Our day began at 3:30 AM, loading boats for the two and one-half hour drive from **Turrialba** toward the Rio **Chirripo Atlantico**. Our driver, **Tito**, was somewhat



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# COSTA RICA

familiar with the area, and after a few navigational corrections, we were deposited on a high mountain plateau. The sun had just risen as we began our descent to the river 3,000 feet below.

I was in good company.

**Chris Hipgrave** is a world class creek boater. His most astonishing exploits are exhibited in *Water Fall Kauak*, a video in which a 125 foot waterfall in Wales is tackled.

Nicknamed **Pina (pineapple)** by the locals because of his blond mohawk dreadlocks, **Andy Lee**, from New Zealand, had claimed a first descent a month earlier near Manuel Antonio.

**Scott Andler**, from Portland Oregon, had attempted the **Chirripo** 3 weeks earlier, only to be turned away by high water. His group had hiked for over 9 hours in knee deep mud to the river. Tired, they

camped there overnight and by the following day were out of food. Fortunately, **Indians**, which exclusively occupy this territory, helped extricate their boats from the canyon by loading them onto horses.

Scott's group was grateful, but the horses were not accustomed to dragging kayaks. They spooked, smashing the kayaks into trees as they bucked and galloped uncontrollably up the mountain.

**Brent Austin**, who suffers from Compulsive Paddler Syndrome, can only be satiated by multiple trips down the Green Narrows. The **Chirripo** would have to suffice this day.

## IT DON'T COME EASY

The hike in was the most arduous I had ever done with a boat. The two mile hike to Giant Gap in California paled in comparison. The trail started as a narrow footpath between rows of coffee. Continuing down, we were engulfed by the verdant jungle. The trail was "good" despite deep mud and countless steep switchbacks. Several times when the trail presented optional routes, an Indian

*Left: Our escorts to the river. We were really taken by the beauty of these people.*



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# COSTA RICA



Top: Brent getting tuned up for the canyon.



Bottom: Chris ... Euthanasia Falls.

would appear - almost too coincidentally - to assist us in following the correct path.

Although the region was remote, the indigenous population was versed in Spanish, no doubt from trading coffee and bananas outside of their village. Small children would sometimes appear higher up on the mountain, as if we were being shadowed. How did they know that a Fer De Lance or a **Morte Verde** was not in their wake as they romped through the thick forest unprotected? The dark trail, like a tunnel shutting out all light, continued up and down the mountain, but would periodically open up to expose a brilliant meadow of chest high grass and a glimpse of the valley below.

We reached a banana grove and a thatched roof hut crudely constructed from bamboo like poles lashed together. We felt like we had taken a step back in time. Next to the hut was a thatched roof pavilion complete with handmade vine hammocks and an open fire pit for cooking. The inhabitants assisted us in locating the river, since we had veered off the path by some 300 meters. **This** family of **Indians** escorted us the rest of the way.

We **arrived** at the river after a two and a half hour hike, scratched, muddy, bruised, sweaty, and almost exhausted by the carry and lack of sleep. My hands were rope burned, blistered and sore from dragging the boat, making it difficult to consider clutching a paddle for the long run ahead. The river looked low, probably no more **than** 300 CFS.

We put in nearly 2 miles upstream of the foot bridge that Scott had hiked to 3 weeks before. The river was unique. Channelized in a gravel bed was about 2-3 miles of Class II water. The action began to pick up to Class IV when we scouted a blind 7 foot boulder strewn drop. The **difficulty** dropped back to Class II for another half mile until we entered a steep rocky gorge. The action jumped from Class III to Class IV almost immediately.

The volume picked up noticeably. Another **half** mile and we were **into** some very pushy water. The river took on a western feel and hole dodging was imperative as we picked our way through boulders fields. And then the wind began to howl through the gorge, upstream, as if to push us back. Precise eddy hop moves be-

# COSTA RICA

came more difficult as we wrestled our paddle blades, first through the water, then through the gale.

The gorge was steep and stunning and there was absolutely no way to get out. Several rock slides were a result of an earthquake in April 1991. The epicenter of the quake was very close to the lower canyon. Rock slides formed a natural dam that blew out after heavy rains later that year and altered many of the rapids.

The river was now falling at 120-130 foot per mile, **making** for non stop continuous Class IV+ action.

At this point Chris was in the lead and I ran second. I began to wonder, why am I following **him** down this blind mess - he jumped off a 125 foot waterfall, remember?

As we watched from tiny eddies, Chris would disappear. We stared at each other as if to say "Who's going to follow him next?".

There is a powerful link between the human mind, paddling and music. Most people listen to a song on the way to work, then replay that same song mentally all day. On this particular day our shuttle driver had Tony Orlando & Dawn playing in his tape deck **This** prompted Brent to torture me by singing a few verses of "Candida".

In the maw, it kept popping in my mind....."Ooooooh Candida, we can make it together"

It was I who was cursed this time. Perhaps Brent was **seeking** revenge for the time I put a large rock in the stem of his boat, prior to a run on the Green.

The gradient and intensity picked up another notch. We knew there would be 8 to 10 miles of action and that we were probably only 3 or 4 miles in. We stopped to refuel. It was strange - during lunch no one said a word for 15 minutes. The **karma** of the gorge was more than we anticipated. **Looking** downstream, the river curved out of site. We could only imagine what lie ahead.

## THE BIG THRILL

As we approached the 170 foot per mile section the rapids were getting bigger, though more pool-drop in character. **Finally** Andy, concerned about following



*The author running one of many similar drops in the gorge.*

Chris like a bunch of lemmings, suggested in his thick New Zealand accent that "We ought to start scouting these drops".

We had scouted only a few to this point, and for the last mile had been blindly bombing down some serious stuff.

The horizon line suddenly changed, a monstrous rock was perched in the middle of the river. The river made a 90 degree right hand turn through house size boulders. **This** time we all scouted, Chris on river left, and the rest on river right.

Brent, Scott and I found a sneak on far river right and walked the lower section of the rapid. Chris **boofed** a slot on river left, powered through a huge pillow which

**slammed** the left wall of the gorge, and stopped in a eddy to scout the lower portion of the run. He made the treacherous lower section look easy by making a few decisive creek moves, totally avoiding a terminal 10 foot high pourover.

We knew of perhaps a dozen or so groups that had descended the river before us, including Gallo's group in 1984. One group in 1987 had **reportedly** ran all the rapids. However, the 1991 earthquake changed the river significantly and this was the **first** known attempt at this rapid since that time. Chris was given the honors of naming this rapid.

His pronouncement was: "I've always

# COSTA RICA

wanted to name a rapid Euthanasia Falls". So be it.

The Chirripo didn't let up for another 4 miles but it seemed like the gradient decreased a bit **after** the falls. As we finally paddled out of the gorge the difficulty eased back to Class III-IV for a few miles.

**Moravia Falls** was a notable landmark, delimiting the end of the gorge. The remaining 10 miles or so to the take out was Class II or moving Class I.

The volume near the end of the gorge was about 1,000 CFS. All along the way beautiful horse tail waterfalls had contributed significantly to the volume and consequently the difficulty. The guidebook indicates that the run is 18 miles long. That might be so... if one could locate the egress at Playa Hermosa and put in at the bridge. Our trip was about 28 miles.

We paddled down to the main highway in Bristol. At the take out, we trudged up the river bank and found a cantina with cold **cervezas**. Somehow it was all worth

the effort.

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Even **Chris Hipgrave**, who has youth and bravado on his side, downed his first Ibuprofen.....

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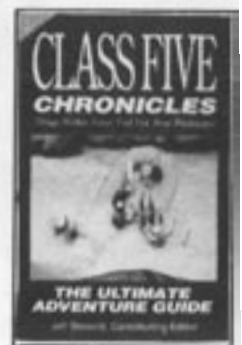
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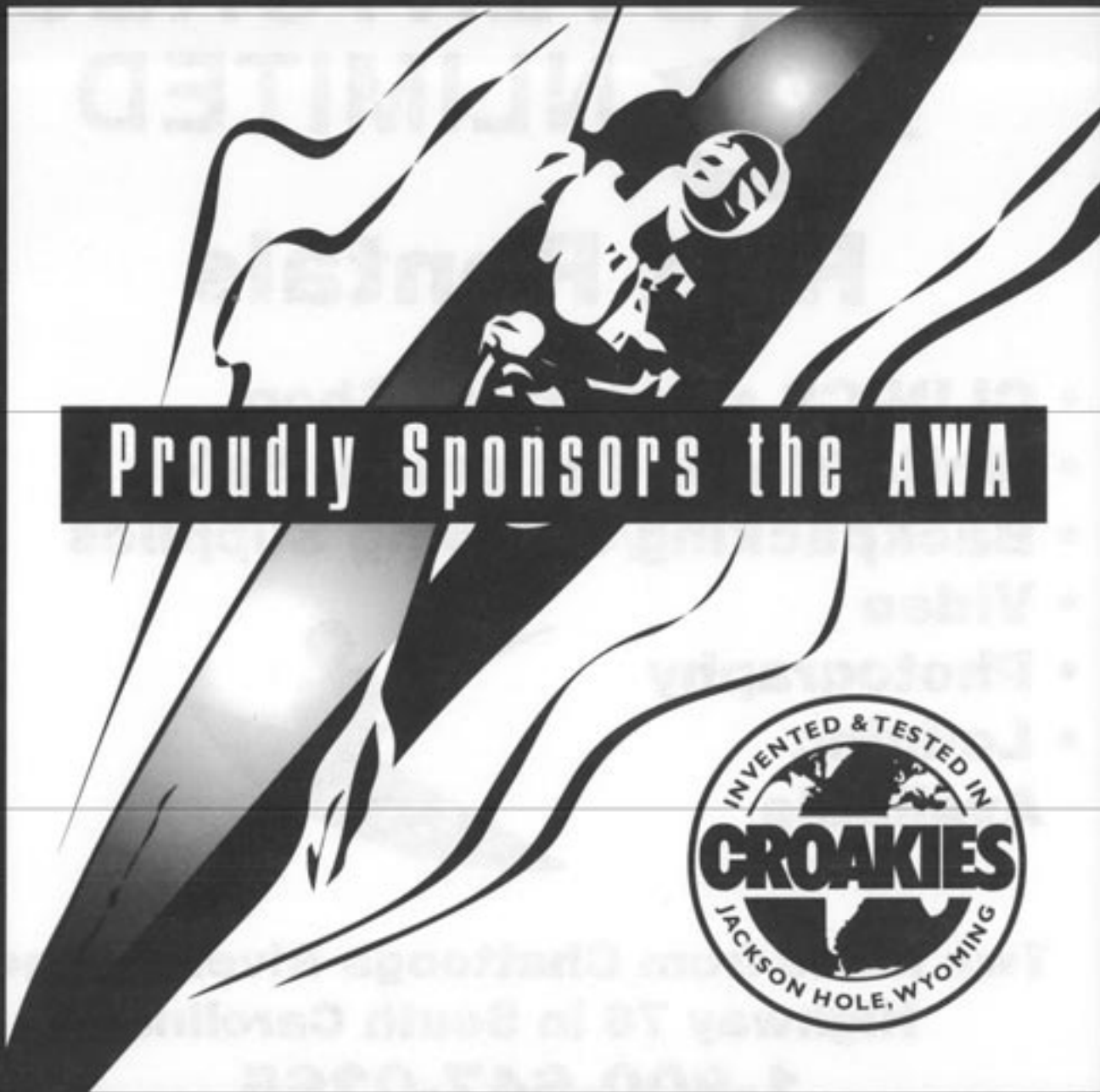
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## Monumental Task Completed Comprehensive Guide to Western Whitewater Published

reviewed by Bob Gedekoh

Western Whitewater: From the  
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Fryar Calhoun  
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lovers."

This proclamation, made  
in the first paragraph of the  
flier that accompanied my copy  
of the new Cassady, Cross and  
Calhoun guidebook to western  
whitewater, left me feeling a bit

# Solo Boater Questions Guidebook's Edict **"Never Boat Alone!"**

An Open Letter by W. Scott Morris

To: Jim Cassady, Bill Cross, Fryar Calhoun  
Authors of Western Whitewater

Dear Jim, Bill, & Fryar,

I recently bought a copy of your Western Whitewater, which I find very impressive. It is the most comprehensive and well researched work that I have seen on western rivers and **will** probably remain on the very top of my pile of river books.

There is, however, one issue which I would like to address in your safety section. This is the edict "Never boat alone". **Actually** there are many good reasons to boat alone and the safety record of solo river **runners** is probably better than that of **group** boaters. I realize that this is not "your" rule; it has been around a long time, but most authors and serious boaters' organizations have dropped it entirely or adopted "boating alone is not recommended", a wiser rule; and one less likely to provoke bureaucrats into banning solo trips on their rivers.

I feel very strongly about this issue because I boat alone a lot. My solos are **generally** long **whitewater** wilderness trips in a small **whitewater** raft, and have included the Salt, Dolores (twice), San Juan, Rio Grand through Big Bend (five times), Middle Fork Salmon, Main Fork Salmon, Rogue, Green, **Westwater**, Cataract, Grand Canyon (twice), and others. These solo trips have provided me with some outstanding adventure and deep solitude, and I hope to do many more in the future. **As** one boater to another, I hope you **will** have the patience to listen to why I think we should eliminate, or at least modify, this rule about never boating alone.

The main issue here is safety. My personal experience suggests that, while additional precautions **are** worthwhile, the likelihood of serious problems while boating alone is minimal. I have never had any mishaps that I couldn't deal with myself; and I think that real experience is what we need to look at here. Not only mine, but others as well. The literature is packed with stories of solo trips of every **kind**, from peaceful to wild.

While there have certainly been thousands of solo river trips over the years, we rarely hear about them because no problems were encountered. But there **are** also many legendary stories about river trips involving solo boaters like, R.M. Patterson, Buzz **Holstrom**, Walter **Kirschbaum**, Walt Blackadar, Bill Mason, Calvin **Rutstrum**, and Amos Burg. And these weren't all just class 2 paddles; many were considered extremely dangerous, and some were first descents. If the "Never boat alone" rule had any basis in fact, we expect none of these boaters to return alive. But survive they did and arrived home in good condition! In fact many of them considered their solo trips to be some of the most valuable and intense experiences of their lives.

If you think about it, you will realize that mishaps **are** actually less likely to occur when boating alone simply because the boater is going to be a lot more **careful**. Moreover, solo trips eliminate several problems which can be caused by group dynamics, including poor communication between boaters and a host of behavioral problems. Also the lackadaisical attitude of "just another trip with a bunch of friends" simply isn't an issue on a solo trip. People who do solo trips **are** very aware that they are responsible for everything and that

skeptical. How could one book adequately tackle such a broad topic?

Granted, these authors have the credentials. Cassady and Calhoun are well known boaters, writers and the authors of the popular guide, *California Whitewater*. Cross is a professional river guide who has published whitewater

articles in a number of magazines. But surely these guys had bit off more than they could chew with this project!

After all, I have a shelf loaded with guidebooks to rivers west of the Mississippi... guides to California, Colorado, Idaho, the Pacific Northwest, Montana.

Could a single book supplant all of these?

The coverage must be sporadic, I thought. I quickly browsed through the table of contents. Having just returned from an eight day, nine river whirlwind tour of southern Colorado, I wanted to see if this new guidebook covered each of the rivers I had paddled.

any mishaps could be serious. **This** is the crux of the problem. The real safety issue with solo trips is not that there are apt to be more problems, but rather that certain kinds of problems might have much more serious consequences if there is no one around to help. **Virtually** any kind of injury or medical problem that incapacitates the boater, or loss of critical gear or supplies on a long trip, could spell trouble for the solo tripper. **I often ponder certain scenarios in which it would be** handy indeed to have some friends nearby.

But over the years I've realized that this isn't as big an issue as it seems. Firstly, there **are** getting to be quite a few boaters out there. It's hard to think of a river where, at least during boating season, you would not see other boaters every day. Boaters on wilderness rivers **are** generally quite friendly and glad to play safety or help out in an emergency; in fact most of the rescues I've seen on the river were conducted, at least in part, by boaters from other groups.

Secondly, there is a techno-fix, radio gear. I personally carry both an aviation band transceiver and an emergency locating transmitter on most long solo trips. While I suspect this is **overkill**, a lone boater with such gear could probably call in help faster **than** a group trip using a runner (although I would never bet my life on it). Advances in telecommunication gear have been rapid, and it **will** not be long before phones are available which **will** work from anywhere (unfortunately). So although problems on solo trips have the potential to become more serious, sticking to popular runs and/or **carrying** radio gear for remote trips seems to negate a fair amount of this liability.

River running does have its risks, and solo boaters **are** not immune to mishaps, but people are to quick to blame the "solo"

factor when accidents do occur. Rarely **will** people bother to ask "Might not this have happened anyway? Even if there was someone else there?". In real life, more people might mean more injuries or deaths, either due to the same cause or some dangerous rescue attempt gone wrong.

If an accident occurs on a solo trip, the cause of the problem probably won't be that the boater was alone, but rather: not

wearing a PFD, boating beyond one's abilities, a victim happens to be boating alone, people will often wrongfully point to that as the cause. But accidents are usually the result of ignoring other, more reasonable, safety rules.

One example of this was a story I heard about a solo **kayaker** who did a remote fly-in, fly-out trip in Alaska some years ago. The boater told only the pilot of his trip plans, but on the way home the pi-

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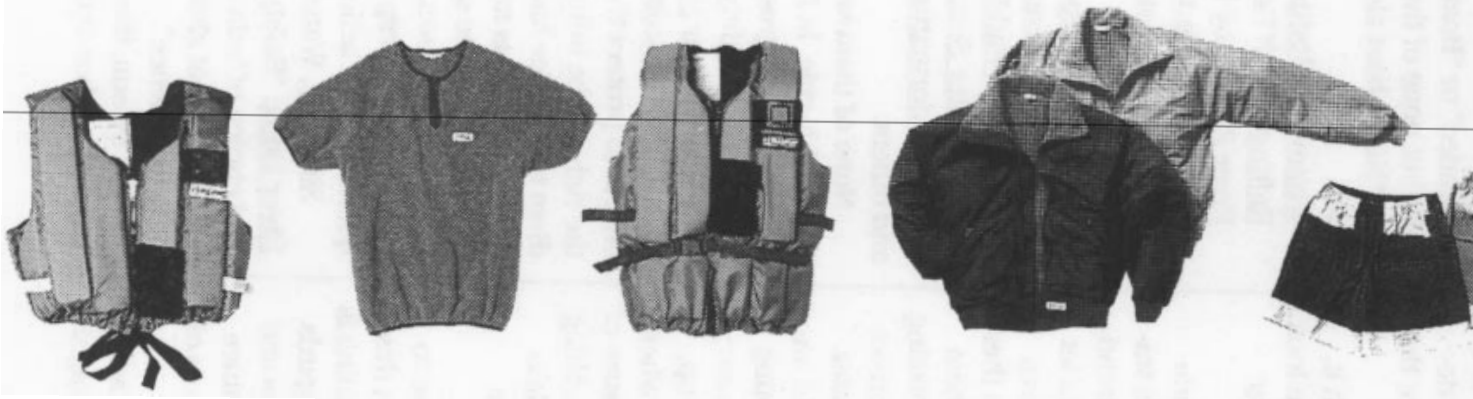
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Surprisingly, they were almost all there... the Arkansas, Roaring Fork, Crystal, Animas, Taylor and the Piedra. Only Lake Creek and Clear Creek, two minor tributaries of the Arkansas, were not covered; and these steep, hairy gems can hardly be described as commonly paddled runs. (Sections on the Clear Creek

near Golden and the Lake Fork of the Gunnison were included.)

But was the coverage of each river adequate? I turned to the article on one of my favorite rivers, the Animas. I found a six page feature which included a hydrograph, an easy to read river map, a photo, a brief review of the history of

the region and an insert on the Animas- LaPlata Project, a major threat to this irreplaceable watershed.

Separate sections covered the more difficult, 28 mile long, Upper Animas and the Lower Animas, 31 miles long.

Running the Upper Animas is logistically

lot crashed and died. The kayaker waited at the take-out rendezvous until he starved to death. The person who told me this story pointed to this particular case as a good example of why you should never boat alone; but starving to death is hardly a boating safety problem. After all, if he happened to have a friend with him, would he have fared any better? Perhaps he could have eaten his friend, but my guess is that they both would have died. The problem here was not that the boater was alone,

but rather that he hadn't left a travel itinerary back home with specific instructions on when and how to activate a search. (I was glad to see your safety rule on this).

Of course even a single tragedy involving a solo trip is enough to tempt one to write rules against boating alone. But let's be fair here and make sure that the same standards of rule making apply to all boating issues.

For instance, let us say a kayaker gets pinned, can't get free, and dies. Lets say we exam the facts and all agree that this would not have happened if the boater had been in an open boat or a nice safe rubber raft. Would it not then be tempting to ban kayaks from the river? "Never take a kayak on moving water".

This, I think is a good analogy. Why don't we ban kayaking? My own personal experience with kayaks proved them to be extremely tippy and dangerous little boats. While my experience was short (about 20 minutes), it was very convincing.

We could convincingly argue that there is no reason why anyone needs to take a kayak on moving water; they were designed for hunting seals on flatwater. We could argue that kayaks are of virtually no practical value on the river, and their operators are usually hedonistic thrill seekers of a most egotistic ilk, strictly in it for the

rush. Certainly if it would save even one life a ban on kayaks would be worth it, right? In fact banning kayaks would probably save many lives each year, looking at the statistics. So why don't we make a rule against kayaking?

Well, probably because we non-kayakers have the good grace and sense to stay out of it and let the kayakers decide for themselves; after all, they are the ones who are taking the risks. The kayakers have decided that its worth it, for whatever reasons, and if they can look these risks squarely in the face and go anyway, who are we to stop them?

Let's use the same standard of rule making for boating alone. Unless the statistics start showing some horrible trend (which simply hasn't happened), let's let the solo trippers decide for themselves what safe and what's not. And when there are accidents, we should examine them carefully, not with the intention of placing blame, but rather to learn how to correct the problem and make these trips safer.

I do not want to dwell on morbid improbabilities, but it is also worth noting that if a solo boater meets with disaster, it is generally due to their own screw up. The most tragic kind of accident is when the victim is innocent, but dies because of someone else's bad judgment - something that happens more than it should. Solo trips preclude such cruel and undue deaths.

The reason I have taken the time to write such a lengthy dissertation on this subject is that the sport of river running is still in its infancy, particularly as regards the development of river regulations and permit restrictions. My fear is that since you guys are experts on many aspects of river running and since Western Whitewater will surely become a classic, some well intentioned bureaucrat might

adopt your safety rules, including "Never boat alone", as part of their regulations and make solo trips illegal on their river.

I think this would be a horrible mistake, and so, evidently, do many other authors in the field. A review of my river library shows a few books echoing the ACA and AWA rules "Boating alone is not recommended" or "Boating alone is discouraged" but none of them insist on this dictatorial "Never boat alone". These books include:

Whitewater Rafting by McGinnis

Rafting by Jeff Bennett

River Rescue by Bechdel & Ray

Floater's Guide to Colorado by Wheat

Rivers of the Southwest by Anderson & Hopkinson

River Safety Report by Walbridge

Whitewater River Book by Watters

Path of the Paddle by Mason

Whitewater Sourcebook by Penny

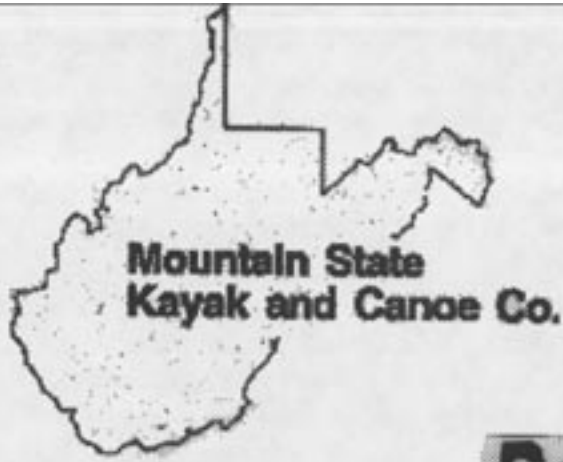
River Information Digest by ARMS, and others.

None of them seem to agree with your implacable rule. In fact several authors specifically disagree with it.

The River Safety Task Force of the ACA says in their Statement of Purpose "The ACA is concerned that well-meaning efforts to protect the individual not curtail the right of the informed, prepared paddlers to practice his or her sport. We believe that there is much to be gained by the individual and the sport as a whole by taking calculated risks.... We believe the individual alone is responsible for the consequences of his actions;.."

