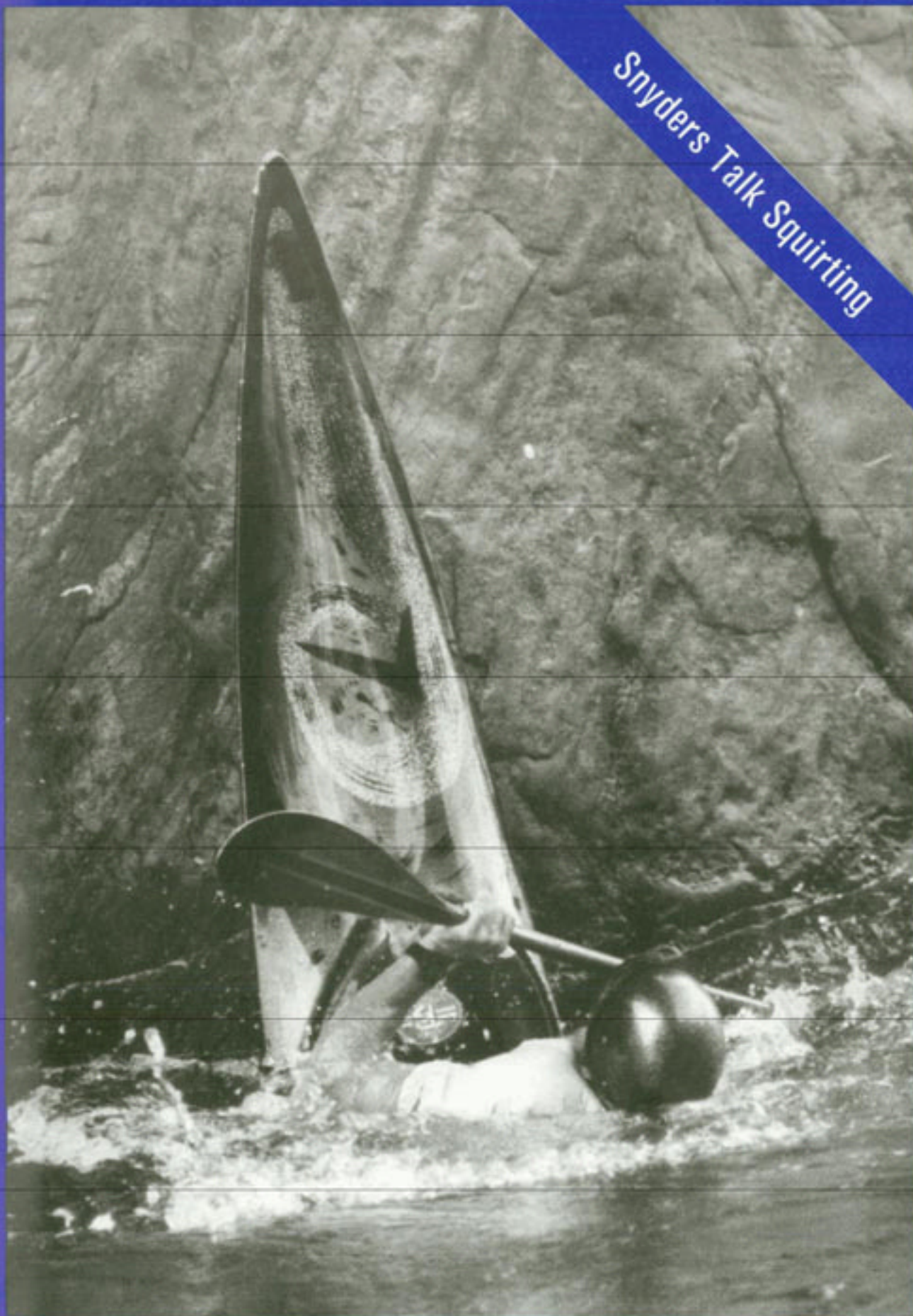


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Jan./Feb. 1990

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american whitewater

January/February 1990
Volume XXXV, No. 1

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AMERICAN WHITEWATER
AFFILIATION

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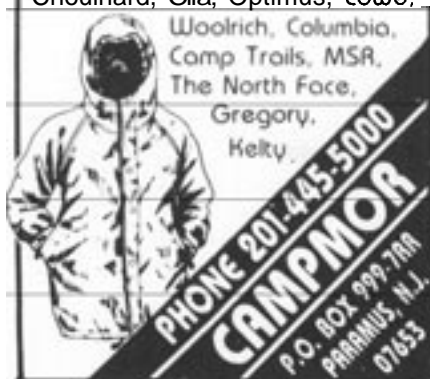
by Chris Wilcox

Front cover: James Swedberg catches Jim Snyder in action performing a pillow squirt.



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editor's forum

Dangerous ideas

There's a cold wind blowing snow horizontally through the apple, maple and white pines that define the lower edge of our meadow. Snow is plastered to the trees, out buildings, and the windows - not just on one side, but all four sides of our log house. It's been snowing all morning - the radio reports say to watch out for blizzard conditions - and my hopes for putting the finishing touches on this edition of the american whitewater are fading with each inch of snow that falls. Soon, I know, the power will be severed as a tree somewhere along the power line's climb up the mountain will topple in the November gale winds. It's a sure bet.



The ice has been forming over the nearby Penobscot, Kennebec and Kenduskeag Rivers for a few days now. Stern screw-ups produce ice cream headaches that last for more than a few seconds. It looks like I'll be spending a lot of time on the bow for a while...

Soon only the tidal rips along the Maine coast will have boatable water. The harbor seals, oblivious to the cold, shepherd schools of fish towards the playwave and eddyline that we call home during the frosty months. We keep out of the way of the seals. Despite their playfulness, they are BIG and besides, they can surf better.

It seems like only yesterday that Bill Hildreth was paddling a Silon. It looked so sleek and graceful, the bow sailing over our heads, our jaws dropped in awe as he probed the depths, leaning dangerously upstream. Its actually been a few years - three or four - since that day in the West River eddy when I knew that I had to trade in the plastic tub for something new, something radical, something dangerous.

With this issue of american whitewater we are introducing a few new "dangerous" ideas. Look for a few articles from the West coast on butt surfing, disintegrating boulders and exploding artillery shells. Visit Northern Appalachia for a tour of the Upper Deerfield Drys and the fight going on there for water releases. Gear up for an assault against the newest designer drug as part of a whitewater assault team in "Kayak Corps." Check out the latest in equipment. Test your piety in the cult of the river gods. Sober up with Charlie Walbridge's Death Watch 1989 and Ethan Winston's accounts of California rafting deaths. Finally, to put things back in perspective, do a sanity check with the Snyder Brothers in an interview on the present and future tense of squirt boating. Now, if I can just finish

American Whitewater Staff

Managing Editor: Chris Koll, 7987 #5 Road W., Fabius, NY 13263

Editors: John Porterfield, RR2, Box 669, Orrington, ME, 04474; Bob Gedekoh, Box 228, RD4 Elizabeth, PA 15037

Membership Director: Marge Weaver, 146 N. Brockway, Palatine, IL 60067

Advertising Director: Phyllis Horowitz W(914)679-2300 H(914)688-7401

Conservation: Pope Barrow

Safety: Charlie Walbridge

Address Changes: Keith Morgan, 2601 Tanglewood Dr., Durham, NC 27705

Missing Copies: Contact Peter Skinner, Box 272. W. Sand Lake, NY 12195

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WHAT IS THE AMERICAN WHITEWATER AFFILIATION?

The American Whitewater Affiliation (AWA) is a national organization with a membership of over 1300 whitewater boating enthusiasts and more than 50 local canoe club affiliates. The AWA was organized in 1961 to protect and enhance the recreational enjoyment of whitewater sports in America.

EDUCATION: Through publication of a bi-monthly journal, the AWA provides information and education about whitewater rivers, boating safety, technique, and equipment.

CONSERVATION: AWA maintains a national inventory of whitewater rivers, monitors potential threats to whitewater river resources through its "River Watch" system, publishes information on river conservation, works with government agencies to protect and preserve free-flowing whitewater rivers, and provides technical advice to local groups regarding river management and river conservation. AWA also gives annual awards to individuals to recognize exceptional contributions to river conservation and an annual "hydromania" award to recognize the proposed hydroelectric power project which would be most destructive of whitewater.

EVENTS: AWA organizes sporting events, contests and festivals to raise funds for river conservation. Since 1986, AWA has been the **principal sponsor** of the annual **Gauley River Festival** in **Summersville**, West Virginia, the **largest gathering** of whitewater boaters in the nation, other than at international racing events.

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

ORGANIZATION AND PURPOSES: AWA was incorporated under Missouri non-profit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its principal mailing address at 146 N. **Brockway**, Palatine Illinois, **60067**. AWA has been granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service under section **401(c)(3)** of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. The charter includes the following purposes: encourage the exploration, enjoyment, and preservation of American recreational waterways or man-powered **craft**; protect the wilderness character of waterways through conservation of water, forests, parks, wildlife, and related resources; promote appreciation for the recreational value of wilderness cruising and of white-water sports.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF: Except for membership services and the Executive Director position, all AWA operations, including publication of the bi-monthly magazine, are handled by volunteers.

AWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Anita Adams
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Pope Barrow
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Washington, D.C. **20003**
Bob Gedekoh
Box 228, RD 4
Elizabeth, PA **15037**
Dan Givens
463 Ave. H, Apt. 204
Boise, ID 83712
Bob Gianville
66 Deer Run
Glenwood, NY 14069
Diana Holder
Route 1 Box 90
Fairview Mt. Rd.
Reliance, TN 37369

Phyllis **Horowitz**
PO Box 329
Phoenicia, NY 12464
Sara Lawrence
6660 Bacchi
Lotus, CA 95651
Tom **McAndrew**
5535 Ridge Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19128
John Porterfield
RR2 Box 669
Orrington, ME 04474
Pete Skinner
Box 272, Snyder Rd.
W. Sand Lake, NY 12195
Keith Thompson
1171 N. 10th St.
Laramie, WY 82070

Mac **Thornton**
322 10th St. S.E.
Washington, DC **20003**
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letters to awa

Accolades

Dear Chris,

Accolades are in order. AWA's article "Desktop Environmentalist" in **American Whitewater**, November/December 1989, is a wonderful and just tribute to Pete Skinner. I tried to express the same thoughts and feelings for Pete and his effort to save rivers at a recent KKCNY meeting but fell far short of the mark by comparison. Congratulations on a job well done in support of this Loch Ness type dam-busting monster, rumored to eat cement and rebar for breakfast, and a candidate for honorary membership into Ed Abbey's Monkey Wrench Gang. The article was... "Great!!!...Great!!!...Grrreat!!!"

Sincerely,
Charles Peterson
Elizabeth, NJ

Computer nerd replies

DEAR EDITOR:

Reading your profile of me in the last issue, I wonder if people out there view me as some sort of keyboard crazy or paddling peril. Gosh, I'm really kind of mellow... at least some of the time. My wife Bonnie and two kids really cool me out... at least some of the time.

But the Perception Conservationist award means a great deal to me - it's the only real award I have ever received and the one award (except for the Nobel Prize...) which I could be the proudest of.

The plaque hangs prominently in the kitchen and the prize money now in AWA's river rescue fund earns more river protection dividends. I hope Perception continues to make these awards - it's one of the few tangible symbols that someone else cares about all the

sacrifices activist's make in fighting for whitewater rivers.

And you'd think from the article last issue that I am a hydro hater of the first order. The truth is that AWA has rarely outright-opposed any hydro project. We've just been opposed to the designs which are ugly, intrude on our paddling experience and steal white-water when we want it. A good designer can put a hydro project underground, not cut trees, hide the intakes and adopt a water release program which is mutually beneficial. I know a few such projects - some right here in New York.

And finally, most readers must think I am the Lone Ranger, riding my PC clone into the sunrise. Heck, the real truth is that I spend much of my hydro hassling time on the phone with other activists, helping them fight the good fight. AWA now has quite a bevy of volunteer hydro hounds sniffing around and biting the bad guys; together, they are changing the face of hydro regulation nationwide.

So at 2:00 A.M. in front of the video screen, I don't feel alone at all anymore. In fact, the field is getting pretty crowded. Maybe I can even consider getting back to plain old paddling again... at least some of the time! But thanks to everyone for their kudos and kind words.

Sincerely,
Peter Skinner
West Sand Lake, NY

Editor's Note: Peter is a long-time AWA Director, and is the recipient of the 1989 Perception Conservationist of the Year Award.

More Merrimack

Dear Mr. Koll,

I have just joined AWA and was surprised when I read my first issue of **American Whitewater** - it contained two letters referring to a section of the Merrimack River in Manchester,

letters

NH that I have paddled on numerous occasions.

The impression created by one of the letters is disturbing. The letter would have readers believe that a truly wonderful paddling area has been created through the efforts of one, or a few, dedicated individuals.

A few years ago this section of the river contained one of the "primo" hydraulics in New England, and depending on the water level it ranged from an ideal training hole for side-surfing skills to a real challenge for expert boaters. There was concern when abutments were placed in the river for a new bridge, but happily the hole was as good as ever. However, not long after this, one individual gained support from a local paddling club to "improve" this section of the river.

I can only assume that the changes were made with good intentions (and it's true that junk was taken out of the river), but unfortunately the end results were disastrous. The hole is gone. The area is now no different than dozens of places that offer a few surfing waves.

In this age when boaters are constantly battling with governmental and industrial hierarchies to preserve paddling areas, it is so sad to see a spot destroyed because of the lack of cooperation and concern amongst the very people who have the responsibility to protect.

Sincerely,
John Clayton
Wilmot Flat, NH

Viva Rios Tropicales

Dear Chris,

This summer I experienced the most wonderful paddling adventure of my fourteen years of whitewater kayaking thanks to the willingness of Rios Tropicales to go above and beyond the expectations of a professional outfitter. My traveling companion, Ed Bumpass and I made the trip shortly after reading

the letter by Bruce Hare. This letter was **contrary** to what other paddlers who have traveled to Costa Rica have reported. Since I have traveled **extensively** in Southern Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Belize, I expected Costa Rica to be similar to other Central American countries. I dismissed Bruce's concerns simply as **unrealistic expectations**.

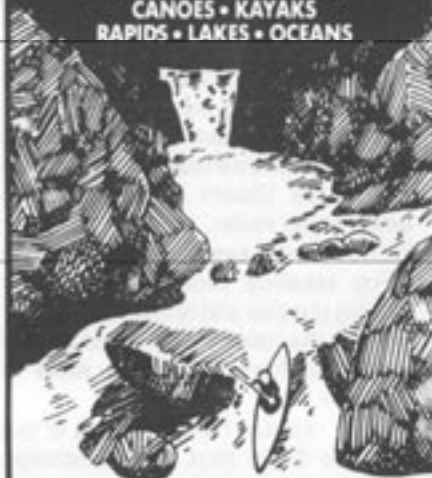
What Ed and I found in Costa Rica was like a **dream**. The country was **beautiful**, people were **consistently** warm, **friendly** and full of life, and our limited **command** of Spanish was never a barrier. What I found amazing was that everywhere we went, including the small town of Cahuita, we were able to drink the water and eat the fruits and vegetables. At all times we felt safe when traveling, even when close to the Panama border.

Because of our work schedules, Ed and I had to travel during the little summer, in between the rainy seasons. This is a time when tourist travel is down and therefore Rios Tropicales did not offer any of its eleven day kayaking packages. Rafael Gallo promised to put a special itinerary together for us and although he was out of the country, his partner, Fernando Esqueval worked with us to design our travel plans. Rafael called me at home in Michigan and then contacted Fernando to make sure that our arrangements were **confirmed**.

We were able to paddle the Rio Reventazon, the Rio Pacaure and the General. The professionalism of Rios Tropicales was of the highest **quality**. In fact, it was dramatically better than two popular U.S. outfitters with which I have traveled. Rios worked with our hotel to manage our accommodations when we were not on the river. Transportation to and from the rivers was comfortable and difficult shuttles were handled smoothly. The equipment was in perfect condition. We were able to paddle our favorite kayaks, Aeroquatics that were superbly outfitted. In fact, my rented **AQ** was outfitted better than my own (which I modified as soon as I returned home). Our guide, **Victor Gallo** was pleasant, fun, able to set up camp

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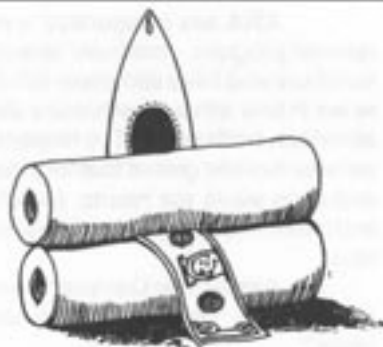


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letters

efficiently, and a fantastic cook. In fact, we have eaten at the best resort restaurants throughout Central America and never have we tasted a meal as delectable as Victor's chicken **chachalacka**. Peter Heller, an expert paddler joined us. In the evenings **we sat** around camp recalling jokes, solving brain teasing puzzles and telling stories. Our trip was like having five days of private instruction from old friends while in Paradise.

Ed and I are dreaming of our return to Costa Rica. The friendships we made through Rios Tropicales is one of the most professional outfitters with which we have paddled. The rivers, warm water, sunshine, beautiful mountains and ocean beaches, makes Costa Rica the most desirable place to paddle. Costa Rica is a friendly and safe country deserving of its reputation as the "Switzerland" of Central America.

Sincerely,
Marlene **Gonet**, Ed Bumpass
Ann Arbor, MI

AWA Love/Hate

AWA has inaugurated a new renewal program - reminder letters to members who have somehow failed to renew in time with a questionnaire about american whitewater. The responses we have received give us food for thought and often warm our hearts. Directors and interested whitewaterwriters, take note!

