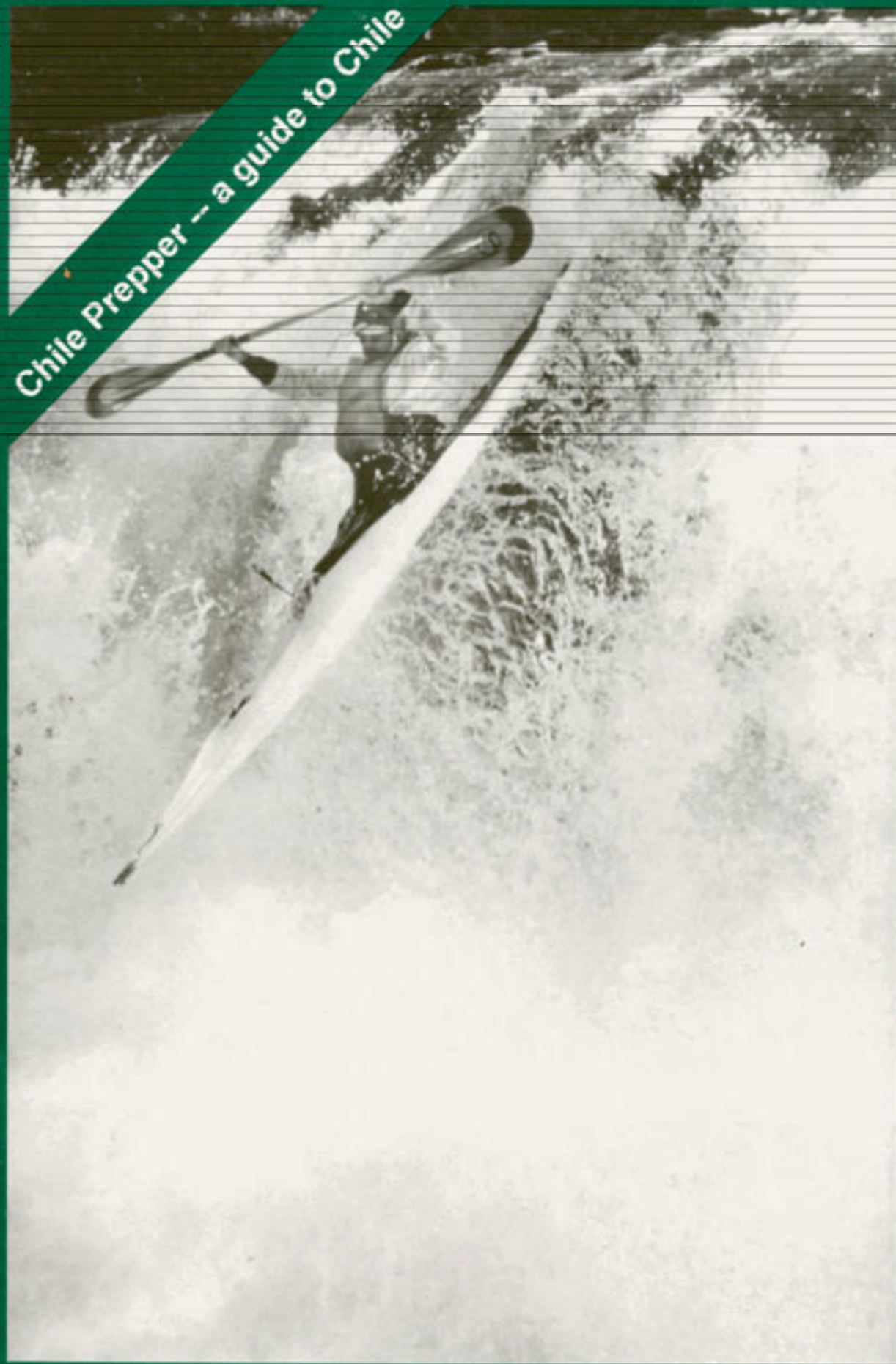


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For official rules and entry forms, contact:

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american whitewater

January/February 1992
Volume XXXVII, No. 1

JOURNAL OF THE
AMERICAN WHITEWATER
AFFILIATION

Features

22

Chile Prepper

It's still paddling season south of the Equator. And here's a quick guide to the best whitewater to be found in the Andes.

By LARS HOLBEK

30

A Tough Way to Make the News

When this team of intrepid paddlers set out to challenge Maine's Gulf Hags, they didn't figure to make the news.

By JOHN FRACHELLA

34

The Great Whitewater North

British Columbia offers some of the best whitewater to be found on the continent.

By ADAM HANDRO

Departments

7

Conservation

Around the Beltway summarizes the underside of river issues in the nation's capitol...Additional funds for the West Virginia Rivers Coalition highlights news from the MidAtlantic region...Senator Robb cuts trees to improve his river view.

12

AWA Briefs

To portage or not to portage remains a question...Risa accepts position with Perception...Recycle your plastic boat...User fees proposed for Lower Yough put-in.

16

Safety

Fewer fatalities recorded in 1991

By CHARLIE WALBRIDGE

Observations regarding high-water boating

By DAVID WALLACE

40

End Notes

Don't clean that brown slime on your air bags.

By BILL HAY

Front cover: Mike Feldman plunges over Rockwell Falls on New York's Hudson River. Photo by James Swedberg.

Back cover: Tim Kelly on New York's Lower Moose River.

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FORUM

You play... you gotta pay

I'm mired in the deepest depths of winter here in upstate New York. Overnight temperatures are supposed to dip below zero. Over a foot of lake effect snow is predicted during the next two days. And I haven't touched a paddle for two months now.

So how the hell am I supposed to pen some witty perspective regarding the boating scene?

You'll have to excuse me--I tend to get cranky at this time of year. But to be honest--I'm not 100% sure my cantankerous nature is a sole product of the weather.

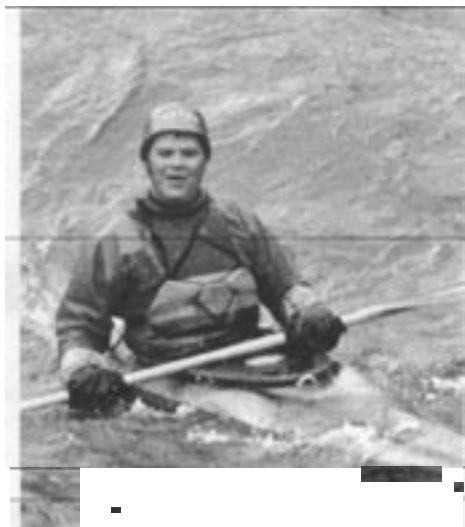
Just a couple days ago, while editing the Briefs section, I came across a notice that the state of PA was planning to levy a \$3 or \$4 put-in fee for the Lower Yough at Ohiopyle State Park. Now granted, I haven't boated the Lower Yough in close to a decade--but 10 years from now when I'm pushing 50--I might want to go back.

Since I learned to boat a long time ago on the Yough--I'm pretty familiar with the operation there. And what the state of PA plans to provide for the additional cost isn't all that more than what's currently in place.

It seems that the proposed fee is just another example of an ominous trend. The Feds want to tax our kayaks and canoes...states want to charge for the use of public land...it seems that the government seems intent on preventing fun from being free.

I wouldn't complain if I thought the money would be dedicated to preserving rivers or constructing support facilities for whitewater boaters. But I don't see that happening. We're too small a segment of the recreation population. More than likely--our dollars will be popped into some general fund to be wasted in who knows what way.

It's enough to make me cranky. Especially in January.



In this issue...

Now on to this issue. Lars Holbek has taken time from his travels to pen a recapsule guide to the best rivers of Chile. It's appropriate...it's paddling season down there. And while the rivers of Maine and British Columbia are good for nothing but skating at this time of the year, we've got a couple of articles that will prep you for the upcoming season. Finally, we have an interesting safety section in this issue. Charlie Walbridge contributes his annual assessment of the year's fatal accidents while also included is one of the first reports taken from our AWA safety surveys. Read it and enjoy. And remember, April is only a couple months away.

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PURPOSE

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 PO Box 85, Phoenicia, NY 12464. AWA has been granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service under section 501(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.

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LETTERS

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 boaters, 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. Stories on floppy disk (WP5.0) are best. 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.

Thanks for WVRC

Dear AWA Members:

As noted in the last American Whitewater, AWA is making grants of hundreds or thousands of dollars to whitewater conservation groups all over the country. We at the West Virginia Rivers Coalition were granted the absolutely stupendous sum of \$50001 In addition to that, last year AWA granted us \$2000 and about 260 individual AWA members have joined WVRC giving us another \$10,500. The grand total of support from AWA members over the last 18 months is over \$17,000!!!

That should put to rest forever the notions that (1) paddlers are cheap, or (2) they are not willing to financially support effective river protection efforts.

To the contrary, our organization is living proof that AWA is now capable of spawning and supporting a new major river saving movement. It was AWA people and money which got us going. Just as a child can never adequately thank a parent, so it is with the debt we at WVRC owe to all of you.

And as with an ambitious child, we are determined not to disappoint you. We will bring home permanent protection for a goodly chunk of prime West Virginia whitewater!

Mac Thornton
Chairman WVRC
Washington, D.C.

Gate Crashers

Dear Chris,

As you can see from the enclosed newspaper dip, the saga of the Manchester, NH race site drags on. It is probably significant that about a week before all the gate wires were cut, an anonymous threat was relayed to Mark Ciforowski, the person who developed the course--a threat in the spirit of the earlier anonymous obscene letters Mark and some of the rest of us received over the past several years. (Re: AWA letters to editor several issues ago).

The course was completed in September '91, and just a week before the first scheduled race (also in September), the top 10 wires had been cut. The threat

LETTERS

received in October was to the effect that the September vandalism was just a warning, and now real damage would be done. A week later--the weekend of Halloween--all but the upper gate wires were cut down. Not likely a coincidence. The wires have now been restrung and it is hoped that the additional vigilance by the City of Manchester authorities and increasing use and enthusiasm by the boating community will protect the course in the future.

Yours,
Jim Sindelar
Hopkinton, NH

(Editor's note: It's absolutely incredible to me that this nonsense continues to happen. You like to think that the boating community is kind of a large extended family...and even though there may be differences within the family--none of your relations are actually asses. I know that one group of boaters up there in New England suspects another group of boaters for the vandalism. Let's hope that the damage was actually created by a gang of punk teenagers...and that the cops catch them and cut their hands off.)

Help the clubs

Dear Chris,

I live in the land of independents: the Great American West. Now I don't have anything against independence except where it leads to apathy, which also runs rampant out here (except where firearms and multi-use public lands are concerned, of course). Some friends and I started a new dub in Salt Lake City. The Utah River Runners Coalition is up to 30 members in 9 months. We are trying to get conservation, safety and instruction programs going but have widely differing viewpoints on how to do things. Enough about our particular problems though.

It seems to me that dub affiliation in the American Whitewater Affiliation is dwindling in favor of individuals. The AWA purpose statement reads "...provides technical advice to local groups regarding river management and river conservation..." AWA does provide a lot of information to its members but that doesn't do any good unless they know how to incorporate it and

act on it. (I am not ruling out the possibility that the "advice" is there and I am too stupid to abstract it.)

I have the feeling, however, that there are other fledgling groups such as ours looking for a little guidance, or better yet, a role model. I would like to see AWA affiliate dubs (large and small) who have successful programs submit articles describing in detail how their programs operate and what drives their members to be involved, or even better, committed (but not in the insane way like Gary and Carla).

Mark Venable
Salt Lake City, UT

(Editor's note: Valid comments, Mark. The truth is, the AWA is networked across the country to help clubs and other groups with river conservation issues through our directors and regional coordinators. But we don't have any active consultants dedicated in helping clubs organize their ranks. I've fielded recommendations that we print a regular club column to serve that purpose--but I'd need a volunteer to gather and edit the submittals. Suggestions?)

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Inside the Beltway

The underside of river conservation

By D. THROAT

An eight-lane interstate highway (known as the "beltway" encircles Washington, D.C. (stands for Darkness and Confusion) like an impenetrable moat isolating the capitol from the outside world. Inside this terrifying inferno! while the rest of the nation looks on in horror, the ponderous wheels of government slowly grind away,

The world inside the beltway is a cacophonous Tower of *Babel*—inhabited by politicians, bureaucrats, T.V. news casters, lobbyists, lawyers, government contractors, drug addicts, and special interest groups.

Undeterred by this horrific scene, and ever alert to anything and everything affecting whitewater, AWA volunteers keep a close watch on events of interest to whitewaterboaters.

The following is part of a continuing series of reports from inside the beltway.

RELICENSING DEADLINE ARRIVES

The big deadline for the relicensing of 237 hydroelectric power plants came and went on December 31, 1991. The day did not go unnoticed by river conservation groups. AWA representative, Rich Bowers, participated in a spectacular press conference marking the event. The conference was held on the last day of the year on the plaza in front of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, just two blocks north of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. It was covered by National Public Radio, the New York Times, several wire news services



and a number of other newspapers and six or seven television stations.

Even as Rich, and Matt Huntington of American Rivers, told the press corps about this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, truck loads of applications from power companies all over the nation, more than 160 in all, began arriving at the front door of FERC. The applications are now stacked in huge mountains of boxes and papers in the FERC document room.

"When these 237 plants were built, no attention was given to the loss of fisheries or to the ecological damage they could cause. Under present law, however, equal consideration must be given to the environment, even if that means that the dam should be removed," said Rich in his statement to the press. Matt Huntington added that American Rivers and other environmental groups are already proposing that two very destructive

dams be removed completely, the Elwha Dam in Washington, and the Edwards Dam in Maine. He noted that all 237 dams combined provided only 2/10ths of 1% of the nation's total energy supply. A significant amount perhaps, but not significant enough to justify massive environmental destruction.