Similarly, Watters says in Whitewater River Book, "Safety is the responsibility and choice of individuals, and the choice is something that should be left in the wilderness experience".

Bill Mason, the legendary canoeist, teacher, author and filmmaker is more to



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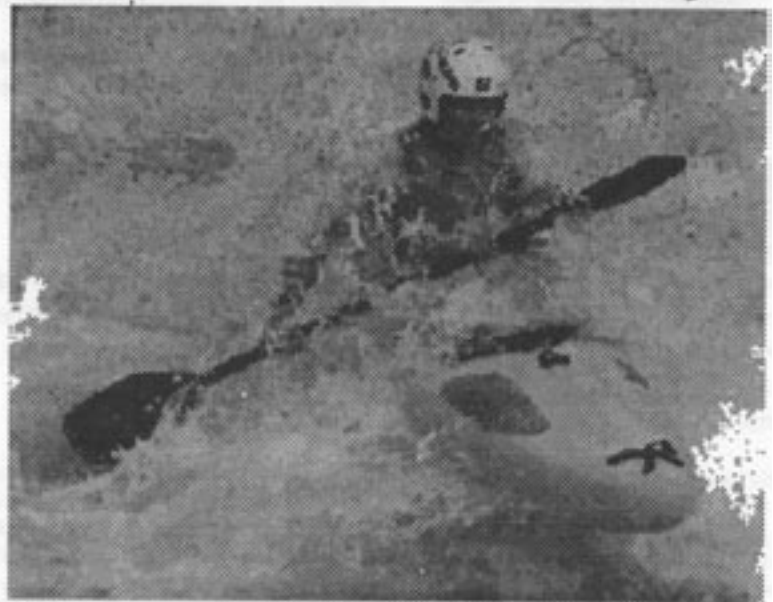
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complicated. Would the information in the new guide have allowed me to safely negotiate the Animas without getting into trouble... on or off the river? The answer in a word, yes.

The article contained appropriate flow suggestions, recommending 800- 3000 cfs... certainly a reasonable range for most boaters. The correct

phone number to obtain flow information was included. The three significant class V rapids on the river above Tacoma were specifically described and landmarks were given to allow the recognition of these monsters in time to scout.

The infamous Upper Box, a two mile long class V+ passage through an inescapable canyon at the end

of the Upper Animas, was mentioned and appropriate warnings were given, as well as the information boaters would need to avoid arrest for trespassing should they judiciously elect to skip the Box. In summary, the section on the Animas was excellent.

I wondered if the authors had fared as well in their coverage of other regions.

the point about this rule. In the introduction to Path of the Paddle he has an excellent discussion about solo trips, and although he is quick to point out their risks and dangers, he speaks clearly to those safety conscious groups and their well intentioned rule against boating alone.

Mason says "I am as safety conscious as they are, yet I cannot bring myself to say that traveling alone is a thing of the past. I don't think anyone has the right to say that".

Of course there are plenty of cases where this didactic rule has been published over the years. You can often find it in the safety rules of school or scout

groups, or boating clubs catering to novices. While this "Never.." rule should really be tossed in some deep river, it is perhaps, forgivable in the context of dealing with beginning boaters who simply haven't a clue. But in the Preface of Western Whitewater you strongly imply that the book is for **ALL** river runners, including daring experts.

You purposely avoid authoritarian dictums like "Never run class V" or similar rules which might be included for exceptionally naive students. So why do you say "Never boat alone"?

There is an issue of integrity that needs to be addressed here. If we are tempted to

include rules like "Never boat alone" simply to dissuade novices from doing something stupid, but really intend for them to be broken by advanced boaters, then certainly we should ban boating class V water, maybe even class IV. And we should probably up-rate all rapids at least one notch to protect these eager neophytes. Right?

This is an issue which has confronted many rule makers and rapid raters over the years, and most of them, like yourselves, have come to the conclusion that honesty is the best policy. Tell it like it is. So, if you going to address the issue of solo trips, lets do it with the same sense of

## Guidelines for Contributors

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

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

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Photos should be submitted in the form of color or black and white prints. Keep your originals and send us duplicates if possible; we can not guarantee the safe return of your pictures. If you want us to return your pictures,

include a self addressed stamped envelope with your submission. If you have slides, it is best to have prints made and to mail these instead. Because we publish in black and white, photos with a lot of contrast work best.

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

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

If you are writing about a commonly paddled river, your story should be told from a unique perspective. Articles about difficult, infrequently paddled or exotic rivers are given special consideration. Feature stories do not have to be about a specific river. Articles about paddling techniques, the river environment and river personalities are also accepted. Pieces that incorporate humor are especially welcome.

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

Profanity should be used only when it is absolutely necessary to effectively tell a story; it is not our intent to intentionally offend our more sensitive members and readers.

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

Articles will be edited at the discretion of the editors to fit our format, length and style. Expect to see changes in your article.

The American Whitewater Affiliation is a non-profit volunteer organization; the editors and contributors to American Whitewater are not reimbursed. ■

I turned to the section on Idaho. The list in the table of contents was impressive, containing almost all of the popular runs, as well as a few, more obscure streams. The classic multi-day floats on the Selway, Middle Fork of the Salmon and the Snake were admirably covered and included pertinent information of river management and permit

applications.

The section on the North Fork of the Payette, one of Idaho's class V classics, succinctly discussed the difficulties of this expert run. The article on the North Fork's little sister, the Deadwood, was equally concise and contained reliable information regarding levels and shuttling.

Of course not every

noteworthy whitewater run in Idaho is included in Wester Whitewater. Hair boaters will not find an article on the Golden Section of the South Fork of the Clearwater and creekers will not find coverage of the more obscure Lolo Creek or the Forks of the Lochsa.

Which raises an obvious point, one which Cassidy, Cross and Calhoun allude to in their

honesty.

For some reason, many people respond to the issue of boating alone in a very **personal** way; they often translate the question of whether it's okay to boat alone into "Would I ever boat alone?". But the real question here is "If somebody does want to boat alone, and appears competent to do so, should we **try** to stop them?".

Of course there will occasionally be a few crazies and spacecase novices who show up at the put-in alone for all the wrong reasons, but I think that any experienced ranger could weed out these types based on a short conversation about their experience and an examination of their gear.

Over the years, most authorities and organizations have realized that boating alone is not a problem for river runners. Of all the river permits I have obtained on western rivers over the last 12 years, I have never had any problems getting approval for a solo trip. The one exception to this was the river office at Dinosaur National Monument (this park specializes in fossils) which used to ban solo trips, but has recently relaxed these regulations somewhat.

River managers tend to be very decisive when it comes to dealing with serious safety problems. They hate it when visitors get killed in their park; and they are quick to remedy the problem with safety rules wherever they see **fit**. Hence the strict regulations on life jackets and other safety equipment. If boating alone were any **kind** of real safety problem, these people would certainly have made it more difficult to get permits for solo trips.

But they **haven't**. There is simply no experiential or rational reason to believe that boating alone is a safety problem in itself.

I think that there is, however, a potential problem with the publication of "Never boat alone". Typically, people new to the sport will fire themselves up with **legendary** stories of solo adventures like those of Patterson, Mason, Kirschbaum, and **Blackadar**. And since these great deeds blatantly violate one of the most emphatic safety rules on your **list**, it may appear that they will have to make a choice between being a safe boater or being a legendary boater. It may even encourage them to scoff at all your other safety rules.

Which would be unfortunate as your safety rules in Western Whitewater are actually very good. I especially like the ones starting with "Know how to recognize ...", "Know the **risks** of ...", and "Know the dangers of ...". These not only provide warnings, but good advice, and a list of keywords for the innocent to dwell on before they set out in some skinny little boat.

Another latent drawback to the inclusion of unfounded but sermonic rules like "Never boat alone" is that once a person does go solo, but doesn't meet the bogey man as warned, he may well start to feel above the rules, invincible, Godlike.

This is a wonderful feeling, to be sure, but truly dangerous. In fact, from my own experience, I would guess that the feeling of invulnerability is the root cause of most of the worst mishaps on the river. Publishing dire warnings which prove easy to ignore simply encourages this **kind** of overconfidence in boaters.

Safety issues aside, there is a particularly profane aspect to this "Never boat alone" rule that reeks of betrayal. Betrayal of the greatest heroes of our sport and many of the classic stories of our time. Indeed, a betrayal of the very thread and fabric of true wilderness adventure.

The heart of all profound wilderness experience is the direct, unprotected

meeting of individual and nature. Whether it's a search for solitude, or a battle with the Gods, solo trips have always provided a classic and profound way for this to **oc-**

Many of the stories that stir the imagination of adventurous boaters are tales of solo trips into the wilderness. Stories of discovery and learning, freedom and a new perspective; stories of adversity and adventure, and a passion for life. Stories like R.M. Patterson's **Dangerous River**, when on his first solo trip up the **Nahanni** River, he felt like "the last survivor of the human race cowering in the dusk beside his puny fire at the bottom of some vast shadowy canyon - a monstrous gash into the heart of a dead world".

Or Anderson's and **Hopkinson's** account in Rivers of the Southwest of **Walter Kirschbaum's** solo first descent of Gore Canyon of the Colorado, which starts off "Perhaps in 1962 no one else in the world was equally **qualified** to make the **run**... and in 1962 Gore Canyon represented the outer limits of possibility in whitewater boating. Kirschbaum would have to make the **run** alone....

Or the story of **Walt Blackadar's** incredible solo through **Turnback** Canyon of the **Alsek** River. The first and last boater to even think of running this 10 mile stretch of seething class VI whitewater. The experience was so awesome that he later tried to explain it by claiming that he had "missed the eddy", an unlikely story that no one believed.

These and many other tales told in the flickering firelight are the very soul of wilderness boating, the stuff of **dreams** and aspirations for many boaters. The ultimate experience. Very few of us **will** ever come close to these experiences, very few will actually ever **try**. But we are dealing with hopes and dreams here, as well as **reali-**

introduction; Western Whitewater is not meant to be a substitute for the more detailed guides which cover specific regions. For instance, if you want to explore some of the less popular, more demanding runs in Colorado or Idaho, you would still do well to purchase Wheat's Floater's Guide to Colorado, or Amaral's Idaho: The Whitewater State or Moore

and McClarans' Idaho Whitewater. In fact, the authors list available guides to each of the rivers they cover.

But for those looking for an effective overview of the almost limitless whitewater opportunities in the west, Western Whitewater will be an invaluable place to start. For instance, if you are planning your first boating trip to the

Pacific Northwest, reviewing the 130+ pages of text dedicated to this region should give you a very good idea where to go and when.

And Western Whitewater is not just intended for advanced hard boaters; it includes pieces on many class II-III rivers and practical information for both private and commercial rafters.

ties, and it seems particularly brutal and irresponsible to try to ban such legendary achievements.

As boaters we need to protect these dreams and the right to realize them someday. Even if it is discouraged by everyone involved, we must allow those few brave souls that are well prepared the right to boat alone into the jaws of death, the gates of hell or the depths of their own being. Any attempt to make these experiences il-

legal would be a terrible betrayal of all that wilderness boaters hold sacred.

So what should we do about this rule? I suppose that since I have decimated it (hopefully), I should offer something constructive in its place. Actually, I would like to deep-six it, just eliminate it, and leave the responsibility for this decision to the boater. I think there are way too many rules already. Boaters should be **thinking** about realities, not rules.

But if you do feel compelled to write rules, they should be phrased in a way that tries to be helpful rather than dictatorial. "Never boat alone" is an ominous edict that is not only misguided, but lacks any kind of useful advice; some explanation of the safety risk would be much more useful.

Perhaps:

"Boating alone generally means dealing with problems alone, and mishaps

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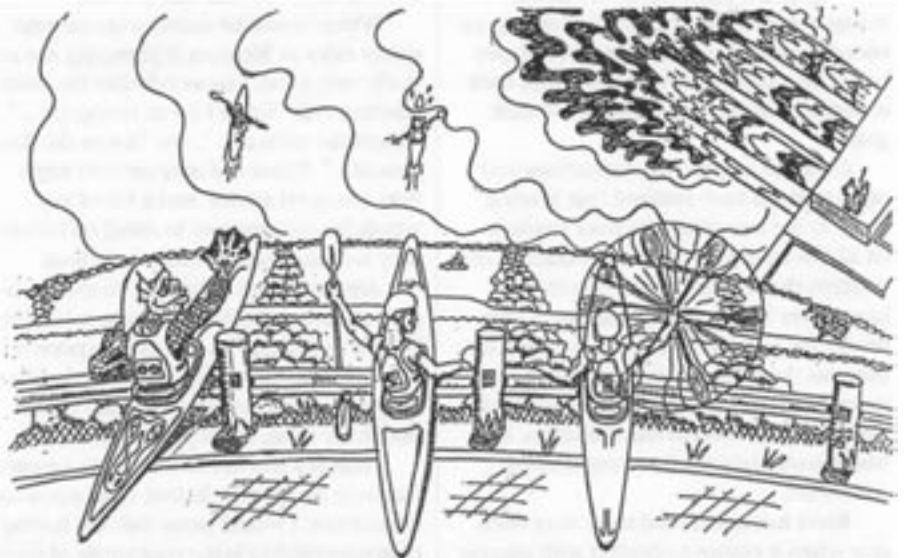
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A number of striking black and white and color photographs capture the spirit and diversity of western rivers and the maps by Melissa LiCon are practical and easy to read.

I was glad to see that the book contains specific information regarding threats to the environmental integrity of a number of rivers and refers readers who want to get involved

to appropriate national and regional river conservation organizations.

A brief section on river safety is also included. (See the lively opinion piece by Scott Morris in this issue of American Whitewater that addresses the issue of Cassidy, Cross and Calhoun's prohibition against solo boating.)

After surveying Western

Whitewater carefully, I must concede that my initial reservations and skepticism were unfounded. The authors have successfully tackled a monumental task. Western Whitewater is a remarkable achievement on a grand scale, a valuable reference to anyone planning to explore the rivers of the American west. ■

might have much more serious consequences" or, if you insist on a sterner warning, stick to the more reasonable and widely accepted rule:

"Boating alone is not recommended" or, if you must,

"Boating alone is discouraged" or, better yet:

"Boating alone is not recommended as mishaps on solo trips might have much more serious consequences."

There is actually a lot of good advice which should be offered to the solo boater to be, but it would never fit in a list of rules. If you would like to deal with this issue in more depth in any of your future publications, I would enjoy contributing to this effort. I am enclosing an article on solo trips that I wrote for Canoe Magazine (Dec. 1988), but I have learned a lot since then and would be glad to share these things with your readers.

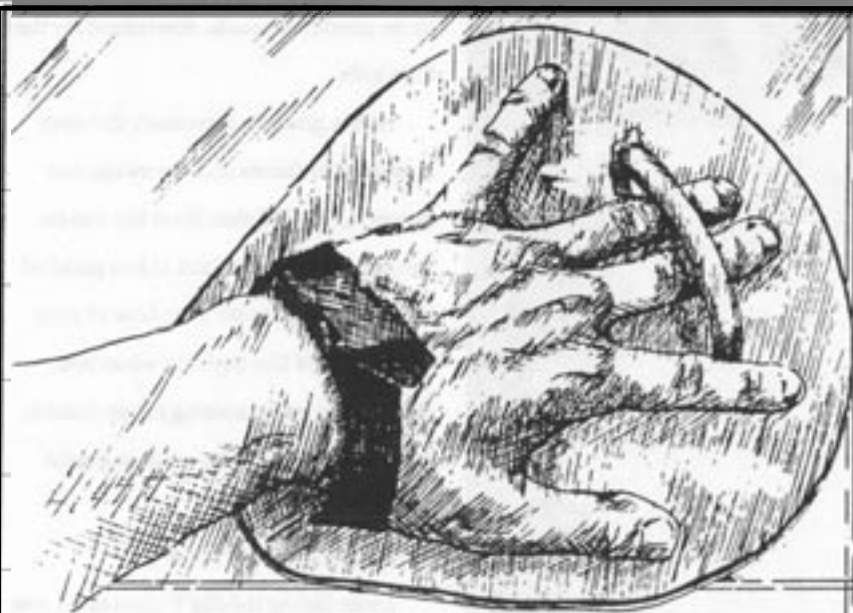
I would be delighted to hear about your thoughts and experiences on this issue.

And, aside from your edict on boating alone, I think Western Whitewater is an excellent piece of work.

Congratulations on a job well done!

Sincerely,

W.Scott Morris ■

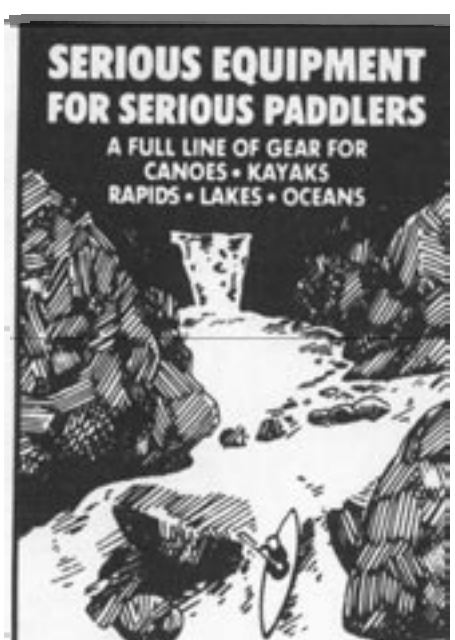


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# the **BIG WAHOO**



## Riding the Big Wahoo

by *Bob Gedekoh*

The first murky swells rolled smoothly and predictably. My boat rose and fell gently, as if I had climbed aboard one of those gentle **carousels**, downsized for the little kids.

As the gradient increased, the river mustered its forces and the swells **burgeoned** to big **kid** size. Soon the waves sprouted crisp peaks and, if you paddled hard, you could launch the bow of your boat skyward like a rocket when you reached the crest, soaring for an instant, before landing with a resounding **splat** deep in the next trough.

It felt good. Real good.

I was Riding the Big Wahoo and I was having Big Fun. Peering downstream from one of the peaks, it looked like this gigantic magical sine wave would roll on forever. Intoxicated by the ride, I threw caution to the wind... hardly noticing that the waves were starting to explode.



*Left page: Team Adventure Kyle Matinello, age 14, droppin' into Gore Rapid, 1000 cfs, somewhere between Steepness and Nutcracker, 1994 Cadet U.S. Team K-1. Right page: Kyle looking for a line in Jacobs, North Fork of the Payette*

Eventually one crashed down over my head and I emerged from the foam with an icy **snootful**. I had lost my momentum and when the next wave erupted, just as I reached the top, I slid backwards, surfing down into the trough, bracing all the while to avoid a flip.

It was an **interesting** turn of events, amusing, but not necessarily one I cared to repeat. Recognizing the power of the river, I resolved to put a little more muscle to the paddle. As I headed downstream the river grew increasingly turbulent, surging rhythmically from left to right as well as up and down. Along the banks the muddy water swirled through the scrub and around the trees; the **smaller** bushes shuddered in response.

The shoreline sailed by at a remarkable clip. How fast was I moving? It was hard to tell... certainly faster than I could run. Perhaps ten... maybe even fifteen... miles per hour.

I drove up and over several more mountains of water and, just as I was starting to think to myself, "How much longer can this fun last?", I found out.

Just ahead a swell towered above me... the Matterhorn of the **wavetrain**... and with a burst of energetic strokes I climbed to its magnificent peak, pausing for an instant to savor the view.

It was **breathtaking** all right, but not in the way I might have wished.

A Monster was **lurking** just ten feet ahead and ten feet below me. And it was voracious and it was mad and it was unavoidable. It was the Mother of All Holes...the Dark Side of the Big Wahoo!

The Monster had a vicious upstream grin. No... grin is not the word for it... it was more of a sneer. It was deeper than **Socrates** and it had a virulent downstream recycle. It was the Death Valley of Holes. It was the **kind** of hole where the unwary surf for a time, then windowblind for a

while, then cartwheel. It was the kind of hole where kayakers often swim and the **kind** of hole where swimmers sometimes recycle and the **kind** of hole where recyclers occasionally die.

It was the **kind** of hole that makes you wonder if Riding the Big Wahoo is really such a good idea!

I know the question on the tip of your tongue.

Where is this Big Wahoo? How can I find this river? Or, perhaps, how **can** I avoid it?

Well, like a state of mind, the Big Wahoo is everywhere.

Okay, **almost** everywhere. (Don't think you will find it in Kansas.) But you can **find** it on almost any sizeable whitewater river. You can find it on the Hudson and the Nolichucky and the **Chatooga**. You can find it on the Loehsa and the Arkansas and the **Animas**. You



ream Adventure

**Fred Coriell**, age 14, Launching a pillow in Gore Canyon, 1000cfs.

can find it on the Deschuttes and the Rogue and the Trinity.

You can find the Big Wahoo on virtually any river that swells... ie. floods... in response to especially heavy snow melt or rain. The important question is not whether you can find it; but whether you should find it.

In fact, defining the Big wahoo is not easy. Water levels that are intimidating to an advanced boater may seem trivial to an expert, particularly one familiar with a river. The North Fork of the Payette at 1800 cfs is a Big Wahoo to me, but the Big Dogs of Idaho consider this an inconsequential level. To a degree the Big Wahoo is in the eye of the beholder, but for the purpose of this article we are defining Paddling the Big Wahoo as tackling a commonly paddled river at an uncommonly high level.

High water adds a new dimension to paddling rivers that are, at the usual levels, class III and IV. Paddling the Big Wahoo can be rollicking fun, but it is not without serious risk. Days on big water are like the little girl in the nursery rhyme... when they are good they are very, very good, but when they are bad they are horrid.

## Staying Out of trouble

Flooded rivers present unique challenges and dangers; getting into trouble becomes all too easy, while getting out of trouble can be next to impossible. When it comes to high water, the odds are stacked to challenge the boater, if not to beat him.

Consider even the most basic factor, the essential "quality" of the water. Because high water is often a function of snow melt or early spring rains, the Big Wahoo generally ranges from chilly to frigid. One rarely gets to paddle the Big Wahoo on a warm, sunny day.

Flooded rivers are almost never clear, silt and sediment render the medium opaque, making it difficult to detect rocks and obstacles just below the surface. Even waves and holes take on a peculiar appearance. As anyone who has paddled the Grand Canyon knows, negotiating a booming class IV chocolate milk shake can be difficult.

I have paddled the Cheat and the Tygart when they were so muddy that my every splash left a gritty haze on my

glasses, one that was almost impossible to wipe away.

And dirty flood waters are often ripe with infectious agents. When heavy rains occur, particularly during warm weather, barnyards, sewage disposal plants and septic tanks release billions of bacteria and viruses into their watersheds. As a result boaters may develop common ailments such as swimmers ear (otitis externa) or skin infections (cellulitis) at the site of minor cuts and abrasions.

A good friend of mine once wound up in the hospital with a virulent infection in his hand after he skinned a knuckle on a flooded Tygart tributary. The infection, which developed in less than twelve hours, occurred in spite of vigorous cleansing and antiseptic application at the take out.

The risk of contracting more serious infections, such as hepatitis or giardia, is no doubt increased when paddling dirty flood waters. Cautious Connoisseurs of the Big Wahoo routinely flush their ear canals with a weak white vinegar/ alcohol solution and carefully rinse any cuts with clean water and apply an antibiotic ointment such as neosporin after getting off the river. Certainly extended roll practices

Riding the Big Wahoo



Left: Team Adventure Justin Souter, age 15, Droppin' into Gore Rapid, 1000cfs, 1994 Jr. U.S. Team C-2.25 Right: Team Adventure Luke Moore, age 14, Big Air, Gore Canyon, 1000cfs, 1994 Jr. U.S. Team C-1.

# A POINT TO PONDER

## Monitoring the Big Wahoo

As a consequence of geometry, the relationship between the level of a river, as measured with a vertical gauge, and the actual flow, as measured in cubic feet per seconds, is not a linear one. To put this simply, as most rivers get higher their gauges become less sensitive. The difference between eight feet and nine feet in terms of volume and actual flow is usually a hell of a lot greater than the difference between one and two feet.

This is a point well worth pondering when you are tempted to ride the Big Wahoo. Consider this data from the Lower Youghiogheny.

Gauge reading in feet	Actual flow (cfs)
1.7	600
2.0	750
3.0	1650
4.0	2900
5.0	4400
6.0	6350
7.0	8000
8.0	10500
9.0	13500
10.0	18000

## Riding the Big Wahoo

in cruddy flood waters are ill advised.

Microorganisms **are** not the only undesirable life **forms** which find their way into flooded rivers. High water often flushes snakes from their rocky dens along the river. Most of these are **harmless**, but **copperheads** and rattlesnakes sometimes are swept into these serpentine regattas. Needless to say a rattlesnake that has been flushed from the comfort of its den into a raging river may be a trifle foul tempered.