A friend from Connecticut wants more articles focusing "sexual technique."

Joe from New Jersey asks for more open boating articles in Class I - III whitewater.

A booster from West Virginia begs for forgiveness so he won't "miss one issue."

Jim from D.C. begs for more articles on Western permit-type rivers.

But Ken, a long time New Yorker, demands the Journal "reduce

the Hair!" and insert more stuff on Class III - IV runs in wilderness areas and out West.

Charles from Cambridge tells us he's "away sailing for months at a time - my son missed the renewal. Keep it coming. I enjoy the new format and improved articles."

International canoe expeditionaire Betty from New York wonders if we "know there are whitewater paddlers on our rivers other than kayakers?"

Dave from College Park coos: "I find the Journal much more informative than any of the commercial publications available."

Laurie from Knoxville whines "Please don't take my american **white-water** away!"

The Saylor's just moved to Georgia and "sure doesn't want the membership to lapse!"

Robert from Louisville says the "Journal is great." but [he] forgot to renew because his new infant at home

is "driving me nuts."

Finally, Dave from **Rustburg** says "Your magazine is the best!"

All of us volunteers at AWA thank you for caring enough to renew in spite of our failings and saying all those nice things. **We are** always trying harder - its your comments and suggestions that help keep us going.

Writer's Guidelines

American Whitewater welcomes submissions from its readers. Proposed articles should relate in some way to whitewater...river conservation...expeditionary boating...safety...interviews with river personalities...paddling techniques. Our readers are most interested in new rivers, not previously described in well-known guidebooks. Most of our readers are intermediate to advanced boat-

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letters

ers, they do not need instruction on how to brace or roll, but they are interested in innovative designs and styles. We try to be receptive to any and all ideas.

The readers of *American Whitewater* are interested in whitewater...unlike **some** boating magazines we do not publish articles regarding flatwater canoeing or sea kayaking.

Submissions should be double spaced and neat. Correct spelling and grammar are appreciated.

Photos should be included when appropriate. Black and white prints or color slides are accepted. Photos with pronounced color contrasts reproduce best.

Stories must be edited as necessary to fit the format of *American Whitewater*. Remember that even the work of professional writers is usually heavily edited before publication. The editor of a major outdoor publication recently revealed that he rarely deals with amateur writers, not because their work is inferior, but because they are unwilling to accept appropriate editing. Expect to see some changes in your story.

Story length should rarely exceed 3000 words...twelve typed pages...double spaced. The best stories have a distinct focus or slant. This aspect of the story should make it unique and should catch the readers' interest. The focus should be introduced in a **clear way** at the beginning of the article.

It is often better not to use chronological order in telling the story of a river exploration. Our readers rarely care about what kind of vehicle was driven to the put-in or which interstates were traversed. Avoid extraneous details and cliches. Open the story with an exciting anecdote that will catch the readers' interest, then fill in the details later.

Humorous stories and articles with a different point of view receive special consideration.

The editors and writers of *American Whitewater* do not receive financial compensation. Every effort will be made to return submitted materials but we can not guarantee their safety.

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awa briefs

Bolinas Kayak Surf Contest invites paddlers to...

"Get Yer Boat Salty"

By Susan Norman

Brush Up on Your Surf Lingo, dudes

Fall is a laid back, sometimes restless time of year for northern California boaters. The weather is still clear and balmy, but

most of the dam-controlled Sierra runoff has trickled away, and there are a couple more months to wait before the winter rains bring the coastal rivers up. So what's a hard-core boater to do? Well, during the first weekend in November, "surfs up" in Bolinas, California for the annual "Get Yer Boat Salty" Kayak Surf Contest.

An hour north of San Francisco, Bolinas is a small, picturesque coastal town known for a reclusive collection of artists, 60's drop-outs, and the young hippies of the 80's. The dumpsters are painted paisley and wearing tie-dyed clothing earns you a discount at the local bakery. Got the picture? Highway signs marking the existence of the town mysteriously disappear soon after they are installed-- Bolinas' way of discouraging tourists. If you don't know where Bolinas is, chances are you won't find it - so bring a map.

Nevertheless, for the past five years, the citizens of Bolinas have endured the invasion of "butt-surfers" who descend upon the town for two days

of freestyle kayak competition and an evening dinner, dance and auction. The



annual freestyle surf event features standard kayak, high performance kayak (squirrel boats, slalom race boats, and surf shoes), wave skis, and sea kayak categories at the novice, intermediate and expert level.

Despite 'THE QUAKE', its damage and the traffic snarl it created, the event this past November brought out nearly 100 entrants and was considered by all to be one of the best organized and most successful contests since its inception. Mother Nature seemed to make up for the havoc she had recently wreaked by providing the best surf in four years and spectacularly warm, clear weather.

Another factor contributing to the success of this year's event was the standardization of the judging criteria. In general, all butt surfers were judged by this standard:

"The paddler who performs the most radical maneuvers in a functional and stylish manner, in the critical sections of the largest and best-formed wave, for the longest ride, shall receive the highest score."



The novice and intermediate paddlers were judged on a 10-point scale, with 2 points possible for take-off, 6 points possible for the overall quality of the ride, and 2 points possible for the finish moves. The expert kayak, high performance kayak, and wave ski classes were scored on a combination of maneuver points (no maximum) and a maximum of three style points. Maneuvers included such radical moves as round-house cutbacks, aerials and re-entries, floaters, lip turns and face rolls.

At the end of the first day of competition, 21 preliminary heats had separated the truly grooved from the grooveless. Despite individual performances, all attention was focused on the evening's festivities, the **dinner-dance-auction** -the California boating party of the year. Over 200 contestants, friends and onlookers woofed-down a delicious "high-carbo" catered dinner and rehydrated with a few Sierra Pale ales in preparation of some fast and furious auctioning.

The Bolinas Kayak Surf Contest, originated five years ago by Keith Miller of California Canoe and Kayak, serves as a fundraiser for Environmental Travelling Companions (ETC). ETC now organizes the event and nets from six to seven-thousand dollars in donations derived from entrance fees and eleven-thousand dollars in donated auction merchandise. Now in its eleventh year, the ETC is one of the oldest non-profit organizations in the country that serve people with special needs by helping

them experience outdoor adventure. ETC helps **AIDS** patients, the visually handicapped, those recovering from drug addiction, those affected by Multiple Sclerosis--in short, anyone who is developmentally, economically or physically disabled. ETC outings involve sea kayaking, whitewater rafting and nordic skiing. In the words of one ETC staffer: "handicapped people are remarkably unfearful." Even quads on their first whitewater rafting trip, their wheelchairs strapped to the rowing frame, display an incredible amount of faith, courage and trust in the hands of the ETC staff.

Perhaps the knowledge that the proceeds of the auction were going to a great cause helped loosen up people's pockets a bit. More likely, bidders just couldn't resist the impressive array of items put up for bid. In any event, the rapid-fire delivery of auctioneer John Mills and the flurry of hands made short order of donated kayaks, exotic river trips, paddling gear and even leather jackets. At the end of the

buying frenzy the floor was cleared, the lights turned low, and the pulse turned up with live music.

The field of finalists, down 50 percent after the preliminary heats, pulled out all the stops the next morning as they tried to cram as many radical moves as they could into each ride. A large group of boaters, many eliminated in the preliminary rounds, played next to the competition area, cheering for their friends in between their own rides. There's nothing like a big, wet, salty wave breaking over your head to shake off the fuzziness of last night's drinking and dancing!

Nerves tightened as the field narrowed. Three two-person judging teams were kept busy with their bean-counters, clicking off and calling out the moves as they saw them. "Good take-off with bottom turn, cutback, round-house cutback and 360! Another cutback...AND OH MY GOD...DID YOU SEE THAT BEAUTIFUL FLOATER!!!!...and he's still riding it, riding it, STILL riding it!

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awa briefs

Another 360 and jeez! great ender! OK - I got 11 points and I'd say at least 2 - maybe 3 - for style, eh?"

At the end of the **two-day** competition, many of the contest's old, familiar names were still there - battling for top honors. This year's winners produced few surprises amongst the long-term competitors. Current freestyle kayak world champion Eric **Hascom** of San Diego, captured the Expert Kayakclass, Ken King of Marin, California once again taking top honors in the wave ski division. In a major upset, newcomer Doug Connors of Greenbury, California in his first competition beat out masterwave hounds Don Wells (division winner the last two years) and Dick Wold for the high-performance division title.

A winning weekend for all--surf, sun, and good friends sharing the knowledge that they were helping out a great cause. Recent events in the Bay Area heightened the challenge the ETC organization and staff faced in pulling off the event. Their office, damaged by the quake, was closed for two of the three weeks leading up to the surf competition. Despite a lack of computers and telephone communications, the major fundraising event went off without a snag.

In past years, a few of the handicapped clients that have benefited from ETC's programs take part in the surf contest with a handful helping out as **ETC volunteers**. None were able to come this year, primarily due to the added stress and difficulty created by

the quake in moving in and around the San Francisco area.

As one ETC staffer reflected, the difficulties they had faced in organizing the event were in many ways similar to the difficulties handicapped people face every day. "With the quake, all of the sudden the details of everyday life became very difficult and complicated. For handicapped people, every day is a quake. Simple actions we normally take for granted are for the handicapped everyday events."

With the help of funds raised at this and other ETC events, the ETC

mission of bringing the beauty and challenge of the outdoors to the handicapped will continue.

To get involved in next year's Get Yer Boat Salty - The Bolinas Kayak Surf Contest or to become an ETC volunteer, contact ETC at the following address and phone number:

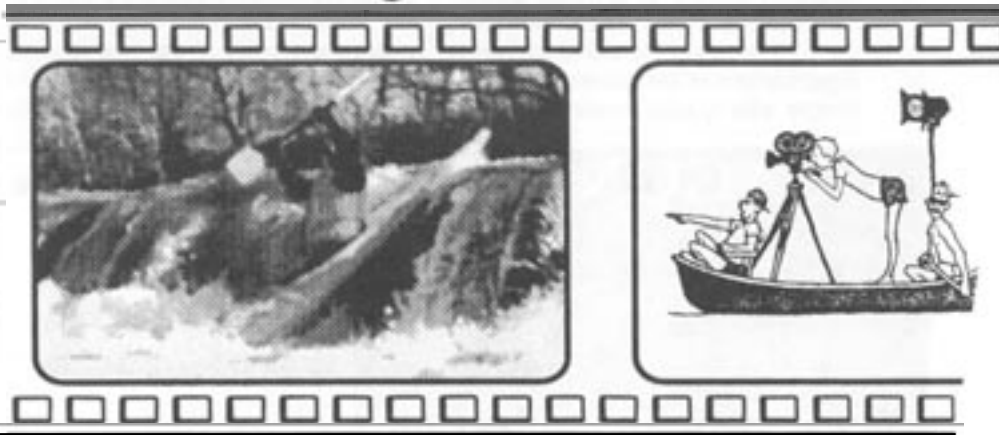
ETC

4 Mason Center Building C

San Francisco, CA 94123

415-474-7662

THE SEVENTH ANNUAL NATIONAL Paddling Film Festival



Last minute preparations are **underway for The Seventh Annual National Paddling Film Festival**. The

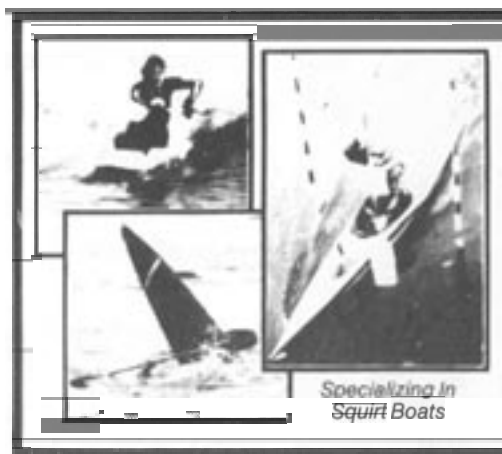
Film Festival is being held February 23rd and 24th at the University of Kentucky starting on Friday at 7pm.

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The film festival, sponsored by the Bluegrass Wildwater Association and by **Menasha Ridge Press** will once again gather paddling enthusiasts to view this year's crop of amateur and professional whitewater films. Videos, Super-8mm and 16 mm movies and slides shows will be judged in the following categories: **Recreational/scenic**, racing, humor, **safety/instructional**, hair boating, club entry, and conservation. The amateur competition is judged by a distinguished panel paddling and film-making personalities. Professional entries are judged by a panel of paddlers representing boating clubs from across the country.

If you have a video, movie or slide show to enter, you have until February 17th to submit it to the BWA. Write to BWA at P.O. Box 4231 Lexington, **Kentucky 40504** for an official entry form and additional entry information.

The festival is found at the University of Kentucky Health Science

Learning Center, 2nd Floor, Lexington, Kentucky. Easy to find, the Health Science Learning Center is on Rose Street, across from the University Hospital.

Bring your down coat, dancing shoes, swimsuits and boating gear for a two-day poolside party!

Who knows--you may even catch a glimpse of BWA's own Women in Rubber!



The National Paddling Film Festival will be held at the University of Kentucky Health Science Learning Center, 2nd floor in Lexington, Kentucky.

AW reviews new boat design

Prijon's Topolino: fun in short package

By Tom McAndrew

There are lots of ways to gain attention on the river. Exhibiting new moves or new equipment usually will get you noticed. However, if your goal is to really turn heads, then you should consider paddling a Prijon Topolino.

At a short 7'3" long, and with its rounded hull, the Topolino shatters most paddlers' sense of what a kayak should look like. After getting over this shock, our review team, and the paddlers they encountered, made instant evaluations about how the boat would handle. Interestingly, many of these opinions proved to be wrong.

Many felt the boat would not surf well. In fact, sometimes it surfs too well. While paddling downstream, the Topolino seems to pause at every ripple and try to surf. On short, steep waves the boat was extraordinary. It **allows** you to surf comfortably without having to back off or lean way back on the stern

deck. On normal waves the boat performs flawlessly, and some felt it was the easiest boat they'd ever paddled for back surfing. The short length and round edges enabled paddlers to spin effortlessly on the top of waves to perform this move. Only flat waves caused problems, as the Topolino was apt to slide off of them.

The boat surprised most people with its hole playing abilities. It was quite comfortable in most holes, and perhaps the best boat on the market for spinning at the edge of holes. This led one reviewer to suggest that it was perfect for teaching hole playing to beginners. But before that becomes a common practice it should be noted that the Topolino's lack of any edges makes it quite uncooperative in deep, sticky holes.

The boat's short length caused some to feel it would not ender well. In fact, just as with surfing, sometimes it ended too well. At the edge of holes,

or after running a drop, you have to lean forward, or the boat will back ender. Front enders are easy to achieve on ender-waves. However, the short, blunt nose of the Topolino resists ending at pour-overs.

The boat tracked much better than its size suggested. Correcting the boat was quite easy, as the short, round design reacted quite quickly to any sweep or draw stroke.

Alas, the prognosticators were correct about some features. It was practically impossible to accelerate the Topolino. When discussing this feature one reviewer felt the boat should be renamed the Tortellini. That's a bit harsh, though the boat is slow.

The boat's short length and poor speed suggested that it would be a poor **attainer**. This proved to be true. Frequently, the only way we could get back upstream was to walk **back** on the shore.

Perhaps the biggest surprise

awa briefs

about the boat was its spacious accommodations. Despite its length, paddlers over 6 feet tall were able to comfortably fit inside. An adjustable platform-style footrest combined with the absence of a center foam beam contributed to this characteristic.

The foam seat, combined with a back band, generated positive reviews. The seat can be moved, but not as easily as many others on the market.

The Topolino is a barrel of fun, but it **could get** you into trouble on some waterways. The boat's design causes river dynamics to be amplified--holes seem bottomless, waves seem mountainous. Thus, big rivers are quite a chore in this boat. In addition the boat is not good at carving against the current, which limits its effectiveness on both big water and steep, technical creeks.

N.O.C. to host

International raft competition planned

Over 300 participants from 25 countries will converge upon the Nantahala Outdoor Center March 15-26, 1990 for the first international whitewater rafting rally to be held in the United States.

The Nantahala '90 Rally is sponsored by Project RAFT (Russians and Americans For Teamwork) and will be filled with competitions on rivers in North Carolina, Tennessee and Georgia.

Nantahala '90 is a continuation of the popular annual Chuya Rally held in the Altai Mountains of Siberia. Initiated in 1979, the Chuya Rally was opened to international competition in 1989 through funding from the Soviet Peace Fund with participants from 17 countries.

The Soviet Peace Fund proposed that in the interest of making the Rally a more international event, the 1990 competition be held in the U.S.

For additional information and schedules, contact Ellen **Barbbers** at the N.O.C.

A low volume stream, at low or medium levels, is the best environment for this boat. On such a stream the design will not hinder your performance, and will probably "amplify" your pleasure. Advanced paddlers may experience new thrills on familiar class II runs with this boat. However, they probably won't want the Topolino as their only boat.

If you're looking for a lot of fun, and a lot of notoriety, the Topolino would be a great addition to your fleet.

However, if you're looking to really make a mark, wait until later this year, when Prijon starts selling a two cockpit version of the Topolino. (This will be the first K-2 whitewater boat on the market.) Then see if you can find a partner to paddle the Russell Fork.

(Primary contributors to this review were Elizabeth McAndrew, Bill Pearlstein, and Rich Widmann. The review team ranged in height from 5'2" to 5'10" and in weight from 125 lbs. to 200 lbs.)