Meanwhile, FERC's chief relicensing official, Thomas Russo, tried valiantly

to tell FERC's side of the story. Russo argued that there were no problems in the FERC relicensing process, even though public involvement has been almost completely eliminated. According to Russo, "State and Federal agencies have had almost two years to comment on these applications. That should take care of everyone's concerns." When asked what government agencies were looking after the concerns of non-consumptive recreational river users—such as canoeists and kayakers—at the hundreds of rivers not covered by the NPS River Watch program, Russo retreated to his office without comment.

Under FERC's rules, the public—AWA, American Rivers, and other public-interest groups included—are entitled to one public meeting at the start of the process (2 years ago in most cases). The public now has a 60-day period after the filing date to voice their concerns (i.e. by the end of February 1992). That is IT in terms of public involvement, except for those few groups and individuals prepared to file the complex papers needed for a full:



Relicensing could mean regular releases on NY's Beaver.

fledged "intervention".

Needless to say, AWA has a few relicensing ideas of its own. Headed up by Pete Skinner, AWA hired a relicensing specialist, Rich Bowers, to reviewed every single application to determine if applicant had looked at the possibility of restoring or creating additional whitewater recreational opportunities. AWA is demanding that whitewater recreation not be ignored in the relicensing process. If the power companies refuse to cooperate, AWA will intervene in every case no matter what it costs. "If we do not act NOW, we will not have another chance in our lifetime. These licenses last for 30-50 years," according to Skinner.

Most of the plants involved are located in the northeast, the upper **midwest** and the Southeast; New York alone has 43 plants now undergoing relicensing.

The 1991 relicensing deadline is an unprecedented opportunity for whitewater boaters, but a very difficult one to take advantage of. Help is needed from boaters in every State concerned.

FATE OF CRITICAL RIVER WATCH PROGRAM STILL IN DOUBT

Congressional sources say that the fate of the popular River Watch Program, supervised by the National Park Service, is in deep trouble. The 1992 appropriations for River Watch came through, but strings were attached. The Park Service was ordered to justify the program to Congress by April of 1992 or face a funding **cut-off**.

The program has always depended on annual lobbying efforts by American Whitewater and other groups to get Congressional approval to fund the park service **recreation** experts working in

the program. Now, this funding is more endangered than ever. The National Hydropower Association, with help from key Senate staffers, is seeking **to kill** funding for the entire program after the 1992 fiscal year.

The NPS River Watch Program is the only national program now addressing non-consumptive river recreation. Although it is administered by the National Park Service, it is not limited to national park system rivers. The program provides experts on recreation to participate in the licensing and relicensing of hydropower projects on key whitewater rivers (such as the Deerfield, the Penobscot, and the Pine) to study and recommend improved recreational opportunities. Unfortunately, due to limited budget authority, only a few of the **200+** projects now undergoing licensing or relicensing are covered by the program.

NATIONAL ENERGY BILL SIDETRACKED FOR 1991

The gigantic national energy bill, pushed by the Bush administration and Democratic Senator Bennett Johnston (LA), was put in cold storage at near the end of the 1991 Congressional session. This is very good news for river conservationists since the bill contained a number of unwise provisions designed to jump start new hydroelectric power development and bypass environmental review.

After being stalled in the U.S. Senate since springtime by the acrimonious dispute over the Arctic Refuge and auto fuel efficiency standards, the bill finally reached the Senate floor in November where it was filibustered to death by a small band of Senators wearing green **hats**. MDNM Supporters of the bill promise to bring the cadaver back

from the grave, but environmentalists hope to see big changes in the bill when and if it does return.

The bill would have exempted hydroelectric projects of less than 5000 kilowatts from Federal environmental requirements. It would also remove the authority that some Federal agencies (like the forest service) have to protect Federal lands threatened by hydropower.

MICHIGAN RIVERS BILL-MDBO CONTINUES TO STRUGGLE

The bill to designate 14 rivers in Michigan as national wild and scenic rivers did not make it through the Senate in 1991. It passed the House of Representatives in June of 1991, but local Congressmen and Trout Unlimited continue to oppose

the bill. TU wants legislative language to allow fishery restoration activities in the newly designated rivers. Wild and scenic river purists claim that statutory language is not necessary and have, so far, won the battle.

Senator Riegle is a strong supporter of the bill, but Senator **Levin** is a question mark. Meanwhile FERC weighed in by testifying in the Senate in October of 1991 that the bill would conflict with 6 hydropower projects now pending before FERC. With all this confusion, prognosis for Senate passage is uncertain.

The Michigan rivers bill includes several segments of whitewater rivers: the Black, tributaries of the Ontonagon, the Paint, the Pine, the Presque Isle, the Sturgeon, and the Brule.

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HOUSE HEARINGS ON LITTLE RIVER BILL

The Parks Subcommittee of the House of Representatives completed its hearings of the landmark bill proposed by Congressman Tom Bevill of Alabama to make the Little River Canyon in northern Alabama a National Preserve. Support was not unanimous, but the State, the Alabama Power Company, and many national and local environmental groups gave the bill a thumbs up.

This is one of the best whitewater runs in Alabama and boaters have been strongly supportive of Congress, an's Bevill's bill. The bill would protect the very scenic Little River Canyon from hydroelectric power developments and authorize the transfer of thousands of acres of Alabama Power

Company property to the National Park Service, as well as some State lands.

WHITEWATER TRAINING SITE UP AND RUNNING

Not all the news events take place INSIDE the beltway. Only a few miles from the beltway at Dickerson, in the Maryland suburbs, in an unusual example of cooperation between an electric utility and whitewater boaters, the Potomac Edison Power Company has built a whitewater training site for the U.S. whitewater racing team.

The site is located in the warm-water discharge canal at the company's thermal power plant in Dickerson, Maryland. This facility, which opened on Thanksgiving of 1991, is the only year-round training site in the United States similar to


the course athletes will be racing on in Barcelona in this year's Olympic competition.

The course is slightly shorter than the Barcelona raceway (900 feet long as opposed to 1200 feet long) and less steep (16 foot drop as opposed to 24), but has more volume (650 cfs versus 350 cfs). According to Assistant Coach, Gordon Bare "the character of the water is typical of artificial courses—very different from natural river beds. It should be ideal training for Barcelona."

The project is the brainchild of two D.C. area racers, John Anderson and Scott Wilkinson, who built a scale model of the course with PEPCO's help. Anderson is looking for other sites, possibly in New England or New York, to replicate this outstanding success. Suggestions anyone?

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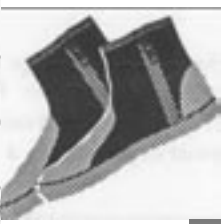
A bill to designate 31.5 miles of Sespe Creek in Southern California as a national wild and scenic river passed the House of Representatives late last year and is set for action in the Senate Energy and natural Resources Committee this spring. Sespe Creek is a little-known whitewater run, which few boaters have been lucky enough to catch when it is high. According to Dr. Keith Beck, who has been chasing this creek for years, it is a "real screamer". The river designation is part of a larger bill (H.R.2556 and S.1225) to designate a wilderness area in the Los Padres National Forest (CA). With support from both California Senators, Cranston and Seymour, prospects for the bill look good.




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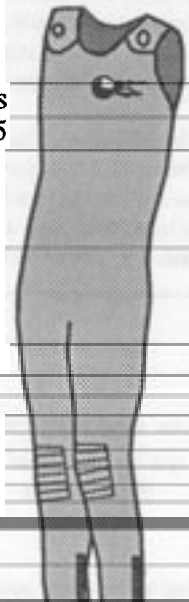
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AWA active in mid-Atlantic river issues

By MAC THORNTON
AWA Vice President

1991 was another busy year for the whitewater conservation program of the American Whitewater Affiliation and our member dubs in the Middle Atlantic states. Here is a short summary of what went down:

West Virginia Rivers

Coalition. Thirty national, regional and in-state groups have joined forces to gain designation of thirteen "crown jewel" streams in Monongahela National Forest as federal Wild and Scenic Rivers. In the **entire** East, there are now only 17 designated rivers! Included on the target list are paddling gems like the Smoke Hole Canyon of the South Branch Potomac, the Laurel, Shavers and Dry Forks of the Cheat,

the Cranberry and Williams, and the infamous Blackwater Canyon.

In the summer, the U.S. Forest Service handed WVRC a smashing victory in its report on eligibility, the first stage of the designation process. The report upped the total miles eligible to 293.9, only 9.1 river miles short of **WVRC's** goal!

In mid-November, the Virginia Environmental Endowment announced a grant to WVRC of \$30,000! WVRC is now hiring a second full time staff person and is launching a major membership campaign. **Mid-Atlantic** paddlers will soon be receiving a mailing giving an opportunity to join WVRC. Please join -- the political might to get the job done rests in the number of people who demonstrate their

support!

Gauley. The National Park Service is formulating plans for the Gauley River National Recreation Area, and AWA has met with and explained paddler priorities to the planners. AWA asked for riverside access points to be developed preferably near Panther Creek (below Sweets Falls) and at the AW put-in (above Koontz Flume). AWA also asked for primitive camping along the rim somewhere near Panther Creek/Woods Ferry.

Paddlers are also keeping an eye on a **run-of-the-river** hydropower project planned for Summersville Dam. Current plans would not impact whitewater, except for shifting the parking lot at the dam downstream a couple of hundred yards.

Far Upper Gauley.

A Rube **Goldberg** hydropower project was planned for the far upper Gauley (near Bolair), which proposed to drill through a mountain and divert most of the Gauley flow into the Elk River! Paddlers joined with American Rivers, Inc. in opposition, and this is one time FERC made the right call: another bozo hydro idea bites the dust.

Lost/Cacapon. AWA was one of the plaintiffs in court challenges to a dam boondoggle being promoted for Kimsey Run, a major tributary of the Lost River. A local fat cat wanted the government to build a dam which would create a sizeable lake on his property, which he would develop into another Deep Creek Lake. However, the justification for the \$10,000,000 dam was flood control, and a flood control

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Producer Paul Bonesteel has assembled the highlights into a montage of playboat showmanship, accompanied by original fusion/rock music. He covers how the events work, have evolved, and are promoting the cause of river protection, with flair and excitement. **Order your copy today, a bargain with a year's membership to AWA!**

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dam is kept nearly empty most of the time. He wanted a flood control dam kept full! A West Virginia state judge saw the ruse and issued an order killing the project. The fat cat is appealing.

AWA is also supporting the establishment of Dr. George Constantz' Pine Cabin Run Ecological Lab. George is the leading voice for restoration of river ecosystem health in Eastern West Virginia.

Upper Youahioaheny. FERC blew this one! Pennelec's hydro dam at Deep Creek Lake (source of summer Upper Yough flows) was up for relicensing, but FERC issued a decision saying a license is not required at all, since Deep Creek and the Upper Yough are not "navigable" under federal law! FERC said the river was too dangerous for whitewater sport. A remarkably stupid result. This

could be bad news, since if the facility was subject to being licensed, Pennelec had a reason to make paddlers happy by providing good whitewater flows with lots of advance notice. But it could also be good news: FERC has always gone out of its way to shaft whitewater paddling interests. The situation is **unclear**.

AWA continues to work with the State of Maryland on potential controls on flows, rafting regulations issues, and fish habitat studies (which could affect flows in the future).

Savaae. AWA continues to work with the Army Corps of Engineers, the State of Maryland and the Upper Potomac River Commission on getting more whitewater releases on the Savage. The Savage will be the site of the U.S. Olympic Team Trials next June.

James. AWA is

assisting the Coastal Canoeists' Charles Ware in an effort to obtain Wild and Scenic or other protected status on the James River in Richmond.

Alleahenv. Clarion. Mill Creek. AWA is assisting the effort to obtain Wild and Scenic designations for long sections of these easy, scenic sections of three streams in Northwestern Pennsylvania.

Group formed to protect Potomic

Paddlers in the Washington, D.C. area have become increasingly upset with tree-cutting and development along 11 miles of the Virginia shoreline of the Potomac River from Great Falls to Chain Bridge. This unique stretch (the Potomac Gorge) currently offers an astoundingly beautiful wilderness (almost) ex-

perience wholly within one of the nation's largest urban areas, in addition to rapids from Class I to Class VI.

In order to tackle the development issue head-on, the AWA and Canoe Cruisers **Asso.** announce the formation of a new organization-- the Potomac Gorge Preservation Council (PGPC for short). AWA and CCA dollars and expertise will be tapped to get PGPC off the ground.

In the last year, several landowners along the Virginia shore between Little Falls dam and Little Falls have cut down trees to improve their view and tossed the trees in the river. Unfortunately, the view works both ways.

The most offensive tree cutting apparently is the work of none other than Virginia Sen. Charles Robb.

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Portaging: the kind of good sense that needs to be developed and encouraged

by CARROL WILSON

"You portage, You wussyl" proclaimed the t-shirt on an endangered specimen at one of eastern America's paddling meccas a few years ago.

That taunt was ringing in my ears a few days later as I gingerly lowered my boat off the dry side of a vertical ledge on Tennessee's Tellico River. But so did the words of one of our most respected local paddlers. "Once I aspired to be the best kayaker in this part of the country. Later, I decided that what I really wanted was to become the oldest kayaker around here."