These snakes want out of the water and they want out of the water **NOW!** A **warm** dry rock would be peachy, but the deck of a kayak will do in a pinch. It is not always easy to dissuade a disgruntled and confused snake from **climbing** onto your boat.

Raft passengers are another life **form** that frequently winds up in the drink when rivers **run** high. Years ago a well known safety boater on the Cheat was faced with the unenviable task of retrieving an injured raft customer who had come to rest on a small boulder in the middle of the deluge. The Cheat was ten feet and rising fast; with each passing minute the rafter's pedestal became smaller and smaller.

The stalwart safety boater managed to **ferry** across the torrent to the microeddy behind the boulder, only to discover that the rafter was not the only critter **taking** refuge on the rock... he shared his **sanctuary** with two surly copperheads! The **rafter** was safely evacuated from the rock; the snakes were left to fend for themselves.

## River Renovations

All manner of debris finds its way into rivers in flood. Tires, outhouses, trees... you name **it**. As long as these objects are moving with the flow they offer minimal hazard, but when they come to rest at inopportune locations they become deathtraps. More than ten percent of whitewater fatalities occur secondary to entrapment in trees according to a recent AWA safety survey.

The Big Wahoo often deposits **strainers** in unexpected places. There is nothing more disconcerting than drifting around a blind corner in a familiar rapid, only to discover that a **strainer is blocking** your route of choice. If you are lucky, you spin into an eddy, if not... Of course this risk of entrapment persists long after the Big Wahoo has spent its fury.

Late this winter the Upper Yough raged at a level that amazed even the local **oldtimers**... nearly spilling out into the streets of **Friendsville**. This Wahoo was not without consequence. A forked tree came to rest across the face of the Tombstone Rock in Lost and Found **Up Falls**. This has always been a dangerous spot, the site of one fatality and a number of close calls.

Fortunately the tree, which could not be seen from the pool above, did not block the conventional route. But anyone blown "off line" was likely to find themselves in a very, very bad way.

That tree has since been removed but

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the point remains... **extra** caution is in order when paddling a river, even a **familiar** one, during or after a flush of high water. Under these circumstances it is a good idea to ask local boaters if they know of any new obstacles before launching.

Sometimes whole rapids change with a flood. The November deluge of 1985 altered the topography of the Cheat River forever, rearranging boulders the size of houses. Those of us who paddled the river for the first time, **several** days **after** the flood (at eight feet-a Big Wahoo in and of itself), got several eyepopping surprises.

Not the least of these was the **megahole** which appeared and remains at Big Nasty and the total "renovation" of Coliseum. Let me tell you there was some **scrambling** going on that day!

Within the past thirty years mudslides and avalanches have created completely new rapids on a number of popular **west-**em rivers, including the Colorado and the Piedra. We take these rapids for granted now, but you can be sure that their **ap-**pearance came as quite a surprise to the **first** boaters who paddled across them.

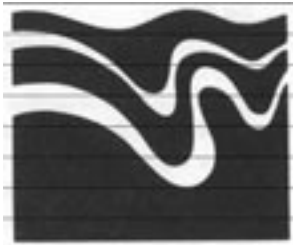
## Facing the Challenge

But these are problems that one encounters after the Big Wahoo. What about the challenge of paddling the Big Wahoo itself!

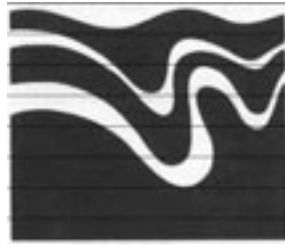
There is of course the obvious. Big water makes big waves. Big water is turbulent. Big water is unpredictable... it swirls and explodes unexpectedly. You **can** play with big water and it can play with you.

Eddy lines become eddy walls. Rapids "flowing upstream" form in eddies that **are**

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## Riding the Big Wahoo

usually tranquil. Sometimes these rapids take the form of whirlpools. **Breaking** out of such an eddy can present an unnerving and frustrating challenge. Some become inescapable.

We recently published an account of a perplexed boater who spent an **discomfit-**ing time recirculating in such a depressed

eddy on Chile's **Futaleufu**.

During high water eddy lines attain amazing strength, snapping boats around in an instant. It is easy to underestimate their power; if you don't **change your** lean fast enough, you will find yourself floundering for a brace, or even upside down. And rolling in a churning, swirling, **turbu-**

lent eddy can be far more difficult than **rolling** in a **straightforward** wave train.

It becomes difficult to roll when vigorous currents are playing seesaw **with** your paddle. Meanwhile your boat spins like a top. Inevitably you find yourself "set up" on the unfavorable side. Small wonder these spots earn names like "**The Eddy of Woe**".

Large waves and hydraulics are two of the most distinctive features of high water. At high flows rivers and their passengers move quickly. Everything happens fast, boaters must be able to read the river and choose an appropriate line without hesitation. Obstacles and holes must be anticipated well in advance if they are to be avoided. It is easy for the uninitiated to underestimate the speed and power of the Big Wahoo.

It helps if one is **familiar with** the river at lower levels, but certainly this does not guarantee an uneventful cruise. At high water levels familiar landmarks and even entire rapids sometimes disappear.

One stormy spring day a few years ago we paddled West Virginia's New at twelve feet. We maintained our orientation through the Keeney Rapids, but then we got "lost".

Nothing looked familiar. Although we had all paddled the New at more conventional levels countless times, we were thoroughly confused. Were we in Double Z? Undercut Rock? Coal Tipple? And where was Greyhound?

"Where in **hell** are we!?" we shouted to one another over the roar of the river. **This** riddle remained unsolved **until** the Bridge came into sight.

**Familiar** rivers that **are** tame at conventional levels take on an entirely different character at high flows. Consider the Lower Yough. Dangerous holes emerge along the popular river left route through Entrance. And no one is **going** to negotiate a slalom course through the exploding turbulence that is normally the **Dartmouth** Rapid.

**Dimple** Rock is gone, Swimmers Hole is gone, Double Hydraulic is gone!

But several "new" megaholes appear... pourovers that form behind rocks normally five to ten feet above the surface. If you know the river you can anticipate the location of these **maneaters**, but if you are **unfamiliar** with the river, you could be swept into one of these **traps**.

Even the most cautious **whitewater** paddlers find themselves stuck in **hydrau-**



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lics from time to time. Big Wahoo enthusiasts

should be prepared to deal with this. Paddlers should **try** to paddle forward and backwards across the hole, hoping to **find** a weak spot in the recycle. Often it is possible to punch out one of ends of the hydraulic. Allowing the boat to spin or doughnut in the hole may facilitate escape; if the current **catches** the bow or **stern**, it may **kick** the boat and boater out.

Intentionally (or unintentionally) flipping may also work if you extend your body and paddle **into** the deeper downstream currents. Of course sometimes large holes have ideas of their own; **after** a flip you may find yourself **"windowblinded"** upright again... and still in the hydraulic!

As a last resort decked boaters can pop their skirts, allowing their boats to fill with water. **This** extra weight may allow the boat to wash out of the hole. Unfortunately sometimes there is no choice but to swim for it. No one is eager to abandon their boat in a monster hydraulic, but it is

**best** not to stay in your boat until you **are** completely exhausted and have no reserve. Remember that swimmers often recirculate in large holes several times **before** they flush free. In these **circumstances** follow Walbridge's advice and use your body to "Make shapes".

River wide ledges which may be of little consequence at low levels can form gigantic keepers at higher flows. And the carved faces of rocks, **normally** high above the surface, may **create** menacing undercuts as water levels **rise**.

Familiarity with the river, the ability to read water and solid boating **skills** should be requisites to high water **runs**.

It is always best to paddle the Big Wahoo with a cadre of **skilled** boaters who understand the risks involved and agree to look out for one another. The individual who knows the river best should lead and a strong paddler with good self rescue **skills** should sweep.

The group should make every effort to stay together; remembering that **swift**, powerful currents can separate members

of a party by more than half a mile in just a minute or two. Whenever possible, those in the lead should pause in an eddy or pool to allow the group to "tighten up".

Rescues can be surprisingly difficult on the Big Wahoo. In the unfortunate occurrence of a "Yard Sale", boaters, boats and gear drift apart quickly and it is easy to lose sight of them. Assuring the safety of a swimmer must be the foremost priority, retrieving gear a secondary, albeit important, concern. Slings and **carabineers** that are readily accessible can facilitate the rescue of abandoned canoes and kay-**aks**, especially if the boats **are** outfitted with adequate floatation.

Even so, **salvaging** boats and paddles can be nearly impossible on continuous rivers like the Colorado's Animas during peak snow melt. At high water the **Animas** features big, booming class III-IV rapids that extend without respite for miles and miles. To make matters more **difficult**, there are few large boulders along the shore... hence there are precious few eddies. Swimmers, who can pull themselves





**Team Adventure**  
 Silas Treadway, age 15, Tunnel Falls, Gore Canyon, 1000cfs.

## Riding the Big Wahoo

onto shore, **generally** fare better **than** their gear. Over the years quite a few boats and paddles have been devoured by the impenetrable Second **Box** Canyon of the **Animas**.

## Boat Selection

What is the best boat design for paddling the Big Wahoo? Ask ten experts that question and you will get ten different answers. **Squirrely** currents can create havoc with diminutive slalom and **squirt** boats. But proponents of these vessels argue that they tend to slice through or get blown out of large holes. And, because they are light and maneuverable, a few well-timed strokes may allow you to dodge trouble entirely.

Larger boats **are** more stable and forgiving... less likely to flip and easier to keep on line. But high volume boats, particularly short ones, tend to stick and recycle in hydraulics. Large boats are usually heavier, a disadvantage when quick evasive changes in course **are** imperative, but an advantage when punching through large waves and holes.

If entrapment is a concern, **glass** boats, which sometimes break apart releasing their occupants, **and/or** boats with large, keyhole cockpits are wise choices.

Entrapment is less of an issue in open boats and they generally punch through big water effectively. But unless they **are** filled with floatation swamping can be a problem and, by virtue of their weight and bulk, they can be difficult to rescue.

## Big Water... Big Fun

All things considered, it is easy to see why the Big Wahoo may not be every boaters bucket of **tea**. Running rivers at high levels can be an intense and **scary** experience and there are many excellent boaters who just don't enjoy paddling close to the edge.

Running high water requires a lot of **skill**, strength and judgement, and perhaps a little bravado. There are unique risks inherent to running high water, but there are rewards as well.

The decision to put on a river is an individual one, each paddler must decide for themselves whether the **risks** are acceptable. **This** is never more true than when rivers run **high**. ■

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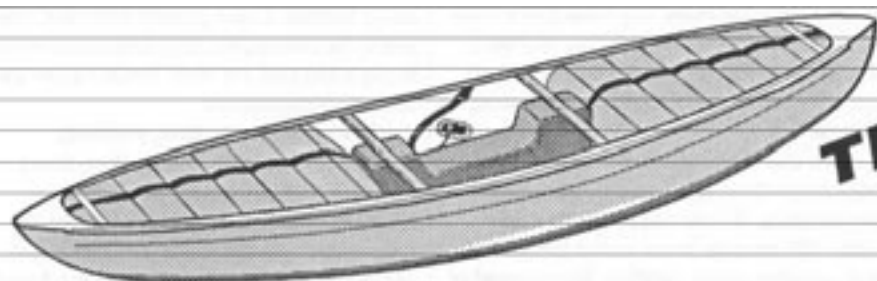
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*Team Adventure*

*Adam Boyé, age 16, North Fork of the Payette, 2000cfs, climbing out of Nutcracker, 1994 Jr. U.S. Team C-2*

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# AND THEY LIVED TO TELL THE TALE

by Barry Tuscano



This story has been told countless times, and it *still* makes a great party tale. The biggest problem I have with setting it down for a national audience is how to tell it without **looking** stupid.

Knowing what I now know, or even what the most basic whitewater novice knows today, it's incredible that "it" happened. But you **gotta** understand that, "this" was way back in the old days.

I began my whitewater career in 1971 on the Youghiogheny River. Riding the rapids in a little raft was an instant hit with me. Riding them outside the raft was even better. My friends and I never attempted to learn anything about moving water. We thought the only way to approach a rapid was full speed ahead, right down the middle. Our raft trips involved more **swimming** than paddling. We didn't have the foggiest notion what a hole or an eddy was. If the raft flipped, that was fun, and made the day more memorable. You have to remember that there was no one else on the river to learn from - not that anyone could have taught us anything.

In 1973 I was introduced to the Pittsburgh Explorers Club. This was, in those days, a social organization which regularly scheduled outdoor activities such as rock climbing, parachuting, and **whitewater** rafting. The activities offered an excuse for going to exotic locations to drink. The activities were always strenuous, but the parties afterward were real killers.

Explorers Club members were undertaking some monumental expeditions and always had great stories to tell. In reality most of them were in way over their heads. I fit right in with their rafting program. They ran trips to the New and



**Gauley** Rivers. That **first run** Gauley club lore.

Some of us showed up late and had to take our little Sears raft. The older members had **all** secured spots in the Club's big rafts. The Club has a slide of us upside down and airborne at Pillow Rock that is still shown at Christmas parties. We swam every rapid on the Gauley that day.

For the next couple of years we made trips to the New River two or three times per summer. We owned two Sears specials - \$99 on sale, horse collar life jackets, and wooden canoe paddles. We camped at Fayette Station, where our night-time activities became legendary.

Once our party was bigger than we could fit into the rafts, so we got a truck inner tube and took **turns** riding the rapids in the tube. Pretty soon we were fighting over who got to ride the tube. The New was perfect for this - deep, with few rocks. We rode inside the tube with our feet hanging down and our arms over the sides. It was amazing how the tube caught the deepest current and **skirted** the holes.

Not that we knew what a hole was. We had learned that there were rapids called The Keeneys and Greyhound. These

were places where we could count on having fun - **usually** outside the raft.

**Occasionally** we would encounter a raft trip - the industry was in its infancy then - **and** the guide would get a real concerned look and ask us if we knew

what was coming

up.

What a sight: two little yellow rafts with four people in each, straddling the tube, riding the raft like a bronco buster. **We had lost so many** paddles that we began tying ropes from the handles to the raft. Sometimes my dog rode in the front of the raft. The inner tube would tag along behind. Those guides had every **reason** to be concerned. But there's no doubt in my mind that we were having more fun **than** their customers.

It was about this time, probably around the campfire and the keg, that I came up with my theory of whitewater relativity that can be summed up as: "Its only water". To **illustrate** the finer points of the theory, I regularly invited my friends with the worst hangovers to join me for a sunrise swim through Fayette Station Rapid. **This morning** ritual not only would broaden our insights into the dynamics of rivers, but it instantly cleared the cobwebs associated with the excesses of the night before. I've since revised this theory; but what is so amazing to me now is that we got so far into the sport without knowing anything at all about the technical aspects of it - and survived.

Well, its time to get to the good part of the story - the part that makes me look stupid. If you thought that I already covered that - you're wrong.

## ACT 1:

It was the **first** weekend in October, **1976**. I **know** this because it was a month before my wedding. I was 25. I was madly in love. I was irrational. **Must** have been the hormones.

We were **at** **Summersville Dam**; my bride to be and I were having a **tough** time with my theory of **whitewater** relativity. It was **only** water, but it **was** 6 inches deep and it was inside my tent. We spent the **early morning** hours **cramped** in our VW Bug in wet sleeping bags. It **was** raining as hard as I've ever seen it rain and the water was everywhere. Shortly **after** daybreak I downed a couple of cold Rolling Rocks and went **looking** for the other Explorers. I found them at the base of the dam, **hypnotized** by the sight of the water blowing out of the dam. It had **rained** four inches over **night** and the lake was overflowing. The water was lapping at the railing above the **put-in**. I can **imagine** what thoughts were going through the minds of the others who had come to take on the mighty Gauley. Something akin to respectful awe. I can't imagine now what I **was** **thinking**.

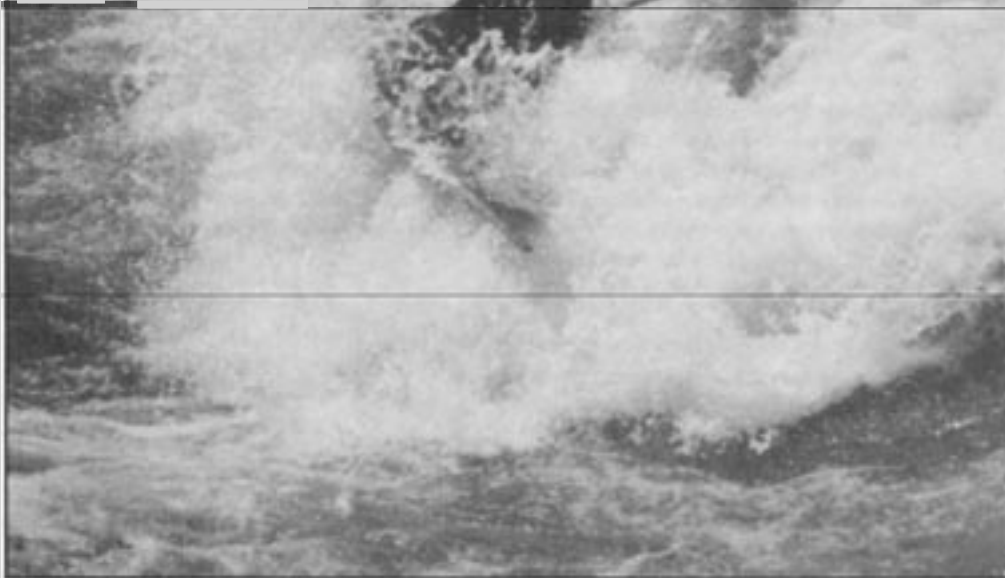
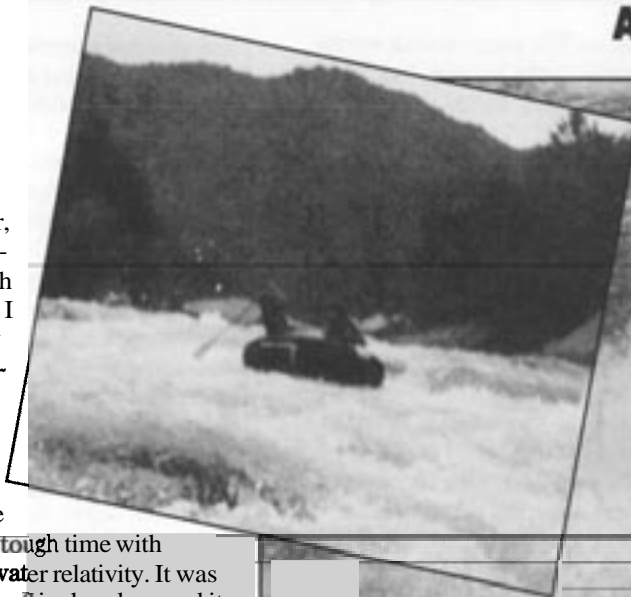
"Where's the **rafts**? Come on, let's get going". I was greeted **with** blank stares, and stern admonitions. **Not a single other** person was even **contemplating** getting on the river. I had never considered that we wouldn't

So what's wrong with this picture? Later that day I **formulated** a new rule to live **by**: "Never make a life and death decision on a **morning** that your breakfast came from a brewery." **This** has served me well over the years.

And, no, I didn't put on the Gauley by myself at 15,000 CFS. You think I'm stupid, or what? I talked some of the Explorers **into** driving down to look **at** the New.

## Act 2:

Fayette Station bridge. **20** miles south. Still raining. Same respectful awe, **etc...** A group stands and stares at the New River. The **campsite** above Fayette Station Rapid is under water. Fayette Station Rapid is gone. The water is **rushing** by at 50 mph, about ten feet below the bridge deck. The



Above: New River Gorge, 12 feet, Middle Keaney. (Photo by Scott Underhill)

**Painted** gauge on the bridge pier is under water.

There's some discussion by the Explorers as to what it would be like to put on the New **at** this level. I'm **looking** at where the takeout rapid- Fayette Station- used to be and arguing that it will **all** be washed out. Several of the more experienced Explorers keep mentioning "Big Holes". I think I quoted the Theory of Whitewater Relativity.

**Final** result: Four of us decide to take a Sears special and an inner tube and give it a whirl. Where, you ask, did I find three other crazies to risk this with me? **#1**. That's Kitty, my wife. She loves me and has no choice. **#2** That's Joady, my sister. She trusts me and has a touch of my love of adventure. **#3** That's Ron, Joady's husband. He loves Joady and has no choice.

Now we're rolling. Load the gear and

head up the road to Fayetteville. Remember this is pre-Bridge. Halfway up the Gorge Road we're turned back by a mudslide. I have since made this a rule to live by "When shuttle roads **are** washed out the river Gods are trying to give you one last warning."

The detour was **30** miles back through Gauley Bridge to Fayetteville. We stopped at a gas station to blow up the raft, then proceeded to Cunard.

We donned our heavy 2-piece hooded diving suits and primitive **PFDs**. Ever safety conscious, we also wore cheap plastic helmets. Our paddles were dutifully lashed to the raft. Kitty and I were using homemade paddles that I had crafted in woodshop. I had used a wood canoe paddle for a pattern, lengthened the shaft and enlarged the blade. For strength I use solid red oak. They were heavy, but un-

breakable. Each paddle had a hole drilled in the grip and we knotted a piece of parachute cord long enough for freedom of movement. No one ever considered that it was also long enough to strangle someone.

I don't remember there being any talk about what to expect once we were on the river. We did discuss the possibility that the power lines below railroad might be in the water. I don't think anyone had any contingency plans if they were. We hoisted that raft and began the long descent to the gorge. Our **trusty** inner tube was in the raft and the raft was on our heads. If anyone had any reservations about the river, surely we would have turned back when we got to the part of the hill where a huge **mudslide** had totally obliterated the road.

We were knee deep in very unstable mud and rock there and could easily have triggered another major avalanche. But I guess the Gods were saving us for the river.

The water was so high that the put in was on the lower road. The river here looked like the ocean. It was sooooo wide, with huge smooth waves rushing by. For 50 yards along each bank there were trees **poking** up through the current. I realized that whatever happened, it was going to be fast.

I have since paddled many high water runs. I was on the Lower **Yough** the day of the '85 flood. I paddled the Grand Canyon, the Cheat at 10 feet, the Tygart at 13 feet, the Ottawa in the Spring. But this was the fastest sustained current I can ever remember seeing. In the time it takes to describe this debacle, we were at the take-out. Maybe 15 minutes.

### ACT 3:

We jumped on the raft, straddled the tubes, got a good knee grip and paddled like hell to get out through the trees. Once into the current everything was smooth sailing. The swells were 15 feet high and a quarter of a mile long. No need to paddle; we were traveling too fast already. Down past the railroad bridge in three swells - about two minutes. **Luckily** we ducked under the power line, short of the crest of the wave. A few feet higher and we would have been "wired"!

Having negotiated what I thought would be the only threat on the river, I began a short discourse on how easy this was going to be. Probably even boring. Meanwhile as we roared around the next bend off in the distance there appeared a new feature, one that none of us had ever

seen before. The same smooth swells were visible to the horizon, but then the horizon was fairly abrupt. In the center of the river a spout of water was shooting about 30 feet into the air.

It took a few seconds for this to register. Then Joady piped up with the first rational idea of the day. "Hey that looks pretty big. Maybe we better try to get over to the side".

My reaction was less rational. "Just paddle hard. Its only water."

At any rate we could never have gotten over in the seconds that were left before we crested the lip of the huge caldron of exploding white froth. That instant will be forever etched in four memories, perhaps more in mine, since I was the one responsible for this folly. Looking down 30 or 40 feet into the bottom of the hydraulic which stretched from **tree-line** to **tree-line**, there was no doubt in anyone's mind that we were about to die.

I remember **thinking**, "Now I know what a hole is."

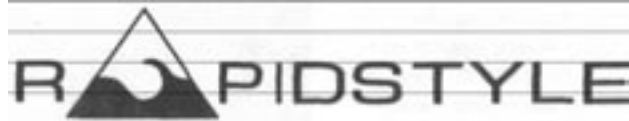
That raft never even slowed down on impact. I think we rode it all the way to the bottom of the river. Then I was being

tumbled and cartwheeled through a chaotic mass of foaming and wrenching water. The force was indescribable. Any resistance was out of the question. **This** river was going to do what it would to me and all I could do was submit. I tried to curl into a ball, but **centripetal** force kept my limbs splayed.

Suddenly I was clobbered by a huge **flume** of water and was **carried** with it. I tucked into a ball again and the noise faded. The water became black and I was sure that I was on the verge of eternity. I closed my eyes and waited. I was being swept away with such force that I felt like a tiny insect. Finally, my lungs forced me to attempt something. I opened my eyes and for the first time could see light in one direction.