Whitney Shields Memorial Fund to assist river conservation

A number of folks have made contributions to the Whitney Shields Memorial Fund in the memory of Whitney Shields, who died in a boating accident in September on the Lower Meadow in West Virginia.

Donations are being collected through AWA and are earmarked for preserving private boater access on rivers Whitney Shields frequented, specifically the Great Falls section of the Potomac River.

Contributors to the fund have been:

Jocelyn Hemreid, Cabin John, MD
Eric & Marjorie Edwards, Washington, DC

Sammis Property, McLean, VA
Jack & Gloria Michael
Katherine Haydn

The Van Vlaanderen Family
Anita & Dale Adams, Princeton, WV
Larry & Kay Gradick, Richmond Hill, GA

Andy Bridge Germantown, MD
Wm. S. Shields College Park, MD
Doreen Gantz, Hollywood, MD
Dr. & Mrs. Harvey Lazar, Silver Spring, MD

Robert & Marsha Raines, Baltimore, MD

Iris J. Davis, Gaithersburg, MD
Gillette Research Institute, Gaithersburg, MD (Nancy Richards)

Risa Shimoda and Forrest Callaway, Denver, NC

Contributions to the memorial

fund can be sent to the following address:

Whitney Shields Memorial Fund
American Whitewater Affiliation
46 North Brockway
Palatine, IL 60067

10th annual F.O.R. festival scheduled

The 10th annual Friends of the River Foundation River Conference and Festival will be held March 16-18, 1990 at Dominican College in San Rafael, CA.

Over 60 dynamic workshops will be offered during the weekend ranging from such topics as Families and Rivers, Recreational Boating, and Environmental Concerns to Class V Paddling. Prominent guest speakers will also be featured.

The latest in new river equipment will also be on display while used gear will be available at bargain rates.

Saturday's activities include an active social schedule including a dinner, dance and auction.

To receive an invitation to this annual rendezvous for the river community, call Marilyn Storm, Conference Coordinator, at (415) 771-0400 or write Friends of the River, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco, CA 94123.

Byrne blunders: Great Falls remain open

by Mac Thornton

A clumsy attempt by the National Park Service to cut off access to the Potomac River for Great Falls paddlers has been beaten back through quick action by Washington, D.C. area paddlers. The National Park Service faux pas has left a footprint on the face of John Byrne, a park superintendent and longtime foe of whitewater paddlers.

Jurisdiction over Great Falls, a Class VI cataract just 15 miles from the White House, is a complicated matter. The State of Maryland owns and controls the river itself, but as a practical matter, the National Park Service controls access to the river on both banks in the vicinity of Great Falls. John Byrne is the NPS superintendent on the Virginia side of the river, and until recently, veteran paddler Dick Stanton was NPS superintendent on the Maryland side.

On September 1st, 1989, Stanton retired.

On September 4th, 1989, following a year of careful study, the State of Maryland issued final regulations for Great Falls paddlers. The regulations require only that a paddler wishing to run the Falls sign a registration form which contains various disclosures about the danger of the rapid and the difficulty of rescue. All parties to the rulemaking proceeding (including paddlers) were happy with this result, with the exception of Byrne.

On September 8, 1989, Byrne made his ill-conceived move. With Dick Stanton retired, Byrne hoodwinked the higher-ups in NPS into issuing a letter to Maryland stating that access from all NPS lands for Great Falls paddlers was closed.

Tipped off the existence of the then-secret letter, paddlers sprang into action. Although Byrne is a lawyer, he

failed to read the very regulation (-MDBO36 CFR 1.5MDNM) which NPS cited to support their action. As a result, NPS completely failed to follow the correct legal procedures for closure restrictions on the public. In addition, NPS lacks the legal authority to cut off a public right granted by the State of Maryland on a Maryland-owned resource.

Joined by the American Canoe Association and the Canoe Cruisers Association, the AWA fired off a letter pointing out these legal deficiencies. The State of Maryland was a strong ally. On November 3rd, a meeting was held with the National Park Service brass, and they quickly scotched Byrne's plot. As a result, paddlers continue to enjoy legal access to the Potomac from NPS lands for the purpose of running Great Falls. (The only exception is that access for boaters is currently unlawful on the Virginia side upstream of the Falls. Paddlers have asked for a change to this long-standing Byrne-produced policy.)

Paddlers also voiced a number of complaints about the management of the Virginia side park by Byrne, including the fact that it took him three years to erect a simple safety sign at a deceptively benign put-in just above the Falls on the Virginia side. The lack of such a sign apparently contributed to the death of a novice in 1986.

Interviews with the surviving boating partner of the novice revealed that the pair did not know they were putting in the river just above the Falls. In fact, all four boater drownings over the last 15 years at Great Falls involved novices who did not run Great Falls intentionally. Among paddlers who have intentionally run the Falls, not a single one has been drowned or seriously injured since the Falls was first run in 1976. In fact, no closed-deck boater has ever drowned on the Potomac River.

Naturally, these facts should not lead paddlers to underestimate the danger of Great Falls. For further details, contact AWA Director Mac Thornton (202) 543-4923.

American Rivers head resigns

Kent Olsen has tendered his resignation with American Rivers. Olsen transformed American Rivers from a small and relatively ineffective group of river advocates into a powerful and respected conservation organization with a 1.8 million dollar budget and a string of river conservation victories to match. The A.R. board is searching for a replacement. Any candidates?



Idaho is too Great to BOMB!

Proposed bombing range threatens river corridors

Wendy Wilson

If you are planning to go boating in Idaho, the Wild River State, be sure to bring your flak jacket. The Air Force has unveiled a proposal to do away with the peace and tranquility of the high desert rivers of Southwestern Idaho by expanding a small, little known military reserve called the **Saylor** Creek Bombing Range. At stake are three of the finest wilderness whitewater rivers in the country, the Bruneau, the Jarbidge and the Owyhee, and the recreational use of six million acres of public lands.

These three wild rivers have each been recommended for Federal Wild & Scenic status by the agencies that manage them. They are known for their class II • V whitewater, uniquely remote canyons and solitude. The Bruneau, the Jarbidge and the Owyhee are closely guarded secret retreats for tight-lipped whitewater aficionados in the Northwest.

The Air Force's final proposal for shattering the silence will not be available for another year; what

the public has heard so far is alarming. The deserts of Southwestern Idaho could be transformed into a giant Hollywood-like set for simulating World War III. Live missiles would be drilled into the ground and armed supersonic warplanes would ply the skies day and night.

The Air Force is scheduled to transfer 84 F-4 warplanes from California's George Air Force Base to Idaho's Mountain Home Air Force Base. The military says that along with the planes will come new pilot training requirements to buzz, bomb and boom the mile-high desert plateaus adjacent to the river canyons.

The initial public outcry has been deafening, even to the Air Force. Over one-thousand citizens attended a series of public hearings in Idaho to voice concern. The plan laid out at the hearings included 160,000 acres of "impact zones" or live-ammo targets. Within these areas all non-military use would be prohibited. Over 7,000 square miles - including the Bruneau, the Jarbidge and the Owyhee River canyons



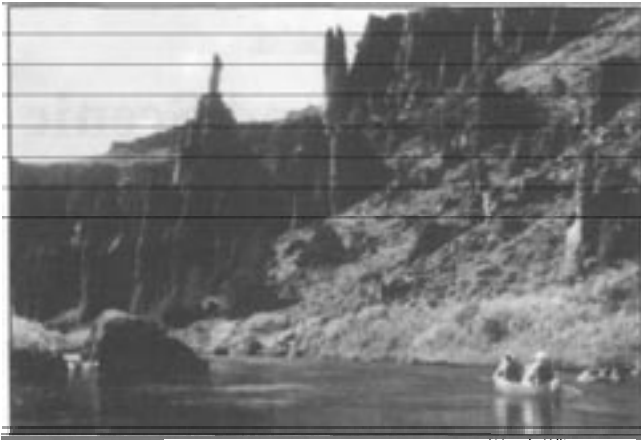
Toby Fleming photo

Open canoeists line boat down a rapid on the East Fork Owyhee one of the Idaho desert rivers threatened by a proposed Air Force bombing range.

• is proposed as a supersonic maneuver zone. The military anticipates 13,000 supersonic training missions per year flying as low as 100 feet off the desert floor. The public was told that river runners could still float BETWEEN the target

areas if we still want to.

If you have ever been in these canyons you know the heart-stopping effects of "incidental" sonic booms which now happen infrequently above 30,000 feet. Already hikers occasionally find "dummy"



Wendy Wilson photo

Canyonlands on Main Owyhee.

bombs on the canyon floor, strays from the existing **Saylor** Creek Range miles away. The sub-sonic acrobatic maneuvers of the F-111 jets already stationed at Mountain Home Air Force Base occasionally remind startled river runners of the awesome power of the American military.

River runners, environmentalists and rural residents share an underlying concern that what the military wants the military is apt to get. But any land withdrawal of more than 5,000 acres has to pass muster before the entire U.S. Congress. None of Idaho's own congressional delegation is willing to take a stand against expansion of the bombing range. The political position is that the current proposal is too big and probably needs refinement. Those opposing the range expansion believe that it is unnecessary and should be scraped.

The Idaho **Whitewater** Association (IWA) expects the **Saylor** Creek Bombing Range controversy to be a major long-term fight. An environmental impact statement will be prepared by a Cali-

fornia consulting firm under the direction of the Tactical Air Command with assistance from the Bureau of Land Management. American Whitewater Affiliation members can keep tabs on this process by joining IWA. The \$5 per year IWA membership can be sent to 5010 **Bitterbrush**, Boise, Id., 83703.

Most importantly, write your own representatives in Congress about the military take-over of the American West.

America's high desert is subject to both understatement and exaggeration. Depending on who you talk to these lands are "nothing but jackrabbit holes", or "America's **Serengeti**". To wilderness river runners and desert rats the canyons are some of the most sacred and valuable wildlands in the nation. The canyons of the **Bruneau-Jarvis** and **Owyhee** Rivers have been the private Grand Canyons of a lucky few. Our silence has already been shattered. Whatever the outcome of the bombing range expansion, the crush of public scrutiny will leave Idaho's little-known empty quarter forever changed.

Wild and Scenic sought for WV's Cranberry

Congressman Nick **Rahall** (D -**W.Va.**) has introduced legislation to designate West Virginia's Cranberry River as a federal Wild and Scenic River. A tributary of the mighty **Gauley** River, the Cranberry offers about 16 miles of heart-pumping Class III to V action, with gradients up to 100 feet per mile.

The entire 33.4 mile length of the Cranberry has been previously studied and found suitable for Wild and Scenic designation, which would protect the Cranberry from hydropower, mining, timbering and other inappropriate development.

Just last month, the AWA participated in a coalition of 21 conservation groups in asking for designation of ten superlative West Virginia **whitewater** rivers, the Cranberry being one. House staffer Jim Zoia then came up with the idea of linking designation for the Cranberry to a bill traveling through Congress **carrying** a provision which would withdraw about 11 acres of land from the Cranberry Wilderness Area. This well-known Wilderness Area encompasses most of the headwaters of the Cranberry.

The reason for the proposed withdrawal of this land is to allow for the construction of a crushed lime drum facility on the upper part of the river. This facility is desired by fishermen in order to help counteract the effects of acid rain, which

has rendered the Cranberry too acidic for fish. A similar type of facility was completed this past summer on **Dogway** Run, a tributary of the Cranberry. The **Dogway** Run facility has reduced the acidity of the Cranberry, but another facility is needed to make the main stem of the river suitable for fish.

The State of West Virginia estimates that the Cranberry has the potential for 800,000 user days for fishermen.

If designated, the Cranberry would be only the second federal Wild and Scenic River in the Middle Atlantic states. The only other designated river is the lower part of West Virginia's **Bluestone** River. American Rivers, Inc. is playing a key role in promoting protection of the Cranberry.

"River blocks" ban upheld on Saco

A recent Maine Supreme Court ruling affirmed a lower court decision knocking down attempts by Maine state police and game wardens to pull over canoeists and searching their canoes and their person for illegal drugs and illegally imported liquor. River blocks along the lower sections of the Saco River in Maine had civil libertarians up in arms last year.

Status would open Virginia mountain whitewater

Blue Ridge rivers pushed for Wild and Scenic

Paddlers are seeking Wild and Scenic designation for several whitewater gems in George Washington National Forest and Jefferson National Forest. Both National Forests are located primarily in the gorgeous Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, and both are due to study rivers as a part of their long-term management plans.

Joined by the ACA and the Canoe Cruisers Association, the AWA is focusing on the following streams in George Washington National Forest:

Bullpasture, Jackson, Back Creek, Passage Creek, Irish Creek, and the **Lost/Cacapon** (W.V.).

The streams in Jefferson National Forest of greatest interest include Jennings Creek and **Whitotop** Laurel Creek. Typically, these streams offer comparatively short sections (2-6 miles) of Class II-III water, occasionally surging to Class IV. It's usually possible to run two or more sections in a single day.

As a practical matter, obtaining Wild and Scenic protections for these

streams is likely to be difficult. The river valleys of Virginia were settled in colonial times, and the National Forests ended up with mostly **ridgetop** lands. Most of the lands adjacent to the rivers mentioned above are privately owned, and rural Virginians are notoriously hostile to allowing outside access or control over local rivers. Under archaic Virginia common law, many mountain streams are legally "non-navigable," meaning that boaters can be denied access and permission to run such a river. These

problems are typical on rivers such as the Piney, Cowpasture, Jackson and Back Creek.

Lovers of these beautiful rivers are determined to press ahead anyway, and some thought is being given to legal challenges in state court on the navigability issue. A volunteer attorney is needed. Contact: Mac Thornton (202) 543-4923.



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National River Registry proposed!

Congressman Pete Kostmayer of Pennsylvania has agreed to introduce a bill in the United States Congress to establish a National Register of Significant Scenic and Recreational Rivers. Details of the bill are not available at this time, but the bill is expected to allow state and local governments and private groups to nominate rivers, waterfalls and similar areas for inclusion on a National Register.

The landmark legislation has the potential of providing the most significant and effective method of protecting whitewater rivers ever offered in the United States.

The register would be maintained by a Federal agency such as the Park Service. Unlike the Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers system, dams and other forms of river abuse would not be absolutely prohibited in all circumstances for rivers on the Register. However, it would be much more difficult to build a project on one of these rivers than on a river which is not on the Register. The Park Service would be authorized to require minimum feasible mitigation for any damages to scenic values and recreational opportunities at a registered river.

The Kostmayer proposal is an entirely new river conservation system, but it is not a substitute for the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Land acquisition and Federal management

would not be involved. Including rivers on the Register would not require an act of Congress as does Federal Wild and Scenic designation.

In effect, National Register Rivers would be comparable to the baseball Minor Leagues, a pool of rivers with important, Fed-

what needed to be protected, AWA published its inventory that included every whitewater river in the country. Completed with the help of hundreds of volunteers in 39 states and a generous grant from R.E.I., the Seattle-based outdoor equipment company, the inventory served

Potentially the most significant and effective method of protecting whitewater rivers ever offered in the United States.

erally recognized values that would be prime candidates to eventually move up to the majors (inclusion in the Wild and Scenic system). Many registered rivers would never make it to the majors, but they would still enjoy a degree of protection which is unavailable today.

Paddlers are encouraged to voice support for the bill by writing Congressman Peter Kostmayer, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., 20515. Offer your support for his legislation that would protect America's vanishing heritage of whitewater rivers. Contact your own Congressperson and Senators; ask them to cosponsor and support the Kostmayer bill.

The AWA called for the introduction of a National Register last year when it introduced its ambitious National Whitewater Inventory.

Using the logic that you first had to identify

as the keystone of AWA's attempt to list and protect our dwindling whitewater resources.

The published inventory was sent to a number of State and Federal agencies with authority over rivers and river planning. Initially, the inventory was a conscious-raising effort--and now that intent has hopefully borne fruit.

Throughout 1989, volunteer whitewater experts refined the information in the inventory and added river segments previously overlooked. The AWA inventory now has a complete list of each whitewater river segment in the country, the general location, the put-in and take-out, the mileage, and the whitewater difficulty rating. The inventory has been useful, but river conservationists and government agencies working with the data suggested that additional information could make the inventory an even

more valuable river conservation tool. Two new features are now being added.

Whitewater maps

First, computer-generated maps have been drawn for most major whitewater river systems. The maps are designed to enable readers less familiar with whitewater to more easily locate the important whitewater river systems in each state.

Local groups

Second, a project is underway to list the key local river conservation groups and boating organizations currently working on whitewater river issues in each state. Addresses will be provided and, where possible, phone numbers.

The inventory is not a substitute for whitewater guidebooks; detailed instructions for how to get to the river or how to run the river are not included. Minimum and maximum flow data and USGS gauge locations for whitewater runs are also not provided in the current version. The book does, however, provide whitewater experts and river conservationists with a comprehensive picture of all significant whitewater recreation opportunities in America.

Make sure all your favorite runs are included in the AWA National Inventory. For your own copy of the Inventory, send \$15 to: AWA Whitewater Inventory, 136-13th St., SE, Washington, D.C., 20003.

Dams must go!

by Pope Barrow

The earliest environmental fights were almost always fights against dams. Even the Sierra Club got its start when John Muir tried to organize opposition to damming Yosemite Valley. The names of many of the historic battles still rattle around in our memories. "No Way Big A" bumper stickers (used in the victorious battle against the Big A Project on Maine's West Branch of the Penobscot River) are now collectors items. Battles like the disastrous effort to stop the

New Melones Dam on California's Stanislaus stir sad-sister emotions. But all these fights had one thing in common. All were efforts to stop construction of unwise and environmentally harmful projects.