To portage or not to portage... if you're a paddler, sooner or later, that is the question. Not those arduous carries in northern lake country that keep chiropractors in the well to do, or those sixty foot waterfalls that even northeastern tongue-lollies forego. I mean dass three, four and five rapids that are a piece of cake to some paddlers and extremely inappropriate for others.

Many view portaging as an unconditional surrender.

"If you portage two or more major rapids, you shouldn't say you 'paddled it'," I once heard somebody declare. This same reckless opiner had cried foul after reading the account of a kayak descent on North Carolina's ferocious Horsepasture River, a descent that had included several portages. Well, I have since seen the rapids between the major waterfalls on the pell-mell Horsepasture, and I'll concede that its first descent was, in fact, quite an accomplishment.

My own first portage occurred in 1980 at tremble-making Bull's Sluice on the Chatooga. I was one of only two in a party of eight who chose, with considerable chagrin, the snake infested walk around the Sluice on the Georgia side. As our trip leader, the legendary Bunny Johns, came over to help me with the carry, she said, "I think you're wise to portage at this water level."

It was just the salve my smarting ego needed.

Such careful decisions begin with scouting, which means they often begin in the mind of someone else; an experienced trip leader. The trip leader must shoulder the responsibility to initiate and direct the



The willingness to portage often enables a paddler to see a stretch of river they wouldn't ordinarily experience. Here a boater carries a difficult drop on New York's Bottom Moose.

scouting of any rapid that even one of the party may want to walk around. This means scouting from the bank above and below a rapid; eddy or island scouting only as a last resort. It should be a given that you scout from the side of the river on which a portage is

possible. A portion of the responsibility also rests on the trip leader to deflect and nullify group pressure in its many forms.

A leader should employ these kinds of statements: "There's no damn shame in walking this one", or "Even experienced paddlers have problems here some-

times."

The leader ought to make a special effort to defend an apprentice from the scoffs of others in the group and attempts to minimize the risk that a rapid may pose. If a rapid really is a piece of cake, say so; if it's harder than it looks, make that known too. If you believe the rapid in question is comparable to something else your tyro may have run, show him how the two are related. Remember to offer assistance if needed. We can all name a few places where a solo portage can be more dangerous than the route on the river.

Of course, American "suemania" aside, the decision to run or walk around a rapid is ultimately each individual boater's. Most group pressure is subtle, and only the individual can resist it. Only you can discipline yourself to do your own eyeballing, without looking about to see who is preparing to run the rapid and who isn't.

Only an individual can evaluate his or her own ability, by asking, silently, 'Have I ever paddled another rapid almost as difficult as this?' If the answer is yes, and the conditions are right, you may want to go for it. On the other hand, if it looks much more difficult, carry. The final decision is,

and ought to be, agonizingly private.

Never portage a rapid without looking at it first. You'll want to study the features that trouble you. As you do, you're improving your water reading ability and laying the basis for its successful negotiation in the future.

Don't always be reassured by group support. Numbers mean you will be evacuated if you're injured, but numbers can't prevent every conceivable injury. You paddle your own boat.

There is a rapid known as Lower Factory Falls on Alabama's Bear Creek that, at a typical level of flow, is a sieve of torrential undercuts. No amount of group support at the bottom of that cataract, which is, to my mind, unrunable, could significantly reduce the danger that it poses.

Most of us fear embarrassment more than injury. Don't let your decision making be too influenced by the dread of ridicule.

If a rapid looks as if it can be run (or swum) safely, and your leader trip leader assures you that it is not particularly dangerous, go right ahead when your turn comes, even if you fear that you might be baptized. This is how you will learn to

overcome performance anxiety and improve your paddling skill.



Much has been written in recent years about positive imaging in athletics. In whitewater, this means visualizing yourself making the precise maneuvers that it will take to run a rapid smoothly and safely. Watching a veteran paddler execute those maneuvers will help. Try visualizing; it should be a part of your decision making process. If you can't visualize yourself making the necessary moves, you probably should not attempt the rapid. Of course, sometimes you may be lucky; there might be a safe sneak route as an alternative to a strenuous carry.

Remember, a portage is not an unconditional surrender or even a defeat. Adjust your attitudes before you hit the river.

When I'm invited to paddle some steep creek that I have never seen before, I expect to do some portaging. Sometimes I don't, but I always anticipate it.

And if I portage, I don't usually qualify my experience by saying, "I didn't really 'paddle' that creek. I walked two of the rapids."

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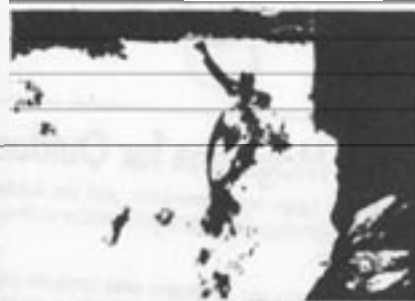
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BRIEFS

Gauley Fest Coordinator sought for 1992 event

The search for the 1992 Gauley Festival Coordinator is on.

Volunteers willing to assume responsibility for this vital task should contact executive director Phyllis Horowitz at (914) 688-5569.

The task is a massive one but the Coordinator is not without help. The Coordinator will oversee a sizable staff that has been developed over the past five years and will be assisted by former Coordinators.

The Gauley Festival has grown into the largest nonracing whitewater gathering in the world. Last year more than 2,000 paddlers attended the Saturday night affair during the height of the Gauley River release season.



The band sets up for the 1991 Gauley River Festival. The AWA is seeking a Coordinator to oversee preparation for this year's event.

In addition to providing an evening of fun for thousands of paddlers, the Gauley Festival raised more than \$15,000 in a single evening for AWA conservation activities.

Although the demands are great, the rewards for AWA are significant. AWA members are encouraged to volunteer.

Barry Toscano served as Coordinator for the record-setting 1991 festival.

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Half Mile East Of Hawk's Nest State Park

Ohiopyle plans user fees for private boaters

The Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks is proposing a user fee of between \$3-4 for use of its put-in for the popular Lower Youghiogheny River at Ohiopyle State Park by private boaters.

Currently, private boaters who negotiate the entire run are required to

purchase a \$1 shuttlebus token, however, boaters who choose the run the shorter "Loop" section have not been charged.

Ostensibly, for these new fees the Bureau will provide a reservation system to assure a quality trip, comfort facilities at launch sites, trip orientation and

safety programs for users, on-river emergency services, a shuttle service and other park provided services.

It is unclear how Pennsylvania paddlers will react to the new charges--particularly since most of the listed services have already been provided by the state.

However, the Bureau expects the new fees to generate upward to \$200,000 a year.

Recycle your beat-up plastic boat

Perception has announced its Recycle Program as an alternative to just discarding worn-out boats.

Since 1985, Perception has used the plastic from recycled boats in the manufacturing of seats, thigh-braces and other industrial products and is now extending the opportunity of participating in their ongoing recycling efforts to the paddling public.

All that is required from the consumer or retailer is to ship the cut up boat via UPS--Perception will pay the shipping

charges. Perception will also accept any brand of kayak into its Recycle Product as long as it is constructed of linear plastic.

The program was developed as part of Perception's **commitment** to meeting current environmental issues.

For any questions, call Paula Sumpter, **Shipping/Receiving Manager**, at (803) 859-7518.

Perception picks Shimoda Callaway

Risa Shimoda Callaway, president of the AWA Board of Directors, was recently named as the National Marketing Director for Perception, Inc. Her duties will include strategic planning for the marketing of Perception and Aquaterra products, supervision of the regional representatives and overseeing the Sales and Marketing Department.



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Year-end accident summary

Whitewater fatalities down in 1991

From an accident perspective, 1991 was a relatively quiet year. I received reports of five fatalities among experienced whitewater paddlers, a little more than half the number experienced during the past few years. I attribute no great meaning to this; fatalities often come in clusters and if a couple of near-misses had gone the other way the toll could have been significantly higher. Perhaps the low water levels experienced in many parts of the country played a part. Information on many of the events described is still coming in, and I welcome anyone with information on this and other incidents to contact me.

By CHARLIE WALBRIDGE
AWA Safety Chairman

The first fatality of the year occurred on May 15, on Section IV of the Chattooga River along the Georgia/South Carolina border. The victim, Chris Booker, was a strong paddler comfortable in grade IV+ whitewater. With the river running at 2.3 (a medium-high level) augmented by substantial side-stream inflow his group made good progress, scouting and running each drop in turn. Entering the five falls, the steepest and most demanding part of the run, they ran the first two class V rapids without incident. They were scouting Crack in the Rock when one member's paddle fell into the river. Booker, who hadn't really scouted the drop, took off after it through Center Crack.

At levels over 1.6 Center Crack has a vicious hole; locals familiar with the river either run Right Crack or portage the drop entirely. Booker was stopped, pummeled, and had to exit his boat. Gaining a foothold on one of the large rocks which form the cracks, he attempted to grab his boat as it was carried past him. The boat pulled him back into the hole, where he was held under for a long time before being violently flushed out some fifty yards downstream.

His companions rushed down the river, yelling at him to swim to shore. They believe he was conscious, but he did not respond. As he washed into Jawbone Rapid the group got back to their boats and gave chase, portaging the drops. Upon reaching the lake, they began a thorough search of the rapids upstream. Finally, with dark-

ness falling, they began to paddle across Lake Togaloo to the take-out. They found him floating, face down, where the lake begins to widen.

A series of miscalculations on Chris Booker's part created this tragedy. He clearly did not know about Center Crack's evil reputation or he would never have attempted it without backup. Certainly no paddle is worth that kind of risk; a good breakdown spare takes a lot of the pressure off the group in these situations. Once free of the hole, he again put himself in grave danger trying to rescue his boat. Had he waited until his group could set some ropes downstream he could have

been extricated without much danger. Locals report numerous rocks in the runoff of center crack; this

and the coroner's reports of head injury could account for his dazed state upon surfacing.

On June 18 Tom McAssey, a long-time Alaskan outdoorsman and a strong, experienced kayaker, died on a high water run of the Little Susitna River. This 150 ft/mile, boulder strewn Class V run was at 64 on the gauge, leaving slight margin for error and making rescue very difficult. McAssey, who had made the run 70 or more times in the past four years, flipped in "Death Ferry" rapid. Initially he held onto his gear, but was pummeled by the huge rocks and current and soon became unresponsive. His companion, after several attempts at rescue, raced ahead to the takeout bridge for help. His body was found 200 yards upstream.

McAssey apparently had some health problems including arthritis and a recent back injury and may have been taking pain killers. This, combined with a pre-run beer, could have affected his ability to handle the river that day. The unrelenting difficulty of the run made rescue extremely difficult, and such conditions are a warning to anyone not in top form to stay away. Doctors hypothesized that laryngospasm, a tightening of the throat muscles caused by the ingestion of small amounts of water, lead to his death.

Although the runoff in the Western streams was disappointing over the past season, there was a brief spate of high water in Colorado. On June 12 Joe Goff, local expert very familiar with the run,

was running with a group of comparable paddlers on the "Numbers" section. With the river running at between 3 1/2 and 4 feet (2200 cfs; a medium-high level), the rapids become quite long and difficult. Goff apparently tried to punch a hole at the top left; he was caught and violently surfed before being spit out. He was in the set-up position, but never rolled.

With most of the group occupied playing the rapids upstream, Doug Regan spotted him and chased him down, snowplowing him and his boat to shore in the brief breathing space between rapid #4 and #5. CPR began at once, but the victim had been under too long. In the absence of head injuries one cannot rule out some type of laryngospasm which made breathing impossible.

On July 20 Mark Pyle, a BLM Employee, was making his first run down Brown's Canyon. The water was low; nearing the end of the runoff cycle. Off by himself, he elected to warm up with a few rolls. In doing so, he inadvertently drifted into an undercut rock at the mouth of the canyon and was pinned fast. His group found him quickly, and broke three ropes trying to pull him free. He was later rescued by a commercial outfitter, who used better quality ropes, a z-drag, and a different angle to do the job.

On September 21 Ned Helmsley, a competent and aggressive 45 year old boater, was trying to beat the Gauley Festival crowds by taking a low-water trip down the nearby New River Gorge with his wife and a few friends. By putting in at Cunard, he soon arrived at the pool above Lower Railroad Rapid.

At the -1 level foot this drop has a number of nasty undercut rock exposures; one of them figured in a drowning some years ago. Yelling over his shoulder to the group to watch out for a downstream pinning rock, he peeled out and headed down the left side. He became vertically pinned at the bottom of the drop; initially he had an air pocket and could hold his hands up, but then the boat shifted and pulled him under.

Once his paddle floated free, the group knew it was over. He was some distance from shore and almost impossible to reach. Ten minutes later guides from Class VI Expeditions arrived on the scene; one of their rafts ferried out across

a hole and clipped a line into the stem of Helmsley's kayak. **Thirty** minutes after their arrival they were able to pull the boat free, but by then it was too late.

Helmsley's most significant error was in not scouting the drop even though there were life-threatening dangers downstream. He thought he knew where he was going, but clearly he did not. In addition, he was a big man: 6' tall and 195 pounds. He was paddling a **low-volume** kayak which was extremely small for his size. I can't say whether a bigger boat might have avoided pinning, or if a less snug fitting kayak might have permitted him to escape. But both of things might have improved his chances, and deserve consideration by others.

1991 also featured a number of near-misses which may give all of us useful insights. On **January 12** a group of Tulsa, Oklahoma boaters arrived at the Upper Mulberry River in Arkansas. Temperatures at the Wolf Pen put-in were in the mid-thirties. David Reid was wearing a dry suit and rubber gloves, and paddled a kayak equipped with a very tight "man-hole-style" sprayskirt with heavy strips of rubber at the **coaming** and a piece of flat

nylon webbing for a grab loop.