"**That** must be up." I broke into a strong breast-stroke and seconds later surfaced.

Simultaneously I began **sucking** in air and surveying the surface for other survivors. The **first** thing I saw was the raft. It was floating upright about ten feet downstream. A couple of strokes brought me to it and I flopped over the side in seconds.



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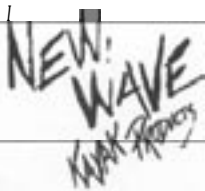
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Upstream and off to the right I spotted the inner tube and I almost collapsed with relief when I realized that Ron and Kitty were clinging to it. I thought I could see Joady's yellow helmet and orange life vest further down river toward the right shore.

My first job was to get to Kitty and Ron and haul them back into the raft. I grabbed my paddle rope and pulled in a splintered oak shaft. Another rope had nothing at all. All of the paddles were either broken or gone. Suddenly being in the raft seemed less than secure. I began hand paddling towards the tube, making very little progress.

Kitty and Ron were about twenty feet away from me when we came to the second hole. This time I recognized what was coming from the signs... another abrupt horizon with spout of water shooting high into the air. I glanced towards the tube for a second and then, terrified, I threw myself spread-eagle across the raft and grabbed the oar-locks with both hands.

I don't know what I thought the raft was going to do, but I was determined to not relinquish those oar-locks.

From this position in the raft I wasn't really able to see much, but after my experience in the first hole, that suited me fine. I closed my eyes.

I never did let go of those oar locks. At

some point not far into my second hole ride the raft was torn free. The oar locks were my only connection to reality and I held them like my life depended on it.

I finally surfaced, spitting up water and sucking in air. Miraculously the tube was right beside me and I latched on to it. A short distance away I could see the deflated remnants of the raft floating down stream. I had no desire to retrieve it.

Feelings of security are by all means relative. Floating a 50,000 CFS river with two other half-drowned people on an inner tube suddenly felt great. I started yelling for everyone to stroke for shore. We were exhausted and scared. One more hole would certainly kill us. Letting go of the tube and swimming would have been easier, but none of us were willing to relinquish that tube. We made very slow progress to the right shore, but, thankfully, the river had no more terrible surprises for us.

As we crawled up the bank my first reaction was to collapse, but I was so worried about Joady that I scrambled up to the railroad tracks and started running, scanning the river and calling. I did this for almost a mile and was despairing of ever seeing my sister again when I rounded a bend and spotted her calmly strolling

down the tracks.

I couldn't believe it. We had all survived. I should have been overjoyed but I was overcome with exhaustion. I collapsed right there and began retching. Joady had to help me walk back to Kitty and Ron. She explained that she had surfaced from the hole near the right shore, grabbed a tree, then made it to shore.

I hadn't realized it, but I was the only one to hit the second hole. You might say I got what I deserved. Kitty and Ron neatly skirted the second hole close enough to see my terrified face as I fell into it.

We were less than a one-half mile from Fayette Station. It had taken us 15 minutes to get there, most of it spent swimming or hanging on an inner tube. Later I learned that the big holes that did us in were formed by Whale Rock in Upper Keeney and the undercut in Double Z. I have since paddled the New at fifteen feet and had a close look at each of these holes as I drifted by. At fifteen feet they look very impressive-but there is no comparison to the way that looked that fateful day from the brink-at more than thirty feet- with more than twice the flow.

## Aftermath

So, you ask, what effect did this amazing experience have on us? Well, for a time I had a hard time finding folks to take rafting. We all knew that some or all of us should have died that day.

Did whitewater lose its charm? Well, figure this out: I got a kayak the next summer, which opened up a new chapter in my notorious career of aquatic misadventures. Kitty did indeed marry me the next month and has also mastered the kayak. We now have a 15 year old son who has mastered the Upper Yough.

Joady and Ron never got in another raft and try not to think about whitewater. They got their fill of whitewater all in one big helping. Shortly after our debacle they found the Lord and dedicated their lives to Jesus.

I would argue that stupid is someone who doesn't learn from his experiences. Just because someone or something hammers you over the head doesn't mean you shouldn't consider it educational. I do have a very thick skull, but I can learn. I may be crazy, but I'm not stupid.

These days I have a deeply ingrained respect for rivers. Over the years I've been taught many a valuable lesson by these powerful teachers, but that first one remains the most memorable of all.

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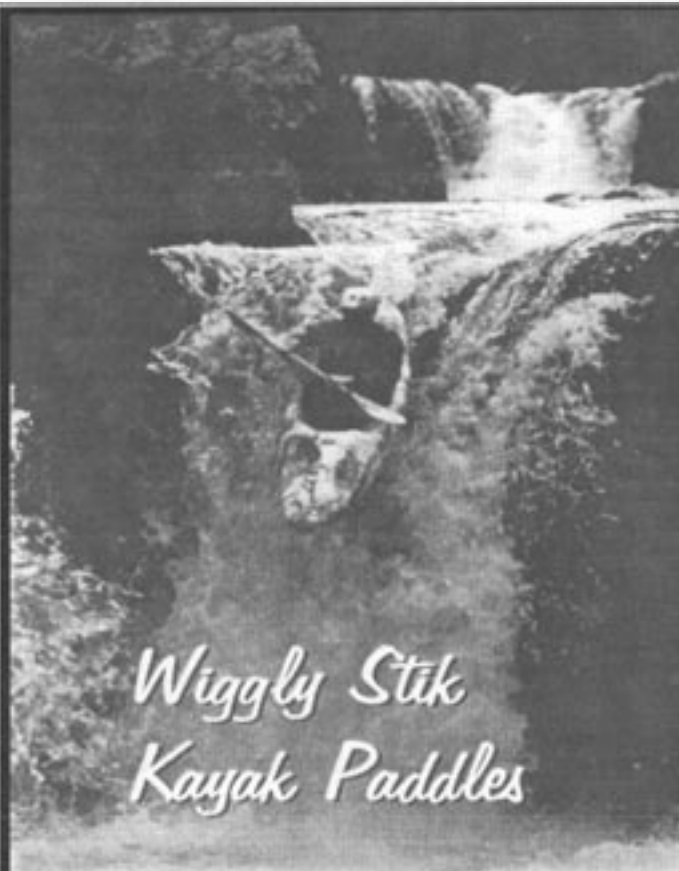
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## A Tale from the Big Wahoo

Based on the CGRR Nolichucky Trip of *May 28, 1994*

by David Parker



### Dramatis Personae:

David Parker, Duke of Decatur  
Mike Frace, aka Sir Swimsalot  
Sir Francis Cheung, a noble paddler  
Dave Skelhorn, a clown  
Jon Spaller, a clown  
Steve Smith, a seer  
Tracy Letterman, Earl of Millegeville  
The Boy Scout, aka Jeff Peters  
Ruth Ann Marchbank, paddling a duckie  
Joyce Reynolds, Empress of the Tick Farm  
Julie Keller, aka The Gripper, wife of Francis  
Karen, wife of Tracy  
Audrey Pennington, Princess of the Narrows  
Many other paddlers

## ACT I

### Scene 1 (Parker's Palace)

[Enter Duke]

#### Duke:

Now is the winter of my discontent  
Made gloriously summer by paddling  
trips. And all the snow that fell upon my  
house  
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.  
Now is my brow bound with paddling hel-  
met  
My torso, fore and aft, padded with PFD  
I take up the broad bladed lance, the  
paddle  
And I cry, "Bring on the Nolichucky!"

### Scene 2 (Green's Liquor Store)

[Enter Duke]

#### Duke:

One case of beer, one bottle of wine — No!  
Two cases of beer, two bottles of wine!  
In sooth I hope 'twill suffice my palate  
(Well, maybe a bottle of gin) — Anon,  
I am off.

## ACT II

### Scene 1 (A campsite near Erwin)

[Enter Duke, Spaller, Smith and Empress.]

#### Empress:

Greetings and felicitations I bring  
From the Tick Farm whence, lo, I have  
traveled.

#### Spaller:

Here comes the Empress, in sportive hu-  
mor  
Fain would I jest ere twilight fall this day.

Smith:

You axe three paddlers, yea, whom des-  
tiny—  
That hath, as its instrument, this world  
And what is in't, the never-surfeited river,  
will trash many ere sunset tomorrow.

#### Duke:

Yet what strange drowsiness possesses  
me  
Verily, will I take my rest. Wondrous  
Heavy. And be fresh to paddle anon.  
I will not adventure my discretion.

## ACT III

### Scene I (the Nolichucky River put in)

[Enter Tracy and Sir Francis.]

#### Tracy:

Thou see'st we are not all alone unhappy:  
This swift flowin' river going by  
Presents more woeful pageants than the  
scene  
Wherein we play.

#### Francis:

All the world's a river,  
And men and women here merely pad-  
dlers.

They have their eddies and their ferries,  
And one man in his time surfs many holes.

### Scene 2 (On the Rocks)

[Enter the Empress, Sir Francis, Sir Swimsalot and Duke]

#### Empress:

Ye, what monstrous hole awaits me here,  
Would that I were positioned straightaway  
Ileigh-ho, I am undone! [Exeunt vessel]

#### Duke:

Roil, roil, oh thou wondrous river  
Yet I will try the last. Beside my boat  
I give my strong low brace: Hark! Hark!  
And yet

What water fills my vessel? To prevent  
My navigation? Zounds! I am undone! [Ex-  
eunt vessel]

#### Sir Swimsalot:

Forsooth I know not primogeniture  
Imbues in me aquatic contretemps  
When least I glub expect glub, glub,  
Glub, glub, glub, glub. [Exeunt vessel]

#### Francis:

In sooth, I promise you (except for Quar-  
ter Mile)  
The way is mush easier as we go.

### Scene 3 (Quarter Mile)

[Enter Skelly, Duke and Sir Francis]

#### Skelly:

To sneak, or not to sneak: that is the ques-  
tion:  
Whether 'til nobler in the mind to suffer  
The scrapes and bruises of outrageous for-  
tune  
And flail my arms against a river of  
troubles  
In my opposing end swim. To sneak, to  
swim  
No more — and by a sneak we say we end  
The headache, and the thousand natural  
shocks  
Swimming flesh is heir to! 'Tis a consum-

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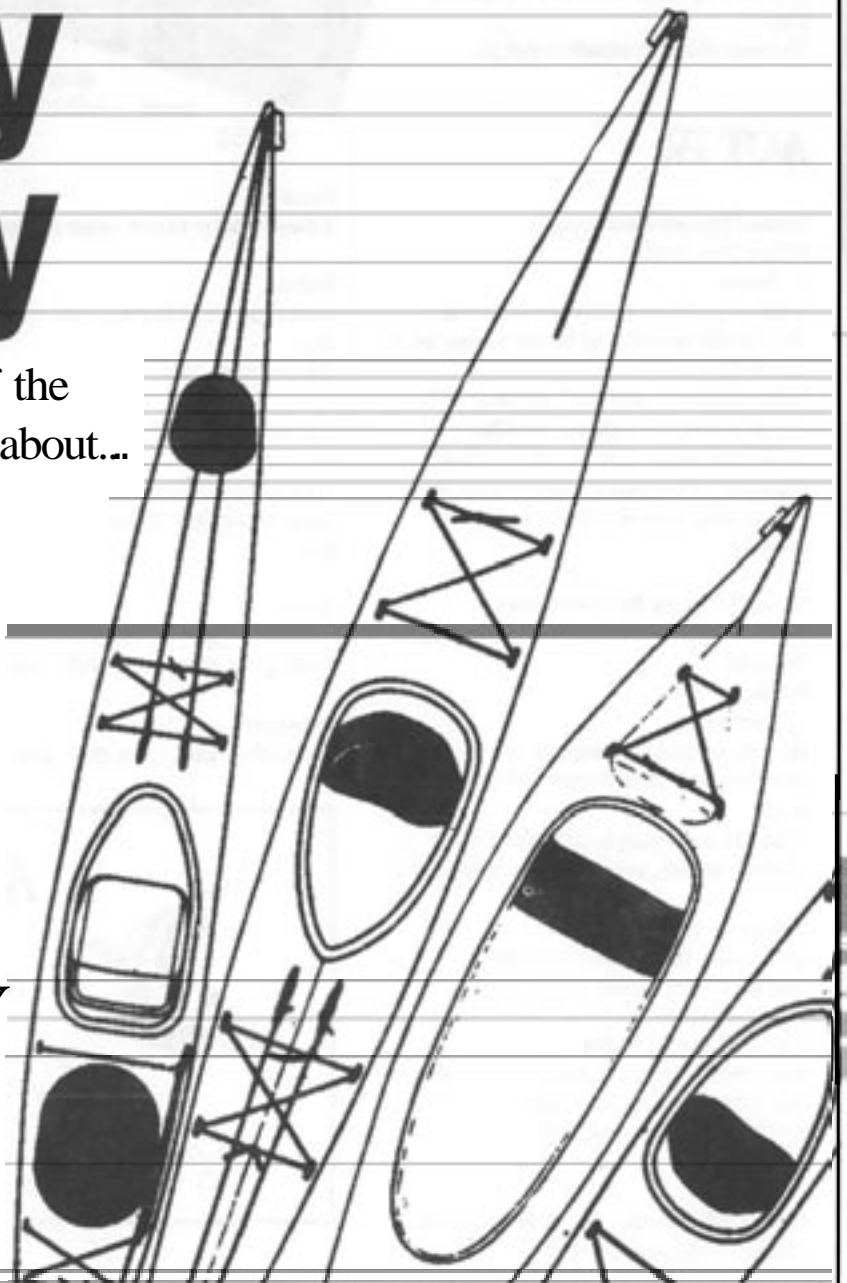
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mation

Devoutly to be shunned. To sneak, to swim —

To sneak perchance to swim; ay, there's the tub.

**Duke:**

I grunt and I sweat through this weary rapid  
And now find my off-side ferry will not do  
I'll switch hands, the bet—AAUGH!  
[Exeunt vessel]

**Francis:**

In sooth, I promise you (as I quoth earlier)  
The way is much easier as we go.

## ACT IV.

Scene I (below Roostertail)

[Enter Boy Scout]

**B. Scout:**

Is this a paddle which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.  
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight, or art thou but  
A paddle of the mind, a false creation,  
Proceeding from the beer-oppressed  
brain?

Scene 2 (Lower Rollercoaster)

[Enter Ruth, Princess, Duke, Julie and Sir Francis]

**Ruth:**

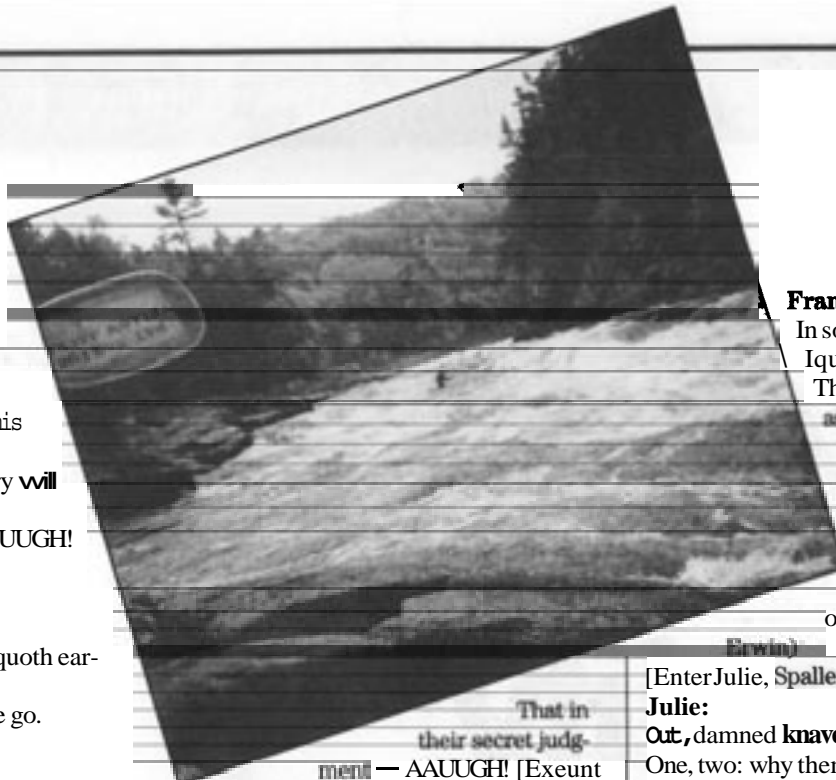
O, wonder!  
How many goodly paddlers are there here!  
How beauteous the river is! O brave new world  
That has such people in't! AAUGH!  
[Exeunt vessel, very long swim ensues.]

**Princess:** (sings:)

Come unto these yellow sands  
And then take hands.  
Curtsied when you have and kissed  
The wild waves whilst.  
Why, 'tis a boisterous and a rude river,  
Not for beginners. Why, she defies me  
AAUGH! [Exeunt vessel]

**Duke:**

I know not whether the river gods rule  
For some displeasing service I have done



**Francis:**

In sooth, I promise you (as I quoth earlier)  
The way is much easier  
as we go.

## ACT V.

Scene 1 (the take out at the campsite near

Erwin)

[Enter Julie, Spaller and Duke]

**Julie:**

Out, damned knave! Out, I say!  
One, two: why then 'tis time to do't Hell is murky.

Re, my lord, fie! A paddler undeterred.

**Duke:**

Here's neither bush nor shrub to bar  
The take out of this noble crew.

**Spaller:**


Here, kiss the book [Gives him drink]  
Though thou canst swim like a duck,  
Thou art made like a goose.

Scene 2 (the campfire)

[Enter Duke.]

**Duke:**

If I offend, it is with my good will.  
That you should think, I come not to offend,  
But with good will. To show my simple skill,  
That is the true beginning of my end.  
[Exeunt/■]



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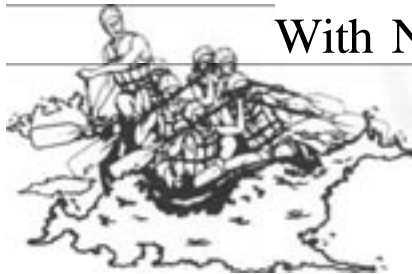
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Lee Beaufort wearing Shogun's Paddles, West River, MA. Dave Steiner photo.

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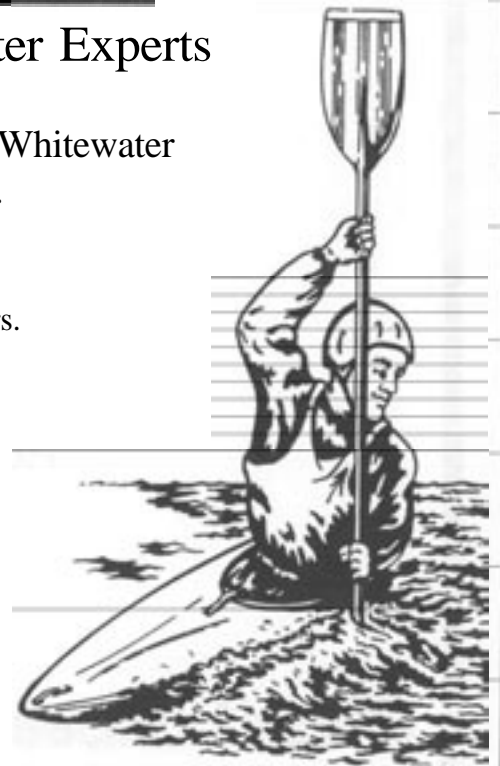
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## A Blast from the Past Tips on Surviving the Big Wahoo

# I DIG HAIR- BIG, NOT LONG



Reprinted from the 1971 Winter issue  
of *American Whitewater*

By Dr. Walt Blackadar,

*Editor's note: Dr. Walt Blackadar, who died paddling one of his favorite rivers, the South Fork of the Payette, was a true whitewater pioneer. He was among the first to paddle many of the western United State's most difficult runs and he was renowned for his ability to negotiate big water. This article, written for *American Whitewater* in 1971, is of more than historic interest; Blackadar's tips on paddling BIG WAHOO whitewater are still quite valid today.*

One point of interest, the meaning of the term "Hair" has evolved during the past twenty-five years- in Blackadar's day "Hair" was used to refer to big rivers running high, as opposed to steep, technical creeks.

Paddling Hair need not be nearly as exhausting as many boaters make it. We all started paddling our first big water with the shout "paddle hard —paddle!" in our ears. Many of our best boaters have never been able to forget this philosophy even after they no longer needed it for reassurance. Actually the charge technique is sometimes the cause of upsets in big water. My motto is quite the antithesis, "When in Hair relax and keep your paddle high and dry."

Most of us have graduated to whitewater via open canoes, and we soon learned in these fragile craft to back paddle and let the boat climb the waves. A crashing onslaught by the boater soon brought a full boat and capsize. A kayak (K-1) under forward power, going faster than the oncoming wave, has no chance to rise and ride over the challenge, but rather cuts through and becomes unstable. A craft floating at the speed of the wave is very stable until it reaches the brink and then tends to get flipped back from the crest.

Thus a boater can relax, almost go to sleep, even in huge Hair, until his boat reaches the summit of each wave. At that instant a brief but definite downstream feint or, if necessary, a stroke/brace combination prevents the expected upstream flip and lets one again relax for a couple of seconds until the next crest is reached. This feint is actually a bluff rather than a stroke, and usually never hits the water; however it does shift the body weight, and if the wave has been read properly, nothing more is required, even for a big wave. If the feint proves insufficient, it is then

Above: A whitewater explosion on the Niogzra Gorge. (photo by D. Cochran)

continued on into a stroke or brace to which one then commits himself to as much as necessary.

I frequently watch kayakers fight their boats to maintain a bowdownstream a pproach in Hair, and I am sure that most of them who watch my nonchalant attitude feel that it is pure showmanship to enter sideways or backwards. This is not always hue; in reverse it is possible to lie back on the rear deck and shift one's weight way back and one's arms easily reach almost to the stem. Once immersed in a wave on a high brace, it is easy to hold on for some time, until the lightened bow climbs over the wave. The stem thus becomes a sea anchor, pulling the kayak to safety.

Sideways is stable if on hitting a cresting wave you fall downstream and catch a high brace through the wave, pulling the boat over the top before righting your body. If you really commit yourself on the brace, it is impossible to flip upstream no matter how violent the wave.

This opens a new approach to big-wa-



Mark White on the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone.

ter **kayaking**. Forget the angulation of one's boat, relax until reaching the crest of a wave, and look for danger. **This** latter adage is the single most important aspect of staying alive in Hair. Read the water at a glance, react only if needed. Don't focus your attention all over the **river** but concentrate on the second or third wave directly ahead just as you crest, occasionally glancing farther down river to check your general position relative to what is coming.

In big water uniform waves are your safety, and breaks in the rhythm suggest danger. **All** mounds with no wave showing below **are** potentially dangerous; each flat pancake is a **warning** of the hole directly upstream. At first one fears crashing down huge water **in** big waves, but it soon becomes apparent that one can usually avoid those yawning holes with only one or two strokes if floating with the water and staying in the waves. If your boat is sideways when you get **to** the very brink of disaster, you don't have **to** slop into it! You're already pointing **to** safety, and a single forward or backward stroke often allows you **to** circle the rock or hole.

If floating backwards, you are in the best possible position to avoid trouble because you are perfectly set up for an upstream ferry **to** either side **to** safety. As you become more **skilled** in this relaxed

approach, you **will** find yourself riding the waves more and more with your hips, keeping your paddle high, similar to a tight-rope walker with a long pole. It helps to maintain your balance and serves as an ever-ready wand to tap ever so lightly on a brace when needed **to** maintain stability.

Watch the wave that is hitting you and reach your paddle over and through this wave so as to tap the downstream face. Then, if the wave proves more violent than expected, the tap becomes a grab, which is used to pull the boat through. A wave coming from the side, rebounding off a **cliff** or a rock, is treated similarly by leaning into the wave, throwing the paddle over the crest and into the back side just as the wave crashes on you.

I would emphasize the necessity of an infallible roll, first learned in flat water and then transferred to Hair and eventually **to** rolling **in** holes on purpose, thus technically and psychologically steeling yourself **to** the **big** Hair rolls. When practicing, forget the usual flip in roll position; instead concentrate on flipping **in** various inconvenient positions so that you can learn **to** get organized under water. Remember **to** practice a broken-paddle roll in case you end up with only **half** a paddle.

I have never felt there was any place for the layout (put-across) type roll **in** big water and would concentrate on develop

ing an infallible screw roll. **Any** roll that requires a change in hand positioning is certainly slower, and carries a higher risk of losing your paddle while trying to get organized. However a dependable roll is far more important than a fast one. When you flip, take enough time **to** get everything right before your first try and then come up every time.