DAM OWNERS NOW ON THE DEFENSIVE

Suddenly, the tide is beginning to turn. Except for continuing efforts by a small band of misguided small power developers, funded by junk bonds and subsidized by

overpriced power contracts, few new dams are being built. Instead, a new kind of warfare over dams is replacing the old efforts to stop dam construction. Incredible as it may seem, the enemy is on the defensive. People are now talking seriously about removing existing dams! It's hard to believe we have come full circle in so short a time, but it has happened. Like the Berlin wall, the concrete walls which blockaded the free flows of some American rivers may be on the way out.

EARTHQUAKES AND SABOTAGE NOT THE ONLY ANSWER

Not long ago, the only way to get rid of a dam was to arrange for an earthquake or an accident of geology (as happened with the Teton dam failure) or to have a bunch of vigilantes sneak in with dynamite and blow it up (as happened with Sunbeam Dam on Idaho's famous Salmon River). Events like this were more imaginary than real.

Even the famed



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Monkey Wrench Gang never pulled off a real dam removal caper. But now serious proposals are afloat to legally tear down dams and restore fisheries and free flowing water.

M E ELWHA

One of the most exciting dam removal ideas involves Washington State's Elwha River. Built in 1913, the Elwha Dam--which generates power for a Japanese paper mill in nearby Port Angeles--destroyed a legendary Salmon run. The Elwha, which flows north across the Olympic Peninsula from the wild highlands of Olympic National Park, was one of the few U.S. rivers where all five Pacific



Vigilantes found a simple solution to the unwanted sunbeam Dam on Idaho's Salmon River...they stopped by a night with a sack full of dynamite and blew the dam to hell. Contemporary dam busters have less dramatic, but legal, options.

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Salmon species spawned. The river churned with Chinook weighing over 100 pounds and annual runs of 275,000 pink salmon.

The Elwha offered more than 75 miles of fabulous fish habitat (as well as outstanding whitewater). That all ended with the construction of the 100-foot high Elwha Dam. Then in 1927 a second 200-foot high dam was built 8.5 miles upstream. Now environmentalists and the National Park Service are asking that both dams be taken down. Support is growing for the idea in the local community. At one meeting of 100 concerned citizens, 2 people defended the dams, 20 demanded removal, and the rest called for bringing back the fish any way possible.

Even the Congress is now involved. On June 12th of last year, at

the request of local Congressman Al Swift, the powerful committee chairman who controls electric power legislation in the House of Representatives, John Dingell, called for an investigation of the dam removal idea at the Elwha. Experts in the Government Accounting Office are now finishing up this study.

THE KENNEBEC

A similar drama is being played out on the opposite end of the nation. Fishermen and conservationists are asking for the removal of the Augusta Dam, one of 11 dams on Maine's Kennebec River.

According to Lewis Flagg, a biologist in the Maine Department of Marine resources, before the Augusta Dam was built, the Kennebec probably supported more anadro-

conservation

mous fish- species that live at sea but spawn in fresh water- than any other river in the State. Historical accounts describe huge runs of 10 species, including salmon, smelt, herring, shad, striped bass, and sturgeon.

After the dam was built in 1937, fish populations dropped precipitously. Then came water pollution. As pulp mills proliferated in the river's drainage, water quality deteriorated dramatically. No fish could survive. At one time, the lower Kennebec was so filthy that fumes stripped paint off nearby houses and cars. Pulp mills and saw mills used the river as a waste disposal system. Fish spawning grounds were choked with bark from log drives and the oxygen content of the water was depleted, suffocating the fish.

Then beginning in 1970 with the passage of the Clean Water Act, the Kennebec began to come back to life. Pollution still remains in the lower stretches, but the river's ecosystem is recovering. Eagles, kingfishers, herons, cormorants, and ospreys are back. So are perch, small and large mouth bass and brook trout.

But bringing back the Atlantic Salmon won't be easy. Even dams with state-of-the-art fish ladders block 10% of the fish migrating upstream, and many new-bom **smolts** trying to return to the sea are inevitably chewed to bits by power generation turbines. To reduce this damage at some dams, migrating fish are scooped out of the dam tailwaters

and chauffeured upstream in huge tanks, like rock stars on their way to a concert. But these are half-baked solutions. The only sure way to bring these fish back is to remove the dams. And that is exactly what is being proposed for

the Augusta Dam on the Kennebec.

The Maine State Planning Office is currently reviewing the data on this dam removal proposal (FERC #2389).

The Elwha and the Kennebec may be the first

of many new free-flowing rivers to be reborn from the clogged riverine arteries and the thousands of existing dams we have become accustomed to accepting as immortal.

Kennebec, Penobscot Rivers

AWA participates in Maine relicensing hearings

The American Whitewater Affiliation participated in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Relicensing hearings throughout Maine this past fall. The relicensing hearings concerned the Class II-III East Outlet segment of the headwaters of the Kennebec River, and the popular and challenging Class III-V Ripogenus Dam -to - Debsconeag section of the West Branch of the Penobscot River.

AWA presented testimony to Central Maine Power and Kennebec Water Power officials and a handful of state regulatory officials concerning water releases and site improvements for the East Outlet of the Kennebec section. In line with a stance taken by the Maine Professional River Outfitters (MEPRO) the AWA requested a minimum flow of 1200 cfs from June 1st to October 1st for three hours a day, between 10am and 1 pm for the East Outlet segment. This position was endorsed in principal by a sparse turnout of local



Scott Underhill photo

C-boater paddles Maine's scenic Kennebec River gorge.

boaters and local fishermen. The minimum flows requested should not interfere with early morning and

early evening fishing for trout, chub and landlocked salmon. (This is one of those scenic **beginner-**

through-intermediate runs where one may see bald eagles stalking and feeding on fish and fowl.)

The FERC hearing concerning the nationally significant and recently threatened West Branch of the Penobscot River drew larger crowds of local boaters and other special interest groups. The 26-mile Class I-V "river of the descending rocks," known for the bad-tempered **Cribwork** Rapid and for exceptional landlocked salmon fishing, was threatened by the Big-A dam project. The proposal for that dam would have inundated the **Cribwork** and four miles of Class III - IV gorge running. The proposal was withdrawn by the **power/paper** company

under fire from local and national environmental groups; the proposal can still be resubmitted by Great North Nekoosa.

At the FERC **reli-****censing** hearing, AWA requested daylight water releases through McKay Station seven days a week at a level no less than 1800 CFS from the last weekend in April to the 2nd weekend in October. Notification of deep-gate tests which divert 2400 cfs of flow down a Class V gorge for nearly a mile were requested, along with notification of full-power testing which unleash 3600 cfs - a lot of water for the ledgy West Branch of the Penobscot section.

Requested were improved access rights to

the put-in in Ripogenus Gorge. Currently the barbed wire-topped gate that leads into the McKay Station compound at the put-in has been found **locked on Wednesdays and after 4pm** for the rest of the week. AWA argued that public safety for boaters as well as fishermen was jeopardized by the lock-out; the gatekeeper position is funded through fees paid by commercial outfitters.

AWA requested that Great Northern Nekoosa, the dam operator at the McKay Station generating site, prepare an socio-economic study of commercial and private boating's affect on the North Woods economy. Maine's six-month boating season attracted 35,000

commercial boater user days - more than 50,300 rafters. That's in addition to thousands of private boater visits, countless fishermen, and a plethora of canoe outfitter customers, fishing guides and paddling schools who use the West Branch and surrounding tributaries that drain Moosehead Lake. By comparison, the Gauley River in West Virginia attracts 28,600 boater user days in a 21-day season, providing West Virginia's economy with over sixteen million dollars in direct and indirect income from commercial and private boaters.

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Fatal whitewater accidents mar Eastern paddling season

During the late spring and summer of 1989 the East Coast enjoyed the finest boating season of the past decade. It seemed logical that the number of kayak and canoe fatalities would be higher than usual, but nothing prepared me for the avalanche of reports crossing my desk.



By Charlie Walbridge
AWA Safety Chairman

In addition to the tragedies which occur when inexperience and fast water mix, there were seven fatalities involving canoeists and kayakers from the mainstream Eastern paddling community. Since there are no others that I know of from the West, the death toll is about average for the past few years; it seems high to those of us who live on the East Coast mostly because these incidents have previously been concentrated on the other side of the country.

Since they involve boaters who were properly equipped, well-trained, and prepared for the rivers they were attempting these events are especially unsettling. In addition, there were about the number of fatalities in the commercial outfitting sectors last year, which was the worst ever. Information on these is difficult to come by due to the potential for litigation. In addition, I have received an unprecedented number of near-miss reports. This frightens me because close calls often predict what is in store for the rest of us down the road.

I am going to concentrate this report on six incidents involving prepared paddlers and one which got considerable press coverage in the D.C. area. Amid the fun of river running and the speedy progress that novices using

good equipment can expect, we must not reduce our respect for the river. Everyone must realize the risks involved and act accordingly.

On May 7 Mimi LeBeau, a student at Dartmouth College and a nationally ranked flat-water racer, was killed on the West River in Vermont while paddling with a group of friends from the Ledyard Canoe Club. The group had pulled into an eddy above a huge tree trunk which created a strainer. As she pulled out of the eddy she flipped, and was carried into the tree and pinned under several feet of fast water. The group was unable to assist her until water was cut off at the dam, exposing her body. There was a faint heartbeat, and resuscitation was attempted, but she died in the hospital soon after.

This tragedy was reported in a previous issue. Jim Healey of the Appalachian Mountain Club looked into this accident further and made a significant discovery. It seems that Mimi, after flipping, was "hanging in" upside down, as she had been taught, awaiting a bow rescue. She was thus totally unaware of her impending collision with the strainer and thus unable to protect herself. Bow rescues are appropriate in flat water and in instructional settings at play spots where the runoff is clean and help is well positioned close by. They are not suitable for general river running, especially on the West, which was bank-full due to recent rains.

When the choice is between a passive rescue where you wait for help and an active rescue where you help yourself, the active rescue is almost always the best choice even if it involves swimming. Never be afraid to exit your boat if it will improve your safety.

On May 17, in what was probably one of the most incredible cases of

poor paddling judgement I've heard about in a long time, New Jersey paddler Ken Kashuahara drowned in an attempt to run a low dam on the **Pequanock** River. This dirty, industrialized creek has little to recommend it except some small waves and eddy lines which make it a tolerable after work run. The group portaged the first dam. Ken, known as a "very go-for-it person", expressed the opinion that the drop could have been run. Above the second dam the river enters a concrete-walled section; the group caught eddies behind a pumphouse and waved Ken to shore, but he continued over the 8' drop. He landed upright, but was sucked back into the boil and pummeled. He was out of reach of rescue ropes, but eventually washed out without detectable breathing or heartbeat. He was resuscitated, but died later in the hospital.

This type of disrespect for dams is surprisingly commonplace. The members of my own club have had close encounters with dams. This despite the warnings of their companions and considerable coverage of the dangers of dams in their training. One person said he "didn't believe it was as bad as it looked". The other said he "wanted to experience it for himself". They are alive today because their friends took the time to set up throw lines prior to their run. The moral: if you're going to do something risky, at least get some backup!

On July 9 Roger Stallings, a participant in a clinic at the Nantahala Outdoor Center, was killed in what has to be one of the most bizarre and **unpreventable** accidents that I've ever encountered. His group was running a class II section of the **Tuckasegee** River in North Carolina; he was running through a wave train behind several other paddlers when his boat got snagged in a huge industrial conveyor belt. This heavy duty, 18 wide reinforced rubber device was probably discarded by an upstream mining operation. As is the case with a lot of dangerous river trash, it gave no warning of its presence. Recent high water carried it downriver where it waited, flapping silently beneath the surface in a wave train, until it claimed

its unsuspecting victim. Stallings' boat folded and he was dragged completely **under** water; guides took considerable **risks** but were unable to reach him until it was too late.

On July 17 Debbi **Vorbeau**, a camp counsellor for the Arlington County Parks and Recreation Department, was killed in the "Needles" section of the Potomac River near Harper's Ferry. The river, although high for summer, was at a moderate level, making the rapids a solid Class III.

The party had just begun a trip of several days above the rapid. The victim's canoe tipped in the upper part of the Needles; she became wedged **between** her canoe and an underwater log jam. The other eleven members of her party were scattered over the width and breadth of the river, clinging to rocks and debris. They were pulled from the water by rescue workers from Harper's Ferry assisted by a Maryland State Police Helicopter. This accident received high-profile coverage from newspapers throughout the D.C. area.

A short time after Debbi's death I received a call from her father. He said that his daughter was an excellent swimmer, but had no whitewater experience. She had been asked to come along as a chaperon for the campers. Canoes had been rented, but she was given no training which would have prepared her for swimming in Class III rapids. The performance of the rest of her group suggests that she was not alone in being **unprepared**; indeed, there seems to have been no "river leader" on the scene who evaluated the situation and made the decision to run or portage. The **alternative** to swift water training would have been to begin their trip **downstream** of the confluence with the **Shenandoah** where the river is essentially flat for some distance. The county will not talk about the incident, so confirmation of these observations is not possible.

On July 29 Kevin Huff, an experienced open canoeist, was running the Lower Tellico River in East Tennessee at a very low flow. His group ran five miles of Class II-III water without incident until they reached "Reader's

Many of these accidents indicate to me that we may be approaching the limits of our sport

safety

Rock", an innocent looking rapid with a huge undercut rock on the left. Like many undercuts, it gets harder as the water drops, making evasive action difficult.

Huff, paddling a Sunburst outfitted with air bags and a Perception saddle, missed his line and was swept sideways into the rock. Only a small piece of his boat and his hand remained visible. After attempting to pull him free, his companion Jeff Wroblinski slashed the Sunburst's air bags, allowing the victim and his boat to sink deeper to where it could wash free. He was under about five minutes; CPR was started; EMT's arrived, and he was taken to a hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Huff was probably trapped by the buoyancy of his bags. Slashing the bags was an excellent example of quick thinking under pressure, and the rescue was completed in good time. The other boater in the party was setting up a Zdrag when the boat came free, indicating a high level of preparedness. We can never become complacent about known hazards, even on easy rivers. It is a good place for marginal paddlers to walk.

The '89 Gauley season in West Virginia occurred during a wet September, and there was considerable paddling activity on surrounding rivers. The Lower Meadow, a class V-VI tributary which reaches the Gauley just above Lost Paddle Rapid, is known for its steep drops and hugely undercut rocks. In less than a month it claimed the life of two highly skilled paddlers.

John Dolbaire, an employee of the Nantahala Outdoor Center, was an expert paddler who had run some of the hardest creeks in the Southeast. He and Denise Handrich of Wisconsin and Dean Tomko of Pittsburgh were attempting the Lower Meadow at 2500 cfs on September 12; Gauley Festival Weekend. This is an extremely high flow; to my knowledge no one had tried it at more than 1800 cfs and that run was apparently pretty scary. Dean compares the difficulty to the Upper Yough in the "mid-three's".

They had made the run with-

out incident until they reached a drop known as "The Brink of Disaster". There Dolbaire missed an eddy and got caught in a hole and thrashed for five to ten minutes. Denise had previously set up a throw line and laid it across his cockpit, but despite the dangers lurking downstream John elected to stay in his boat and continue to work free. Finally he escaped; while trying to roll he slammed against a huge rock and bailed out.

Only 100 feet of fast-moving water separated him from the next rapid, "Coming Home Sweet Jesus", a class VI drop which is seldom run. Dean Tomko, who had run first, moved out of his eddy to rescue him at considerable personal risk. Dolbaire grabbed Dean's bow and could not or would not move to the other end. Dean, an extremely strong paddler, made little headway and eventually broached on a rock. Had this not happened he would have probably been killed also. John, who seemed beaten and disoriented, was swept into "Coming Home, Sweet Jesus". Dean feels that drop was probably unrunnable that day. John was swept into a huge rock, known to be severely undercut, where he disappeared. His body was discovered miles downstream a few days later.

The group was fully aware of the dangers of the run. Before putting on they had discussed the water level and the difficulty of rescue under these conditions. Dean feels that the accident was the result of "a class III mistake in Class VI water. I agree. There is no clearer example of the risks of high-level boating.

The next group was composed of a group of experts from Washington, DC and one California paddler touring in the area. The Meadow was running at a near-optimum level of 915 cfs. The victim, Whitney Shields, had made the run four or five times; he was considered one of the finest boaters in the D.C. Area with dozens of runs over Great Falls under his belt. Eric Lindburg, who pulled him out, had a similar background; the other two were new to the river.

They were on the lower part

of the run when they came to a steep rapid with a trashy line. After scouting, they decided to run another slot over a medium-sized ledge on river left. Two members of the party made the run without incident; Shields pitched and pinned vertically beneath the water. Rescue was immediately set up; using a tag line for support, Lindburg worked his way down to try to release the boat. Initially unsuccessful, he slipped and fell, landing on the bow of the boat which was not where he expected it to be. He quickly clipped the rope into the bow, allowing the kayak to be dislodged. CPR was begun immediately, twelve minutes by the clock after the pin. An impressive time, but not fast enough. The body was evacuated by local rescue workers who took hours to reach the site.

This accident, like the one described above, had no clear cause other than the risks of running high-level whitewater. One thing may have contributed to it. Whitney Shields was paddling a "Screaming Meanie", a high-performance creek boat supposedly designed to resist vertical pins. It is about half the volume of a Dancer, however, and I question whether a boat this small is a good choice for steep creeks. Certainly this choice may have posed an added risk. Beyond that, I am left with the observation that repeated runs of class V-VI rapids may eventually catch up to you regardless of your skill.