Flipping in a hole, he was unable to properly orient his paddle because of the gloves. An uncomfortable situation turned deadly when his lack of dexterity resulted in an inability to locate and use the grab loop. Struggling to pop free of the kayak, he passed out.

Fortunately his buddies rallied to his aid. They got into their boats, ran him down, pushed him and his boat to shore. They then dragged him out of the boat, and struggled with a muddy bank and fast current to get him onto dry land. There his friends, hearing him struggle to breathe, cleared his clogged airway. At this point Reid started to breathe on his own. He was evacuated by open canoe to **the road** and from there to a hospital where he was treated aggressively for two **full** days.

This is quite normal in near-drowning events. Doctors believe that the extremely cold water caused his trachea and **larynx** to go into **severe** muscle spasms, making breathing impossible. He was saved by the competence and persistence of his friends, who did what needed to be done.

NORS "Currents" reported the rescue of Jim Smith, who became **vertically pinned in a narrow slot in Tennessee's** Piney River near Knoxville. He was completely buried, and the water pressed him into his kayak and made breathing difficult. His three companions set a tag line across the drop, pulling it snugly under his chest. Using this for support, he was able to bring a knee up through the large cockpit of his Infinity kayak. After more struggles he eventually got both feet out and crouching on the rim.

This is not as easy as it sounds; as he shifted position **the air pocket his body** created would disappear. Fighting panic, he would create another pocket by holding his hands over his face. This naturally made it harder to work free. A rope was thrown to him, the tag line was loosened, and he swung to shore. The group retrieved the boat by tying a flat rock to the middle of a line across the river and sinking it under the boat. By having the ends switch sides, a loop was created. They were thus able to lift the bow free. Smith had to let go of his paddle early in the accident, but was able to paddle out on a **takedown** spare that someone had the **fore-**

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July 14 saw noted author and paddler Slim Ray receive a disabling injury on North Carolina's Middle Green Gorge.

This run, one of a handful of upper-level class V+ runs opened up in the past few years, has been seeing increased use recently. Slim was part of a strong group from the Nantahala Outdoor Center, many of whom were making their first run down the Green under the guidance of people familiar with the river. Taking plenty of time to scout and carry, they reached Sunshine Falls without incident.

Slim elected to run this difficult double drop; he missed the left-to-right boof move, slammed into rocks at the bottom of the first 15' ledge, pitched for a second, then fell over. He was then sucked back into the falls where his lower back was caught between his boat, which was being pushed down by the full force of the river, and a shallow rock beneath him. This is where he received his injury. He bailed out, and was picked up by his companions with throw ropes. When he reported an inability to move his legs he was immobilized in the water by his group. Help was summoned; a helicopter landed in the gorge, and Slim was packaged and carefully evacuated by EMT's.

At this time he no longer has the use of his legs, and is undergoing prolonged rehabilitation. A clear and frightening indication of the possible consequences of minor mistakes in extreme whitewater.

Slim Ray was involved in another rescue in June of this year in which a boatman in a rescue clinic who had several carabiners clipped to his life vest. He became "clipped in" to the running line on the outside of his raft after a capsizing. The victim was then dragged some distance underneath the raft down Westwater Canyon until Slim was able to swim up to the raft and cut him free.

We have had several people become clipped-in to lines while participating in rescue clinics. I now feel that the habit of wearing 'biners in this way is DANGEROUS and should be stopped. Both Nantahala Outdoor Center and Wildwater Designs sell small pouches which can hold this hardware, pullies, and a folding saw. The pouch is then clipped to the end loop and stuffed inside a rescue bag, where it is ready for immediate use. This gear can also be stuffed inside a life jacket pocket.

All of these incidents point out

the need for added caution on the river in the form of scouting and setting shore based or boat-based back-up. We are seeing increased evidence that laryngospasm can cause "dry drownings" in turbulent water without having the victim held beneath the surface. The "flush-drownings" episodes make clear the difficulties faced

rescuing unconscious swimmers from a kayak in difficult whitewater. But as the near-misses show, prompt action by trained and determined companions CAN make a difference. Formal rescue and first aid training, combined with determination and confidence on the water is the key to success.

AWA safety survey reveals flood condition dangers

By DAVID WALLACE

Are you: 1) 25-34 years old; 2) male (mostly); 3) been boating a few years; and 4) think you're pretty hot? Then listen up, you fit our profile for paddlers who got into trouble during flood conditions. One of our survey victims said his bad judgement/overconfidence was partially due to "Billy Bad-Ass Syndrome". I also describe it as the high "Balls to Brains Ratio".

In analyzing the data from AWA's Close Calls and Serious Injuries Survey, we received some fascinating ac-

counts of river mishaps, and some trends became apparent. One of these trends were whitewater incidents which occurred during flood conditions. As the rainy season (and flood season) is upon us, it is timely to pass on some of these observations.

From the AWA Close Calls Survey, we received reports on 23 persons involved in whitewater incidents which occurred during flood conditions. All but one were male, and the vast majority (20) were paddling regular kayaks (2 canoes, 1 raft). Although the majority (74%) of victims were not injured (1 death reported, however), these incidents were serious: 18

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people ended up walking out of the river after their accident (as opposed to completing their runs).

When asked about the type of accident, over half (56%) of the respondents chose "Long Swim" (Table 1), and almost half (44%) of the incidents occurred in Class V whitewater (Table 2). This is in contrast to the **experience/skill** level of the victims: most (61%) had only "Medium" experience, and only 17% reported a "High" level (and I don't mean mind-altering substances!) Incidents generally occurred in the East and Pacific Northwest, with the difficulty of most of the rivers being class III or IV under "normal" flows. These incidents took place from 1986-1990, with 9 occurring in 1989 and 10 in 1990.

FIVE-IN-A-HOLE

In the AWA Survey, persons involved in flood events were younger overall in comparison to all survey victims. Almost half of flood victims were 20-29 years old (see figure). It is not uncommon these days for boaters with only 2 or 3 years experience to be paddling class IV and even V rivers. Although their skills may be good—hand rolls, skilled at playing—there is something to be said for "old fashioned"

Table 1. Whitewater Incidents Which Occurred During Flood Conditions by Leading Accident Type (N=23)

Accident Type	Percent
Long Swim	56%
Recirculation	35
Side Pine	13
Logs/Debris	9

river experience over time. One flood incident on the Watauga River in North Carolina is a good story to use as an example. I call it Five-In-A-Hole.


After a period of heavy rain the Watauga Gorge section was running very high. The party of five kayakers, all experienced on the Gorge at "normal" flows met at the put-in bridge to find the river substantially above the bridge and rising. They later found out the river was running 9,500 CFS! For those unfamiliar, the Watauga Gorge is a creek type run, with low to moderate levels generally 300 to 700 CFS.

The group knew a Gorge run was out of the question, but wanted to run something—"we had driven all that way." One person suggested the section above the Gorge (class II-III at normal flow) and

said it would be "just a big flush." The group went upstream to find the river big, brown, and running bank to bank through the trees. They hadn't scouted much on the drive, but agreed to be careful. They all put on several boat lengths apart.

They soon realized how powerful the river was that day, and one of the kayakers admitted it was "like a locomotive out of control"—and one he no longer cared to be riding. There were no eddies, however, and the group soon came to a **horizon line** across the river, bank to bank. They watched as the first boater hit the monster hole and disappeared. In the few seconds to react, each one tried to punch the hole at a different place, but as one later told me, "we all just had to endure our own personal Whitewater Hell." Dancer XT "Mystery Moves", violent cartwheels, and deep recirculation were provided for their "enjoyment". All five were out of their boats and swimming at the same time, and were on their own to save themselves. One found that upon surfacing from the hole his life jacket was completely unzipped, and only held on by the waist tie.

Getting to shore required swimming through trees and strainers, and the



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group was very lucky that no one drowned. Three of the kayakers wrapped around trees, one of which the group initially thought contained a person trapped in his boat. Injuries included a dislocated shoulder, hyperextended knees, and numerous bruises.

MORAL OF THE STORY

So gentle readers, what are the lessons here? Rivers in flood are not so forgiving, and often place multiple people at risk when things go bad. Several surveys reported multiple paddlers swimming at the same time, often having to rescue themselves. A similar pattern of events were involved in many of the flood reports:

1. Participants were not familiar with the river in flood stage, and in some cases, were not familiar with the river at all. Moral: One of the Watauga Five-In-A-Hole gang told me that he would never get on another river at very high flow unless he was personally familiar with it, or he knew he could scout everything. This is good advice to take home. Rivers at very high flows can be exciting and fun, provided you avoid those Five-In-A-Holes.

2. Participants were not familiar

Table 2. Whitewater Incidents which Occurred During Flood Conditions by Class of Difficulty

Whitewater Class	Number (%)
Class II	2 (98)
Class III	1 (4)
Class IV	7 (30)
Class V	10 (44)
Class VI	3 (13)

with everyone's paddling ability, and if they could handle the river. Some of the survey respondents admitted not knowing everyone's skill level, and that these paddlers were not up to the difficulty of the river under flood conditions. In some cases, rescuers chasing swimmers got into trouble, and ended up swimming themselves. From one report on the Wilson River in Oregon, a group of seven kayakers got together for this normally Class III run that was at 10,000 CFS and rising. Three people ended up swimming—one for an estimated three miles! The group got separated, and all walked out except for one person. One of the participants felt that contributing factors were not being sure of

everyone's paddling ability beforehand, and having to rescue numerous swimmers. He felt that having to conduct a rescue under those conditions and still avoid the river hazards, increased the river difficulty by possibly a full class.

Moral: One of the Wilson participants summed it up nicely: "This run (at flood) was better suited for people who knew each other's boating skills and habits." Good advice. Rivers at very high flows are not the best time to meet new paddling partners. You find yourself, and possibly the whole group, at the "Ragged Edge" of your ability to keep things together. Those conditions are not the time for surprises on abilities, or how people will react under pressure.

3. Billy Bad-Ass Syndrome. Now maybe you don't consider yourself this way, but after analyzing the surveys we got the impression that many of the flood victims were either overconfident in their abilities, or severely misjudged the difficulty of the river at flood stage. Table 3 shows that almost all (91.3%) respondents cited "Very High Flow", and over half chose "Bad Hydraulic" as contributing factors to their flood incident. Hey folks, if



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Table 3. Contributing Factors in Whitewater Incidents Which Occurred During Flood Conditions As Reported by AWA Survey Respondents

Factors	Percent
Very High Flow	91.3%
Bad Hydraulic	77.1
Class V-VI Difficulty	74.7
Unsuccessful Rescue	70.4
Unseen Obstacle	47.4
Low Head Dam	8.7
Inexperience	21.7
Cold Water	13.0

you're going to the "Big Water Ball," you better know how to dance! When asked about factors that initiated the flood incident, most said "Bad Judgement (74%), and "Lack of Experience" (22%). One of the Watauga boaters told me that he had never really been "trashed before Five-In-A-Hole, and that their whole group felt that way. **They** had good skills, but not necessarily the experience needed that day, or the warning signals to avoid the situation. Our one flood-related kayak death is due to many of those factors, as unfortunately the victim chose to run a low-head dam.

Moral: Confidence is a big part of our sport, but be wary of overconfidence. Ask yourself if the whole group has realistically evaluated the risk (and danger) involved, and is everyone up to the challenge. This is true for all rivers, but especially for very high flows. Don't place your partners at added risk trying to save you if you have no place being there.

4. "We've Driven **ALL** This Way". At some point, especially if you're boating rain-fed rivers, you'll get to a river and it will be too high. You've probably driven a good distance and maybe you have been planning this run for awhile.

Moral: Group pressure and desire can often cloud good judgement in this case. Try to have a backup river in mind if you **see** that logs are floating by and it's pouring down rain on you. If that challenging mountain river you've been waiting to do is too high, then look for a nice larger river with less gradient for some safe Grand Canyon style fun.

Boating on very high flows can "Redline" the Funmeter, or can be your own "Whitewater Hell"—the choice is up to you. Try your hand on some of the known bog-water runs in your area that are considered "fun" and "safe", so you can get the feel for big pushy water. Then the next time the Ocoee is jamming at 15,000 CFS (as I caught it in 1990) you can say—Kowabunga! Surfs Up!