I put the paddle **in** position alongside my boat, slide my rear hand back **to** the **in**-active blade, and wait until the blade breaks water before I start up. In huge waves, I find that my paddle won't break the surface until I reach the crest of a wave where an immediate roll brings me up **in** time **to** get stable before the next summit.

Next to roll practice **in** big water, I emphasize hole practice. Start **small** and work up but eventually bite off boles you cannot get out of by any technique except **to** swim. While in holes I follow and concur with the excellent **article** by Jim Sindelar and Walt Harvest which was printed in this magazine about a year ago (Spring 1971). **My** technique in essence is as follows: First, get stable on a downstream brace then **try** to paddle forward or back and haul the kayak over and out, but do not do the same thing over ten seconds. Change **to** something else before you get too tired

One helpful trick, when all else fails, is **to** **try** to get the boat perpendicular to the hole by pulling the bow up or downstream. Once lined up, lunge the upstream end **into** the apex of the hole and thus **into** the downstream water. This will usually result **in** an **end-over-end** and a prompt exit from a nasty hole. Lastly, when all else has failed, drop in, keep trying something different upside down with your paddle as deep as possible. Also as part of **this** technique, remember **to** save a little energy and roll up even though you know you **are** still in the hole and look around, you will usually remember something that you forgot **to** do.

Note that it is sometimes remarkably easy to roll up **in** that **squirrely** water. Try it! If everything else fails, then do a wet exit and go deep, but keep your life jacket on. I have never felt that the buoyancy of a life jacket meant anything in a hole. When you are able **to** join the downstream water, you **will** be pushed out.

Also, should you by any chance become unconscious, you have **an** excellent



## A Blast from the Past Tips on Surviving the Big Wahoo

chance of resuscitation when picked up within five minutes floating in your jacket, and it **will** be impossible to find your body in that length of time if it is drifting deep without a jacket. Note that the first boater to reach an unconscious swimmer should swim or float alongside him while immediately rendering mouth to mouth resuscitation. The quicker those first few breaths can be given, the greater the chance of revival.

While I emphasize playing in holes to become thoroughly acquainted with the hole technique, actually while paddling Hair, one should never need to call upon this reservoir of tricks. If a mistake is made in reading the water and suddenly one **crests** over the last wave in a series and stares into a flat which rapidly becomes a boiling hole, it is too late to **avoid** it! So charge! Go into high gear at the first sign of your error. Stroke hard on top and if possible on the way down, then reach far **forward** into the soup and hit it with as many strokes as possible and as hard as you possibly can.

If you follow my advice and the hole is big, you **will** probably flip, but hopefully downstream of the hole. If you do flip, the temptation is to try a quick roll, but poorly organized rolls in the soup of a hole have a notoriously low success ratio for most people. Better, unless there is something horrible directly downstream, is to **KEEP PULLING ON THE POWER STROKE UNDER WATER** until the turbulence subsides-then roll up. Using this approach, your chances of getting out on this first try are greatly increased, since you never let up on the power, and your body in the underlying fast jet helps pull you on through. However if you don't make it out and are hauled back into the hole, then shift into the technique that I have just outlined and get stable on a downstream brace and start trying one thing and then another.

If you plan to paddle big water, you must use a big life jacket because swims can easily become disastrous. **Thus** forget about the life jackets with ten to **fifteen**-pound flotation, and secure the Grand Canyon type vests which have thirty-three pounds of **buoyancy**. These are easy to paddle in, do not hinder a roll, and it becomes much easier to relax, knowing that a swim is possible as a last resort.

We equip our kayaks with a handle **one-third** of the way back on the rear deck, which is made by placing a block of

wood on the inside of the deck and glassing it well in place before drilling a quarter-inch hole for a rope through the deck and block. A wood handle, much like the old fashioned outboard motor starting rope handle, on a two-inch rope is then attached and allows the boater to take a swimmer through nasty water with ease. Without this handle it is necessary for the swimmer to cling to the boater's cockpit which is a very unstable situation, or to cling to the **stern** grab loop of the boat.

In really big water, the ends of a kayak whip violently in the waves, and the swimmer could easily suffer a broken jaw unless the boat is turned loose. Several injuries have in fact resulted from this. However with the swimmer clinging to the handle and with his other arm over the stern of the boat, he is **firmly** anchored to the boat and no bruising will result. Should the boater flip, the swimmer automatically lets the boat twist around under his arm and stays up even though clinging with one hand to the now under water

handle. If the boater rolls up on the same side he went in on, both rescuer and rescued will be equally happy with the result.

My views regarding paddles are not yet firmly entrenched in my mind, and I hesitate to give advice. Certainly I can see the advantage and do use a heavily spooned blade in ordinary paddling. In Hair however, you can't **afford** a paddle that might trip you up, and I personally use a big **unspooned** blade. The bigger the water the bigger the paddle-you're not using it for propulsion, only for a brace. Whichever type you use, a spare (break-down) paddle is essential.

I hope that some of these ideas **will** prove helpful in polishing up your big water technique-remember that when the Hair gets huge, don't fight the water any more than absolutely necessary. Try **to** relax, riding the waves with your hips and keeping your paddle high, ever ready for a brace. As we say up here in Idaho, enjoy the ride. You're going **HOME**. ■

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"IF YOU FORGOT IT, BROKE IT, OR LOST IT, WE'VE GOT IT!"

COME SEE US AT THE MACE TRACE

# Pandemonium on Chatooga III A Hell of a Plate to Take Your Mother!!!

by Lee Belknap



I was bopping down the Chatooga III when I noticed that the normally dry side of the Island had water in it. I had always wanted to see that side of the island, so I told my sister, a local raft guide, to eddy out at the bottom of the island and meet me there. When I got there, no one was in sight.

Now I was at the top of the Sandy Ford rapids, all alone. I started through the rapids to catch up to the raft, playing waves I'd never seen before. As I bounced along, I saw a strange sight. In the pool below the rapids was a helmet like my sister's, floating, with no raft or passengers in sight. A closer look revealed that it really was my sister. Where was her raft, my mother, my brother, and his Honduran army officer guest?!

That's when I noticed the horizon line. It was in the middle of the river directly below me and I was heading directly towards it. As I skirted the edge of the hole, I found myself looking into what looked like a Greyhound Bus Stopper on the New. But we were running Chatooga section III, mind you!

Nonetheless, that hole contained my sister's raft with my mother, high siding it for her life. My brother and his military school classmate were also in the clutches of the hole, recirculating wildly.

There was nothing I could do but wait below. I didn't have to wait long. Soon we were scattered on both shores with the raft tied off precariously in a strong current. It took us a while to get the raft out of the water. The "D" ring gave out just after we got it to safety.

This was on Section III of the Chatooga? My sister had planned to take my mother, brother, and his friend down

Section IV that day, but between 7 and 9 that morning, the gauge jumped from .7 ft. to .9 feet. When the gauge reached a foot, we opted for section III. Before the day was out the river would peak at five feet.

After everyone was safe on shore, I had to get my brother and the Honduran back to the raft side of the river. Ferrying each of them across on the back of my kayak would have been simple if only the Honduran spoke English. Somehow he finally got the point and mustered the courage and we made it across the wide, swift current that is normally a large pool.

With everything collected, the family decided to take out there so I joined a new group of paddlers-including some of my sister's co-workers.

Until that day, I had never seen so many walk off a river. At Sandy Ford a group was surfing a small hole at the top of the pool. One paddler had several great surfs but during his last turn he suddenly discovered that exiting was next to impossible. The water had come up that suddenly,

As soon as my new party rounded the first corner everyone peeled off to scout the Narrows. I paddled down to an eddy just above the Narrows and found a raft trip in need of assistance.

They had beached their boats high off the river, but a raft and a kayak floated away just a minute after they turned their backs on them. I went solo down the very turbulent Narrows, looking for the equipment. The Narrows was fairly mellow until I got to the bottom. There I carefully

slipped through the huge boils. I found all the gear where someone else had stashed them, but they were almost in the water again. I pulled them way up into the woods. I had no idea how high the river was going to get and didn't want to take chances.

I waited for the rest of my new group to show up; It must have been 45 minutes before the next boats came through. I had just started to pack up my stuff to walk out. After all, I had no idea what Second Ledge would look like and I didn't want to face it alone. But the first boats through contained friends that I paddled with frequently. I gave up on my sister's co-workers, figuring that they'd walked out, and I joined my third group of the day.

The rest of Chatooga III in flood was wild, wonderful, and weird. The current was fast, and the water boiling. The nasty holes cast menacing invitations, and there were tons of waves to mess with. I remember vividly the full size trees doing enders as they floated down the river. There were many of them. All of a sudden one would suddenly appear and flip end over end, sometimes close by, without any warning. Luckily, nobody was hit by one of these things.

Second Ledge was a piece of cake, provided you started an inch from the RIGHT bank. We did, however, see others desperately trying not to "be the cake" as they punched the nasty looking hydraulic in the normal route. I knew I didn't want to be over there.

When we got to Bull Sluice there was water running down the back side of the spectators' rock. It wouldn't have taken much more water to have turned that channel into a wonderful steep creek run! ■

# A Massacre on the Tygart

by Lee Belknap

It was Memorial Day weekend, 1990. We had launched at West Virginia's Audra State Park to run the Middle Fork and Tygart gorge.

Just below the put-in there was a wonderful whirling figure 8 shaped whirlpool, pulsing between two fast moving currents around a mid river boulder. The whirls facilitated an endless series of effortless, dynamic, but graceful eddy turns.

It seemed that everyone was there. Groups representing Virginia, DC (my group that day), Pittsburgh, North Carolina and Ohio were all milling about the place. I figured all of these folks couldn't be wrong. If they could handle the Tygart, so could Julie and I. Besides, the river seemed to be rising slowly, having stabilized at a moderately high level after the night's rise. We didn't know that an hour later the final group to launch wouldn't even be able to find the gauge, because it was buried under water! The river may have risen as much as ten feet in that hour.

At first our run seemed unremarkable. If there were any swims, they were routine and have long since been forgotten. We were having a lot of fun. We scouted the second to last rapids on the Middle Fork before the Tygart confluence. It was obvious that the holes here were too big, rocky, and ornery to mess with. While we were deciding this, a glass C1 floated away and pinned just beyond reach at the top of the rapid. By the time rescue was complete, the rock the C1 had pinned on was nearly under water. We departed for the other bank to portage.

As we ferried across the river, a group of paddlers — a half dozen or so — swam to shore just above us. Things were starting to get interesting. About half way through our portage people started running the rapid we had judged unrunnable. They didn't even hit any of the holes. As a matter of fact, the holes were gone!

The river had risen abruptly and washed them away. If the carry back to



the top of that rapid had been easy, we would have turned around and run it too!

We scouted and identified a reasonable sneak route through the next rapid. But by the time I finished slipping my sprayskirt on, I didn't like, nor even recognize what I saw. The rapid had suddenly changed and big waves were now disappearing down our proposed "sneak" channel into the woods. We abruptly changed our plan and hiked again. As we put back in, I had to snatch my paddle as it floated off the formerly "dry" gravel beach, a beach that was evolving into a creek while I climbed into my boat.

At the Tygart confluence the group split into two. Julie was still with me. By now there were swimmers everywhere. Many others carried from the confluence back to the put-in at Audra on a park trail. Julie decided instead to carry to the takeout along the tracks on the other side of the flooded Tygart river.

I carefully paddled onto the flooded Tygart Gorge. While I played the first waves, the Middle fork became a cannon ejecting human cannonballs. I became very busy picking up animate and inanimate flotsam and ferrying it to shore. One such piece of drift stuff was a open canoeist, an old friend that I found floundering in the middle of the wide river. While reeling in this big fish, he pointed out that there weren't many boaters left in the river. He had just about given up hope of ever getting to shore.

This was one of three incidents that were reported from that river, on that day, to the AWA Close Calls Survey. Sometimes it is easy to misjudge the seriousness of a situation.

With my friend safe, high and dry, Julie and I ferried across the river, The ride was great. There were big turbulent waves everywhere. Some were exploding, others hiding sizable holes. Paddling sideways "Western Style" through this stuff, while using the waves to maneuver around

the holes and to scout, was a lot of fun. We reached the other side too soon

I was psyched and was looking forward to finishing the river. But I had to wait for someone familiar with the Tygart to show up so that I wouldn't blindly paddle into the holes I presumed would lurk in the S-turn rapid.

While waiting for a "guide", more members of our group appeared and paddled into the woods. Julie waded through the sticker bushes and fought her way up to the railroad tracks to join them and dozens of others who were carrying out. Hey, one of the marchers was the leader of our party!

I was bummed. I looked around and saw a small number of paddlers continuing downstream. But I had no idea if any of them knew where they were going. With no one to follow, I joined the pilgrimage on the tracks.

The story doesn't end here. Shortly after we started walking, we helped rescue a kayak from the river. It's former occupant had hit a hydraulic so powerful it knocked his helmet off. He too was now walking the tracks. A few minutes later, he caught up to us and I "sold" his boat back to him at a fair price. (I wasn't going to carry it out!)

A couple more 'yakers drifted by clinging to their boats. The first got to shore quickly, but the second disappeared behind an embankment between the tracks and the river. I dropped my boat, grabbed my rope, and climbed the embankment. I found him clinging to a tree in very swift current.

In the end, perhaps only a half dozen of the hundreds who put on the river made it to the takeout via paddle power. S-Turn was reported to be both worse and better than expected, with incredible holes half way across the river, but a nice flood channel sneak on the right side of an island.

We put back in below the last rapids and paddled down smooth water to the takeout. Then, instead of wading the usual 1/4 mile up the tracks to our cars, we paddled up through the woods all the way to our vehicles. There we waited for a Mend who missed the railroad bridge he needed to cross, and took "a little longer" getting home..

# BAD DAY AT THE BLACKWATER

West Virginia's Blackwater River is one of those steep high mountain streams that comes up fast... sometimes very fast... sometimes very, very fast!!!!

Black Water River.

by Bob Glanville



One Saturday in early April, 1987, while making a run on the Big Sandy, Jack and I decided to paddle the Blackwater the next day. John, whom we had just met, expressed an interest in coming along.

Although I had never paddled the Blackwater and John had only done it once, Jack had been down the river a number of times and knew it well. While I was intimidated by the Blackwater's reputation, I had a lot of confidence in Jack's judgment, and drew comfort from the fact that he would be leading.

That night it snowed on the high plateau that feeds the Blackwater. By Sunday morning the snow had turned to an icy rain and the air temperature was in the upper thirties. "A typical Blackwater day", my buddy Jack said.

While we were having breakfast the next morning in Parsons, West Virginia, Chris introduced himself. Our conversation quickly turned to the Blackwater. Neither Chris or his three companions had paddled the Blackwater before but, upon learning that Jack was a veteran, asked to join our group. Laboring under the delusion that there might be safety in numbers, we agreed.

Our first stop was the takeout at Hendricks, where a gauge was supposed to be painted on a bridge pier. No luck. We learned later that it had been obliterated by the Great Flood of 1985.

Eyeing the river, Jack noted that it was on "the high side of medium—possibly nine inches on the old gauge".

Our guidebook suggested that an optimum run was six inches and that the maximum was one foot. That left precious little

margin for error when guesstimating the level—without the benefit of a gauge. But we naively decided that the level would be manageable and headed for the put-in.

At this point, Jack, who had not been feeling well, announced that he would be unable to join us on the river. The thought of paddling the Blackwater for the first time, at a high level, with five people I didn't know, only one of whom had ever even seen the river before, was more than a little disturbing. This was a good thought; I should have held on to it. But I told myself that, given the size of our party, there would be plenty of probes for me to follow.

Reaching the put-in necessitated a carry of more than a mile on a railroad track and then another half-mile down a steep, heavily wooded, rocky embankment. I should have known that it was not going to be a good day when I pulled my dry suit over my head and the neck gasket did not follow. The gasket was beyond even the aid of duct tape.

Our solution, inspired by the Egyptian mummy-wrapping technique, was to start just under my chin

the BIG WAHCO



*Top: The Ledge on the Blackwater.*

*Bottom: Dean Smith ... Blackwater madness.*

and begin ringing my neck with overlapping layers of duct tape until the collar of the suit was joined semi-permanently to my neck. While this was remarkably effective in keeping the water out of my suit, it was almost as effective in keeping the air out of my lungs. Removing the tape, I later learned, rendered me a "Red Neck" in the truest sense of the word.

At the river it was still drizzling and a cold fog hung over the canyon. The first thing I noticed was that the water looked much higher than I had expected. (In fact, it was rising fast, but we didn't find that out til later).

We put-in in the middle of a significant rapid. Fortunately, we had stumbled on to the river downstream of two of the meanest rapids- **Krackatoa** and the Ledge. In its first five miles, the lower Blackwater drops at a rate of 120 feet per mile. We all knew that there were some nasty drops somewhere, but we didn't know how far. Several of us, quite clearly, were not eager to take the lead, and pretended to be "playing" until the others **started** downstream.

The first suspicious horizon line appeared about a quarter mile downstream. The drop (which I now know to be Rock and Roll), required quick maneuvering around several large holes and pinning rocks, then driving up and over a rooster **tail** above a ten foot wide slot.

Three of us flipped on the rooster **tail** and we all hit our heads hard on a submerged rock just below it. One member of the party was dazed by the blow and we took a few minutes to regroup before running the next drop.

**This** involved punching several holes on a wave **train** headed directly toward an undercut rock, cutting around that rock, then dropping over a six foot ledge on a narrow tongue. That tongue was the only way through a river-wide hydraulic. We passed this test without serious incident.

Next came "**The Slide For Life.**" It consisted of a sloping shelf of rock that drops **thirty** plus feet over fifty yards. Most of the water funneled down the left into a terminal hole, formed by a six foot high rock wall that spanned **two-thirds** of the river. We speculated briefly about punching the foam pile over the barrier, but the consequences of failure were potentially fatal.

Accordingly, we opted to surf three successive **left-to-right** diagonal waves toward a narrow, unobstructed slot at the bottom right. **This** passage was exciting, if uneventful. But "Events" would come soon enough, for the water had risen another six inches while we were scouting and running "The Slide For Life."

The next rapid necessitated a difficult line through a river-wide, very **nasty** hole; the nastiness of which was





Big Fun on West Virginia's Blackwater River.

**exponentially** compounded by the fact that there was a tree in **it**. Several of us, having no interest in a close encounter of the worst **kind**, opted to portage this drop.

Below that rapid, either the character of the river changed, or I began to experience **sensory** overload. I recall one steaming horizon line after another, interspersed with violent hydraulics, **pourovers** and downed trees. **Scouting** was out of the question—there was **too** much to scout anyway, and the more we scouted, the higher the water got.

Someone was seized by a particularly mean hydraulic and violently surfed, first in his boat, then with his boat and **finally** without his boat. **This** was more fun than he could stand. **Hypothermic**, exhausted and scared half to death, he dragged his boat up the canyon wall to the railroad tracks and caught a ride to the takeout on a passing ATV.

Downstream I spotted a tree in the middle of a steep boulder garden and decided to portage. Extraordinarily dense laurel and underbrush hugged the boulder studded shoreline, **making** portaging as much of an ordeal as running the strainer-filled rapid

**As** I was about to relaunch, an overturned kayak drifted by and continued downriver out of sight. I looked upstream for its erstwhile occupant. Before my eye caught Rick I heard his voice, faintly calling my name over the din of the rapids. I could just make out his helmet and his arms above the strainer; the rest of his body was beneath it.

I grabbed my throw bag and raced upstream to the strainer. By the time I **arrived**, Rick had hoisted **himself** up onto the tree and lay there in a heap, exhausted and grateful to be alive.

After a few minutes, Rich recovered his strength and we started to look for his boat. Fortunately, it had not gone very far. Unfortunately, that was because it was pinned under a house-sized rock. Unfortunately **also**, Rick was paddling a light-weight glass slalom racing boat with long needle-like tips.

Now Rick's boat was a foot shorter than when the trip began. While that fact undoubtedly enhanced the boat's maneuverability, it contributed nothing to its seaworthiness. **The rain**, and the fact that we did not have the fifteen rolls of duct tape that would have been required, prevented us from

**sealing** the holes at the bow and stern. Rick was barely able to paddle across the river without **sinking**. He, too, then joined the march down the railroad tracks toward the takeout.

Shortly **after** we performed the next hole extraction, we were sitting in an eddy, steeling ourselves for the remainder of the trip. Out of the mist, like apparitions, slicing through the water in their bright metal-flake boats, **vertically** dancing through the drops, came a group of **Blackwater** Regulars, including John **Regan** and Marty **McCormick**.

Although I'm sure he didn't intend it that way, John **Regan's** remarks were less than encouraging.

"You boys have got yourselves a **real** expedition!" He counseled us to "Take it slow", but, upon further consideration, added, "Remember, the slower you go, the higher the water is going to get."

His parting words will remain with me forever: "Beeeee careful! Beeeee careful!"

John and his companions soon flashed out of sight and we were once again alone in the mist. When they arrived at the take-out an hour and a half ahead of us, John advised my wife to call the local rescue squad if we were not out by dark. **That** certainly made her feel good.

Shortly before dark, we actually made it to the **take-out**. At least, most of us did. Rick, who had not been lucky enough to hitch a ride on an ATV, **still** was not back. He was still hiking down the tracks.

Satisfied that everyone was off the river, I quickly tied my Dancer on to the roof and headed home. It had been a day I would not soon **forget**. ■

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# FIREWORKS ON THE KENNEBEC GORGE

## JULY 4, 1994

### A 9000 cfs Release Triggers a Big Time Splash Party at the First Kennebec Festival

By Tom Christopher

**I**t had been publicized for months so just about everyone knew that the annual turbine test for Harris Dam Station had been scheduled for the Fourth of July to accommodate the first AWA Kennebec River Festival. It's not unusual to see 6,000 CFS in the Kennebec Gorge during the week, especially if the summer days are excruciatingly hot down south in Boston. Energy demand from industry and air conditioners keeps the three turbines spinning for long hours Monday through Friday.

But it is only an accommodation to the kayakers and commercial outfitters by Central Maine Power to grant three or four hours of 4,800 CFS on weekends. This keeps a 20 million dollar commercial rafting industry afloat in the wilderness town of The Forks, Maine, and hundreds of kayakers flocking to this whitewater mecca.

The turbine test was supposed to put a whopping 8,000 CFS into the Kennebec. This extra water would provide a unique big water experience for many boaters—a test of skill and iron will and the chance for a "worst ever" swim if you had the misfortune to come out of your boat.

On the annual turbine test days one finds good paddlers who do the tough stuff every weekend and the "wannabe's", looking to step up in class.

My friend Rick Hudson had traveled from his summer cabin in Lubec, Maine to make the run. I didn't know that he wanted to confront the demons that had caused an epic swim in the early days of his paddling career on the Kennebec.

He very wisely did not apprise me of his fears, knowing that in response I might direct him into every pourovers on the river. Rick is actually a very good boater and I have no idea why he didn't trust me??? I guess he knows that like most boaters I enjoy a good laugh, especially at someone else's expense.

As we walked to the put-in next to the powerhouse we began to hear an ungodly roar. As the bottom it was deafening. CMP had opened the flash boards at the top of the dam in order to

give us the 8,000 CFS they had promised. Water was cascading down the 150 foot sluice, normally used only in case of flood. You couldn't hear what people said when they spoke and the put-in was ten feet higher than normal. Any fool could see the water was big, it was pushy, it was fast. It was reading 9,000 CFS on the gauge. Rick looked tentative.

I squeezed into my Vampire on a small rock ledge, planning to drop into the river between a couple of rafts. Rick said he'd put in a bit further down the line, out of harm's way of the rafts.

"Meet me in the first eddy on the left", I said and plopped four feet into the river. As soon as I hit the current and could feel the power of the river, I knew we were in for a ride.

Five minutes later Rick was at my side, with both eyes wide and not saying a word. We ferried back and forth a few times just to get a feel for the river and were carried five hundred yards downstream. The current was incredibly pushy. Where it compressed against the rock walls of the gorge it curled back into vicious, uncertain cross currents, producing nasty reaction waves three and four feet tall. I paddle the Kennebec countless times throughout the year, but this was a new river to me.

Place that I normally surf like "C-wave"; were gone. In its place were towering whitecaps five feet high. They propelled us like a runaway freight train through the gorge. I didn't like running the river this fast, usually there plenty of places to play, surf, and squirt. Rick was right behind me and still very quiet.

In ten minutes we were at "Boogie Wave", normally a good four-foot surfing wave. Now it was seven feet high and extended half way across the river. After three or four muscular surfs we headed down river to face "Big Mama" and the "Alleyway".