Many of these accidents indicate to me that we may be approaching the limits of our sport. Dams still kill; higher levels often increase danger, and smaller boats add exposure in places where the increased risk is not welcome. Or they may simply reaffirm the uncontrolled element of risk inherent in the sport. Whichever philosophy you prefer, the potential for tragedy exists. Keep it in the back of your mind whenever you are on the river, just as you would when driving your car in heavy traffic.

(Details are unavailable at this time of the death of a canoeist who died after being pinned under "Keep Right" rock on Tennessee's Tellico.--Ed.)

Four die in separate incidents

1989: a tragic season for California outfitters

By Ethan Winston

Four people died in unrelated accidents on California rivers in 1989 as a result of whitewater boating accidents. All four were passengers in paddle rafts.

Springtime high water, traditionally considered the most dangerous time to boat, was a factor in only the April 1st drowning on the Cal Salmon. Two other deaths, incredibly, occurred at the same spot months apart in Meatgrinder Rapid on the South Fork American. Both accidents involved foot entrapment, washed-off life jackets and moderate river flows.

A 43-year-old Modesto woman on her first rafting trip became the fourth victim when she died on the Goodwin Dam run of the Stanislaus River during very low flows.

Cal Salmon Drownings: High Water Exposure

Bloomer Falls is located immediately downstream of put-in on the challenging Cal Salmon River. Bloomer Falls claimed its victim after a commercial trip put on during high flows.

The river was running an estimated 7,500 and 8,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), according to Jack Darnall, recreation staff officer for the Klamath National Forest.

Even though most guide books rate it a Class III/IV at lower flows, some local boaters consider Bloomer a Class V rapid at high flows, when the rapid becomes a series of huge holes.

It was a cold, rainy day, according to reports made to the California Department of Boating and Waterways, with both air and water temperatures about 50 degrees. The Cal Salmon is in the northwest corner of California,

a region notorious for wet springs and heavy rains that cause dramatic fluctuations in river flows.

Of the three rafts in the trip only the first made it through without incident. The second hit the hole and stood on edge, dumping six passengers, including the victim and guide. The third also did a tube stand, dumping still more passengers.

Outfitter Jim Plimpton, in a prepared statement, noted all three Whitewater Connection guides on the trip were highly skilled boat hands who had previously

worked the river in 1988. The victim had also run the Cal Salmon in 1988, Plimpton noted. The guide in the victim's boat had five years boating experience and seven years search and rescue experience, according to the statement issued following the accident.

The Siskiyou County Coroner's office said the victim was a 36-year-old male from Danville, California.

The high flow had already



Raft enters Meatgrinder Rapid on California's South Fork American. Two foot-entrapment incidents resulted in drownings in this rapid.

caused at least one other outfitter to cancel a trip that day, according to Jack Darnall, who is charged with supervising recreational uses of rivers in the Klamath National Forest.

Downstream of put-in, Bill Wing, the owner of another outfitting company watched with some of his guides as the ill-fated trip launched and many of its passengers quickly spilled into the swift-flowing current.

Plimpton's statement noted the victim and his guide surfaced next to each other and the guide tried to pull him into the eddy on river right, but lost his grip as the eddy line submerged them both. The victim then continued downstream toward a **Class IV boulder** field known as The Maze.

The roadside observers realized the three rafts were not going to be able to help rescue the victim. Quickly driving a half mile downstream to the **Morehouse Creek Bridge**, they prepared to stage a rescue.

"The guy floated around the **corner**," one of them **recalled**. "He wasn't making any effort to swim. One of the guides hit him right across the chest with a throw bag and the guy didn't make any effort to hang on."

Knowing the victim was now likely to swim the just downstream **Airplane Turn Rapid**, a nasty **Class IV** boulder field and right-hand turn, **Wing**, owner of **Electric Rafting Company**, jumped in after him, even though he was wearing just a dry suit and no life jacket.

"I was able to catch up with him. He was alive, but totally **exhausted**," **Wing** recalled. "He muttered, 'Help me.'"

Wing tried to swim the victim to shore but was unable to maintain contact after the neck gasket of his own dry suit blew out.

Wing managed to eddy out but the victim continued downstream, **emerging from Airplane** facedown, according to observers.

Chili Bar Drowning: The Drowning Pool

The West's most heavily rafted whitewater river was the scene of two deaths when **drownings** occurred in May and August on the **Chili Bar run** of the **South Fork American River**.

Both victims drowned after having a foot become ensnared at the bottom of a **nine-foot** deep pool just downstream of **Rhino Rock**, located on river right approximately two-thirds of the way through **Meatgrinder Rapid**.

Meatgrinder—long, rocky and turbulent—is arguably the most **difficult** rapid on this stretch of the **South Fork American**, a river which much more typically serves up short **pool-drop** rapids. At the time of both accidents, the river was flowing at about 1,750 **cfs**, considered an average summertime flow on the **Class II/III** run. In both cases the force of the river washed off the life jacket of the entrapped victims before the bodies were recovered.

The first drowning occurred on Mother's Day as a two-raft trip of private **boaters** left **Chili Bar** and headed into **Meatgrinder**, **one-half** mile downstream.

The victim was identified by the **El Dorado County Corner's** office as a white female, age 31, from **San Francisco**. Participants on the trip said she had little previous rafting experience and was wearing an **old-style** **May West (Class I)** life jacket when she was dumped from the boat near the top of the rapid.

Both the victim and the guide became swimmers near where the river

narrows and swings toward the right wall, a second guide on the trip explained. The remaining people in the boat were pitched into the water when the captain-less boat hit a rock.

As the swimmers were picked up by the second boat in the trip and other passing **rafts**, it took several **minutes** to realize that one person was missing. Even when an empty **PFD** washed up downstream it wasn't readily obvious there had been a drowning, according to the second guide.

"Someone becoming entrapped and drowning is not your automatic reaction," she said. "You keep **thinking** she was a swimmer and someone has picked her up."

During the rescue efforts there was confusion over where the victim was last seen. Some trip participants indicated she **was last seen on** the left side of the river and search officials took that to mean river left, without realizing trip participants were indicating the left side while looking upstream, according to **Sheriff's Deputy John Bell**, supervisor of the river patrol unit.

Eastern outfitters also experience year of increased river fatalities

In past years, Eastern commercial rafting outfitters have boasted enviable safety records. Rafting fatalities were normally associated with unguided private trips or the result of natural causes as heart attacks.

But a spate of fatalities in 1989 has shocked outfitters and left them hoping the year is a freakish anomaly.

In West Virginia, arguably the center of Eastern whitewater activity, three commercial deaths were reported in 1989 after accidents on the **Cheat**, **Bluestone** and the lower **Gauley**.

The state of West Virginia has filed charges against the outfitter involved in the **Bluestone** incident.

On the **Upper Yough** in western Maryland, a commercial rafting

customer drowned after washing into the undercut at **Lost and Found** rapid.

On Tennessee's **Ocoee**, a rafter tumbled into the water at the river's first rapid and died after a lengthy swim.

And on Quebec, Canada's **Montmorency River**, a female commercial passenger died after experiencing a lengthy swim in frigid, early-season water.

If there was any common denominator between the rash of accidents, it was higher than normal water levels. After several dry years, the past whitewater season saw ample water throughout the season.

At the time of the **Upper Yough**, **Bluestone**, **Gauley** and **Montmorency** fatalities, the rivers were running above average levels.

Search efforts were called off at 9 p.m. that night. The victim's body was discovered on river right and retrieved the next morning after the river flow had been cut to about **350 cfs**. Her right foot was entrapped, Bell said, and the body was recovered by using a throwline around the downstream side of the body and working the body upstream on both sides.

El Dorado County officials had less to say about the **August 6th Meatgrinder** drowning because of pending litigation concerning the death. Bell and other river patrol deputies have been told by superiors not to comment on the case.

The coroner's office identified the victim as a **20-year-old** woman from Encino, California. She was a passenger on a **Libra Expedition** strip and was ejected from her position in the right front of the raft as the crew high-sided on **Rhino Rock**. Five of the seven people in the raft were dumped. Ironically, the raft struck **Rhino Rock** as the guide tried to retrieve a swimmer from another raft, according to an official report filed by the county with the California Department of Boating and Waterways.

Both the victim's fiancé and brother were also on the trip.

Jon **Osgood**, owner of **Libra Expeditions**, did not return phone calls made to him regarding this story.

As in the first drowning, the victim's life jacket, this time a class **III/V** type, was washed off by the force of water rushing over **Rhino Rock** and into the deep pool - the same pool had just claimed **its** second victim in less than three months. The life jacket, according to witnesses, **surfaced** almost immediately, turned inside out with the victim's t-shirt wrapped around it.

Her body was recovered in the same spot as the first victim, this time with the left foot entrapped.

The rescue efforts were videotaped by Joe **Yaggi**, a videographer working for the local company of **Rapid Shooters**. He had been filming another outfitter's run through **Meatgrinder** when the accident occurred.

Bureau of Land Management

officials in October made the decision to dynamite the three foot by five foot boulder creating the foot entrapment hazard, according to Jim Eicher, a BLM outdoor recreation planner for the Folsom Recreation Area.

"It's not our game plan to blow up every rapid on the river," Eicher said. "But this spot had killed two people under very different circumstances."

Eicher said the BLM sought and received **permission** from various other agencies to drop the river flow to **20** cubic feet per second and **examined** what another official had labeled "the drowning pool."

During that **examination** Eicher and others tried to dislodge the granite hazard with a **prybar** but were unsuccessful. Rescue ropes that had snagged against the rock and broke were visible during the examination, he added.

The actual dynamiting was done on October 18th by a Pacific Gas and Electric crew. Four sticks of dynamite were used, Eicher said.

Stanislaus River: Undercut

A 43-year-old woman from **Modesto**, taking her first commercial rafting trip, became a drowning victim July 8 after apparently being trapped against an undercut rock at the top of **Iron Box Rapid** on the Stanislaus River.

The outfitter involved is Great Valley Canoe and Raft of Riverbank.

The **Goodwin Dam** run of the Stanislaus is found in the rolling foothills of the Sierra and is below the **once-popular Camp Nine** run that was flooded by the New Melones Reservoir in the early 1980s.

It's also a harder run, described as a classic drop-pool drop river by guide books, with numerous class IV rapids and several suggested portages separated by stretches of flat water.

Iron Box, also known as **Middle Pinball**, isn't even a rapid at flows above 800 cfs. At 550 cfs, the level the day of the drowning, it probably **carries** a Class **III** rating, according to Jim Sandner of the Army Corp of Engineers.

Two rocks emerge from the center of the riverbed at that lower

flow. The first one is undercut on the backside, the second rock very smooth and vertical on its upstream face, creating an upstream water flow capable of pinning someone against the upper rock, Sandner explained.

Earlier reports saying the victim was pinned against "**the iron box**," an abandoned piece of mining equipment in the riverbed, aren't true, according to Sandner.

The boat carrying the victim was one of several boats to flip that day after tagging the first rock. The boat's guide was washed up into that undercut area behind that first rock.

"He had a sense of someone else being in that undercut area with him," Sandner said. The guide eventually flushed out on river right around the second rock and over the old mining sluice pontoon that gives **Iron Box** its name.

About an hour after the accident the victim's PFD flushed out on river left and the body later recovered on river right in an eddy.

Since the drowning, the Army Corps has banned commercial rafting on the **Goodwin Dam** section of the Stanislaus at levels below 700 cfs. The only **restrictions** placed on **private boaters** by the Army Corps is that inflatable rafts must be at least 11 feet in length, kayakers must be hard shelled and participants must wear a helmet and PFD.

Summaries of these four accidents have been provided here not in an effort to point fingers, but rather to get the information out into the public arena. In each case the details are from official reports and hopefully unbiased observers.

Are there conclusions to be drawn from these incidents? We will leave the task of distilling such conclusions to the reader, with a bit of advice thrown in. Perhaps we all need to examine the margin of safety available to us on each boating trip we take.

Ethan Winston manages Pacific River Supply and is a long-time activist for Friends of the River.

Boulder busting

By Mark Torf

Road construction dropped boulders and sediment into the South Fork of the Payette river during the 1989 floating season. The most significant impact to recreational boating was a large new boulder at a local landmark—Blackadar's Rapid in the canyon stretch. On October 26th, 1989 this boulder was blown to bits, literally.

Road construction along the South Fork canyon has been very difficult. A crooked, dusty and soft roadbed perched 200 feet above the riverbed is being improved to create an all-weather, two lane highway. Contractors under the direction of the Federal Highway Administration have excavated, blasted, and filled long steep hillsides in order to create a stable roadbed. The process has created a significant face lift for the views seen on river right through the canyon stretch.

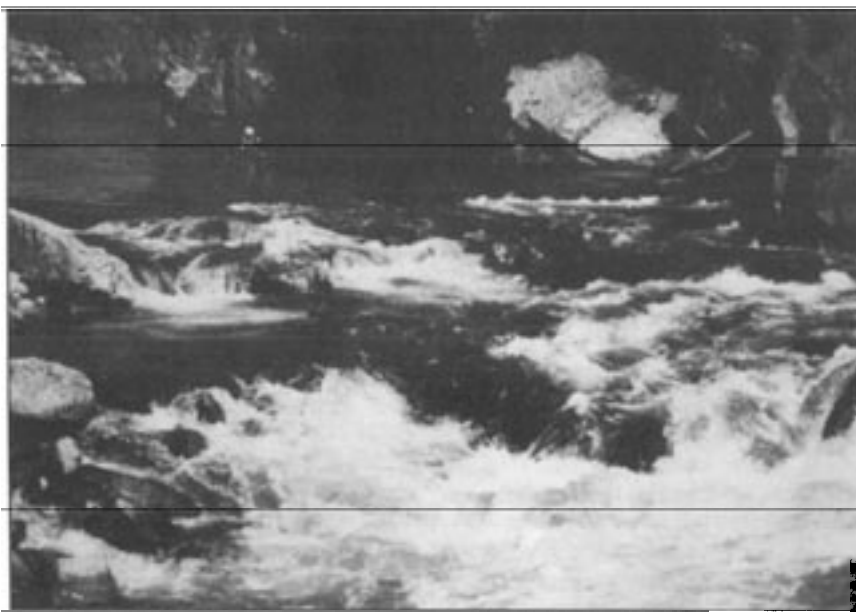
The approximately 20-mile road runs along the river-right bank for the length of the South Fork river corridor. Long known as "The Shuttle of No Return" for its treacherous, winding road surface, it is a major east-west route and serves as the shuttle for both the South Fork and for the run on the main Salmon.

The blasting and excavating required to create the improved highway has been a major concern for area boaters, as well as state and federal wildlife and environmental agencies. In order to manage this concern from a variety of interests, the Federal Highway Administration formed a River Protection Committee. This committee has met regularly for over a year in order to monitor construction procedures, encourage responsible excavation and blasting, and help minimize the amount of debris falling down the



Rob Lesser photo

Road construction along Idaho's Payette River has dumped debris into the river bed.



Wendy Wilson photo

Boater approaches Blackadar's Rapid on the Payette. A boulder dumped into the river during road construction obstructed the drop and created a hazard that required removal.

hillside into the South Fork riverbed.

Two local boating organizations have been active in watchdogging the construction: Friends of the Payette (FOP) and the Idaho Whitewater Association (IWA). A variety of Idaho state agencies and federal agencies have also been represented: Department of Water Resources, Division of Environmental Quality, Fish and Game, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Lands, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Corps of Engineers, Boise County, and the U.S. Forest Service.

Rock and construction debris has fallen into the South Fork of the Payette several times throughout the course of the project. Boulders, concrete bamer walls, metal culverts, and rebar have been knocked or blasted into the water. The committee process was designed to provide a forum for quick resolution of these and other problems. At the September, 1989 meeting, the Friends of the Payette began asking for mitigation of impacts from the first full construction season.

Spring and summer floating through the area generated a range of complaints from boaters concerning the deposited debris. It was difficult to obtain a consensus among such a diverse group of river users-commercial boatmen, kayakers, canoeists, and rafters - but most agreed that the biggest problem was the new boulder in Blackadar's Rapid.

Some believed the new boulder was a safety hazard. The boulder created a rooster-tail in the center of the main chute—forcing an additional move that was difficult for intermediate boaters.

Many wanted the boulder blown up because of the threat of log jams from burned trees in the Lowman Complex upstream. The Lowman Complex fires were one largest burns in the country this past year, with over 42,000 acres turned to charcoal. The new boulder was deemed a "tree-catcher boulder"—and no one wanted to see a repeat of the accident that provided the rapid with its name.

The rapid has significance as a memorial to Walt Blackadar, a world-renown kayaker from Salmon, Idaho who drowned here, pinned under a log. Blackadar, opened up many of the Idaho runs, wrote a plethora of articles

on river exploration and conservation, and is best known as the boater who pioneered big water kayaking. From a historical standpoint, many thought the rapid should be left in the same condition as when Blackadar boated it.

A photographic survey of the obstacles and debris was compiled by Friends of the Payette. The photos documented a host of new rocks and debris along the course of the road construction, most along the riverbank with a few boulders found in the middle. These additions to the rapids were considered by the committee to be of secondary concern. The situation in Blackadar's Rapid, however, was different.

The plan of action concerning the new boulder in Blackadar's Rapid was debated for months. When the matter was finally put to a decision, it was agreed to by a majority, who saw the boulder blasting as a test case for handling future construction debris problems.

Now was the time to "put up or shut up" for the committee. The FOP and the IWA representatives asked the Federal Highway Administration to remove the offending boulder in Blackadar's Rapid, and the FHA agreed.

Hauling the rock out via a cable was impractical, a move which might even cause more damage to the rapid. Blasting the rock in place was suggested as the only viable method available. "Experts" assured the committee it could be surgically destroyed without impacting surrounding features in the rapid. Reluctantly, the boating groups nodded approval.