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By LARS HOLBEK

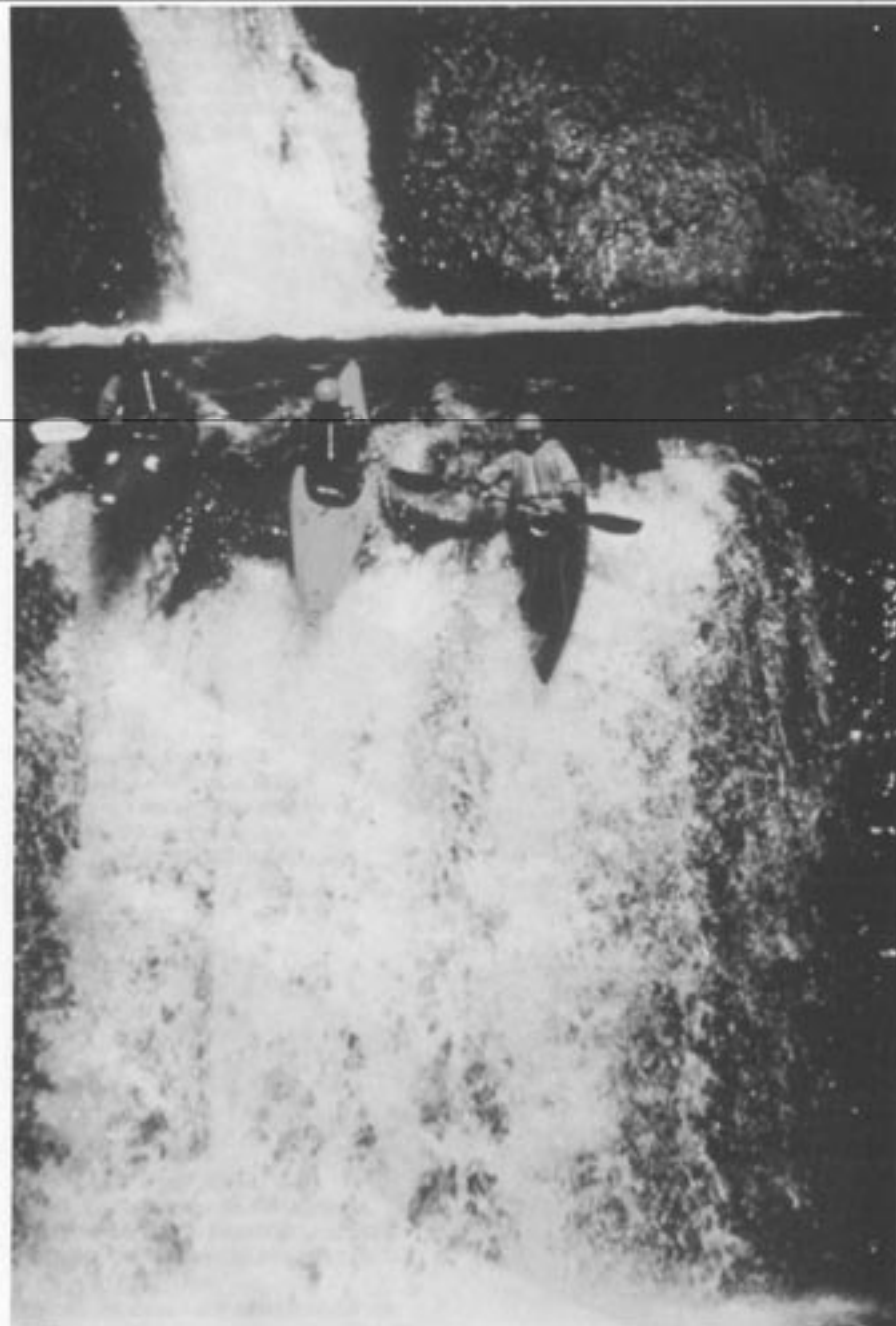
INTRODUCTION

Since my first kayaking experience in Chile in 1983, followed by a major **explor-** at o y safari in 1985, I have wanted to write a guide to Chilean rivers. While kayaking in Chile nearly **eve y** year since, the excitement of writing a guide ebbed as the realization that a full-scale work would require as much time as did *A Guide To The Best Whitewater In The State Of California*, which I co-authored with Chuck Stanley.

My hope is that the international kayaker will, with this bare-bones summary, be able to find his or her way to the rivers of Chile. For those familiar with my **California** guide, the ratings herein will lean toward the conservative. I hope that this information will provide access to the world of Chilean whitewater, and also keep boaters **from** embarking on rivers **beyond their** abilities.

For boaters interested in easier water, Chile has much to offer. However, because **my own** interest is in **difficult** water, this guide outlines primarily class IV-VI runs. **Down-** stream from the runs described river gradients taper off quickly. Although I have little experience in these lower reaches of Chilean rivers, I have talked with local boaters who support my assumption that the rivers run class **III-I** to the **Pacific** Ocean.

High water **snowmelt** generally occurs in December and January, with smaller drainage rivers to the south peaking even earlier. As with the rest of the world, annual precipitation can va y dramatically, so check with Chilean sources (perhaps the consulate) to ascertain that there **is adequate snowpack** in the year that you plan to paddle in Chile.



Lars Holbek photo

MOTORING IN CHILE

There are numerous transportation options available. It is possible to hire a driver and vehicle to shuttle you about, or take a combination of trains, taxis, and buses to arrive at any river. I, however, prefer renting a vehicle for the freedom and convenience it provides. Car rental agencies abound in Santiago and larger cities. Following extensive research into the details, I now go exclusively to **RentAuto** at 1439 Avenida Francisco Bilbao. **Suzuki** mini-vans rented in 1988 for \$600 per month, and are suitable for four with minimal gear. In 1990, we rented a Soviet Lada 4WD at \$700 per month. Boaters report that prices climbed considerably in 1991. The 4WD's are great on Chile's rough roads, and the rain gutters of the Lada are brute strong; they won't crumple under a 4-boat load like the Suzuki gutters. In 1990, petrol cost the equivalent of US\$1.50 per gallon.

Most of the Whitewater runs herein are paralleled by roads, upon which you will access the put-ins. The majority of the runs are 10-15 kilometers (kms) in length, making them short enough to consider a shuttle method other than a second car. Try walking, running, biking, hitching, hiring locals, horseback, or that friend who didn't boat today.

Unless otherwise noted, all roads east of the Pan Am Highway, upon which we access the rivers, are either dirt or gravel, ranging from good to deplorable. Before you rent a car, check that the rubber seals on all doors are tight and keep dust out. On one trip dust poured in through gaps at such rate that 10 minutes was sufficient to whiten our hair and add 20 years to our appearances! Cough, cough...

TALKIN', SLEEPIN', AND EATIN'

Chileans are some of the friendliest and most hospitable people that I've met anywhere, and have proven a strong motive for repeat visits. The better your Spanish, called Castellano in Chile, the more you'll get out of your trip and the more you'll be able to interact with the people. As I learned within days of my first trip to Latin America in 1980, without Spanish I am lost. In addition to tuning up your kayaking prior to a trip, I also suggest Spanish study.

Most farmers and ranchers, upon request, will allow you to camp on their land. Around rivers good camping abounds. Every town has small pensiones and hotels, should you desire a hot shower and bed. Buy food in larger towns before

heading out to a river to camp and boat, as selection in small country towns is often meager.

GEOGRAPHY AND MAPS

The scope of this guide begins with the Rio Aconcagua, 80 kms north of Santiago, extends 1,300 kms south to the Rio Futaleufu, and covers 24 rivers.

The best maps I have found are available at **Coppec** gas stations and come as a series of 14, covering the entire country from north to south. These maps are the most up-to-date, yet are still far from complete. Tiny dirt roads between mountain villages aren't marked; local inquiry is the key to successful exploration of the obscure. If you can't find the **Coppec** maps, most any Chile road map will work.

In the description of each river I mention the town nearest it and this town's distance from Santiago. This is your reference cue for easy. By locating rivers on road maps.

The mountains which feed the first seven rivers covered, the Rio Aconcagua to the Rio Cachapoal, are massive by North American standards. Dozens of glaciated Andean giants between 4,500-6,000 meters dominate this skyline. The rivers that carve and roar out of this rugged section of the Andes carry tons of glacial silt and are generally the largest volume and steepest rivers. South of the Rio Cachapoal, from the Rio Tinguiririca to the Rio Maule, we note a steady decline in peak elevations, from 4,300 meters to 3,000 meters, as well as a less torrential character of river. From the Maule to the Futaleufu peak elevations continue to fall, with mountains 2,000 meters high a rarity.

Geology is varied throughout; some rivers carve through granite, while

others cut through volcanic lava. River volumes range from a typical 10,000-15,000 cfs on the Maipo to a piddly (yet sufficient) 100+ cfs on the Rio Claro, site of the beautiful Siete Tazas.

WRAP UP

That about covers it. Rent a car, buy some maps, shake loose that phonetic Castellano, buy a little food and some Chilean vino tinto and you're past the crux. It's all downstream from here.



Lars Holbek photo

Suren Holbek hikes into Rio Laja

LOS RIOS

Unless otherwise noted, I have personally kayaked every river described in BRIEF here. For each river I have estimated the length of the run, gradient (expressed as meters per kilometer except where gradient is not available), and volume in cfs. Shuttles are approximately the same distance as the run. All gradients listed, as well as most distances, were checked on 1:50,000 military topo maps.

RIVERS NEAR SANTIAGO

• ACONCAGUA

The Rio Aconcagua sports a wild class V+ run from the Rio Blanco through the narrow canyon of Salto del Soldado. We had a pushy 1,500 cfs, lots of scouting, and a portage around a small dam near km 4. Gradient in this 8 km stretch is 25 mpk.

The absolute crux of this run, one of the most severe in Chile, is the Salto del Soldado. Class V-VI drops tumble through a vertical gorge, which are scoutable from railroad tunnels above, and the canyon ends with a nearly dark passage through the easy-but-scary exit groove. Legend has it a soldier jumped the narrowest point of the walls on horseback. Check this run out with care. It's crazy!

Below the narrows the canyon opens up for romping class IV at 16 mpk for the 15-20 kms to Los Andes, 80 kms north of Santiago.



Lars Holbek photo

• MAPOCHO

The Rio Mapocho is the river that runs through Santiago (gag), but is cleaner and more interesting above the city. From the confluence with the Rio San Francisco is a 5 km run to the paved bridge (road to Farellones), which drops 28 mpk and is class IV-V at 500 cfs. Below the bridge is another class IV run of about 5 km to the bridge at El Arrayan.

• MAIPO

The Rio Maipo, just south of Santiago, is a big river in league with the Bio or Futaleufu. The put-in is at road's end at El Manzanito where there is a hydroelectric plant. Below here is an 8 km, class V run at 2,000 cfs with a drop of 14 mpk. Road scout this one and avoid the heinous class VI lead-in to the death gorge that you'll see on the approach drive.

From the confluence of the Rio Yeso begins a 35+ km run, class IV-V, at 14 mpk, which is mostly scoutable from the road. The biggest rapids are right next to the road. A picnic area 5 kms below the Rio Colorado provides a good take-out.

• VOLCAN

The Rio Volcan enters the Maipo 3 kms upstream of the Yeso confluence. From the Banos Morales bridge to the pueblo of Volcan plummets a class V+ river with portages at 1,000 cfs and a gradient of 37 mpk. It's tight and pushy with big, blind drops - experts only!! From Volcan to the bridge 4 kms downstream is an easier class 4-ish run with a gradient of 20-25 mpk.

• YESO

The Rio Yeso has a great 4 km class V run at 25 mpk. The steepest section is above and below the bridge you cross enroute to the upper Maipo and Volcan. A little up from this bridge, take the road on the left toward the Yeso dam. Put in where convenient.

COLORADO

The Rio Colorado is the last major tributary of the Maipo described here. The put-in is at the check station along the road that ascends the Colorado canyon. It had a 7 km class IV run at 1,000 cfs at 23 mpk when I ran it in 1983. Now, however, a landslide has created a huge sieve 1 km above the take-out which has little or no warning before it and even less of an escape eddy.

In 1991, at least two kayakers ran the 3 meter pourover at the top of the sieve and swam under the entire thing!! Tracy Hartenstein tells me he was under for 30-40 seconds while spiraling through 30 meters of dark underwater-world. His boat never came through. A Brit survived the same nightmare, and his boat made it through. Tracy reports a dirt road that takes off from the main road and dead-ends near the sieve. If you insist on doing this run, scout it well. *With every run in this guide, you must approach it as if you know nothing. Rivers change and guides cannot serve as replacement for common sense and prudence.* Learn from Tracy's miraculous survival and don't let this accident happen to you.

RIVERS OF THE CENTRAL VALLEY

• TINGUIRIRICA

The Rio Tinguiririca sports 45 kms of runnable whitewater. From San Fernando, 140 kms from Santiago, take the road to Termas del Flaco, a commercial warm springs and mud bath 75 kms to the S.E. About 12 kms downstream from the termas is a bridge that serves as put-in. The river offers 23 kms of class IV and V with portages, and a drop of 24 mpk. I hear that people have run from the Termas to this bridge, however, on our scout we saw numerous portages. The 23 km stretch ends at the last road access point. From this take-out, where in 1985 lived a Senora who made us lunch, the river eases to class III and IV at 13 mpk for the final 22 kms to Puente Negro.

In 1986, a flood devastated this river and made easier this lower 22 kms. I don't know what has happened to the upper 23 kms. From Puente Negro the river eases to swift class II and III for 15 kms to the Pan Am Highway.

•TENO

Next we come to the **Rio Teno** and its tributary the Rio Claro, accessed a few kms north of Curico, 200 kms from Santiago. Take the road to Romeral and onward to Los Quenes. About 17 kms upstream from Los Quenes is a spectacular gorge. By putting in below the obviously **unrunnable** cataracts you can run a few kms of **class V** of unknown gradient with a few portages. The remaining 10 kms or so to a bridge 4 kms above Los Quenes contains occasional **class III** and **IV** and is rather uninteresting.

The Rio Claro, not to be confused with the Rio Claro of Siete Tazas fame, has a **class III-IV run** which begins 8-10 kms upstream from Los Quenes. Access is by 4WD that may be private. Gradient is unknown but seems in the 15 mpk range or less. I hear of Chilean **kayakers** starting higher up and reporting more challenging rapids.

•CLARO

At last we come to the wonderful Siete Tazas and adjacent Parque Ingles. Take the road to **Molina** (turn-off 216 kms from Santiago) and follow signs to Siete Tazas, some 60 kms into the hills. The tourist trail down to the lower waterfalls of Siete Tazas is the take-out you'll use. To find the put-in, a scant 500 meters upstream as the road grovels, walk back up the road and launch off into the brush following the path of least resistance while keeping as close to the canyon rim as possible. If this is your first time and you're not with someone who knows the way, a reconnaissance is in order. Although many end up lowering their boat to the river above the initial 8 meter waterfall, it is possible to clamber all the way down. As more people kayak here the approach trail becomes more worn.