The next quarter mile was a Whitewater roller coaster into the breach of "Big Mama". Well, "Big Mama" had grown considerably, as if she were ripe with river children. She was HUGE... a good ten feet in height, and followed by a wave train of six to eight footers that led into the "Alleyway". Rick rode "Mama" right



Back Tom Christopher fighting the waves at the top of "Magic Falls." (photo by Shirley Griffin)

Inset: Rick Hudson meeting his "Demons" in the name of "Magic." (photo by Shirley Griffin)

down the middle into the wave train, then caught the eddy on river left.

He was smiling and said, "You know this is like some of the drops in the Grand Canyon" He was getting his color back. "When do we get to the Alleyway?" he asked.

We were already into it, turning the river vertically with our Vampires, trying to stay out of the pourovers along the sides of the gorge. A gigantic pourovers just in front of "Big Kahuna" kept me in the center of the river. We bombed down the wave train into the "Cathedral" eddy, seeking some peaceful serenity. I was breathing heavily from paddling so hard.

Rick caught up to me at "Z-Turn", the last surfing wave before "Magic Falls". Now he was in excellent spirits and really starting to enjoy the river. His confidence was back and he was exhibiting the perversity that he considers to be a sense of humor.

At 9,000 CFS "Magic" contained a mega-recurling wave that had all the power of the discharge tubes at the Gauley. When I pulled through the last wave crest and started to slide into the drop, this gargantuan wave folded over me and buried the entire length of my boat under water. It was as if I had purposely performed a perfect stern squirt, the ultimate vertical mystery move by a fat guy in a long boat.

A hundred yards behind me Rick was confronting the river demons that had him so worried at the beginning of the trip. As I glanced over my right shoulder I could see him upright and paddling hard, the grin on his face was spread from ear to ear.

As we approached the end of our trip Rick told me that he had swum the entire "Alleyway" and all the way through "Magic", early in his boating career. This was the first time he had returned to the Kennebec since.

Congratulations were in order. He had chosen one hell of a day to make his triumphant return! ■

Paddler: John Rose, River: Gauley (pillow rock), Photographer: Dan Wallen (photo courtesy of Dagger)

We were being swept along by a powerful current through the usually tranquil pool above Lost Paddle. The mouth of the Meadow River drifted by to my left.

"Holy Cow!! I can't see any of the rocks up there!"

I took a longing look at the right bank of the Gauley and remembered the trail that goes up the mountain to Carnifex Battlefield.

"Hey, Chris! What's Lost Paddle like at this level?"

"Joe, I don't know for sure. I've never seen it THIS high. But, I think we need to be far left on the first two pitches." "Good. The third drop is usually easy. And the fourth pitch down to the exit pool might even be straightforward." "Ummmm, Joe. You might want to think again. At fall flow, the third drop is the easiest of the four. But, remember, the whole river necks down there. It's going to be very dynamic today."

I knew that Chris Hipgrave was a very accomplished boater. I found out that day he was prescient as well. I had rendezvoused with Chris in Beckley, West Virginia in hopes of running Glade or Piney Creek; but they were too low.

"Chris, what does the Corps say about the New and Gauley?" I inquired.

"11,600 cfs."

"Good level! I love the New at high water." "No, Joe. Not the New. That's 11,600 cfs from Summersville dam on the Gauley. And there's an additional 2,400 cfs pouring out of the Meadow."

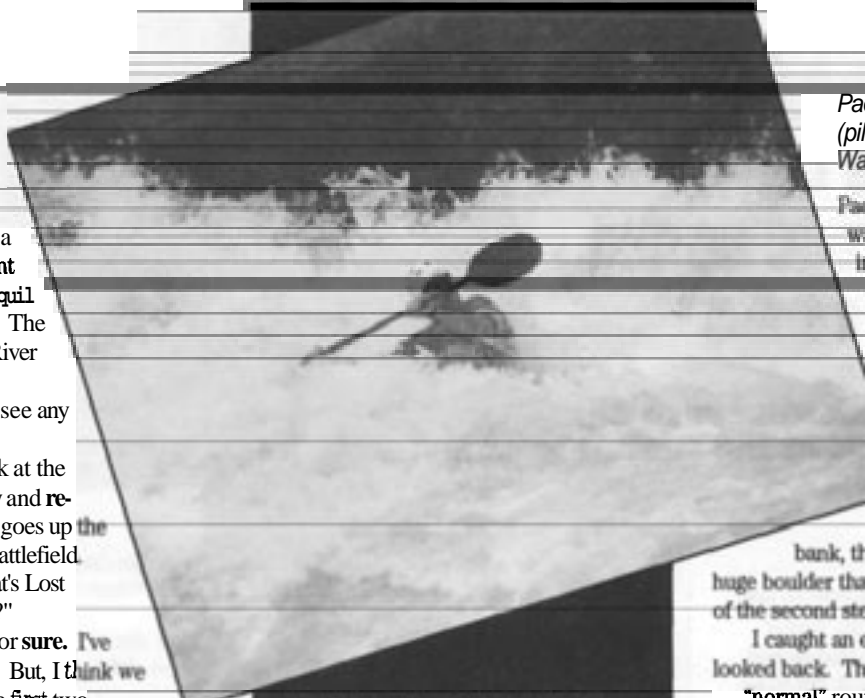
It had been a long time since I've had that "Maalox Moment" feeling. I have never seen the Upper or Lower Gauley at anything higher than the fall flows of 2,400 to 2,800 cfs. My inner voice told me I could do it. But, I postponed the decision as long as I could.

"Let's just go do a play run on the Dries of the New," I suggested.

Chris was happy. I knew that he would have fun on the New. But given his choice, I knew where he wanted to be. The Gauley. But did I want to be there also?

Finally, halfway to the takeout of the New, I worked up my courage and pulled my van over on US 19 and proposed a change of plan. Chris accepted, as I knew he would.

And so the happy couple kept driving right over the New and on to the dam on the Gauley at Summersville.



## FOLLY ON THE GAULEY???

by Joe Garrison

"My goodness. It's not green... it's brown!!" I exclaimed, staring at the torrent that boomed across the riverbed from the tubes, smashing into a house sized boulder on river left.

We stopped at the Corps office and asked if the discharge had changed from the morning recording. The ranger informed us that 11,600 cfs was still coming out the tubes and that Meadow was holding at 2,400 cfs. That meant we would have 14,000 cfs from the mouth of the Meadow to the take-out!

The ranger was appropriately concerned, asking whether we knew the river and whether we had any idea about what it was like at this level. Chris assured him that he had done it up to 8000 cfs. I was silent. I didn't want the ranger to worry any more than he already was.

The ranger sighed, wished us well, and walked off with that body language slump that seemed to say "Guess, I can't stop those damn fools."

The shuttle was silent.

I flipped and rolled in the first ledge. We ran Initiation and I relaxed a bit. Insignificant proved to be a very long, friendly standing wave train that we negotiated to the left of center.

We ran Pillow Rock frrrrr right down a creek route that is normally dry at conventional levels.

Now, we were in the eddy above Lost

Paddle. To scout or not? There was that inner voice again, telling me I could do it. (Who does that voice belong to, anyway??)

No sense waiting.

Time spent thinking might only let doubt creep in and there

was no room on this river for doubt. I led as

we set out along the bank, then paddled to the LEFT of the huge boulder that normally forms the left wall of the second steep drop of Lost Paddle.

I caught an eddy and Chris joined me. We looked back. The

"normal" route at the second drop ended in a stopper of Bunyanesque proportions. I took another deep breath. Normally,

I'd let Chris lead.

But I'd been watching too many Nike commercials. Something told me... "JUST DO IT!!"

I peeled out and rounded the point of rock. I went straight for the gut because I figured the edges of the river would be squirrely beyond belief. Chris was right. These waves were NOT

wallflowers, standing around demurely, looking pretty.

Nooooo! They were break dancing and jiving and rock and rolling and were they happy to see me!!! The first one grabbed my tail and do-si-doed me right into its partner. It took a liking to me and threw me high in jubilation. I tried to remember my dance lessons.

"Head over the butt...head over the butt!!"

Now, I was in a trough climbing...climbing...nooooo...stalling...stalling. This last wave was a real woman. It embraced me as it broke over me. I was buried in its watery hug. Then it gave me a thrill as it exploded under me and I dropped several feet.

I remember thinking that this was the Mother of All Waves.

Suddenly, I was on a jet bearing downstream. I eddied up in time to watch Chris stall briefly on "Mother". Then he came rocketing out.

In an uncharacteristically not-so-cool British accent he hollered, "Did you see that?? What a surf. It just shot me right out. WOW! Talk about dynamic!"

Chris led the rest of the way down the river. I followed with a smile on my face. After all, "Mother" had embraced me and ejected him.

"Mother" did love me best. ■





## When it comes to the Big Wahoo....

### Sometimes Even the Big Dogs Bite Off More Than They Can Chew!

by Risa Shimoda Callaway

As morning broke over Steamboat Springs, Colorado the members of the 1986 Torque- a- Thon stirred. The team consisted of Anita and Dale Adams, my husband, Forrest, Andrew Carr, Brent Cochran, Sherwood Horine, Bob McDonough and Dave Williams. Although the day's itinerary had not yet been set, we were hoping the Yampa would be running at a good level.

The crew of eastern squirt boaters arrived in town just as the Yampa River Festival Slalom race was about to start. Too late to register, we played the role of radicals, donning our Transformer helmets and wielding those ever-so-long Widdemore Blasters and Ceylons. After being permitted an exhibition squirt slalom run, we spent the afternoon lounging in a hot spring, located down around Gate 12. But we needed something more to make their day complete.

A rumor was circulating that the Cross Mountain Gorge section of the Yampa was romping. And so the Torque- a- Thon team headed out, against the advice of local paddlers, who felt that our tiny, flat craft might not fare well on the raging Yampa.

The locals' concern was not without merit. Not so very long before the Cross Mountain Gorge had been attempted at the ungodly level of 13,000 cfs by a party that included Cully Erdman. As network television cameras rolled a very large hole near the top of the Gorge played havoc with the would-be television stars, who never finished the run. It made for quite a Wide World of Sports show.

But not to worry. The Gorge was not running at 13,000 cfs. It was running at 15,000!

The Torque- a- Thon team hit the water at 5:30 p.m. We figured we would have plenty of time to make the run, which is only a few miles long. After a short class II warm up the canyon walls closed in and the light dimmed ominously. There was a terrific

roar ahead, I surmised (correctly) that it was coming from the gigantic river wide hole of TV fame. I took comfort in the thought that my Blaster could cut through holes better than any round boat.

As we approached the river wide horizon line we could see water spouting high into the air from the recycle below. Finding a safe portage became a clear priority. The portage necessitated teetering along the bank on loose gravel, wedging ourselves back into our boats, and reentering the river just above a couple of sizeable waves and another big, menacing hole.

Forrest tried to peel out and was slammed back into the eddy. He tried again... and he was out of sight. Subsequent paddlers climbed into their boats and followed his lead; they each disappeared downriver just as abruptly. Those left behind began to feel very much alone.

Several moments later Forrest appeared downstream of the monstrous hole, stroking like mad. Andrew appeared next, clinging to his stern. Bob and Sherwood were last seen chasing an errant boat around the bend.

Was that Brent's boat floating down the river, too?

Soon Anita was hiking on river right; how did her boat wind up on river left? Sometime later Andrew lost his footing and fell fifteen feet from the trail into the Yampa.

I sort of missed a ferry above a large pourover. Over I went, and when I came to the surface it was without my helmet. It eventually popped up, thirty feet downstream. After narrowly skirting another hole I hit the bank, hoping to take pictures as the others flushed through. I didn't have long to wait.

They looked quite relieved to see me; they were glad that I was not still upstream, locked into an eternal surf of a terminal hydraulic.

As darkness fell Sherwood blitzed to the take out to alert the rangers that their might be a need for a night search. But as twilight fell one by one everyone made their way out of the Gorge. Bob and Forrest were safe, dry and unscathed. Others were less fortunate. Andrew had made great time, swimming the last mile of the Gorge...

The next day the clean up crew, consisting of Bob and Brent, paddled in to retrieve Anita's boat. Dinosaur National Monument Rangers found another kayak, thirty miles downstream. Andrew was relieved! ■

## BAD SPOT!! WHAT WILL WE DO NOW??

### Riding the Wahoo in Costa Rica

by: Joe Greiner

Costa Rica-1986. It was 5:00 AM and raining. We didn't care. We were leaving San Jose for the Reventazon. Mary Hayes Hipsher, Randy Riddle, Frank from Texas, and I were going to meet three others and paddle from Turrialba (Angostura bridge) to Peralta. Spirits were high.

We met Tom Visnius, Paul Mason, and George Snelling at the American Hotel in Turrialba. They had a self-bailing raft and were happily anticipating an exploratory run to see if the nine mile segment was commercially viable. We loaded the raft, had some stimulating Central American coffee, and

away we went.

We wanted an early start. Only Mary and Randy had seen the river before-once each. And there were no roads to our take-out. Mary had to call ahead to make certain there would be a boxcar on the 2:00 PM train through Peralta. We would ride the train while our boats and gear rode the boxcar back to Turrialba. Now all we had to do was get there on time.

The next train?? The next day.

The gauge on the bridge read 1.80 meters.

"Mary, what's the river like?"

"Unless it really rises, it's just like the lower Gauley."

No sooner said than the rain started in earnest. After the first few rapids, I knew that I didn't recognize any of this as the Lower Gauley. In fact, it felt more like the Upper Gauley at a flow higher than I had ever experienced.

The Reventazon was like riding an elevator going up. You could almost feel the river rising. About four miles into the trip, tired, psyched-out, and sleep-deprived, I asked Randy how much more we had to go.

"Not much. The rapids get a little farther **apart**. But we do need to watch for a big, bad ledge-hole down here on the right someplace."

The rafters were having a ball. Every so often, they would stop and George would take out a notebook. They would talk about the last few rapids and **try** to think up good names so that they could remember the river.

We came to a slot. The **kayakers** were waiting in an eddy. I Dipped.

I rolled...almost. I almost rolled **again**. Oh Oh!! I almost rolled **again**.

I ran out of patience and cool at the same time.

I punched out of my boat expecting to find myself on an eddy line. Instead I was in current, heavy current.

"Feet up...breathe...Where am I???

Which way should I

**swim??** Where are the others?? Why aren't they right here?? What's this?"

My feet hit something hard in front of me.

"Was this a rock?"

"Good, maybe I **can** just slip behind it into the eddy. But wait! It's just a shallow spot. Hmmm. Feels smooth. Maybe I **can** stand."

"Ahhh, yes. That's better. I'm standing now. Wait!!! What's this?? Oh %!!"

Five feet in front of me was a seven foot drop with an awesome backwash at the **bottom**. I was standing on the ledge that formed the very hole ~~that~~ Randy had **warned** me about. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Randy **sail** past the ledge on river left.

My feet started to slip. The water was **thigh** deep. My right foot slid forward six inches. My left foot joined it seconds later.

"If only I **can** hold on here...someone **can** get me a rope. Nooooo!!! My legs are moving **again!**"

My legs felt like they were encased in water filled waders. But worse, someone else (not me...definitely NOT ME!!) was moving my feet forward, about six inches at a time. I looked up quickly. Randy was in an eddy downstream but THE HOLE and its backwash was between him and me.

■ "What to do now, buckaroo? You can't just fall off the ledge into THAT hole. Who knows how many times you will recirculate? Make up your mind! Quick! You're at the edge! One more slip and you'll be off the ledge."

Later, Randy described how he watched as I helplessly and inexorably was drawn to

the edge of the ledge. He said that just as I reached the lip he asked himself "**Hmmm**. Bad spot. Wonder what he'll do now?"

I still don't know where it came from, maybe my days as a competitive swimmer. As I felt that last slip, I squared up to the ledge, looked out into the backwash, and launched a racing dive- as **loooong** and as **shallow** as I could muster. I hit the backwash stroking.

Thought Randy "Hmmm. Maybe that will play."

Fortunately, it did. I was able to pierce the backwash into Randy's eddy. The others managed to corral all my gear. The Reventazon continued to rise. We made the **afternoon** train.

On the ~~train~~ ride back, George, Tom, and Paul were huddled in the corner of the passenger car flipping through the notebook and laughing about the run. I could hear them as they came up with name after name. They named the long rapid "Dos Kilometers" and the last rapid "**The Land Of A Thousand Holes**."

My dive **must** not have been as long and as shallow as I thought.

The boys in the raft named the rapid "**The Swan Dive**".

## MIS DOES NOT LOOK LIKE KANSAS ANYMORE

Chatooga IV was **running** high and rising fast **Things** were getting a little tense... and then the tornado hit!

by Lauren Hunter

Sunday, March 27, 1994 started with a quick glance at the weather **channel** and the realization ~~that~~ the **Chattooga** had been sitting in a storm system **all** night. I **immediately** questioned the idea of heading there — as rusty as I felt, I wondered about the water level. I ~~had~~ not been through the Five **Falls** section above 2.2 feet. Maybe I should have listened to that nagging inner voice, but then I would have missed all of the excitement.

Our group met in Charlotte and consisted of my husband Quay, Gordon Brown, Bradford Barry and myself. Upon arrival at

the **Chattooga** the sky showed signs of clearing, but an **unusual** warm, muggy feeling was in the air. I asked an NOC guide what the level was and he said it was 1.8 earlier that morning. As the shuttle was being **run**, I sat trying not to even think about being nervous.

It had been an "interesting" year for me. As a **woman** and a mom, I am a minority among my boating buddies. I use my own judgment when I **run** rivers, but my river running confidence had been shaken earlier that month and my very foundation rocked



when my daughter had been hit by a car last Christmas Eve day. I found myself sitting at the **Chattooga** IV put-in, having impure thoughts. "Not too good," I said to myself. I remembered my daughter's wonderful attitude, her recovery, and her seven year old belief in guardian angels. So I said a little prayer, the first of many that day.

At noon, when we launched, Bull Sluice looked pretty wild. We all **ran** down the center and I made a mental note to check the level. The river felt and looked like it was rising. As we passed the gauge I saw it was **at** 2.2 feet.

I said, "Okay Lauren, you can do this." I started psyching myself up, determined to keep the Doubt Monster at bay. **Our** party met two guys and we merged to become six. I was aware that the air felt very **peculiar**—with alternating **warm** and cool pockets.

At **Woodall** Shoals, I realized that the

river was really rising fast. The hole at the base of the drop on far right was huge. We joked about Seven Foot Falls being Three Foot Falls. We all had good runs and we picked up the pace, remembering that there were feeder creeks that would add to the already rising level. The sky was getting darker and I could hear thunder. As we **approached** what is usually a nice place to relax and gaze at waterfalls and creeks, I noticed a decided increase in the amplitude of the whitewater noise.

When I looked at Stekoa Creek on river right my mouth dropped open down to my **sprayskirt**, hit, bounced off and slammed shut. The creek was soooo high and **disgustingly** brown. It merged **with** the water I was in and caught my edge.

"Mmmmmmm," I thought, "**try** not to get uptight!" Very quickly the Chattooga began to take on that interesting flood stage quality, surging so much that the lines were constantly changing. I tried to unclench my teeth which were still trying to recover from slamming together.

It is a good thing my mouth was shut because the stench from the water was nauseating and I knew swallowing any of the water could be a health hazard. Someone mentioned that there were chicken **farms** upstream of the creek, someone mentioned being sure to stay **upright**, someone mentioned the **status** of the water level and the Doubt Monster mentioned "Raven Chute" in my brain

Raven Chute has eaten more **skin** from my elbow than any rapid in the Southern Appalachians. I knew I would scout.

There were no rocks exposed on river left where we usually eat lunch and the holes were huge. I saw a line but decided to walk. One of the young guys we had hooked up with **ran** it and punched the hole. A pretty cool move! His buddy did not quite make it. Not so cool.

I saw **his** eyes widen as his stem was drawn back into the hole. He valiantly tried to pull out **straight**, his boat's bow waving in the air.

Bye, bye, I thought. Well, it was ugly. He surfed, **swam** and lost his boat. Our buddy did not have air bags—bummer. So, now our buddy was **walking** out of the Wild and Scenic river, paddle in hand. We spent about **an** hour looking for the **boat**.

I was hungry so while we waited, I ate. I looked up and saw other **boaters** on the river. "So we are not the only crazy people after all," I thought.

The weather continued to sour and I knew an afternoon thunderstorm was coming. One of the guys from this new group paddled over and nonchalantly said, "So are you having a little lunch?"

"Well," he added, "you might want to mosey down to Five Falls." I swallowed my food, trying not to gulp audibly. "The river is rising fast," he said. "If you don't get down there soon, there will be no bank to walk on if you **carry**."

Yo! Homey don't like this.....

The guy who had lost **his** boat climbed onto the back of a very generous, well balanced boater's kayak and we proceeded. More **boaters** appeared. As I recognized them, I realized with a sinking feeling that they were all experts. Most of them had done the Green Narrows numerous times and probably even felt comfortable on it, for God's sake!

At about 2:30, we reached Five Falls. The level was estimated at about 4.0 feet.

**Everything** happened fast from here on. The **storm** was getting closer; the water was rising. We made it through Entrance, Corkscrew (which I walked) and **Crack-in-the-Rock**. When we scouted Jawbone, we ended up on river right. It was then that **things** got crazy. The sky became so dark Our buddy helped me get my boat up a rock wall and then walked down river. Later, he found a **raft** to ride out on. There were groups of people below Sock-em-Dog. Quay was standing **looking** at the river, trying to decide if he should **run** Jawbone.

I had decided to walk and it was going to be the walk from Hell. It got as black as night and the young guy whose buddy had lost his boat, joined another group. They all made the hairy ferry above Jawbone and walked the ever decreasing bank on river left.

Gordon, Quay, Bradford and I stayed on the right. Gordon took off up the rock wall to scout our portage. I stood watching the river. The air got very warm, then very cool, then **hail** started falling—large, irregularly shaped **chunks** of ice.

I was glad for my helmet! The darkness **lifted** and the sky turned unearthly colors, yellow **with** a rose tinge. I turned and looked for Gordon, then when I looked back at the river, I saw what looked like a wall of water move down the gorge. There was a roaring sound. The wind was so strong that I leaned into a rock crevice for protection.

Then it all calmed down and I could hear another roar, like a train in the dis-

tance. I yelled something about it to Gordon, but he could not hear me. I wanted to get out of there.

Our walk took an hour. We had a lot of **climbing** to do and used ropes and carabiners for our boats. We had to be extremely careful to avoid slipping. We didn't want to fall **into** the river right above **Sock-em-Dog**. Not my idea of fun. Once we were around **Sock-em-Dog**, we had to ferry around floating lumber in a huge **recirculating** eddy to get to river **left** to **run** Shoulderbone.

As we rounded the turn heading for the lake, the most incredible smell of pine overwhelmed us. We looked up to see that vast areas of the forest on either side of the river were completely destroyed. It dawned on us the we had survived a tornado! Trees were snapped off like broken match sticks. The tornado had bounced from **side-to-side** of the river gorge like a pinball.

At the take out, we ran **into** a group of **fishermen** who had experienced the full force on the twister. With wide eyes and renewed faith in a superior being, they described how they had tied their boat down and grabbed onto roots while lying face down on the ground. They too saw a **wall of** water; they felt their feet lifted off the ground and pulled up **into** the air as they held onto the roots. They saw their **johnboat** fly through the air, torn from the rope and watched the trolling motor drive into a tree. They saw trees breaking and falling like dominoes.

They were feeling very lucky and **anxious** to get out of there. We took out and rushed to change while another storm brewed. When we got to the put-in, we found out that the road home was closed. I realized I had left my ruby red slippers at home. "There is no place like home." Someone mentioned that the level had risen to nearly five feet. We **all** walked down to see Bull Sluice, a sight to behold!

Later we drove past an area where another tornado, or perhaps the same one, had touched down on Highway 76. It wrenched my heart. On the way home I kept trying to remember the words to songs from the Wizard of **Oz**.

That night, the Doubt Monster conquered once more, with pure thoughts, I gratefully rested my head on my pillow at home and drifted to sleep... trying to remember if I really had seen a witch on a broom flying through the **Chattooga** gorge on my way to **Oz**. ■

## Kayakers beg for goodies on one of Idaho's premiere multi-day whitewater challenges...

# A BEAUTY IN THE EYE OF A POTATO? THE SOUTH FORK OF THE SALMON

Articles & Photos by Chuck Pezeshki

We were trying to get our act together that second weekend in June, but we were having problems; Idaho-kind of problems.

Bart needed to get a sitter for his kids. What was wrong with the **sitter** he usually called?