The construction contractor at first was unable to reach the boulder unassisted. In order to closely observe the surgery and to assist the construction team, a FOP representative and a paddling partner volunteered to provide a kayak and assorted river safety gear. The team was set; the water was swift, deep and cold. The Boulder Busters, as they became known, included a kayaker, a rafter and the project engineer.

Straight out of an Alistair MacLean novel, the kayaker dressed for the river: helmet, dry suit, lifejacket, and a knapsack of plastic explosives. A double extension ladder was established from shore to the target boulder. Luck-

ily, the ladder just bridged the shallow drop between the boulder and shore. Packing plastic explosive in the knapsack and on belay from shore, one of the Boulder Busters crawled out the extension ladder to the boulder and placed the charges.

The Boulder Busters began to clear the area in preparation for the blast. Viewers from the road surface waited with a mixture of anticipation and trepidation. Would only one boulder be destroyed? Would the rapid be harmed? Would the construction crew wait long enough to let the Boulder Busters get out of harm's way?

In one massive explosion, the boulder was blasted into thousands of tiny pieces. Ionized. The dust cleared, and the view through binoculars from the roadway told the story: the rapid was unharmed. Further examination revealed that no water quality impacts were seen.

In all, the Boulder Busters operation was an enormous success. The whitewater community pressed the Federal Highway Commission to follow through on its promises, and the Administration did.

While these construction impacts were documented, evaluated and resolved, there is still more construction work to be done, and more trouble spots to monitor. Existing construction must be checked for signs of erosion and long-term sedimentation. A protection team will float the new construction area this spring to evaluate these and other trouble spots. Construction will closely pass Lone Pine Rapid, Little Falls, and Surprise Rapid. Concern is especially great at Lone Pine Rapid, where the road must pass between a large geological formation that holds up the neighboring hillside and the river's edge. The hillside has already slipped some due to the present road, and this additional road construction has geologists, environmentalists and river enthusiasts worried. The whitewater community will be right there, observing, participating, and when absolutely necessary, Busting.

Mark Torf is a kayaker from Boise, Idaho and the Friends of the Payette representative to the South Fork of the Payette River Protection Committee.

SQUIRT!



An AWA interview with the fabulous Snyder brothers

by John Porterfield

A variety of squirt moves: top--mystery move and blasting a wave on the Ottawa. Left--Jeff Snyder demonstrates pillow squirt on New York's Hudson River. Photos by James Swedberg.

It's been five years since the pivot turn metamorphosed into the stem squirt and razor-edged boats replaced Tupperware as the new kid on the block. The "fad" as it was initially labeled by the entrenched big boat theorists outgrew its detractors' moniker into a true offshoot of the sport of whitewater boating. Boat manufacturers came and went, boat and paddle designs streamlined the dense boat concept, and videos highlighting the new three-dimensional world of whitewater boating with dazzling displays of aquanastic ability.

Two years ago the SQUIRT BOOK has reached the boating public--the last guidepost measuring the blossoming growth of the sport of squirt boating. In this interview editor John Porterfield spoke individually with Jeff and Jim Snyder to find out their views of the progress, direction and future of the sport. Excerpts have been edited from those interviews.

AWA: From your perspective, in what ways has the sport progressed in the past two or three years?

JIM SNYDER: It has progressed quite a bit. There are a lot more people doing it, and most of the experts have gotten a lot better. Proof of that is the existence of whitewater rodeos with squirt events. There's a certain percentage of boats who are willing to try squirt boating. And once they have tried it, they will get out consistently enough to get good at it. Most people are in it with two boats - a big boat and a squirt boat. Squirting is a segment of the boating society that has grown into itself - its more a percentage gain than a fad.

JEFF SNYDER: There are a lot better boat designs which allow you to get into lower volume while still maintain a comfort range. That combination is a recent advance that keeps people interested when they can do it reasonably. Also, it's realized that you have to use a small boat for your weight. One of my brother's new designs, the Bigfoot, is designed for folks with larger feet, longer legs and bigger knees - folks that had to do "the pain thing" before.

JIM SNYDER: I don't have the exact figures yet, but I think you are within 5 to 10 pounds of lift of neutral buoyancy

ina properly chopped squirt boat. Now we are trying to get comfort built into that performance range. Once New Wave figured out that everyone needed a bump chop [for the feet] and a weight chop, things got real exact in properly fitting the boat. The bump chop can vary about an inch and a half at the most, while the weight chop can vary up to four inches.

AWA: How about advances in reading underwater currents?

JIM SNYDER: The SQUIRT BOOK helped squirtists and non squirtists alike understand more about the undercurrents and gives them a format to learn those currents with.

JEFF SNYDER: The main facet that I have learned about the subcurrents is that so much [of it] is all pillow action. Before you get to the rock, all of the water slows up to a stop. There's a lot more time there that you would think. That's how I get away with swimming rapids for fun. All of the water goes around the rocks. The only thing you have to keep away from is undercuts. It's all [of the] pillow action that makes it possible to swim over big drops - that's what's doing it for you.

AWA: Jeff, how did you get into swimming rapids for fun?

JEFF SNYDER: Someone saw how ridiculously small my boat was and told me that if I learned to swim I wouldn't have to bring the boat along. They were right.

AWA: It seems like there are more and more rivers on which squirt boating is being done - especially steep technical runs.

JIM SNYDER: There are a whole league of people who are trying to make a name for themselves by running really hairy runs in their squirt boat, you know, like the Russell Fork - whatever's narly. There's a mentality amongst some folks that they have to take their squirt boat down something like that to prove how good they are. It is a valid test - but it's extremely dangerous, and I think it is

out of the realm of fun - unless you are totally at ease in it. You could say that running big water - like the Grand Canyon - is also in that realm of running things that are almost too hairy for little boats, but I don't agree with that. You will always run into people who will give you an argument about what they are doing is difficult beyond fun. Whitney [Shields] and Eric [Lindberg] were doing mystery moves one day on the Cheat. A C-1 paddler who had never seen squirt moves before told them that what they were doing [mystery moves] was totally uncool. They got a big kick out of that.

JEFF SNYDER: My personal favorites are runnin' creeks, small scale stuff, but big water is fun too. All of the limits are getting pushed back in all directions - it's a natural occurrence. Squirt boating was a big shot in the arm as far as kayaking is concerned, it brought new interest for the people who have been around long enough to master the art of kayaking. The biggest thing squirt boating did was to give these folks that were really getting quite good somewhere to go.

AWA: Jim, having boated a lot with Whitney Shields, do you think his death on the Lower Meadow is cause for re-evaluating what should and what shouldn't be run in low volume boats?

JIM SNYDER: No, not at all. When you are in a squirt boat, you can't be fooled into doing runs without thinking they are risky. You know that you are in a risky position when you are in a squirt boat. It's very obvious to you. There's a lack of naivety going on, and it's a game of calculated risks at that point, which is the same as it is in any other boat. So I don't think there is any illusion about squirt boats being low and deadly, I think it's largely a matter of percentages; there are x-number of people that are going to paddle over a 100 year period, and there are x-number that are going to die in that same time frame. Hopefully this will have everybody rethinking what they are doing, perhaps making them more cautious. Most Class V runs that are run by experts have Class III runs through them. What's

hairy about them is the fact that if you are off that line, you can die. If you are blown off that Class III line, you should be **re-evaluating** what you are doing. I don't think people do that enough. As far as what type of boat you want to take where, I feel it is up to you to get your ass to the take out. You shouldn't be going on anyone else's say so. That's a common mistake.

AWA : You both have been doing clinics around the **country** and in **Canada** - where do you see the sport growing?

JEFFS NYDER: The first area of growth was around the South, then around Pennsylvania. The fast areas I've seen are in the Midwest and West - Canada is starting to catch on too. I hear Japan may be ordering a thousand boats or so.

JIM SNYDER: A couple of interesting things have been happening. There has been moderate growth in Canada and a big growth in the Northwest. There has been a relatively big growth in New England, even though New England has been in it for the long run anyway. Colorado hardly has any squirt boaters at all - there are probably less than 20 squirt boaters in all of Colorado. There is a growing collection of squirt boaters in the New Mexico - Arizona area, the Rio Grande drainage. There are a significant number of experts down there. The big water growth isn't what you would expect - there probably has been less than 100 squirt boaters down the Grand Canyon, even though it has been heavily recommended by every squirt boater that has been down there. Squirt-ing grows from renegade boaters who just don't want to belong to the old, local hierarchy of who's experts in the big boats. They want to go out and play on their own thing and have challenging fun.

AWA : What about new moves?

JEFFS NYDER: The transitional **screw-ups** are something that I smoothed out over the summer, possible with **the low** volume the T-Bird has allowed me to get into. Being able to do those moves with three or four strokes has **also been**

a goal I've hit this year. I've come up with a lot of new teaching techniques which allows folks to grow faster. After I was with you in Maine, John, I went back to Canada and elsewhere and the back home. I was teaching a friend of mine who was just starting to squirt, and in three, two hour sessions he now has screw-ups **on both** sides. I am in the process of organizing what I've learned about teaching and putting it all down on paper. Most of the new moves I have been working on center on swimming. I swam Swallow Falls [Top Yough] this year.

JIM SNYDER: I've **seen** the new moves, which are always variations on old moves, coming from a **realm** of confidence that the experts have gotten into. They have tried so much of what there is to do and have become confident in that realm that the next thing comes easily and naturally for them. It's not like a terrible extension into an **unknown** region - it's more like a **peaking** of their abilities. People have been smoothing things out, making them efficient. It's a huge field of knowledge to learn about - 20 plus moves that are available - rapid running moves - a huge amount to learn. There are certain ways to do it right - it's a process of rounding out. You are seeking "downtime" and are always diverted by good surfing! There are a few different realms of expertise developing. One of them is doing the hairy runs at very high water - the Russell Fork, the Upper Yough, the Gauley - the truly deadly runs. That is a frontier being pushed by experts and they are surviving. Others are pushing the limits of "downtime", even though at this point they are **all** plateauing out at 15 seconds plus because they quit **looking** for downtime. They are getting better access to that realm, but [they] aren't going for more. So exits are starting to become "cool" - and there is a lot of hands-only paddling being done in the Southeast.

JEFF SNYDER: Swimming [whitewater] may be the new sport of the 90's, man. It could totally revolutionize the world of whitewater fun. They have already figured out the sport in **Europe**, so people here can figure it out on their

own. It's big in France in inflatable boogie boards, and one guy, Andre Perot, supposedly ran a river off of Mount Everest. Equipment will really help people out once it's established. You have to worry about protection mostly, and flexibility. Flippers, a wraparound helmet - protection like a turtle shell. It's mostly knowing when to breathe. Flotation is an old myth - that's what we **have been going against** for the past five years with squirt boats. You want to go down, not up. We've already seen **up**. One thing **that's** real important: watch out how much fun you are having, because swimming whitewater has an awesome amount of fun **potential**. Go at it from an educated standpoint - look at what other folks are doing before you just **jump** in the river with your flippers on.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The surgeon general and Jeff Snyder do not recommend this whitewater sport for people with a fear of water or of holding their breath. Do not swim whitewater alone or without adult supervision!*

AWA : Many of the whitewater rodeos in both the east and the west have both surface boat and squirt boat classes of competition. How do you feel about that?

JIM SNYDER: It think its happening largely because it gives people a reason to meet and check out new products. As far as the squirt competition itself goes, its very difficult to judge. Its probably as tough as judging [ocean] surfing. As long as everybody is relatively light spirited about it then there won't be people protesting about the particulars of judging. But ten years down the line its got to get that way, everything will probably be so **detailed, because** everybody **will be** so near each other that you have to split hairs on performance.

JEFF SNYDER: I think is something that is naturally going to happen, because when you coordinate an event of that magnitude [a whitewater rodeo] you might as well make it as diversified as possible to attract as many interest groups as you can. In judging, "the matter of opinion" part is the **down-**

side. It's tough to judge.

AWA: Do you think there should be a universal judging scheme established?

JEFFSNYDER: Yea, I think that in the future there will be • I have heard a proposal for a World Cup tour - which might start this year with three events • one in the South, one in Colorado, and one on the Wenatchee in the Northwest. Eventually it could be several events a summer. Somebody needs to take responsibility in organizing this tour way in advance to line up dates and places for the competition. People that want to plan to go to these events need to know in advance. The competition should be split into two different categories • where one is done traditionally • waves, holes, current, eddy lines, and the other one is done on flatwater with a prop • a cone or buoy that is anchored, and you work with that.

JIMSNYDER: It would be convenient if someone did. But I think the sport is so full of rebels and renegades that whatever system it is, it will be, and rightfully so, subject to a lot of second guessing. It will be a trial by fire because you are not going to tell a lot of squirtboaters how to judge if they think they have a better idea. If you want to judge folks on performance, the dual events of flatwater and river work is a good way of doing it.

AWA: Would this serve as a compulsory stage with required moves?

JEFFSNYDER: Well, there are a couple of ways of going into that. I think whatever is done it should leave the door open to creativity. I think there are moves that are hard that a lot of people don't know about. Remaining perfectly motionless or stagnant • that's really quite a hard trick to do • it isn't recognized today as it might be in the future. I think going to the Cup-style event would be good, and I think they will come up with a more consistent system for judging.

JIMSNYDER: Once you get into compulsaries, you start defining what "perfect" is. That doesn't leave room

for growth and makes the sport rigid. The competition will guide the sport in the long run. The experts that are winning competitions will be practicing the moves they get the most points for • and this will somewhat determine the competitive future of the sport. I would tend towards an open-ended system that leaves a lot of room for interpretation. What if long boats came back in and they were really good with plenty of style put into it. It's hard to say how it should go • I'm skeptical of a panel of judges that will tell the rest of us how it should be done.

AWA: How should a point system work in judging squirt events?

JIMSNYDER: I came up with a rudimentary set of rules and some folks have taken that and done variations on it. It's worked out fairly well. There are three criteria, judged 1-5 on each of them. The first is form, which involves the timing of cartwheels and the cleanliness of moves. You would start with 5 points, and lose points depending on the severity and number of mistakes. The second is aesthetics, which is the chance for the judge to say what he likes, similar to style points. The third is complexity, or the difficulty of the moves being done. That 1-5 scale is delineated for the different moves: 1 represents a stern squirt, 2 is work being done with the bow, 3 represents the transition moves • blasting transitions, cartwheels and mystery moves, 4 indicates a complex series of transition moves, and 5 represents transition moves with a screw-up include within the transitions. The Ocoee Rodeo judging worked out well. I think we should build on the judging criteria used there.

JEFFSNYDER: It would be like diving, so many points for difficulty, and so many points for execution for both the flatwater and river events. The flatwater event is like the floor exercise in gymnastics • it's really a proving ground, flatwater is an outstanding place to say "I can do this move" because if you can do it on flatwater, you can do it anywhere.

AWA: What would you be looking for

if you judging a squirt competition?

JEFF SNYDER: One would be creativity • what moves are put together and how • basically the execution. Another would be how the moves are strung together • the difficulty to going from one move into another. Transitional moves are harder than moves that are consistently on one end. Past-vertical moves are typically harder than vertical moves. Linking difficult moves together is what separates the best from the rest. Boat control is pretty easily seen • verticality in cartwheels, clean should be real clean. I don't think competition really needs to be picked apart for its components • maybe it will get to that eventually when there is more value placed in the contest • I see it now as a chance to get out there people what a great opportunity they have to have fun, and I don't do too bad at them.

JIMSNYDER: I would like to see three or four moves that can be done perfectly. Well one thing I would make sure of is the time limit. I've been in competitions where the squirt boaters are supposed to be out there for two or more minutes doing your thing. If you are a squirt boater you know that in two minutes you will be dead to the world. You won't be able to hear the roar of the crowd because you are so tired from everything you have been doing for the past two minutes. Thirty seconds is far closer to appropriate, you know. Think of typical playing formats • you don't go for two minutes straight, transition after this after that • when you get tired you start screwing up your moves unless you are real efficient with your strokes. On the World Cup circuit idea, you need to pick sites that offer the right water and crowd access. Parking is important. The Potomac in Washington, D.C. would be an excellent choice, but you need sponsors, and the sponsors need an angle, such as television exposure, big crowds, etc. to make it work. I think Wautaga [Laminates] did a good job of organizing the Ocoee Rodeo. They included a tupperware class, and AWA helped provide a festival atmosphere. Maybe AWA should take an active role in promoting a squirt boating World Cup.

I'll come back to the Deerfield.....



Scott Underhill photo



Scott Underhill photo

.....hopefully there will be water

But relicensing can insure flows for Upper Deerfield dries

By Ron Rathnow

My first experience with the Deerfield River came in the spring of 1987. I had recently moved up to Massachusetts from Kentucky, and like all northeastern boaters, I had been **waiting** all winter for the ice to break and the snow to melt. This spring, not **only** did the snow melt and the ice break but spring rain - and plenty of it - drove the rivers up fast and hard throughout New England. We dragged our boats out from dusty basements and dug them out from under snowdrifts and headed for the Monroe Bridge section of the Upper Deerfield River.

Sure enough, when we arrived about 3500 cfs of snowmelt and runoff was there to greet us, pouring over a dam and down a normally dry riverbed. It was a lot more water than we had anticipated or had even imagined. Being a new river for me, I was anxious to catch a glimpse of the drops on the shuttle ride. The few views we saw were enough to let us know that the run was going to be very interesting indeed.

We scrambled down a steep, scabble-lined bank below the dam to the waters edge in Monroe Bridge. At 3500 cfs, the rapids started immediately and were nearly continuous - one Class III - IV drop after another. Each rapid got progressively tougher, with more and more decisions to make and holes to thread. Cruising down through the phalanxes of waves, bracing through the holes and dodging pourers became the order of the day. When it was over and another steep climb out of the gorge was behind me, I thought how lucky I was to have a river this inviting so close to home. Imagine my chagrin



Scott Underhill photo

when I found out that this section of river rarely ever has water in it.