Looking up from the take-out trail you see the final two waterfalls. Above these are four drops in the 1-2 meter range. The above-mentioned 8 meter drop is the **first** and is portable by boat-lowering and climbing.

Drive up to Parque Ingles, at the very least for a meal from Senora Rosain her creekside restaurant and hosteria. Her grandson Hugo may serve you; I got to know the family while hanging out there on a bike trip in 1990.

If you loved Siete Tazas and want the ultimate in deep vertical gorges with drops up to 10 meters, I suggest you scout the 3 kms stretch above the Parque Ingles bridge that we call "Veintidos Saltos." After intensive scouting from both sides of this deep gorge, we four-wheeled on river right to a point about 3 kms upstream, lowered our boats to one of the few **less-than-overhanging** access points, and ran 22 drops; 12 over 2 meters **high** and 10 under 2 meters high. We made 3-4 portages, one of which involved lowering our boats into a pool next to a 12 meter falls we deemed unsafe, and then jumping into the pool to clamber up the **back** of our kayaks. So enthralled we were that we made the run twice. With more than a low flow, we had 50-100 cfs, this run could become a trap...

•MAULE

The **Rio Maule** is my nemesis. Many times I've tried to drive to the upper reaches of the most **hydro-developed** river in Chile, only to be turned back by lack of proper documents. Finally, on a bike trip in 1990, I cajoled my way past La Mina checkpoint without



Lars Holbek photo

permits and a wonderland unfolded before me. Normally permission to enter must be applied for two weeks in advance at the gobernacion in Talca. I suggest applying on your way south and then making the journey to Laguna del Maule on your way back north.

Once past La Mina **carabinero** checkpoint, take-out for a run I hope someday to do, look for the major drainage on river right at the bottom of the steep hill "**Cuesta Los Condores**" as seen on your **Copac** map. Hike 20 minutes to hot springs near **Rio Banos** for a thermal treat. The bridge across the Maule which accesses the hot springs is a potential put-in for the run to La Mina **Class V+!!** Look for the 100 mpk section upstream toward Laguna del Maule and other surprises.

1991 Update: Gringo regulars Yaroslav, Dieter and Rocket ran the stretch from the Banos bridge on the heels of a well **organized** French "expedition" to the **Maule**. They report wild action that builds and relaxes in the 20 kms they ran, as well as a portage somewhere near the end.

• ANCOA

Find Linares on your map, 313 kms from Santiago, and gateway to the artificially flowing Rio Ancoa. Seen on **Copac** maps, the Ancoa has a small drainage, and in the summer months of December through February, runs low and clear after its early spring runoff. Enter the tampering machine-man, blasting a 4 km tunnel through the mountain from the **Rio Melado** in the Maule system. Glacial melt water flows through this tunnel and bursts out into the **trickling** Ancoa, sending 800-1,000 cfs to downstream irrigation **all** summer. Whitewater types and farmers benefit, and the result is a great **11** km long class IV and V run at 19 mpk. The shuttle road is very rough.

From Linares take the road that follows the Ancoa, rather than the rough road **through Los Rabones**. **Las Hornillas**, where the tunnel from the **Melado** gushes into the Ancoa, is the logical put-in. Downstream, the first diversion dam is a likely take-out, as is the second bridge a few kms downstream. I always do two portages on this run.

• NUBLE

The Rio Nuble is a popular spring run among intermediate Chilean boaters. From San Carlos, 385 kms from Santiago, drive east on the road to San Fabian de **Alicio**. I have once done a run from road's end at the Rio Los Sauces confluence to somewhere above San Fabian at perhaps **800 cfs**. At this flow there were occasional fun class **III** rapids and the gradient seemed rather low, maybe 8 mpk. With higher flows the Chileans report a juicier run. **The** countryside is beautiful and good camping abounds.

• LAJA

Some **467 kms** south of Santiago the Pan **Am** crosses just below the spectacular Salto de Laja a beautiful **waterfall** on the Rio Laja. While **topos** show the river upstream of this falls rather flat and wide, an excellent **4-5** km run exists at the birthplace of the river. From Los Angeles, 518 kms from Santiago, drive up the road to Antuco. East of **Antuco**, at the base of the final climb to the Laguna de la Laja, you'll **see** a small reservoir into which flows the free running Laja. Drive on to the park entrance a few kms and ask how to find the trail to the Laja birthplace, a sight worth seeing whether or not you carry your boat 20 minutes to run this class V beauty. If no one is in the park station, drive on another km or two and look for a sign and turnout for the trail. Gradient is non-stop, the water of **sparkling** quality.

• DUQUECO

The Rio **Duqueco** is one I've never run and this information is gleaned from a description by Phil **DeReimer**. Find Los Angeles on your map and look to

the east for **Quilleco**. They drove on to **Canicura** and somewhere east of here crossed the river at the take-out. Now on river left, they passed through a private gate drove and upstream on what Phil calls the dustiest road he's seen in Chile.

He reports class **III** and IV at the start, followed by **class V** and portages, and ending with **class IV** above the take-out bridge. He says they had 800 cfs and that more would be better. I couldn't accurately locate this run on **topo** maps, hence have no gradient figures.



Lars Holbek photo

• THE RIO BIO BIO

By now you know that there's more to Chile than **the Bio**. From Los Angeles, 518 kms from Santiago, drive 17 kms south on the Pan **Am** to the road to Santa Barbara. Drive 80 kms to the Rio Queuco confluence, the lower of several possible **take-outs** for the Bio.

Some float the Bio from the Rio **Lonquimay** junction to the Queuco. Drawbacks are a long shuttle and kms of flatwater. In favor is the luxury of a multi-day trip. I prefer to run the two canyons as separate one-days, utilizing the hot springs between the canyons for camping.

The upper section includes the Lost Yak and

Chilean delegation visits U.S. to combat dam

By POPE BARROW

In early November of 1991, AWA arranged for a Chilean environmental activist, Daniel Gonzalez, to come from Concepcion, Chile, to Washington, D.C. in an effort to jump start opposition—both in Chile and in the United States—to the Pangué Dam project on the Bio-Bio River.

Until recently efforts in Chile and elsewhere to deal with this disastrous project have been enthusiastic but uncoordinated and largely ineffective. As a result of the Gonzalez visit, as well as the one-hour long ESPN special on the Bio Bio (which was aired nationwide in early November), interest in the Bio Bio's plight has suddenly exploded. Even more exciting is the formation (spurred on by the Gonzalez visit) of a new centralized organization in Washington, D.C. to coordinate a more aggressive and urgent international effort to help Chileans stop construction of the dam. The new organization is called River Conservation International. RCI is loosely affiliated with the International Rivers Network.

Gonzalez was joined in Washington by another Chilean, Victoria Fulton-Vicuna. The two activists spent a week in the nation's capitol promoting their cause and explaining the political and practical problems they face. AWA attorney, Steve Gates spent countless hours supervising and organizing the week of events.

Although AWA has rarely been this deeply involved in river conservation outside the U.S.A., the Bio Bio is a uniquely important river for the whitewater community. It has become the second best-known whitewater river

in the world. According to International Rivers Network, only the Colorado River in Grand Canyon is better known internationally for its adventure class whitewater. The Bio does offer some of the most exciting whitewater, combined with exotic wilderness scenery, to be found anywhere in the world. It truly is one of the best whitewater runs in the world.

Steve Gates reported that "the Chilean visit was a HUGE success." According to Gates, "the trip enabled two members of the key Chilean organization fighting the dam, Grupo Accion por el Alto Bio-Bio (GABB), to make critical face-to-face connections for the first time with decision-makers in international financial institutions and in several influential American environmental organizations." Some of these organizations, including the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, and Greenpeace, have extensive expertise in international environmental/finance issues. Gates, as well as the Chilean activists believe that this expertise is critically needed to stop the Bio Bio from being forever lost as a free flowing river.

The two Chileans literally ran themselves ragged trying to further their cause. They blitzed through downtown Washington making innumerable important political contacts and pressing their case at the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation (the IFC is the arm of the World Bank which is being asked to fund the project) and the U.S. Treasury (which supervises U.S. participation in the World Bank and IFC).

Gonzalez announced that "progress was made in awakening financial institutions to the many environmental objections to this dam, including the possibility of seismic disturbance (there are active volcanoes right next to the dam site!), water quality problems downstream, disruption of native Peheunche Indian culture and society, and the loss of a unique and valuable international tourist attraction".

On the downside, the Chileans explained to U.S. groups that the Pangué Dam project on the Bio Bio is being pushed by very powerful forces in Chile and Europe and may already be very near approval by the IFC. The IFC and other international financial institutions centered in Washington have been resistant to public review of the project. Despite their best efforts, the two Chileans and their American allies failed to pry loose from the IFC the environmental assessment for the project. That important document is still sitting at the IFC, and at the offices of the Endessa Company in Chile (the gigantic electric company backing the dam), totally unavailable to public scrutiny.

Another disturbing outcome of the Chilean's visit to D.C. was the realization by U.S. groups that the Chileans have very few resources available to them to pursue this fight. They have very little money, limited access to the Chilean Congress and almost no access to the Chilean media. The T.V. and newsprint media are both totally dominated by a pro-dam media blitz being waged by Endessa.

But as groups around the world have

learned, money can be raised and dams can sometimes be beaten back—even at the last moment—with the right combination of enthusiasm and political savvy. The enthusiasm is there, and the political savvy seems to be developing quickly. Chileans have been operating in a democracy with pressure group-type politics for less than 8 years. Before that they were suppressed by a right-wing dictatorship, the Pinochet Regime. With this recent experience of repressive politics and domination by State institutions, it is no easy task for environmental groups to wage war on powerful institutions (such as Endessa) which have government backing.

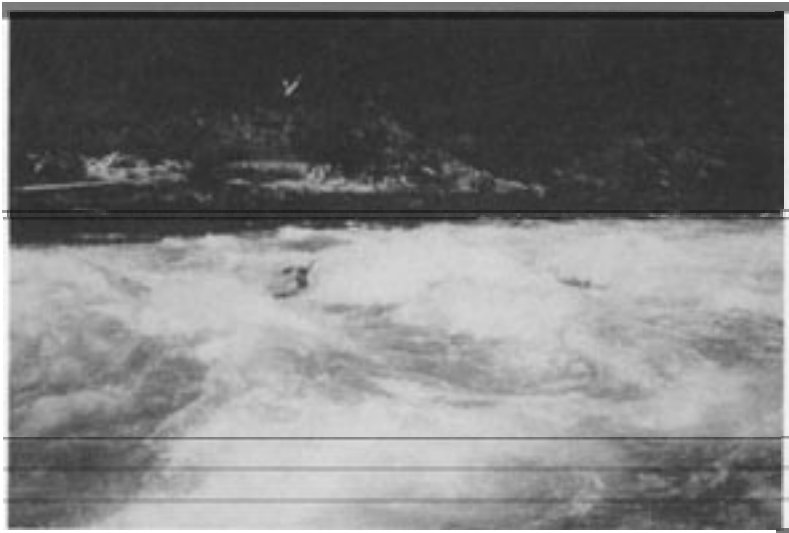
AWA remains 100% committed to fighting the Bio-Bio project and will continue to fund assistance for Chilean groups. However, in the final analysis, this project MUST be beaten in Chile by Chileans.

River Conservation International ("RCI") will be sponsoring trips to Chile in February to raise money for the Bio Bio fight and to interest influential individuals in the river's unique ecology and scenic values. Other activities are also on the RCI's drawing boards at this time, including sponsoring a visit to the World Bank by tribal leaders of the Pehuenche Indians who live in the Bio Bio Valley. Anyone who would like to contribute funds or volunteer assistance should contact River Conservation International at Suite 220, 1200 New Hampshire Ave, NW, Washington, DC, 20036 as soon as possible.

Lava South rapids. The famous Rio Malla waterfall plummets into the river just above Lost Yak. To run this stretch drive up from the hot springs, cross the volcanically silted Rio Malla on a wooden bridge, and continue until the road comes back to river level. The lower run from the hot springs to Rio Queuco encompasses the One-Eyed Jack Canyon and site of the first proposed dam. Both the upper and lower runs are 15-20 kms long, respectively. For the shuttle, a bike, second car, or **willingness** to "hoof it" are suggested as **traffic** on this rough road is infrequent.

The average gradient throughout these two runs is 6 mpk, although much steeper in sections of the two class V canyons.

•FUY



Lars Holbek photo

The Rio Pucon has two runs worth doing. Metrenehue bridge, on the road to **Lago** Caburga, serves as take-out for the upper run and put-in for the lower run. The lower run, perhaps 8 kms, ends at the ferry crossing of **Balseo Quelhue**, which you approach on a 2-km-long road. Look for it 1.5 kms east of Pucon on your left.

On river right, upstream from the Metrenehue bridge, drive a dirt road 8-10 kms and put in on flat water above the rapids of the upper run. There are class **III-IV** rapids on this stretch, as well as a portage around Salto **Mariman**, some 4 kms above the take-out.

Now well into the beautiful and lush lake region, exciting whitewater is less frequent. For those hungry for a jungle river with portages around incredible 50 meter waterfalls, with no poison oak or snakes, the Rio Fuy awaits.

From **Lanco**, 794 kms from Santiago, take the road to Panguipulli, drive around the lake and on to Puerto Fuy on **Lago** Pirehueico. The 8 kms from Puerto Fuy to the 50 meter Salto Huilo Huilo have some good playing, some **runnable waterfalls** and portages around some that aren't.