She had to take her old man to court **Things** had gotten a little lively in the Stites bar and he had bitten the nose off some other local in a fight. "Allegedly" bitten off their nose-he hadn't had his court date yet.

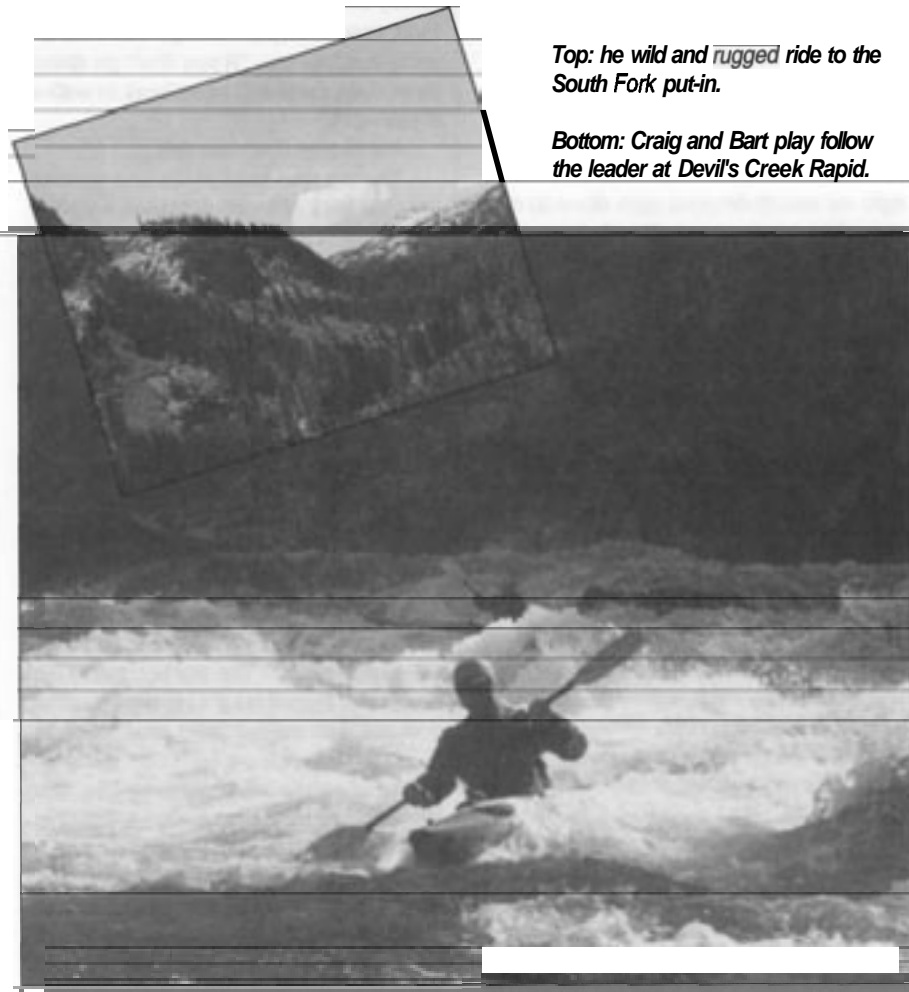
Craig couldn't make up his mind whether he should call **Al** and his cat.-raft crew and sign onto the rafting **trash's** plan. That would mean suffering constant abuse regarding our choice of craft for this three day excursion, but we would be able to bum beer and **leftovers** from their plates.

I faced my own dilemma Should I leave my fiancée for the third weekend in a row, possibly finalizing the string of failed relationships that constitutes the history of our little, ragtag crew?

Things started to fall together Thursday night while I was on the drive to **Orofino**. Bart found a sitter, Craig threw his cards in with **Al**, and I convinced my fiancée that this really was the last weekend for boating in Idaho, considering the drought and all. The total number going to float the South Fork of the Salmon would be nine: three kayakers and six **cata-rafters**. We were headed for the center of one of the wildest chunks of Idaho; the jewel in the eye of the potato.

The South Salmon cuts a deep, granitic canyon on the edge of the largest wilderness complex in the lower 48 states. It is remote, rugged and hard. If a boating party did screw the pooch down there- well they had better be carrying backpacks, hiking boots and two days of food. There are old mining roads leading "somewhere" up on the canyon **rim**, but who knows if they lead back to civilization?

The geologic structure **that** the river traverses is uplifting faster **than** the river is cutting down; hence, the rapids are classic, steep Rocky Mountain boulder-bed rapids formed by slides and fans from side creeks. The **grano-dyarite** walls close in tightly on the river bed, creating a **Venturi** effect, espe-



Top: he wild and rugged ride to the South Fork put-in.

Bottom: Craig and Bart play follow the leader at Devil's Creek Rapid.

cially at higher water. Because of the inaccessibility, the South Fork of the Salmon at high water is not a river for the advanced **intermediate** midlife-crisis **kayaker** that crows to his buddies about flipping and rolling up **against** Pillow Rock on the Gauley.

It is the **kind** of gem were experts **immerse** themselves in a spectacular gorge with numerous Class IV-V rapids, rapids that drop down to the mightiest untamed river in Idaho, the Main **Salmon**. And, on this trip in particular, it would offer us the opportunity to get drunk on someone else's beer -the **cata-rafters'**.

The crew that **finally** gathered in **McCall** ~~that~~ late spring day was a diverse one. Bart is a geologist who used to be a miner... a "whole-wheat" miner. I am a professor and do a lot of environmental activist work. For

me, having Bart along definitely has its **plusses** and minuses. **Bart** tortures me **relentlessly** about my **eco-wacko** tendencies; however, he does **know** the country, having worked here for the past ten years.

Bart **also** knows all of the people in the country, and figures that it is his **social** duty to **re-acquaint** himself with **all** of them each drive to a river.

**This** can cause interminable delays. On **this** trip we met one of Bart's old mining buddies-a fellow by the name of **Chappy**.

"Old Chappy, he's a good old **fart**," Bart said. "I want to stop and just catch up a little." Chappy used to be the mayor of Yellowpine, Idaho, where Bart used to work. Chappy would hand out his business card, which said on one side,

**Chappy, Mayor of Yellowpine**

"You'll be happy with Mayor Chappy!"  
and on the back side,  
"Please don't throw your cigarette butts in the urinal.  
Besides the mess, it makes them soggy and hard to light!"

What a mayor of Yellowpine does is beyond me-Idaho County has no zoning or building codes. Chappy had to move to Riggins after a little accident with a propane heater in his house-he filled up his living room with the gas, then lit a match. He was blown through the door of his cabin.

Craig Thomas, the other kayaker in our party, is a 5th grade school teacher in Orofino. One would think that this would make him patient. In fact, it has made him passive-aggressive, at least since they outlawed corporal punishment at the grade school where he teaches. Craig, however, has taken this energy and funneled it into positive aspects of his life; for example, he gets up earlier and earlier every morning. Friday morning, as the ladder from his loft dropped perilously close to my head, I asked him why it was necessary to get up at 5:00 in the morning when the drive was only three hours long, and we didn't need to be there until 11:00?

The catarafters were all associated with Aire Inflatables of Boise, ID. Al Hamilton, sales manager and partner, who alternately proclaims himself as "God's gift to rafting" and "the kayaker's friend" was coordinating with us. Chris Walker, partner and raft designer, who probably really is God's gift to rafting, accompanied him, along with his brother Todd, Gerry of Mile High Shuttles in McCall, Gail Ater and Greg "Mugsy" Patrek.

Mugsy is a mountain of a man, which is good- he can take a lot of abuse. Al and Mugsy go way back; when Mugsy wants to go rafting, Al throws an extra cata-raft on top of the rig, retrieves his special "Mugsy" dry bag- containing life jacket, wetsuit, drysuit and booties- and phones Mugsy with directions to the put-in. All Mugsy has to bring are his Tevas; Al gave them to him last Christmas. One could say Al almost feels downright motherly towards old Mugs.

We finally arrived at the put-in at 2:00 PM Friday. Up came shuffling a typical Central Idaho denizen, sporting a pistol and a backpack.

"So where you from?" we asked.

"Delaware," he replied. "Looking for a job in the mines."

After a while, he asked us where we were floating.

"Down there," I gestured.

"Shoot, no one goes down there," he replied. "I've seen tons of boaters, but no one goes down there.."

Bart just pointed to me and said, "That boy right there is one of the best kayakers in Idaho," then immediately started smirking. To keep the stranger from pulling his gun, I quickly thanked Bart for the undeserved compliment, and changed the topic, asking about the use of a Glock 17 in the wilderness.

"Rescue," he said. "If I get hurt, I'll just shoot this in the air a couple of times and get help."

Uhuh, sure...

We put in at 3:00 PM. We quickly made our way down the entrance Class III and IV rapids to the first biggie, called Devil's Creek, Devil's Toe, Devil's Tooth, Devil's Protruberance, or whatever part of the anatomy is currently causing irritation. Devil's Creek is a long, complex, Class V-rapid with some ugly aspects- if you mess up.

I ran first, tight and upright, along with the rest of the kayaking crew. We beached our boats below, and hiked up to watch the rafts.

Al Hamilton was the only catarafter to run the hero route down the left. The rest finessed, or ricocheted, down the sneak route on the right. We cheered as Mugsy cleared the bottom wave with no damage, after all, he was carrying the beer and a fine bottle of cheap whiskey.

It wasn't long until we pulled into camp and the insults started flying. Al wanted us to wear signs saying:

**"Please don't feed the kayakers- They only become ornery and expectant"**

Fortunately there was neither paper nor pen. Before long we were all drunk. Al once again proclaimed himself "God's gift to rafting" and this time we quickly agreed. We knew that if we didn't, he would shut off our tap.

After the usual misogynist conversation and boating nonsense, we went to bed. Sleep came easily as we burped beer into our lifejackets/pillows.

Saturday started hot, but turned cold. Soon Catarafter Gail started yelling strange obscenities in Spanish, citing his Texan-Jewish ancestry. I got into a particularly nihilistic mood, and refused to get out of my boat to scout. As a result we ran the second Class V, a rapid, appropriately named Surprise, blind. We kayakers managed to avoid the spanking of Granddaddy South Fork, although I gave a rodeo-hole performance. We cleared out to watch the raft run at the bottom of the drop.

Everything was going fine until Mugsy, who was a little rusty with the oars, entered the top of Surprise. He soon dropped into several big, hungry holes- sideways. Of

course, he wasn't scared- Mugsy is a mountain of a man.

But now he was swimming, hanging on to his cataraft as it did a lawn mower imitation on top of his head. We had to avert our gaze to keep from laughing; after all, Mugsy is also a sensitive guy.

At the bottom, Al gave Mugsy quite a lecture about how to row a cataraft. Frankly, we kayakers were worried if this tension would affect the foreign aid program that evening.

Mugsy finally got it together, promising Al he wouldn't break another oar. Al was still a little upset with his boy Mugs as we passed out of the gorge and down to the lunch spot, an abandoned old sawmill.

The rafters wanted to stop here. Apparently, the attraction of horse poop and rusting junk was just too great for our rubber-on-the-brain buddies- they couldn't wait to beach their boats and break out the Kraft American Singles. For entertainment, Bart maimed a rattlesnake, then proceeded to give me a lecture on how people and rattlers just don't mix.

I suggested he should become a teacher and philosopher, providing rational underpinnings for his white trash, scorched earth campaign against the local fauna.

"Grandfather River is going to get you for killing one of his children, Bart," I said.

"Can I borrow your river knife to saw off its head, Chuck?"

Back in the boats we finally arrived at Fall Creek Rapids, the last big Class V before the Main Salmon. I stood tall and ran both drops; Bart and Craig ran the top, then slinked down the sneak on the right. The rafters came screaming around the corner next, and it wasn't long until we were cracking the celebratory, cold beer in the eddy below. Even I had to admit those high performance AIRE craft were pretty amazing- for rafts, that is.

By the time we set camp that night above the Main Salmon, we had the rafters trained. We guzzled their Sam Adams and Henry Weinhard's, sat in their chairs, and even ate the first round of their food. If we could have gotten their pillows, perfection would have been achieved.

We watched two bears graze across the river from camp. Mugsy won best "expanded story" award, about facing down a bear with a can of paint and his fists.

"Ooooh, yeah, I was gonna spray that bear in the eyes, and then punch him in the nose," he slurred. "It was either him or me, yeah, that bear, oooooohh."

The float out on the Main Salmon the following day was peaceful. By then, the rafters were alternately giving us cookies to bark like seals or shut up. Bart and I played

the classic idiot game of trying to touch the wall in **Chittam** rapid.

Jerry's **shuttlers**, Lynn and Jeannie, arrived just as we reached the **take-out**. More beers and **salsa** and dip and we knew that we had hit the mother load. After all, I reasoned, Bart WAS a miner.

## IF YOU ARE GOING

The South Fork of the Salmon is a challenging **whitewater** trip for experienced boaters only. If the Upper Gauley at **2500** cfs is the top end of your ability, put your high water South Fork dreams to rest. **Californians** should consider it on par with the Forks of the **Kern**. It is not the place for an intermediate to "move up" to harder water. The **first** four miles **are** deceptively easy, but your trip could dramatically fail lower in the gorges, which **are** extremely difficult to exit.

The South Fork is definitely a possibility for a trained paddle crew in a **self-bailing** raft, or one of those amazing **cataraft**. However, above 4 feet on the **Krassel** gauge, the holes get enormous and the swims would be long and icy.

This is spring in Idaho, and the water is **NEVER warm** on the **harder** runs. Plan on **40-45** degree water temperature and wear a dry suit. First runs **are** best made at a level between **2.5'-4'** on the Krassel gauge. Don't be too proud to scout. The South Fork is much harder than the Middle Fork of the Salmon or most of the other popular multiday trips nearby.

Experts **can** take some solace in the fact that the South Fork is not nearly as difficult as a **Secesh** or the North Fork of the **Payette** Top-to-Bottom Run. But remember, you will



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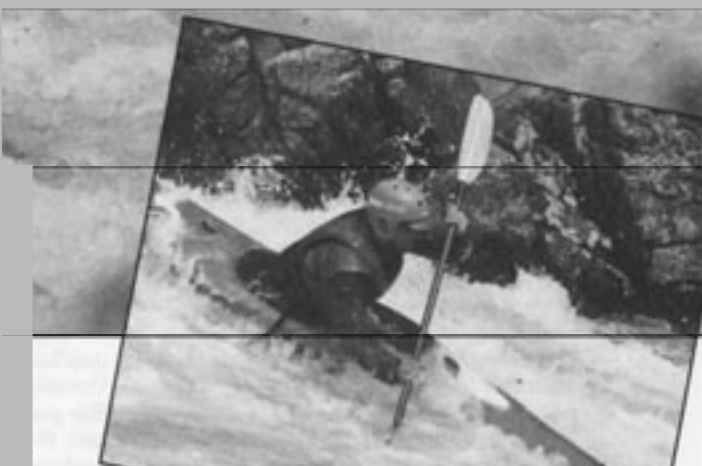
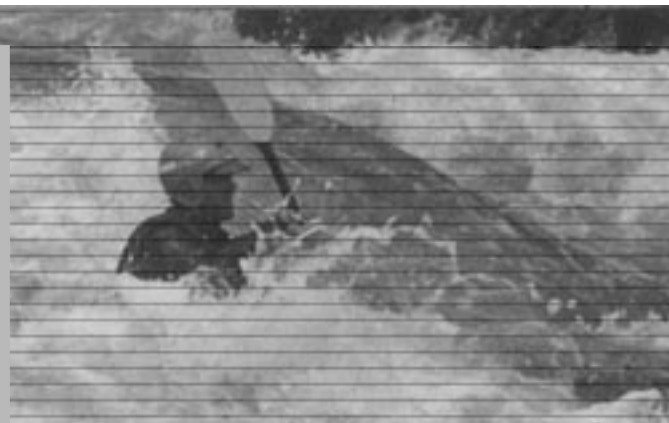
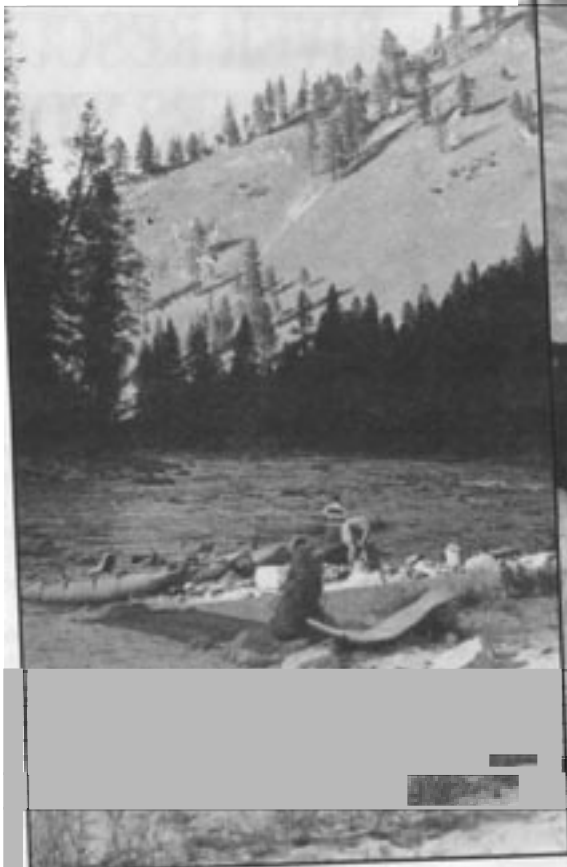
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Idling a loaded boat.

The boating season in Idaho varies daily. Usually in early June the river will be high and the pass over Lick Creek Summit to the put-in might be closed. Call one of our outfitters to get a feel for snowpack. We start early this year due to near drought conditions.

There are also problems with floating on the Main Salmon; after June 15 it is illegal to be on the Main above Vinegar Creek without a permit. Whatever you do, don't camp on the Main without a permit. There is still no permit required to run the North Fork. Refer to Greg Moore's and Don

note of Larry LaRocco's HR 3732 Idaho Wilderness, Sustainable Forests and Communities Act. **This** bill a real stinker, and would open most of Idaho's remaining roadless land to timber harvest and mining development. (Beware wilderness bills from Western congresspeople-they are usually pro-industry giveaways). **This** bill has passed the House, and is moving on to the Senate. We can not save Idaho without your outside help! These are your lands too. For

# SAFETY OPINIONS

LET'S STOP DOWNGRADING RIVERS! *by Charlie Walbridge*

I'm always surprised when otherwise rational expert paddlers insist on **downgrading** the rivers they run. They tell me that the Upper Yough and Gauley aren't "really" class V, and the Ocoee and Youghiogheny are "really" class II. They want to reserve the term "Class V" for extreme rapids at the outer limits of paddling ability. They seem to believe that as their limits are extended, all "lesser" rivers should be downgraded.

Consistency is important when **classifying** rivers. It really doesn't matter if you call a river a two or a four so long as it is done uniformly. But this has become, at best, an elusive goal. Paddlers must be prepared to encounter variations in river rating when they travel. A river in a region lots of challenging **whitewater** and a number of good paddlers will often be **rated** lower than a similar one in a less well endowed part of the country. Even within the same area different groups may **classify** rapids in various ways. A drop may be overrated or underrated to **impress** other boaters, depending on local **custom**. A guidebook author who has an uneventful run will describe a river **differently** from one who had a bad day on the water.

Familiarity often makes a river seem easier. This has contributed to the downrating problem. When I first ran the Upper Yough my "leader" had been down only a few times. Today it's not uncommon to encounter people who have gone down a difficult river dozens or even hundreds of times. The first run is always the hardest, as any first timer **will** attest. But good guides can make a run easier, and practice **will** accustom the paddler to a river's specific challenges.

I always rate a river with a first timer in mind— one who is running the river without a personal guide. I also try to be conservative with suggested water levels for first timers. It's vital to recognize the danger of participating in a freewheeling **high-water** run without a thorough introduction to a river at low flows. Like the upper levels of a **video** game, the fast tempo of a high water run is very difficult for the uninitiated to manage.

The problem of downrating is by no means confined to difficult whitewater, it

occurs throughout the scale. When a class V is downgraded to a IV to make room for a new, more difficult run, Class IV's, III's, II's, and even I's soon follow. **This** lumps a large number of rivers at the bottom of the scale. Downgrading class I, II, and III rivers poses no problems for those who paddle expert-level **whitewater**, but the subtle differentiation needed by novices and touring users is lost. It introduces instability into a rating system which is already difficult to apply uniformly.

More importantly, by bunching all the easier runs at the bottom of the scale, experts make river classification less and less relevant to novice and intermediate whitewater paddlers.

Accurate ratings are also important to **paddlers** testing the limits of their skill. **Virtually** all **experts** top out in class V, so **fine** gradations within this class are **important**. But novices **are** also continually pushing their ability, and need clear and useful distinctions between grades I-III. I certainly remember when these differences were **important** to me when, as an inexperienced paddler, my friends and I used the scale to help select appropriate streams to paddle.

The International Scale of River Difficulty was developed in the 1950's by the AWA following a similar outline to a scale used by rock climbers. The idea spread rapidly around the world. Like paddlers, climbers began to extend the limits of their sport during the 60's and 70's. But unlike whitewater boaters, they did not downgrade existing climbs. They responded by dividing their "Class V" into ten distinct classes, from 5.0-5.9. As the skills of the elite continued to improve, additional gradations from 5.10-5.14 were established. Climbs above 5.10 **are** attempted only by a relative handful of climbers; with most activity being clustered in the 5.6-5.9 range.

Paddlers should do the same thing. The work of **setting** up the gradations within Class V must be done by top paddlers who understand the full range of river difficulty. Despite this need there seems to be little interest in doing so.

It's payback time for top paddlers interested in giving back to the sport. We'll need their help to make these **changes**. ■

# RIVER RESCUE CLASSES WORK

*by Charlie Walbridge*

While hanging around with some of my paddling friends I have been surprised at their disdain for classes in river rescue. These classes have been described as "worthless" or "nerdy" by people whose opinions I usually respect. **Truthfully**, there are paddlers out there who don't need rescue classes. They paddle in groups of people who know their limits and seldom make mistakes. Rescues, other than occasionally assisting a swimmer or recovering a loose boat, are extremely rare. **When** something serious happens, they have a good sense of rope dynamics and river hydrology and **can** improvise workable techniques on the spot.

But river rescue has changed a lot since the days when very complex rope systems like the Tyrolian Traverse and Telfer Lower were the **main** focus. Self-rescue **skills** like swimming and wading are now being taught. Many paddlers, including some really good ones, are pretty helpless when out of their boat, so improved self rescue **skills** can translate **into** added confidence on the river. Today's river rescue courses also include throw-line handling and belaying-**skills** which take full advantage of available terrain and manpower.

River Rescue classes also cover the best ways to use the new rescue style life vests **with** built-in quick-release harnesses. These new PFD's increase a paddler's ability to reach out and help someone in trouble, but many paddlers who own them have no idea how they work.

In some rare, but serious, mishaps, improvised rescues do not work. Today's rescue courses teach stabilization and snag lines. These are real life methods of helping people who have become pinned or trapped in inaccessible positions. They can be used to counter vertical pins and foot entrapment and require a **minimum** of lightweight gear.

Mechanical advantage **systems** like the Z Drag can be set up with a few lightweight **tools** and used to unpin boats. These systems have been refined for over a decade; your chance of setting one up correctly and in a hurry without prior instruction is **small**. Some people need hands-on training; others can learn from a book. But everyone should familiarize themselves with these **systems**.

A rescue class taught by an **up-to-date** instructor **can** teach **many** helpful **skills** that **will** give any boater an edge in an emergency. Taking a course doesn't mean you should go out on the water **looking** for trouble; nobody wants to take a long **swim** or get pinned! But like a **seatbelt** in a car, these courses provide an extra margin of safety when a bad situation **arises unexpectedly**. ■



# PRELIMINARY 1994 ACCIDENT OVERVIEW

*collected and reported  
by Charlie Walbridge*

If the material being sent to me is accurate, 1994 is shaping up to be a "normal" year for river fatalities despite high water in many parts of the country. A total of 10 deaths are now in my files. What sets this group of fatalities apart is the surprising number that were caused by pinning in unrunnable rapids, on bridge piers, or strainers. In most cases the victims knew about the hazard but got into trouble anyway. I've heard rumors of other fatalities and near misses and always appreciate letters or phone calls about them.

**T**he first accident since my last report occurred on December 29, 1993, but was not reported until early '94. The site was in Town Creek Canyon, near Guntersville in Northern Alabama. Temperatures were near 50\_ degrees and water levels were moderate. The group was moving well on this Class III creek run as they approached "The Blockage". Known locally as Sleeping Giant Falls, this 15+' high, unrunnable drop is completely obstructed by giant boulders.