The Upper Deerfield Dries, as they are known locally, is dry as a bone because the water is diverted through a canal to create power at the Bear Swamp Project immediately downstream of the takeout. As it turned out, **luck** was with me that first year in the Berkshires. Once every ten years the turbines at the Bear Swamp generating plant have to be retooled, and to do so meant letting between 1,000 and 1,400 cfs down the **dryway** during the summer months. 1987 fell into that ten-year cycle, and releases started in July and ran into September. Here was an excellent, challenging and very scenic run, only 45 minutes from home. I was psyched! It was a pisser! It was **bitchin!** Life was good again - there was water, sunshine and the rugged Berkshire Hills, just a hair south of the Green Mountains in Vermont.

At these lower levels, the river became a classic New England run. The boulders that had previously created hungry pourers now forced us to run erratic lines through technical rock gardens with a distinct sense of gradi-

ent from top to bottom. Eddies were deep, lines were tight and time went by far too quickly for all of us. But good memories are hard to loose.

These days the Upper Deerfield section in Monroe Bridge rarely runs. The AWA is involved in relicensing the hydro project operated by New England Power and monitored by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The AWA, assisted by and large by local boaters, is involved in an attempt to schedule recreational releases on this stretch. There are also plans to expand a commercial rafting venture if additional releases can be negotiated.

Above the Monroe Bridge section the Deerfield River still **has** plenty to offer whitewater boaters. Originating in the Green Mountains of southern Vermont, the Deerfield drains south towards the Connecticut River in Massachusetts. The East Branch of the Deerfield begins on the slopes of the Mount Snow Ski Area and is fed by additional ski resorts and small streams as it flows towards its union with the West Branch. Although the East Branch is fairly tame, the West Branch should give steep creekers something to think

about. Tumbling off the slopes of Prospect Mountain into a Class V New England run - big boulders, vertical drops and views that resemble a chair-lift ride at one of the neighboring ski resorts. There is even a relatively safe run through a large culvert at one point. The West Branch continues its break-neck pace until the confluence of the Deerfield River is reached in the quiet community of Readsboro, Vermont.

As the river enters Massachusetts it forms Sherman Reservoir, a holding pool for the Yankee Nuclear Power Plant. Yankee was the first nuclear power plant built in the United States. Nestled quietly at the base of a mountain, Yankee still produces power for the northeast. The lower cooling pool for the power plant is created by the dam at the head of the Monroe Bridge section. This dam also diverts the water into the canal, very reminiscent of the Dries section of the New River in West Virginia. The canal then carries the water down into the Bear Swamp Pumped Storage Project. It is this stretch between the Monroe Bridge Dam and the Bear Swamp Pumped

Storage Project that offers the greatest access and potential for future white-water boating.

Below the Bear Swamp Dam the river runs Class I and II until it reaches Zoar Gap Rapid (Class III) about five miles downstream. After Zoar Gap the river reverts back to a Class I and II nature until its junction with the Route 2 bridge. Not only is this stretch a great place to bring beginning boaters, it is also nationally known for excellent trout fishing. Try not to antagonize the anglers as they are our allies in the ongoing struggle to keep our rivers freeflowing.

Zoar Gap Rapid is worth a day trip in itself. Very often when everything else is dry, there will be water at Zoar Gap as the result of power generating releases upstream. Slalom gates at this rapid attract racers for workouts on a year-round basis. There are also good squirt lines and splat rocks for low volume boaters. No shuttle is required. Due to the thermally enhanced water downstream of the Yankee Nuclear plant, Zoar Gap rarely freezes. The radioactive glow only lasts for a

few days - so don't worry about it too much. Besides, it will make it easier for that intimate friend of yours to find you in the dark, if you get my drift.

Another run of interest to advanced paddlers flows into the Deerfield downstream of the Zoar Gap, below the intersection with Route 2. The Cold River packs four miles of Class III-V fun down a narrow, technical riverbed. Strictly natural flow, this run is definitely worth a look at if there has been steady rain in the area.

Like many other power projects across the nation, relicensing negotiations are ongoing for the Bear Swamp Pumped Storage Project. As can be expected, the AWA, local paddling groups and a commercial rafting interest have been directly involved in the relicensing project in an attempt to gain scheduled recreational releases and site improvements for the Monroe Bridge Dam to Bear Swamp Dam run. With any luck, we may see scheduled releases on this section as early as this summer. Show your support for increased whitewater boating on the Upper Deerfield by boating it this spring. Make yourself known to the local residents and to the power company as responsible whitewater boaters, and as a way to help out the Berkshire Mountains economy. Contact your AWA representative and local paddling clubs involved with the relicensing effort. If we lose this one, it will be 1997 before we see any whitewater releases on this section, and the year 2007 after that.

Regardless of what happens, you can be sure of one thing: I'll be back!

Relicensing Contact

J.J. Valera, 91 High Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420, phone: (617)345-3068

Relicensing made easy

The American Whitewater Affiliation has just begun circulation to all of its affiliated clubs and relicensing network members a simple "how to" manual to guide paddlers through the process of getting enhancements at old hydro projects across the nation. Entitled "Hydro Project Relicensing... The Time Has Come!" this clearly-written 10 page cookbook lays out the rules of the game, the schedule and lots of warnings about what not to do.

Along with this package is a full list of the scores of projects undergoing relicensing, sorted by state and river. This list presents lots of critical information about each project including its location, size, age, owner and company contact person.

Prepared by members of AWA, American Rivers and the New York Audubon Society, this guide is a basic roadmap for anyone interested in getting from power companies water releases, better notification, nicer changing facilities, scenic mitigation, etc. This guide is the centerpiece of AWA and New York Audubon's hydro relicensing outreach program library. Other documents being circulated include a whitewater recreational feasibility study protocol and a generic project enhancement agreement form.

You can get free copies from Ron Dodson, New York Audubon Society, Hollyhock Hollow Sanctuary, Route 2, Box 131, Selkirk, NY 12158. Or call him at 518-767-9051.

Working to restore Deerfield Dries

In a relicensing battle against New England Power Company, a coalition of organizations have undertaken negotiations that should provide recreational water releases for socioeconomic studies on the upper stretches of the Deerfield River. The coalition, boosted by a petition with over 900 signatures representing 62 whitewater interest groups includes such well known organizations as AWA, American Rivers, ACA, The U.S. Whitewater Team, Appalachian Mountain Club, and local clubs such as the Housatonic Area Canoe and Kayak Squad (HACKS), The Merrimack Valley Paddlers, the Kayak and Canoe Club of Boston, the Deerfield River Watershed Association, and Deerfield River Outfitters Association.

Public hearings held by New England Power and required by FERC were held in October in Readsboro, Vermont and in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts. The hearings drew large crowds, taking power company officials by surprise. Negotiations are now underway between the coalition and the power company that should determine the type of studies to be conducted and the schedule of water releases for the four sections of dryways found in Vermont and Massachusetts.

Nestled in a pocket valley in the foothills of the Green Mountains, The Deerfield river drops thousands of feet in its course to the Connecticut River and is dammed eight or nine times along the way. Some of these dams, including the Upper Deerfield Dries in Monroe Bridge and the three dryways in Vermont are normally



dry, the water diverted around the riverbed and through a canal and tube structure.

The Upper Deerfield is photogenic, reminiscent of runs in West Virginia. Norman Sims of the Appalachian Mountain Club says "nowhere in the U.S. do you find this quality of Class IV whitewater in such close proximity to each other and so close to major urban areas." There are four stretches directly affected by the negotiations that offer Class III - IV whitewater, and two additional runs, the West Branch of the Deerfield and the nearby Cold River - that offer Class IV - VI whitewater. Sims says "almost no one knew of the whitewater potential of the upper stretch of the Deerfield 10 years ago. Since 1984, the Upper Deerfield [dries] at Monroe Bridge, the Cold, and the West Branch of Deerfield have been run. Some of the sections of dries in Vermont haven't even been explored yet."

With a close proximity to Albany and New York City, New York, Boston and Springfield, Massachusetts, and Hartford, Connecticut, Sims feels this area of unexplored whitewater offers a greater commercial and private whitewater potential than even the many runs in West Virginia. "You don't usually find this type of whitewater in New England, and rarely is it so close to so many boaters."

In the AMC alone, there are over 2400 active members involved

with canoe and kayak activities. Add to that thousands of boaters who are either involved in other clubs or who are strictly private boaters and you have a wealth of users for this new resource.

Commercial development of these runs is intrinsically involved with the success in negotiating a good deal with the power company and with FERC, according to Sims. Bruce Lessels of the U.S. Whitewater Team has founded a rafting company known as Zoar Outdoor Adventure Resort, Inc.; he and Tom Foster of the Outdoor Center of New England see a lot of potential in rafting and instructional use on the many stretches of the Deerfield.

In the coming months negotiations are expected to determine just who will do the socio-economic studies, and what schedule of recreational releases will occur. These water releases are predicted for April and May when sufficient water is available to schedule the releases on the weekends. On the Upper Deerfield Dries section at Monroe Bridge, negotiations involve stepped releases of 200 cfs starting at 900 cfs and ending somewhere around 3500 cfs.

We will keep you informed of the schedule of water releases -it is important that you go and paddle this river during the study phase! The more boaters that make use of the river and go on record, the better whitewater boater's chances are of obtaining long term releases.

Kayak Corps

Special serialized fiction feature

Chapter 1: Doctor, it hurts when I do this.

by Johnson Cerveau

Illustration by William Nealy, reprinted from *Kayaks To Hell*, courtesy of Menasha Ridge Press

Beauregard Winston was jabbing, as it seemed to Rath he always did, about piddling or whatever it was he called it.

Hearing Winston say "Nah, then I just shot through this chute that was off to the left..." gave Rath the clue.

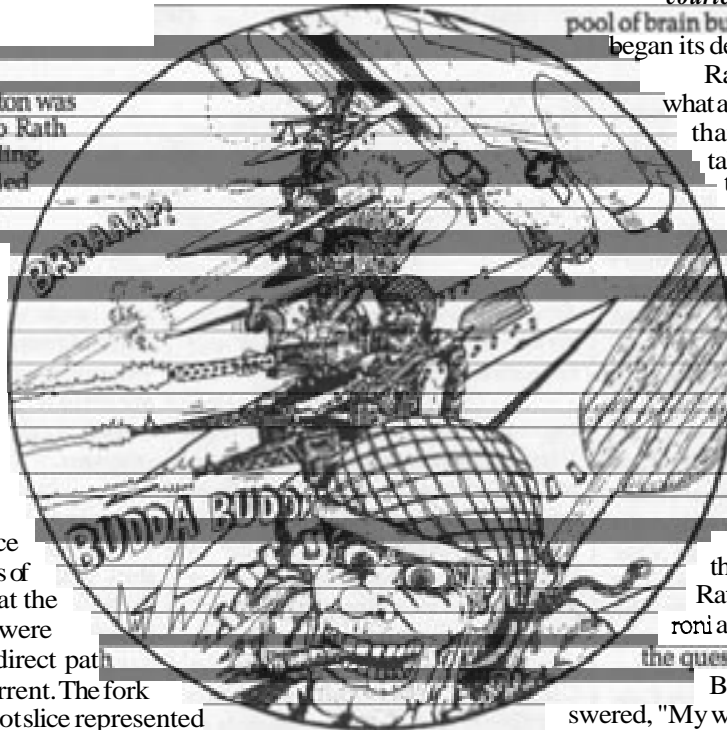
All of the condiments and non-essential implements on the table had by this time had become a map of some stretch of river. Through long acquaintance with Winston's standards of cartography, he knew that the salt and pepper shakers were boulders, usually in the direct path of the most dangerous current. The fork balanced on a glazed carrot slice represented an undercut rock, the celery a downed tree which apparently was immediately behind the safe path around the salt and pepper shakers, and the broken match a spot where someone was forced to vacate their kayak. He had no clue what the butter knife balanced on the ash tray signified.

Rath wouldn't sit with Winston at all except that General Vetterling always appeared to be hanging around actually listening to this goat tripe. Rath took a seat, unacknowledged by anyone else at the table.

"So then what did you do?" the General asked. Rath had often seen Vetterling in front of Congress or the Joint Chiefs where he was hard eyes and angles. Here he was filled with wide-eyed fascination. He reminded Rath of Beaver Cleaver.

Winston's lips gave one of his gap-toothed grins that always stirred pictures of Charles Manson in Rath's mind. "From there on it was fat city. I almost botched a splatter move on this one rock, but that didn't amount to anything." Here Winston seemingly broached his matchstick on the salt shaker before sending it down past the celery.

"I had this clear shot to the falls," Rath saw Winston move his match along the butter knife, "so I paddled like mad towards the drop and shot myself as far out as I could. I boofed that sucker good. Landed right-side up in a foamy



pool of brain bubbles." Here the matchstick began its descent into the ash tray.

Rath had no interest in asking what a splatter move was and hoped that none of the others at the table did either. The association with "splatter movie"

intrigued him for a minute and he liked the idea of watching Beauregard disassembled very quickly and violently, hopefully by someone Rath had put up to the job. Rath dismissed this as mere daydreaming and hoped to be able to change the sub-

"So what'd you do this weekend, Rath?" Startled, Rath looked up from his macaroni and cheese. Winston had asked the question.

Before he realized it Rath answered, "My wife and I played a few sets of tennis and then went to a party." He paused briefly with the practiced air of a prep-school brown noser before continuing, "in Georgetown."

"Damn, Rath," Winston replied, "You spend more time in Georgetown than anyone I know, outside of realtors." Vetterling chuckled.

Rath brushed off the remark, thinking of the years of accumulated memos he'd saved. "Well, you know. We can't all have hobbies quite so... interesting as Captain Winston."

Vetterling jumped to Winston's defense. "No, boy we can't. I've been places you should hope to never see in your life, and I still would never dream of doing half the stuff Beau tells me about every Monday. You know, I was in Southeast Asia with Westmoreland. We didn't have anybody doing any of that surfing stuff or anything like what you saw in that movie—but we had people who wanted only to get their jollies out of risk. I can't say that I don't still feel that way sometimes!" Vetterling's eyes glazed over, lost in the pathways of his own unknowable memories. Winston spoke to break the tension.

"Oh, now Duke we start you out this weekend and by the end of the summer you'll be going down stuff that you never woulda' believed!",

"General, we've got that 1 o'clock." Rath hated

Kayak Corps

hearing Winston call Vetterling by the nickname he'd earned in Asia. Rath knew that if he ever called the General "Duke" he might as well apply for a job at the Department of Transportation.

"So we do. So we do. Well, let's get going. Beau, I'll see you later. Maybe you're right and sometime I'll take you up on your offer."

"Anytime, Duke. I think you'd be a natural."

They all got up to leave. Rath hurrying to dump his trash while Vetterling waited for Winston to collect his map. Vetterling and Rath took off for their meeting, which Winston assumed would be in a Pentagon Black Area. Rath, once out of sight of Winston, began to talk incessantly to the General.

Beau sauntered to his office in the Logistics and Supplies corridors on 2 West. His ankles were all right, but he wished he were in laced hi-tops with support rather than his dress shoes. Since yesterday, thanks to several tablets of shoulder candy, his muscles had improved to the point where it no longer pained him to carry light loads or drive the car, but he would still just as soon take it a little easy for the rest of the afternoon.

He just beat his secretary back from lunch.

"Sharon," he told her, "I'm going to be working on the RDF supply briefing this afternoon. Hold all calls unless they're crucial."

Sharon was career civil service with only twenty more years until retirement. Winston's request meant that she would have to take longer phone messages. The slight sneer in her assent gave Beau the clue that he'd better do something nice for her. "Oh, and I've got to leave early today, so there's no point in you hanging around past three-thirty."

Sharon nodded silently and Beau knew that bureaucratic balance and harmony had been restored.

Winston pulled the top report out of his IN box, highlighted some random paragraphs in yellow, and left it on his desk. He then made sure no one was looking, closed his office door, and started reading Outside magazine, hoping against hope for a good kayak-

ing article. Winston had finished his supply briefing last week — as long as he was caught up he had no qualms about spending his afternoon enjoying himself.

Secondarily he was looking for locations for his Civilian Leadership — Outdoor Development project. He'd been trying for years to get brass at the Pentagon to approve a training, morale-building exercise for non-military personnel. The problem most of the mucky-mucks at the 'Gon had was that, having lived through Parris Island, West Point, or the Army Ranger School, they couldn't see what good a bunch of civilians were going to get out of hiking through woods and taking canoes down rivers unless live ammo was bursting over their heads.

As long as he could have Rath along with him he might be willing to accept the live ammo.

Winston unlaced his shoes and kicked them off under his desk. Hopes again dashed for finding, somewhere, something meaningful on paddling in this issue, Beau wondered why rock climbers and cross-country skiers got all the press. It seemed an arbitrary distinction to him.

They were all in a game with gravity — that's what being outside meant. Whether you raged against it by going vertical on a ledge or used its subtle gradations to navigate a river, what it got down to was that you put yourself against the whole damned planet.

What's kayaking about? Throwing yourself at the biggest, most solid thing you could find — and missing. They weren't called "drops" for nothing. Somewhere in the game were, he knew, the seeds of its own destruction. While he could play the game he would, and continuing to play was impetus enough to improve.