For the jungle epic option of 7 kms at 43 mpk, portage Huilo Huilo on the left, paddle to the next 50 meter waterfall and portage on the right through **bamboo**. Portage and crash **class V** and **VI** to a vertical gorge surrounded by dense bamboo. Portage trails were nonexistent **on my run in 1985**, so we carried up and out on the right. Recent reports have it that fishing trails on the left serve for portaging, and the **take-out** bridge is a few kms below. From this bridge begins a nice class **III-IV** run for 4 kms down to the bridge just above **Lago** Panguipulli.

•CAUTIN

The Rio Cautin, approached from Victoria on the Pan Am Highway, some 610 kms from Santiago, has a good run of **13 kms** at 19 mpk, providing enough water flows in the river. The third and fourth kms combined drop 50 meters and in this stretch exist complex rapids and a portage or two.

Drive **10.5 kms** east of Curacautin to the take-out bridge, then **13 kms** further to a put-in at the end of a long flat stretch that runs past **Malacahuello**, 5 kms upstream. Tromp across a field and RR tracks to reach this put-in just above where the rapids begin.

RIVERS OF THE LAKE DISTRICT

•PUCON

Pucon is the vacation spot for the Chilean wealthy. In summer months the town and surrounding area are crowded with tourists making the scene. For a **cultural** experience, and exposure to a density of Chilean beauties, enjoy an ice cream on the main street and watch the teenage courting rituals.

From **Freire**, 6% kms from Santiago, and 23 kms south of Temuco, drive the 60 kms of pavement to Villarica and then another 23 to Pucon.

•PETROHUE

Between the Rio Fuy and the **Rio** Petrohue **topo** map research reveals little gradient on rivers following into and out of the lakes in the region. The Rio Petrohue, however, has excellent whitewater and scenery. Depending on water level, one of the many drops forming the final waterfall at Saltos de Petrohue is usually negotiable. Be very careful here, as several fissures in the lava plug carry deadly torrents.

From Puerto Varas, 1027 kms from Santiago and 17 kms north of Puerto Montt, follow the south edge of **Lago** Llanquihue to **Lago** Todos **Los** Santos, put-in for the run. While gradient is unavailable, the run is 10 kms long, depending where you take out below Saltos de Petrohue, and flows in summer range from 3,000 cfs to much more, depending on rainfall. The Petrohue is big water, with punchy play holes and some you'll want to miss altogether.

•CHAMIZA

The Rio **Chamiza** flows out of **Lago** Chapo, 50 kms east of Puerto Montt. I once made a portage-fest run from **Lago** Chapo to the El Salto bridge 8 kms below. In the middle of this section the river drops 50

meters in 1.5 kms. We **hiked** out a few kms above the bridge through dense bamboo. A better run, reported as class **III** by those in our group who made it, departs from the El Salto bridge and has a take-out **11 kms** downstream where the road **swings** close.

•PUELO

I know of only two groups who have run the Puelo. The first group, in the early **1980's**, flew in to **Segundo** Corral. In 1991, a group started on **Lago** Interior (I believe) from the Argentine side, checked back into Chile at an immigration post on the lake, and paddled the river from source to sea. Rapids are allegedly up to class **IV** and I presume that flat water is abundant on this 2-3 day trip.

SOUTH OF THE LAKE DISTRICT

•FUTALEUFU

The **Rio** Futaleufu is the gem of Chile. Big class **V**, interspersed with long stretches of flat water through beautiful country, characterize this river.

Getting to Chaiten, gateway to the Futaleufu, is an adventure in itself. Two options now exist. The traditional is to drive half the length of the island of **Chiloé** to Chonchi and take the Transmarchillay ferry, which runs 3 days a week to Chaiten on the mainland. A recent alternative is to drive the newly constructed Carretera Austral, a 2 day **journey** with 3 fjord crossings aboard ferries. Both routes are great. I suggest driving the mainland route on the way down, catching the ferry to Chonchi on the way back. To assure yourself and vehicle passage on the ferry, reserve with Transmarchillay before you leave Santiago. Alternatively, leave your schedule open and try reserving the ferry when you get to Chaiten.

From Chaiten drive out of your way to **Termas** del Amarillo if you have time, a nice rustic hot springs resort. Back on the main road, cross the ferry at the **Lago** Yelcho outflow and drive on to **Puerto Ramírez** near the turnoff for Futaleufu. Drive up this road and cross the Futaleufu from river left to river right. A few, perhaps **as** many as 5 kms before this bridge, is a roadside campsite that we use **as** take-out for the lower run. Continuing up river from this bridge about 15 kms you'll come to a bridge across the **Rio Azul** and the local schoolhouse. Rio Azul is a common take-out for the upper run **and** put-in for **the lower** run. On the river left side of the Rio Azul is a private road that leads down to a swinging bridge across the Futaleufu. This is the easiest take-out site for the upper run that I know of. Running the **Rio Azul** from the schoolhouse to the Futaleufu is a nice way to start the lower run.

Drive on to the town of Futaleufu, crossing the Rio Espolon just west of town. This is a great put-in for the upper run and I've camped for days behind the locked gate on land next to the Espolon.

Both the upper and lower "Fu" have class **V+** that are portageable. To get a feel for the immenseness of the river, I recommend running first **the lower** section

before committing to the more remote upper section.

Topo map gradient for the Fu is sketchy. Total distance from the Rio Espolon to the lower take-out is about 45 kms. Flows ranged from 8,000-12,000 cfs on my **runs**. It's worth planning on spending some time in this area



Lars Hobek photo

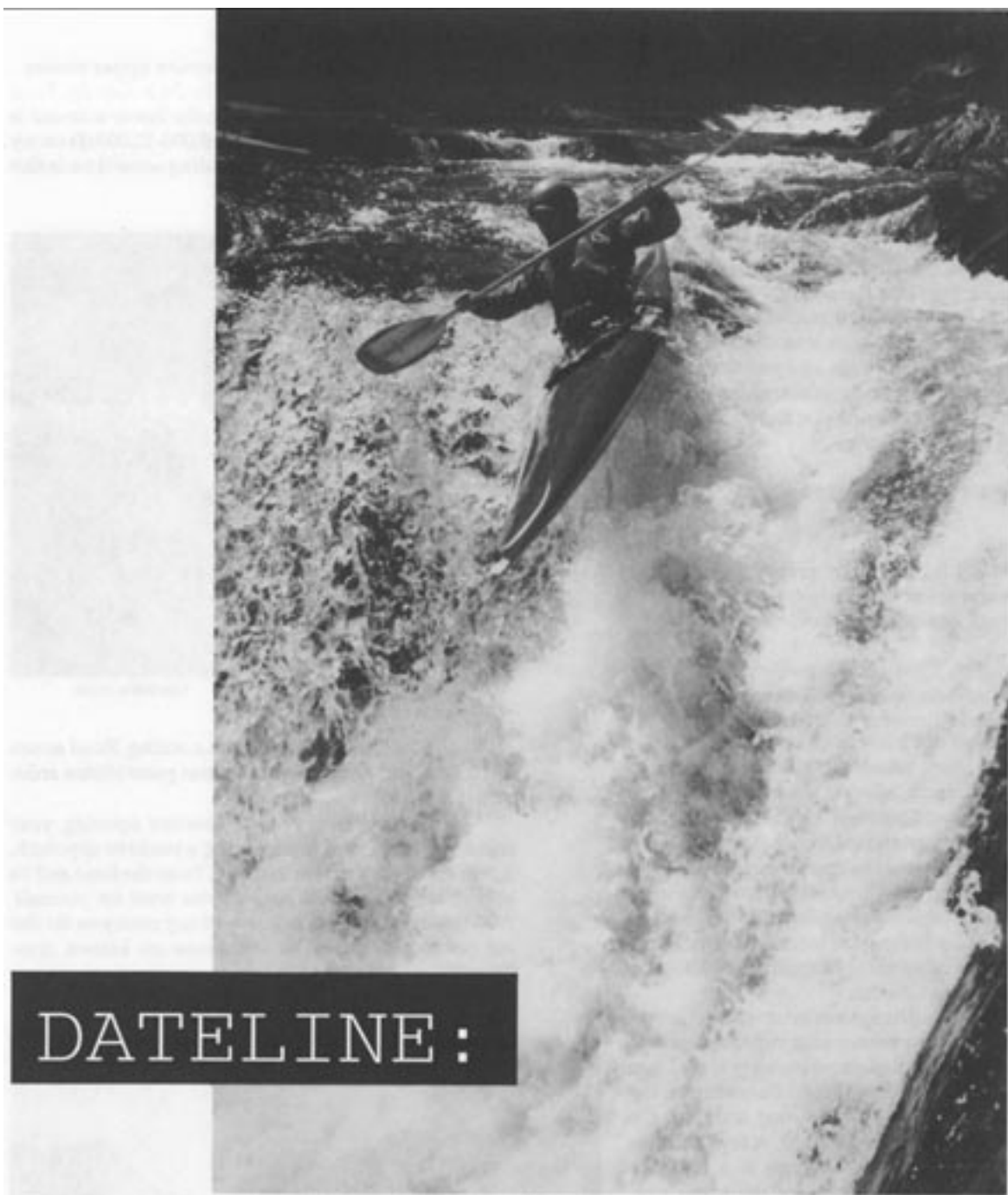
South of here I have run nothing. Road access is minimal, wilderness vast, bailout possibilities arduous.

A final suggestion: Practice opening your mind and heart, and maintaining a positive approach. It will come back to you in Chile. Treat the land and its inhabitants with all the respect you want for yourself. And finally, please let me know of any runs you do that are not in this guide, or variations on known ones. Enjoy!!



Lars Holbek photo

Special thanks to Beph Rypins for her editing, proofing, ideas, and use of her awesome Mac...



Scott Haskell photo

DATELINE :

GULF HAGAS

There's got to be an easier way to get your name in the newspaper than to run one of Maine's most challenging steep creeks.

By JOHN FRACHELLA

The BANGOR DAILY read, "Steep Creek in: Expert Canoers Jump Off Watery Cliffs Just for Fun". That part wasn't planned at all. The photographer just happened to be there, hiking with his camera on a trail along the rim of the gorge. Actually, we didn't want publicity because we didn't want company.

For us, four boaters was the ideal number for this tight, steep run. Everyone who's done this river agrees that the tiny eddies of the steep, technical run can, at best, accommodate four boaters in one group at any one time. More than that would be a crowd. Period.

On the day we had originally planned to run Gulf Hugas, too many uninvited (albeit fully qualified) boater friends wanted to go along. From the beginning we had planned for a group of only four: Courtney Parker, Doug Oliver, Bob Dellert and myself. We tried to keep our plans a secret, but it's hard to withhold information from that ubiquitous boating grapevine. The others wanted to go too.

The original plan was to run the river on Sunday, May 5, and despite objections from us, five other boaters (now for a total of nine) assured us they'd be at the put-in. A very uncomfortable situation began to develop.

In a pre-adolescent fit of excitement, Courtney, Doug and Bob made a last-minute decision to drive up the two hours from Bangor in the pouring rain on Friday night, May 3, to check out the level.

The water was one or two inches above the top of the footing of the concrete bridge abutment, an estimated 600 cfs. We were told that when others had run it in the past the water level was a little lower. This higher water was therefore, to us at that point in history, an upper limit.

The boys scouted the first couple of drops, then headed for home. They knew from what they'd seen that they definitely didn't want any more than the four of us in that gorge.

So, at 9 p.m., with the 'ol rain pelting down, they stopped at a phone booth in the sleepy town of Milo to give me a call. It was Doug's voice on the phone. "Johnny, we've decided to change the plan. Don't tell anyone, but we're gonna run it tomorrow instead of Sunday. The others'll be pissed, but it'll be a zoo in there with more than four boats." So be it.

The dice were cast, and our friends would probably not be our friends anymore. Nonetheless, we had to do what

we had to do.

We knew long ago what we were getting into with Gulf Hugas. The topo map shows the whole run to be five miles long. The gorge section is four miles long and three meters wide. In two miles of that section, the river drops 200 feet per mile.

A total of 13 others had run Gulf Hugas before we did, but we had hiked it plenty of times over the last decade. Six or seven years ago, Charlie Walbridge scouted it by walking up the entire gorge, swimming in the pools at the bottom of each drop and checking out the many rocks and their pin potential.

down and offered to guide the run with the other boys on Sunday. I felt better about my friends not missing the run, but I still didn't get much sleep that night.

The four of us met early in the morning and headed up north.

Gulf Hugas is the name given to the gorge created by the West Branch of the Pleasant River as it leaves its origins at Big Lyford and First West Branch Pond, cutting its way between Baker Mountain, Gulf Hugas Mountain and Elephant Mountain in north-central Maine near Brownville Junction.

None of the members of our



Scott Haskell photo

Dave Andrews boofs off the right side of Billings Falls.

Many times in previous years we had wanted to run Gulf Hugas, but either the water was way too high or way too low. The window of do-ability here is very narrow — maybe a few days in April, maybe a few days in May, but nothing you can plan for in advance, especially if you're traveling from a distance.

The water here rises and drops very quickly. Charlie Walbridge never did run Gulf Hugas because when the water level was right, he was in Pennsyl-

vania. If he had tried to get to northern Maine, the level would have changed — too low, too high, never the same two days in a row.

So after the phone call, I rushed around getting my gear together, while that comfy feeling of knowing I had one more day gave way to fear, worry and excitement.