The victim, C-1 paddler Dick Johnson, was moving towards the final eddy in class II+ water when he bumped a rock and lost his ferry angle. Johnson braced, almost **flipped**, and was pushed downstream. Attempting to reach the eddy, he slammed against a "guard rock" five feet above the top of the drop and capsized. He bailed out, washed over the top drop, and was pinned at the base. The current peeled the life jacket off his body and held him completely under water. **After attempting** to locate him, the group **summoned** outside help.

He was pulled from the river two days later through a remarkable joint effort by members of the Birmingham Canoe Club, a local rescue squad, and a climbing rescue team. First, water was diverted from the drop by felling **trees** and placing a sheet of plywood into the slot above. Next, **working** from a tethered raft, rescuers were able to attach a line to the victim's body. A Z-drag was then used to pull him free.

The Pacific Northwest witnessed two **fatalities** in February. The **first** occurred on the Class V "Green **Truss** Bridge" **Sec-**

**tion** of the White Salmon River in Washington State. A four-man party, composed of expert kayakers who were familiar with the river, was attempting a low-water run. The victim, Jack **Kleinman**, was a class V boater with over **14** years of experience in the U.S. and abroad.

The group was making good time, portaging several drops. The site of the accident was a narrow, zig-zag canyon containing a long Class V rapid, which the group elected to boat-scout. Jack's bow was shoved underwater, snagging a hidden log. The boat pinned vertically in a 3' pour-over. One member of the group immediately attempted a swimming rescue and made contact with the victim, but could not hold on. The other two boaters exited their boats and started throwing ropes towards Jack. They somehow managed to snag the boat and pull it free after about fifteen minutes.

CPR was initiated by two of the group while a third went for help. Jack was evacuated and transported to a **hospital**, where CPR was discontinued after rewarming.

Another accident saw Portland resident Barbara Harper pinned against a log on the East Fork of the Lewis River in Washington. She was a strong intermediate kayaker and very fit. About one mile above Naked Falls the group eddied out above a Class III drop. An 8" thick log was angled upstream, out of the water; there was a clear route to the right. Several boaters made their run successfully. Barbara began her ferry but hesitated, hitting the log broadside, across the cockpit of her boat. She "bear-hugged" the log, and after being tossed around submerged completely.

The group attempted a rescue, lowering swimmers in rescue life vests and connecting a line from the shore to the log. They made contact with the boat, but the powerful current made attaching a line to it impossible. The river pulled off Barbara's helmet and life vest in a few minutes, but the boat did not fold until the next day. After 40 minutes the group **elected** to **abandon** their efforts and get off the river before dark. Three days later a rescue squad using a Tyrolean traverse and a gas-powered winch pulled the log from the river and recovered the pinned boat and body.

In early April a man paddling an inflatable kayak without a life vest or helmet drowned while running Bellows Falls, a huge waterfall on the Connecticut River near a town of the same name. Another man drowned towards the end of the month rafting a flooded Otter Creek near Burlington. Again, **PFD's** and helmets

were absent. This information comes from short newspaper articles; these incidents combine the timeless ingredients of inexperience and high water.

At about the same time 13 year old Jonathan Lapp and his partner capsized a canoe while attempting to land and portage a low-water bridge over **Cocalico Creek** in **Lancaster County**, Pennsylvania. The bridge was completely under water, Jonathan apparently became pinned or snagged underneath. Rescue squads with heavy equipment diverted the stream, allowing divers to recover the body hours later.

On April 16 a commercial raft passenger died of a heart attack following a lengthy **swim** on a very cold, high water day on the popular Hudson Gorge in upstate New York. Very little information regarding this incident is available.

The **Rio Grande River** near Pilar, New Mexico was running at **4850 cfs** on June 22, a high level. On that date **Cecelia Salazar**, a private rafter, was tossed out of her boat in the box canyon section downstream of the gauge. She apparently **recirculated** in a hole and was carried some distance under water. Her body was recovered downstream. I have no information on the run or what the level means and would appreciate help from New Mexico boaters.

On May 24 **Justin** Sappington, a 14 year-old Boy Scout from Baltimore, **Maryland**, was paddling a tandem canoe on Deer Creek, a class II run. The group encountered a cross-stream log. The group was setting up to portage when a canoe capsized. One boy was pulled to shore; the other washed into the log where he was caught between the log and swamped canoe. The scout leader managed to pry **Justin** free after 5-6 minutes using a fence rail as a lever, then started CPR. **Paramedics** were called, and the boy was transported to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Early June brought grim news from the **Wenatchee River** in eastern Washington. On June 4, 1994, despite low flows, a 38 year old **man** and a 12 year old boy died when their 14' **raft** pinned against the bridge piers of U.S. Highway 2 during a commercial trip. The two **victims** caught their legs in the "chicken line", a rope **strung** around the outside of the **boat**. These piers **are enormous**, and one of the passengers reportedly suggested to their guide that the group **start** paddling right before impact.

The cause of the accident appears to have been a miscalculation on the part of the guide. It is worth noting that some Class V private rafters are using grab loops

or T-handles in place of a chicken line.

On May 22 there was a drowning on the **Lochsa River** in Idaho, which may also have involved entanglement in a chicken line running from bow to stern. More information about this accident is needed.

The infamous "Mean Bridges" section of the **Poudre River** near Fort Collins, Colorado, claimed the life of novice kayaker Charles Seltzer on June 4. The bridge is extremely tricky to negotiate and was the site of an a similar drowning a few years ago. Portaging would have been a better choice. The victim was pinned completely under water. Even after a line was attached to the boat it took the combined strength of thirty people to pull it free. The kayak had to be cut apart to remove Mr. Seltzer. CPR was started, and although there was a pulse when he was loaded onto a Life Flight helicopter, he died in the hospital two days later.

In the near-miss category a kayaker was **run** down by a racing powerboat while attempting to gain access to **Lambertville Rapids** on the Lower Delaware River near Philadelphia. The high speed boat was revving up in a **warm-up** area (which was not marked) when he ran

up over the kayak's bow. **Fortunately**, there were no injuries.

There was another bad pinning and entrapment on the **Ocoee River** in **Tennessee** near Double Suck in late June. The rock, which is slightly undercut, was the site of a similar incident last year. The **victim** was rescued by nearby paddlers who attached a rope to the bow and pulled the boat free.

Slim Ray reported the remarkable recovery of a **six-year** old boy following submersion in a 36-F river for **65** minutes following an auto accident. He was pulled from the water with a body temperature of only **62°F**! A **heart-lung** machine rewarmed his blood gradually over several hours, and a lengthy hospitalization followed. Now he's back in school with no brain damage.

I'm always looking for information about fatalities and new-misses involving trained whitewater boaters. I am especially **interested** in accidents occurring after this report was written (in late June). Please send write-ups, either your own or from club newsletters or newspapers, to Charlie Walbridge, AWA Safety Committee, **230** Penllyn Pike, Penllyn, PA 19422; or call 215 646-0157. ■



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# THE SAD FUTURE OF KAYAKING?

**O**ne of the West's most daring and accomplished Hair boaters questions the future of whitewatersport in a world where no one takes responsibility for themselves.

Three friends were talking about recent events.

"Hey, did you hear about the kayaker who was playing right above a strainer? Knew it was there, but went ahead anyway."

"Boy, that's asking for it."

"I'll say, and he got it. Flipped, couldn't roll up-washed right into the log."

"I remember, he got stuck in the branches and drowned."

"Then his family sued the kayak manufacturer for not having big enough cockpits to get in and out of."

They all shook their heads.

"Man, that got it backwards."

"Stupid."

"Bizarre."

"Hey, but what about the three guys back in New England? Hear about them?"

"Oh Yeah! Where the First Guy got stuck on a rock, Second Guy tried to eddy out and dislocated his shoulder"

"And the Third Guy lost a bunch of gear trying to get the Second Guy to shore!"

The three friends all laughed and slapped each other on the back.

"What a joke! Sounds like the Keystone cops in kayaks. A bunch of flailing geeks!"

"No -that's not the point. The Second and Third Guys sued the First! Blamed him for the dislocated shoulder and the lost gear."

"You're kidding! While he was sitting out there broached?"

"That's what happened. Lawyer from the Big City. Bullshit mentality."

"Weird."

"Funky."

"Jesus, what's paddling coming to...?"

"It's not just kayaking. Did you hear the one about the climber who tied in wrong, rope came loose, and he cratered

from 40 feet?"

"And sued the rope manufacturer for not having clear instructions about how to tie the rope?"

"Give me a break!"

"We're talking life-threatening idiocy here. You know, Darwinian selection."

"It goes way past that! What about the burglar who crashed through the skylight of the place he was burglarizing?"

"Now I read about that one. Got hurt, broke a leg or something, then sued the owner of the building?"

"The guy he was stealing from?"

"God, no!"

"Sorry to say it's true, my friend."

"Yeah right, Justice will prevail."

"Screwed up thinking."

"Weird shit."

"Guys, I got a better one. Hear about the girl who sued Nike when she tripped over the shoelaces of her new shoes and broke her wrist?"

"Naah!"

"That's Bull!"

"I tell you, it's true!"

"Or the guy who came upon an accident and tried to rescue two girls out of a burning car, but only got one?"

"Whadda ya mean, only got one out?"

"He was burned badly, couldn't get the second, the car was all in flames."

"And?"

"Get this - and I'm not making it up - the second girl's family sued him for not getting her out."

"Christ. After he risked his life."

"Sort of puts it all in perspective, don't it?"

"Man, damned sued if you do, damned sued if you don't."

"Shit," they all said together, and looked at each other soberly.

"Our sport is dead."

"Responsibility is dead."

"Our bleeping culture is dead."

"People are screwed."

"To hell with all that!", one said with a cheerful wave. "Let's go paddling!"

They glanced edgily at each other - a look that nervously weighed unspoken concerns.

"Well..."

"Uummm... Ok, but we're gonna have to sign an agreement before we go. You know, just so there's no problem if something happens."

"Yeah, so we're on the up and up about things."

"Yup, it's better to make it legal."

"Have Jack write it, he's a lawyer."

"Anyone here a notary? Bi? Here, stamp the form."

"Great! Go by Kinko's on the way out of town and make three copies. We'll be set."

"Alright!!!", they all said excitedly.

"Let's go paddling!"



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# Kennebec River Fest Hits A Home Run 1st Time At Bat

By Tom Christopher

The Kennebec River Fest had been on the front page, sports page and in feature sections of newspapers from Portland to Bangor all week. WTOS Radio blasted the airwaves throughout Maine, bringing the newest AWA river event to the ears and hearts of whitewater lovers and racers. The weatherman promised a superb weekend and most of the black flies left the state, headed for Quebec two days before the festival. The three day weekend of the Festival proved that Maine is a whitewater heaven.

We knew if we did it, THEY would come. They came by the carload, the vanload, and even by bus. THEY came from New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey, the Carolinas, and even Idaho. The paddle town of The Forks, Maine, made famous by whitewater rafting, now had hundreds of kayakers descending upon it for the Fourth of July.

Over five hundred boaters and local residents turned out for the first annual Kennebec River Fest, held at Wilderness Outfitters. Thirty exhibitors also came to Maine to support this first ever event. First Selectman Dan MacDonald and the VFW boys from Biingham, Maine put on a killer Chicken barbecue, serving almost three hundred meals over the course of three hours. They also kept the burger & chip wagon going from noontime until the festival closed, so nobody would go away hungry.

The outfitters from RAFT MAINE kept the beer flowing fast, enough to quench the thirst of even the driest boaters, and the bluegrass band "Good Clean Fill" provided music throughout the evening.

Even brief thundershowers didn't dampen any spirits. After huddling under vendor tents for half an hour the storm passed and the show went on.

The races turned out to be exciting with nine contestants walking away with \$1,800 dollars in prize money provided by Champion International. First prize in the Tandem Canoe Division went to Chip Cochran and Scott Blue of Greenville, Maine. Chip is recognized as a national champion in canoe poling, and finished the six-mile course in 39.24. Dick Hanson of

Orrington, Maine won the Kayak Division in 40.38.

Hanson beat out Fred Ludvig of Houlton, Maine who actually reached the take-out first, a full minute ahead of Dick. But Hanson was able to exit his boat and scramble up the steep take-out bank to beat Fred to the finish line.

Frank Mooney and his crew from Crabapple Rafting beat all other teams with a time of 53.35 to firmly establish major bragging rights amongst the commercial outfitters in The Forks. Crabapple Rafting runs outfitting facilities on both the Kennebec and Deerfield Rivers in Maine and Massachusetts. Other outfitters vowed there would be a new champion next year. We'll see.

Wilderness Outfitters, host to the first AWA Kennebec River Fest, provided an outstanding riverside site and their staff put every effort forward to accommodate AWA workers and festival vendors. In spite of their own busy commercial rafting schedule they generously found time to help when needed.

Central Maine Power Company likewise did a great job, providing the festival with logistical support, advertising and public relations, not to mention of course extra water releases on the Dead and Kennebec Rivers.

There were many others that worked hard to make this event happen. John Willard, owner of Wilderness Outfitters, gave us the opportunity to show what AWA could do. Russell Walters, the president of Northern Outdoors, worked very hard to coordinate our efforts in Maine and acted as liaison to the RAFT MAINE outfitters. Mark Ishkanian, Communications Manager of Central Maine Power, provided countless hours to keep this event a high profile item in the Maine media

And to everyone else that helped to give the effort a boost, many thanks!

**CHECK OUT THE BIG WAHOO SECTION OF THIS ISSUE FOR TOM CHRISTOPHER'S ACCOUNT OF A HIGH WATER RUN ON THE KENNEBEC DURING THE FESTIVAL WEEKEND!**



*Inset: Her Riveress (Phyllis Horowitz)*

*watching the end of the race and contemplating a cold one. (photo by Doug Feick) Back: Scott Blue (foreground) and Chip Cochane race to the put-in after a 200 yard land dash in the Taupen Canoe Division.*

## We need your input!!! AMERICAN WHITEWATER ANNOUNCES NEW COLUMN

### HE DID WHAT?

Who is Bob? Why is Bob's Hole named after him? What about

Dudley? And who or what did he dip? Is Jared the first or last

name and what happened to his knee? Are Charlie's Choice and

Charlie's Washing Machine first cousins? Zwick's Backender? Vernon's Folly? How DID those rapids get their names? Inquiring minds want to know.

Sounds like a great column in the making.

OK Maybe you don't want to write it. I will. Talk to me. I'd like to cover one or two rapids each issue. I'm particularly interested in rapids which have names where the origins are not described in popular guidebooks. Or even better, those stories that the guidebooks got wrong...but you...you have the TRUE story.

Your stories will NOT be verified. LEGENDS will be GLADLY

accepted. Maybe we will even generate mail expressing an alternate story to your story. Maybe we'll publish two or three versions of the naming of the same rapid and then have readers choose the one that they think really happened.

(Whoa, Joe! What's so new about that?)

See you around the campfire. Ill be the one with the portable recorder taking down every word.

Joe Greiner  
404 Stacy Street  
Raleigh NC 27605  
919-834-1633

# ANNUAL SOUTHWESTERN CANOE RENDEZVOUS— OCTOBER 7-9, 1994

The HOUSTON CANOE CLUB, has announced the sixth annual SOUTHWESTERN CANOE RENDEZVOUS to be held October 7-9, 1994. The symposium will be held on Lake Raven at the Huntsville State Park, 60 miles north of Houston, Texas.

The SOUTHWESTERN CANOE RENDEZVOUS is the largest paddle sport show in the country. The public is invited to participate in the many activities that include: clinics, workshops, on the water demos, exhibitions, family entertainment, competition, raffles and an auction benefiting river conservation efforts.

Over **fifty** clinics will be taught by leading instructors from all over the country. Clinics will be available for beginners to advanced paddlers. Specific instruction

will be given in all types of paddle craft, including: flat water canoes, white water canoes, sea kayaks and white water kayaks.

Major manufacturers and retailers of canoes, kayaks and paddle sport accessories will be on hand to display their products. This event allows the public to "test-drive" any of the hundreds of types of boats that will be displayed. Many manufacturers will be unveiling their newest product lines.

Regional, State and National competitions will be held, including an Interpretive Freestyle Competition, sailing regattas and outrigger canoe races. The TEXAS CANOE RACING ASSOCIATION, organizers of the Texas Water Safari, will host other classes of competition. The GREAT

TEXAS DUTCH OVEN COOK-OFF will be held again at this year's event, in cooperation with the Dutch Oven Society.

The HOUSTON CANOE CLUB is a non-profit organization whose purpose is the promotion of canoe sport and is active in conservation, recreation, racing and instruction. The club is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary in 1994. The club is open to the public and has over two hundred members.

Additional information and registration packets can be obtained by calling the Houston Canoe Club at (713)467-8857, or by mail, P. O. Box 925516, Houston, Texas 77292-5516. ■

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## Bigfoot Stole My Heart

by Carla Garrison

It was my favorite supermarket tabloid **story** ever.

"Bigfoot Stole My Wife!" the headline screamed. Below this revelation was a picture of a distraught middle aged **man**, a logger from the Pacific Northwest, who claimed that his beloved wife, Olga, had been abducted from the deck of their double wide in the middle of the night by a Sasquatch.

What I fancied most about this report was that the logger had waited six weeks to tell his tale. Actually, he had not taken the initiative to report his wife's **disappearance** to anyone. Neighbors had noticed that Olga, who was by **all** accounts a rather big, garrulous woman, was gone. Olga's husband only came up with the Bigfoot **story** (alibi?) when the **local** cops came to inquire after her whereabouts.

Why had he waited so long to report her abduction?

The logger offered an explanation that certainly seemed reasonable, at least to those in the community familiar with Olga. The logger said that he hadn't been concerned, because he figured that the Sasquatch would soon **tire** of his new toy and **return** her to the porch.

His explanation apparently satisfied the local authorities, who gave up on Olga after a brief wilderness search. And it was embraced with open **arms** by the publishers of the tabloid, who reported, several issues later, that Olga was **still** missing, and that a number of other middle aged men with large garrulous wives had moved into the same mountain village.

Apparently they were hoping that the Sasquatch would be so delighted with Olga that he would decide to start a harem.

My cousin Gary Carlson once told me that you can lie your way out of anything as long as you keep a straight face and stick to your alibi. When I **first** read this story I figured that this **logger/Olga/Bigfoot** scenario **confirmed** that.

Being a modern woman with an analytic and inquiring mind, I did not believe some of things I read in the **National Enquirer** and **Star**. I did not believe, for instance, that twelve of our **congresspersons** were aliens from another planet or that two newlyweds in England really had tongues more than a foot long. And I certainly didn't believe in Sasquatches and Bigfoots.

Abominal men, yes. Abominal snow men, no!

But that was before a Bigfoot Stole My Kayak. That was before a Bigfoot Stole My Heart!

It happened during the second night of a three day solo expedition down the Middle

Fork of the Feather in the Northern Sierras. I was sleeping in a **bivvy sac** beside a large rapid; no doubt that's why I didn't hear **him** sneaking up on me.

All of a sudden there was a **terrific** hulla-baloo outside my tent; it sounded like a gang of bears was raiding my camp. It had been a tough day on the river and I was in no mood for this, so I jumped out of my sac and grabbed my paddle and flashlight, ready to do battle **with** the marauders.

When I got my my act together and hit my light, I couldn't believe my eyes. No gang of bears was making the **ruckus**; it was a solitary, albeit gigantic, hairy creature, **rummaging** through my boat. It was plenty big, but I was plenty mad, so I started yelling like a banshee and brandishing my paddle, determined to drive it off.

To my **surprise** he just grunted and stared; I think he was sizing me up. All of sudden he charged, **snatched** me off the ground and threw me across **his** powerful shoulders. I kept **whacking** him in the **ass with** my paddle but I couldn't get a very good swing and it didn't slow him down a bit. Then he scooped my kayak off the ground and tossed it over his other shoulder and we were off, crashing through the brush like some **kind** of super-sonic bulldozer.

I didn't know where he was taking me and I didn't know how far he **carried** me; all I know is that I was plenty **pissed**. I kicked and clawed and gouged and bit that sucker, but it got me nowhere. I have since learned that, when it comes to behavioral modification, **bigfoots are** lot like most men; psychological manipulation works better than corporal punishment.

After several hours of crashing through the **wilderness** we reached a cave on the side of a **cliff**; this was Bigfoot's lair. Bigfoot dumped me onto the ground like a sack of potatoes, then stood in the moonlight at the mouth of the cave admiring my kayak.

I had assumed that the Bigfoot that had abducted me was the like the one that had taken Olga—that he wanted to turn me **into** a love slave. But as I sat watching him, caressing my kayak and paddle, his eyes dancing in the moonlight, I realized that it had really been my boat and gear he wanted. Taking me was just an afterthought.

Suddenly it all became clear to me. For years this lonely critter had been peeping enviously at the boaters **running** the class V rapids not a **mile** from his cave. It looked like so much **fun** that he had decided to try it for **himself**. He wanted something more **than** sex; Bigfoot wanted something that was thrilling.

He wanted to learn to kayak!

Satisfied that Bigfoot meant me no **harm**, I crawled under a **deerhide** and dozed off. When I came it was morning and Bigfoot and my gear were gone. I could hear the roar of the river at the base of the cliff and I quickly **guessed** what was going on.

That idiot is going to demolish my gear, I raged, and I barreled out of the cave and scrambled down the talus to the river. My worst fears were **confirmed**, Bigfoot was in my boat, about to enter a long, pushy class IV rock garden. I yelled and waved my arms, but it was **too late**.

Let me **tell** you, he was quite the sight! He had my helmet and PFD on backwards and he was holding my paddle wrong. He was wob **bling** and floundering even before he hit the first sluice. He rocketed down a big tongue of water right **into** a rock, which he managed to broadside. Of course he leaned the wrong way and flipped, careening around the boulder into a **pourovers** that cartwheeled **him** several times. When Bigfoot **finally** flushed out of that, he bobbed down a sizeable wave **train**, upside down, floundering and flailing with his paddle, apparently trying to roll.

He tumbled over a five foot ledge and **recirculated** for nearly a minute. Amazingly he made no effort to abandon ship. Finally it kicked him loose and he **drifted** down into a long, shallow slide. He took **quite** a beating there; I could see the boat bouncing up and down as his head and shoulders were pummeled by the rock. Eventually he floated into the pool at the **bottom** of the rapid, for a **moment** there was no sign life and I figured he was dead. Then suddenly his— I mean, my—paddle broke the surface and the water exploded, as if a mine had gone off. This went on for nearly **thirty** seconds, then amazingly, I don't know how, he managed to **roll**.

He had a deep gash in his head and his face was covered with blood. His knuckles were raw and oozing and his right shoulder looked like it might be dislocated. He was **gasping** for breath and his eyes were **rolled** back into his head.

But in spite of all this, and this is the thing that won my heart, Bigfoot was grinning **from** ear to ear. At that moment he was the happiest Sasquatch in the world.

How could I resist?" The big lug clearly **had** heart. He certainly had the physique. He certainly didn't have skill, but I could remedy that. I knew right then that I was going to turn him into a world class hair paddler.

To be continued... ■



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Photo: Vernon Keith Paddler: Jerry Creedon

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VIPER 11	11'6"	26.25"	15.5"	45 lbs.	\$795	\$556.50
VIPER 12	12'6"	27.25"	15.5"	49 lbs.	\$795	\$556.50
PROBE11	11'8"	28"	15.5"	45 lbs.	\$795	\$556.50
PROBE 12	12'8"	28.5"	15.5"	49 lbs.	\$795	\$556.50

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Whitewater playboats are available fully outfitted and ready to paddle. Add \$225 (solo) includes: Foam Saddle/Knee Pads/Thigh Straps/ Yakima Foot Braces/Air Bags and Quick Disconnect Lacing Kit.

**XL15 AND XL14  
 AVAILABLE  
 OUTFITTED FOR  
 TANDEM PADDLING**

## NOVA 10

has one of the most stable Canoe. The stability. The business tripping river whitew

## INTREPID

arched and our canoes. or carrying a few equals a

## SPORT 1

stability for is available

## CHALLENGER

canoe has a nimble wheel lent canoe for

## SOLO 13

with a tucked and stern. N small twisty moderate w won't let the canoeing: S

MODEL	LENGTH
CHALLENGER	14'2"
SPORT14	14'
NOVA~~	16'
NOVA 17	17'
INTREPID16	16'2"
INTREPID 17	17'3"
NOVA16	16'
SPORT 14	14'
SOLO 13	13'



**Mohawk Canoes**

963 N. CR 427, LONGWOOD, FL 32750

(407)834-3233, Fax (407)834-0292



# american whitewater

**AWA Journal**

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Address Correction Requested

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