Winston sat back and shuddered at the thought of how he'd almost become pressed Beauregard at that seemingly minor slot move above Little Splat. He'd brushed it off, but it was closer than he liked to come to being in trouble this weekend. The guys had watched and seen, and while he could thrill Duke Vetterling with tales

of bravado, his fellow river runners knew that he needed more practice in technical water. With a satisfied grin he looked at the clock on the wall and realized he had only three more hours until he could get out and try to do some shredding at O. Deck.

Rath walked out of the cafeteria with Vetterling, checked his watch and proceeded to LN404, the location of his 1:00 PM meeting.

Someday, he thought to himself, he'll put the administrative noose around Winston's neck himself. He thought of his memos — shelf-feet of them, all just waiting for the right moment for Rath to give them over to JUMMP — the Joint Unified Military Materiel Program. When added together and with the proper commentary supplied by Rath, and without ever mentioning Winston's name they would become a litany of shame and failure. That would be the end of Winston. But he needed to wait until the chaos that reigned while the Administration changed parties to get away with it.

Winston was in Materiel in large part thanks to Rath. Previously he'd been on assignment as a public relations liaison to the Joint Chiefs. This brought Winston and Rath in more constant contact than Rath could stand.

Rath managed to get him a promotion, and a raise but at the cost of putting him in Materiel. A resume-grubber would have considered it an insult and left almost immediately. Winston seemed to actually enjoy the job more. Rath would not make the same mistake again.

Rath deferentially allowed Vetterling to go through Security first. Rath then ran his own badge through one of the many automatic checkpoints guarding the more secure areas of the building. The barrier in front of him withdrew like some engineer's nightmare of a subway turnstile and allowed him access to what those in the Company called the Black Area.

Farley, from State, had already arrived and was testing his slides to make sure that they came up in the proper sequence, and that every spot on the table had a set of his handouts.

Rath thought of Farley the way

Kayak Corps

good up-standing people think of other good up-standing people. Rath admired Farley's ability to give good presentations. Farley admired Rath's ability to suck up to anyone without being too obvious. They often networked over tennis.

"Farley" Rath said.

"Rath," Farley replied shaking his hand.

The security door swung open and Klaus Ehrenberg came in, trailed by two men Rath knew of as intelligence operatives. Quite a coup of Farley's to get Ehrenberg in on this briefing.

Klaus spoke in a heavy Slavic accent, which confounded everyone in official Washington and the Press since he had been in this country since the age of twelve. His supporters ignored it as a harmless affectation. His detractors tried to lure him into speaking in what they believed was a middle-American accent lurking under years of practiced, halted speech.

It was just one of the most obvious things proving that unlike most of the men in the President's Cabinet, Ehrenberg actually had a personality. Rath hated that.

"Klaus," greeted Rath extending his hand.

"Knock it off. Let's get going. I've got things to do."

They all sat down and without further pleasantries Farley clicked his control box for the first slide.

"Operation Cowabunga", he clicked for his second slide. It looked like something out of a chemistry textbook.

"Faze", a designer drug. Inhaling it produces a euphoric high lasting fifteen to thirty minutes. Total sense of elation, power of control over your environment, feeling you can do anything. It leaves you hungry for more. One bad side-effect: It rots your mind, starting in the cerebral cortex at the speech centers. The few long-term addicts still alive have almost completely lost the ability to talk.

"Major Lopez, a commander in the San Marcos air force, currently also the world's largest producer of

Faze. He has yet to begin distribution, but..." Click "reconnaissance indicates capacity for well over fifteen metric tons of designer drug."

"The kicker—Click—he does it all illegally. The Peace Corps left twenty thousand tons of plastic resin down there in the early seventies when they wanted to build small trinket factories in the area to improve the local economy. The goop was just gathering dust in a government warehouse until Lopez got hooked up with a biochemist—Click—who managed to turn the stuff into an hallucinogen."

At this point Vetterling figured he'd better say something: "So that makes it legal?"

"No sir. What makes it legal is that it's not illegal. It's not a cocoa derivative. It's not on the DEA's list of banned substances, and Congress isn't even thinking of looking at it right now."

Vetterling began laughing: "So if he started putting this stuff into cigarettes and guaranteed everyone it destroyed their brains he wouldn't even need to have a Surgeon General's warning?"

Farley cleared his throat and tried to go on, hoping he wouldn't have to answer that. Klaus saved him—sort of.

"Any indication when he's going to start distribution?" Klaus started getting his hooks in.

Rath chimed in, "we haven't been able to get an operative close enough to the operation to find out. However, from our satellite surveillance of the number of forklifts entering his warehouse, we estimate a current stock of twelve tons. Soon he just won't have a choice but to start moving product."

Klaus looked at Vetterling, "I start to understand what the military is doing here."

"Look, Klaus. Diplomatic initiatives have failed. Lopez is out there on his own, with no governmental sanction or authority. His own government is afraid of him. I don't like going into San Marco any more than you do, but given what we've got here I don't see a lot of choices."

Talk to me, Vetterling. What

are you saying?"

"We go into the jungle and terminate the Major's command."

Nobody in the room thought this was a bad idea.

Klaus looked to the front, "Farley, what are our choices?"

"That's really what we're here to talk about. We need ideas. Lopez's stronghold is in a valley. —Click— He runs the air force and has radar set up here, and here, with some of our own SAMs right next door."

Klaus nearly became enraged. "Who sold these people SAMs?"

"The previous administration," Vetterling quietly reminded him.

"Oh, well, in that case."

Farley continued, "An airdrop in the vicinity is out. He has the Indians on his side, they think of him as some kind of godfather. There's a ring around him about twenty miles wide, all dense jungle."

"You're not giving us a lot of options here."

"Secretary Ehrenberg, as I said, there aren't a lot of options. We need ideas."

"There's got to be something we can do to drop a squad down there."

"Not unless you want then to swim down twenty miles of whitewater."

Vetterling's eyes went wide and Rath's right eyebrow arched. Simultaneously they both blurted, "Did you say whitewater?"

.....to be continued next issue. Stay on edge!

River Gods cont.

of catastrophes on "easy rivers" where perhaps paying more attention would have prevented the mishap. You can call a run "uninteresting," "uneventful," or "unchallenging" - but never call it easy. Those of you that don't become one with the water both mentally and spiritually face the prospects of disciplinary action from the "Lord of H₂O."

3. Never take the word of everybody that you talk to. Group observation before getting on the river tends to downgrade the significance of a run; group observation after a run tends to heighten the risks. Different rivers mean different things to different people. Our Class III may be a Class IV to you - and vice versa. Judge by your own opinion, for only you will be forced to live with it. Most paddlers will give you an honest answer to your question, but some can't resist the temptation of a captive audience. Watch out for the "spin factor" -

a type of round robin game that verbally enhances or diminishes the dangers of a run exponentially in an effort to confuse you and dissuade you into running flatwater for the rest of your life.

4. Finally, never drag your boat! Boats were made for the harmonious compromise of whitewater and paddler, allowing us to "dance down the river." Boats are not meant to be brutally dragged over boulders and ledge and through the underbrush. In the eyes of the River Gods, to shoulder the load is to honor the deities. Besides, who wants to be thought of as a wimp. In a sport of survival, we all know (if I may borrow this phrase) that "Real Men (Women) Carry Their Boat and Drag Their Women (Men)."

For those that think this guideline in River Religion is a bit ridiculous, pay heed next time you load someone else's boat backwards! For those of you who are interested initiates or devoted

members of the cult of whitewater, recognizing the existence of the River Gods represents the respect that you have for the river. It's not a battle between you and the river; the river, infinitely more patient than any of us, will always win. It is a battle or challenge within ourselves, executed within the boundaries of respect in which we hold the river.

When on the water, we are at the mercy of the "River Gods." Fate has a way of creating the unexpected, either for or against you. Sometimes you get trashed in THE HOLE and sometimes, as in my case, it lets you go. For the few of you that believe in fate, we ask you to pay proper homage to the River Gods and to tie your boat on your car facing forward. Maybe the "River Gods" will smile on you next time when you are someplace you shouldn't be.

Chris Wilcox is editor of the Merrimack Valley Paddlers newsletter and pays homage to the river gods throughout the northeast.

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What the AWA can do for *you*...

...and what you or your club can do for the AWA

Why does the AWA need my membership, and what do I get from it?

What does a paddling club get from its AWA membership?

Who benefits from AWA activities? Read on for the answers to these compelling and often-asked questions!

The American Whitewater Affiliation was formed in 1957, incorporated in '61. As the country's oldest and most experienced organization committed to promoting whitewater boating and conservation, it has a long history of promoting paddling safety and uniting boaters nationwide. The AWA is its members: its survival through the lean years and through its current growth is due to your involvement!

What YOU Get

What does your individual membership get you? Briefly,

- **You** receive american **white-**water, the best magazine available on the issues involving whitewater boating.

- **At** your disposal is a national network of legal and technical assistants to assist members in fighting hydromaniacs, polluters and river vandals or supporting local river concerns. If you want information regarding a particular river or run, you can get it.

Due to the growth of AWA over the last couple of years, your membership has enabled us to branch out a bit...

- **We** have more members in the West, and you can attend and help with a growing schedule of festivals and competitions around the country.

- **You** can now get acopy of the Nationwide **Inventory** of Whitewater Rivers, a continually updated inventory of whitewater runs nationwide. The inventory is available in hard copy or on floppy disk in a format acceptable to DBIII.

What AWA Gets

- **Since** the AWA is staffed almost exclusively by volunteers, your membership dues and any donations made for whitewater defense are used with incredible efficiency.

- **We** have benefitted from whitewater-conscious businesses such as REI, Patagonia and **Perception** which see **AWA's** role as a facilitator of protecting whitewater boating interests for the private enthusiast. Every dollar counts.

- **We** are excited about a growing number of members who have volunteered material for use in american whitewater, from feature articles and briefs on new river runs, to press releases on whitewater-related activities. Other forms of participation involve local editorship of the just-mentioned **White-**water Inventory, a living document which provides private boaters and those in the decision-making process the information needed to protect America's whitewater runs.

- **There's** plenty of time and energy spent at recent events sponsored by the AWA, including the Gauley Festival and the Ocoee Rodeo.

- **New members!** Clearly our strength is in numbers. When someone sees that we've accomplished a lot lately and decides to join the AWA, that is a terrific vote of confidence!

What CLUBS Get

All it takes for your paddling Club to join is for one person to pay the Club Membership fee...easy as a Class I float!

- **That** person will receive american whitewater, and your club name and address will be printed in upcoming issues. We have had trouble keeping the list up-to-date, but that is now behind us. (Ok, don't trust us: believe it when you see it.)

In 1989 we will have a slate of AWA Regional Coordinators throughout the country, local paddlers that you may already know and can call on for help or information on any river issue.

Additionally, we will announce in the next issue the appointment of our AWA **International** Connection Coordinator, who will be available to assist AWA clubs and individuals seeking information about paddling overseas.

What Else Could Clubs Get?

We want to provide our Affiliate Clubs and their members with services they need. Here are some thoughts:

- **A** toll-free whitewater assistance **hotline** (not a **hotline** for local river levels) for help with any question or problem that stumps your local resources.

- **A** computer network of hydrological flow data and river level information.

- **Broad** publicity for a project, activity or accomplishment with mailing labels provided by the AWA.

- **Establishment** of a 'Clubs' booth at the Gauley Festival for promoting events and causes - even collaborating on upcoming projects or trips.

- **What** else? Let us know what you'd like the AWA to provide to Clubs. We welcome your ideas.

Clubs Help the AWA

AWA Affiliates have often 'spread the word' on river safety and preparedness by disseminating the Safety Code, which includes the International Scale of River Difficulty. Additionally, several recent battles to preserve whitewater runs have been effected via clubs' rallying its members and thereby accelerating momentum.

Club leaders can help out the most by making sure members are kept abreast of our accomplishments and


goals: if they think they are worthy and see fit to themselves join the AWA, we'll become that much stronger.

If You **Think** the AWA is Worth It, Tell a Buddy

The AWA needs each member to be a spokesperson, to educate other whitewater lovers why we're here

and what we have done to allow them to enjoy the rivers they run. A modest call to action can make a difference between the demise or vitalization of a whitewater project.

The AWA is a unique organization. We care about and fight for celebrating and preserving safe **white-**water recreation. We've been doing this for well over thirty years, and we're

well into our second thirty. We are an excited bunch of active paddlers - not bureaucrats or former paddlers turned politicians - with a lot on our agenda. Stay tuned...

If you have comments on Individual or Club membership, contact Director Anita Adams at Route 2, Box 614, Princeton, WV 24740, (304) 384-9209.



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Yes. I want to join AWA and receive my free subscription to American Whitewater. Enclosed is my \$15 (\$18 Canada, \$25 overseas) annual membership fee.

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I would also like to make a tax-deductible contribution to AWA's Whitewater Defense Project. Enclosed is my donation for:

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Clip and mail to AWA, 146 N. Brockway, Palatine, IL 60067

Don't disturb the River Gods

By *Chris* Wilcox

It seems like its been ages since we have had any decent water to speak of in New England. But I remember back a couple of years when everything in the White Mountains of New Hampshire was at flood stage or damn close to it. The East Branch of the **Pemigewasset** River in Lincoln was slowly rising past a high level of 2.5. Clear, ice cold water rushed past the wood suspension bridge at the normal put-in for the East Branch run. The water here is so clear that it's deceptive - two feet of water looks like it is barely covering the boulders, **when in** reality there's plenty of water - too much water for many boaters on this boulder-choked run.

Three of us decided to carry our boats over three miles up an abandoned narrow gauge logging railroad bed that now serves as a **hiking** and cross country **ski** trail in the White Mountain National Forest. We trudged through the snow, shifting our kayaks from shoulder to shoulder, **fording** side streams gushing with **snowmelt** and runoff. Four-thousand foot peaks surrounded us - it would be a long way back if something went wrong.

None of us had ever run this top section of the East Branch before. We didn't even know anybody who had run this stretch at this high a flow. We were sure someone by now had run it, but that didn't help us out much.

Finally we reached Franconia **Brook**, our entrance point into the upper East Branch. Sliding into our boats, we knew we were in for a Class V run. Peeling out into the current, I had a feeling that this was a day I would not soon forget.

Right after the **first rapid**, things went from bad to worse. While **picking** a route through the congested boulders, holes and pour-overs, my bow snagged a **micro eddy**, spun me **around**, and deposited me into what seemed to be "the biggest hole I had ever seen." With what must have been a potent shot of adrenaline, I instantly reviewed my situation, my brain at **hyperspeed**:

I could breathe.....I had my brace...thrashing up, down, up, down...it was working...almost...**thrash**...I was almost **comfortable**...**no panic** anyway.....**Now** for an escape plan....

Before I could scull another **stroke**, the hole (no, this was THE HOLE) as quickly as it devoured me released me, gently popping me free, right-side up, into the backwash. Wow.

At that moment, right there, I knew there was no such thing as an atheist in a sousehole.

The rest of the trip developed into the religious experience I had predicted from the beginning. Every one saw GOD that day - punishing, forgiving, protecting, demanding respect. Safely in our vehicles at the end of the day, white as sheets, we all paid silent and verbal homage to the "River Gods."

When you begin paddling whitewater, sooner or later you will hear someone mention the existence of higher beings in the same sentence with holes, strainers, and rouge ice flows. Most folks mention this acknowledgement of a higher being only to themselves. Then one day they get trashed, and their paddling partners comment, "Well Art, you must have upset the River Gods." Most beginners disregard this warning, brushing it off as some unknown form of hazing specific to whitewater sport. There are the few that go all out, giving their heart and their soul to the sport - these folks are likely to heed the advice of their mentors and contemplate the existence of the River Gods.

Few paddlers that I have met are truly religious - church on Sunday always looses out to boating on Sunday. But almost all are superstitious by nature, and some go to great lengths to follow a sacredly guarded routine before entering the river.

I know some paddlers who eat only fruit the morning before a trip. Another always brushes his teeth immediately before setting foot in his **boat**. Many have a certain order in which

they put on their gear. One cult of **boaters** prays to the spirit JA for sun and CHAC for rain. Some listen to Little Feat or the Dead and pass the peace pipe around, scattering the ashes in the source of their amusement in hopes it will appease the spirits. When nature calls, all of the paddlers I know make sure none of their fertilizer makes it back into the river - good environmental sense - but mostly because they fear it will anger the River Gods. For some, it may be a lucky helmet or life vest; a **Gumby** glued to the helmet, a wiffle ball golf ball on their **sprayskirt**, even though they haven't gone for a swim in years. For others it's a quiet moment along the riverbank, reflections of thought in reflections of whitewater. I know of one paddler who even sleeps with his lucky teddy bear. Religious people or not, we all manage to find a minute to ourselves to collect our thoughts on what is to come, even though we may not be conscious of doing it.

Okay, some of you know what I am talking about, and most of you probably think I'm just full of **sh__**. But out of respect for the interested few, well, just jot down some of the taboos of "**whitewater** voodoo."

1. Never, never, never ever put any boat on a vehicle facing backwards. Even if they don't all fit or are in danger of falling off, its better to **make** two trips than to chance the wrath of this bad karma. Being almost as old a rule as whitewater boating itself, it not only angers the River Gods but **looks** pretty dumb as well. A good friend of ours ignores our pleas continuously; we now keep a close eye on her because we know she is paddling against the odds.

2. Never **say** "its easy." Besides the vanity of momentarily making you look good in your own eyes, this statement has a tendency to lower your concentration level which invites in the unexpected. It seems we are always hearing **please turn to page 43**



Take
me
to
the
river...



drop
me
in
the
water...

Phil DeRiemer, Siete
Tazas, Rio Claro, Chile.
Photo by Lars Holbek.
Kayak by Perception.

1110 Powdersville Road,
Easley, South Carolina 29640.
(803) 859-7518





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