I called Matt Lawler, a three-time veteran of Gulf Hugas, to verify that I was doing the right thing. He calmed me



Barb Taylor Parker photo

Bob Dellert caught in free-fall at Billings Falls on the Gulf Hagas.

group had ever run it before, and I think we kind of wished Matt was going with us. Our girlfriends and wives came along to take photos, and we said our goodbyes at the put-in.

The run began at a bridge off the access road above the Katahdin Iron Works. There was one mile of flatwater from the put-in to the first drop called Stair Falls. Here the river split in two around an island.

We opted for the river-left channel over three successive four- to five-foot vertical stairs into an eddy. Courtney led, and he hit hard midway down the middle step. Doug went next, got turned around somehow and made a clean run backwards! Bob and I followed Doug's route, only we decided to run it forwards.

A couple hundred yards downriver there's an eight-foot ramp into another eddy. Then the next drop is a 12-foot vertical beauty. Everyone had a fairly clean run here, which put us into a sizable eddy just above 20-foot Billings Falls.

Above us, on the rim of the gorge, the girls looked horrified. They shouted for us not to run this falls, probably because the up-river view they saw looked worse than the down-river view facing us.

Doug ran it first, right down the tongue in the middle. Bob ran it far river

right, boofing off an underwater ledge that shot him way over the falls in a really cool arc. Courtney ran Doug's route, but got stuffed underwater at the bottom of the falls. While we waited for his boat to resurface, Doug casually inquired if anyone had seen Courtney in a while. I ran the same route, got stuffed a little myself and had to roll. The girls were relieved.

John Connolly and the group that made the virgin run five or six years ago decided to dub Billings "Kazooti", specifically to confuse boaters and protect this river from exploitation and overuse. Another purpose for this nickname was to deter any self-sung heroes that could die there. This is definitely no place for the unqualified. The scare factor is 10 out of 10.

Below Billings things started happening very quickly with a series of smaller drops — six feet here, 10 feet there — and precious little time

to get our heart rates back down or plan our next move.

The gorge walls started getting steeper, taller and lots closer together. The sun wasn't getting in there very much, and huge, thick sheets of ice were clinging ominously — sometimes out into the river. The ice was melting, and I couldn't help but think that if one of those big sheets decided to let go, it would probably lodge underwater, creating a nasty strainer. I tried not to dwell on that.

Buttermilk Falls was half a mile downstream from Billings, and it looked pretty straight forward: an 18-foot vertical with a 60-degree tilt into a large keeper-like foam pile that we all went under doing full meltdowns in full-volume steep creek boats.

Between Buttermilk and the take-out, things get even busier. Davey Smallwood, who ran Gulf Hagas the next day with Matt, commented, "There are so many rapids here, you can't remember them all. It's constant, wild stuff."

Somewhere in this stretch there's a crazy section called Jaws. It's hard to say how long it actually is — maybe a quarter mile, maybe a half mile. Here the gorge walls get even steeper, darker, closer together and almost totally covered with ice.

For us, there were two portages

in this section. One had a horrendous undercut rock midstream, and the other featured all of the river's volume running headlong into a huge amorphous mass of granite located in the center of a narrow, steep chute.

On Sunday Matt's group opted for three portages in this section, deciding to forego a tight, curvy, boulder-strewn (possibly undercut) stretch that we had negotiated the previous day. This section had turned out to be totally unscoutable, and we were truly relieved that there were not nine of us in there at once.

Courtney ran it first. We couldn't see him at all, but heard him shout from below that he was all right. The put-in here (following an earlier portage) involved pushing off a rock shelf halfway down a waterfall, then launching sideways down a blind pitch. Bob had to roll here (successfully) and afterwards confessed that he had been almost sure he was gonna die.

The entire section had been terrifying. Portages we had considered mandatory required roping boats down sheer rock faces and around tight corners to avoid slippery ice.

Back in my boat, in more than one spot I found myself careening around corners, dropping over six- to eight-foot falls and shooting down steep slots and tongues. Often I would find the boys waiting with outstretched arms to catch an endloop or my cockpit rim. We'd cling onto one another or one another's boat until we'd had time to catch our breath and regain our nerve, only to then let go again and take yet another blind plunge. Not a good place for a crowd.

Hammond Street Pitch, the last rapid, consisted of a series of five- to six-foot ledges with a final chute that had a vertical ledge on the river left side and large round boulders along the right. In the middle lay a huge flat boulder on edge that looked ominously like a circular saw blade. We were all lucky (skilled?) enough to sneak around it.

During the entire run that day I had an uncomfortable feeling that if any of us got into trouble there was very little the others could do to help. Evacuation of bodies would be extremely dangerous and difficult. There's no major road nearby, and the woods there are deep and thick.

I tried to stay as positive and focused as possible. I had to roll once in Jaws, and once I had to swim out of a very small hole in a very easy section. I wasn't paying attention, and this hole, although small, wouldn't let go. In retrospect, I feel fortunate not to have broken any bones or

seriously injured myself anywhere on the run.

The scenery was breathtaking. Granite, huge pines, fir and a deep, dark primordial forest all around. But it's funny — when you do a run like Gulf Hugas, you're focusing on what's directly in front of you, not exactly on the panorama

The Sunday run included Matt Lawler, Davey Smallwood and Dave Andrews. That's when Scott Haskell, the BANGOR DAILY photographer happened along. He was on his own free recreational time, hiking with his own personal camera and his own film. It was happenstance that he was there, and I guess he was pretty freaked out when three boaters appeared at the lip of the first 20-foot vertical drop — Billings Falls — with all intention of taking the plunge.

And as if that weren't shocking enough, the first guy over, Davey Smallwood, got stuffed under the falls into the "Room of Doom" and then swam behind a huge curtain of water for 45 minutes while his buddies rescued him with a rope.

This is how BANGOR DAILY reporter Steve Kloehn recounted the incident:

David Smallwood paddled hard, digging into the West Branch of the Pleasant River as his closed canoe raced towards a 20-foot vertical drop. At the precipice, he took one last paddle. Then he was airborne.

Smallwood arched back, almost touched his helmet to the stern of the boat as it angled towards the roiling water at the foot of the falls. He hit hard, and the cold water rushed over him, filling his nose despite the noseplugs.

In a moment he pooped back to the surfaced little bit too far to the right. His boat was caught between a tall standing wave and a ledge, moving fast towards the ledge. Before he had a chance to get turned around, Smallwood was against the ledge, and he rolled underwater. He brought himself up easily enough, only to be rolled again, still pinned against the ledge. After his fourth foll, he decided to bail out.

He tried to swim over the standing wave, but it felt like he would be dragged under the falls, so he let himself be washed back into a cavern. There he pulled himself out of the water by wedging his body between two sheer walls. His companions could not see him, and from his position, he could not raise his head to call them.

Eventually they got a rope to Smallwood, which he tied around his waist. From there he belayed himself, like a mountain climber, laterally across the face of the gorge

until he was at a place where he could climb to safety

It was an hour before paddler, boat and paddle were all back ashore where they began. Smallwood was exhausted and shivering. He climbed back into his yellow canoe, pushed it into the rushing river and headed for



Taylor Parker photo

Doug Oliver threads his way through a technical course below Buttermilk Falls.

the falls again.

Of Billings Falls, Davey says: "This is not really a difficult run. It's pretty hairy, but it's not difficult. The difficult parts are the rapids that follow, a series of smaller drops, six feet here, ten feet there that leave a paddler very little chance to plan his next move. That's the stuff that's dangerous — rapid after rapid without a break." He commented that after steep creeking in West Virginia and even after three months in New Zealand, Gulf Hugas is the most challenging stretch of water he had ever tried.

How hard is the Gulf Hugas really? Matt Lawler, who has kayaked it three times, and John Connolly, who has done it twice (once in a C-1 and once in a solo open boat), had a minor disagreement on this question.

Matt thought at first that Gulf Hugas was similar in difficulty to the Watauga. But John was quick to remind him that the Watauga is not a Class V-VI run with two mandatory portages. 'Nuff said, I guess. But I don't know, having never run the Watauga.

By the way, I saw a video of part of Connolly's OC-1 run, and, as usual, he looked calm, smooth and confident. He had to roll at the bottom of Billings Falls,

but then so did a lot of decked boaters.

Two kayakers, Bill Dallam and Paul Nicholazzo, executed Gulf Hugas with one portage. They ran one of the two sections we carried in Jaws and wound up naming it Amok. Both agreed they would never run Amok again. No pun intended.

Who should try Gulf Hugas? My impression is that Gulf Hugas is not something for beginners, intermediates or even advanced paddlers — it's for a few experts who have the absolute ability to make their boats go where they want in life-threatening situations, regardless of the circumstances.

To successfully make this run, one must be strong, agile, in top condition and constantly alert. One must also be prepared to read difficult water and make decisions in a flash. The Gulf Hugas demands at least these qualifications. Making this run was certainly the most challenging point in my personal boating career.

Out of the deepest respect for all the Gulf Hugas veterans and in appreciation to the many who helped me with this article, here's the known list of graduates: Dave Andrews (K-1), Henry Mah (K-1), Ian Cameron (K-1), Paul Nicholazzo (K-1), John Connolly (C-1, OC-1), Doug Oliver (K-1), Bill Dallam (K-1), Courtney Parker (K-1), Bob Dellert (K-1), Jim Peppin (K-1), Fergie (K-1), Dale Rafford (K-1), Paul Fischer (C-1), Davey Smallwood (C-1), John Frachella (C-1), Dave Wood (K-1), Matt Lawler (K-1).

The Great Whitewater North...



By **ADAM SHANDRO**

Around the first of August my buddy, **Breck Seiniger**, and I grew weary of scraping down the same old rivers over and over again. We were anxious to explore some new water, but where?

Heading north seemed the obvious choice.

After **all**, British Columbia offered almost a **million** square kilometers of land and 843 rivers. There **would be** countless small streams and creeks feeding these rivers, and most of these had never been paddled. And so, after a couple of weeks of planning, we loaded our boats onto the Toyota and ventured forth.

The drive from Boise, Idaho to BC is **not** a bad one, about ten hours, unless of course you happen to be driving in the middle of the night. Then, with a little luck, it can be accomplished in a bit over eight.

We left Idaho late in the evening, so, as the sun came up, we were about to cross the Canadian border. We filled the



...Boating in British Columbia



tank, knowing that this would be the last time we would pay less than \$1.50 a gallon for ten days.

Crossing the border, we headed for the town of Chilliwak and the **Chilliwak** river. The water was a bit low, but the Canyon run on the Chilliwak, with a gradient of 110 fpm, **was still** a welcome warm up. We put in at mid-morning and took out at a fish hatchery just after noon. I was exhausted from the drive and the lack of sleep, but the feeling of having paddled my first river in BC gave me quite a boost.

We stopped to buy some of **Chilliwak's** famous sweetcorn, then drove to what seemed to be the social hub of the town, the mall. In the center of the parking lot a make-shift skateboard ramp had been erected. Here the local hot shots tried to impress the shoppers. This seemed a **likely** place to eat lunch, so we joined the crowd watching the **kids** show off.

As we sat eating our sandwiches an enormous green van pulled up with a

C1 and a **Pyranha** roto-bat on top. And so we first encountered Diesel Dave, a BC boater who, in one season, had done more than 110 different BC rivers. Diesel was familiar with most of the better runs in the lower half of BC, and, as luck would have it, was looking for people to boat with for the next four days. We quickly accepted his offer.

We were very lucky in meeting Dave because there are no definitive guide books to the better **runs in BC**. The series of guides by Betty Pratt-Johnson tends to overrate rivers and concentrates primarily on those with a class 3+ to 4- rating.

The longer we talked to Diesel Dave the **more anxious we became** to tackle some of the **more awesome BC** whitewater, and by mid-afternoon we had plotted our course for the next few **days and** were back on the road headed north.

After only a few hours of driving, that consumed what seemed to be millions of dollars worth of gas, we arrived in

Keefers, BC, along the massive Fraser River. The Fraser drains nearly one fourth of all the water in BC. The river we had decided to run the **next** day was a tributary of the mighty Fraser, the Nahatlatch. By the time we arrived at the river it was dark, so we couldn't scout, but Diesel informed us that this river was on Indian land and that night was a good time to drive to the campground.

Apparently during the day the Indians set up roadblocks on the dirt road and collect a small fee for the "rent" of the road. Still exhausted from the drive, we quickly pitched our tent and fell asleep to the gentle roar of the Nahatlatch.

When we awoke we were **relieved** to discover that it was not raining. We ate **quickly**, then headed to the headwaters of the Nahatlatch Canyon at Frances Lake. It would have been an uneventful shuttle if **Brick's** Corsica, piled high atop the van, had not connected with a low lying tree limb. Fortunately, the Corsica survived

this misadventure unscathed and, within a few minutes, was loaded back onto its rightful place, crowning the vehicle.

The Nahatlatch was simply beautiful. It's always amusing to paddle from a put-in on a lake directly into what proves to be the most difficult rapid on a river, in this case a gem called the Meat Grinder. It was a really only a solid class 4, but it was powerful, with 3 sticky holes to punch. The rest of the run through the 80 fpm Canyon was filled with great surfing and awesome hole riding.

The Nahatlatch Canyon proved to be a typical BC run, with gigantic pines reflecting hundreds of shades of green on the rushing water. Moss covered the steep rocky walls, giving the Canyon the atmosphere of a softly padded chamber.

After a few more steep drops and a zillion surfs we got back to camp. We agreed that the Nahatlatch was a great run, even more fun than the Chilliwak. Now we were hooked, obsessed with running as many BC rivers as possible. And so, we loaded the cars and headed north again.

As we continued our explorations the rivers just kept getting better. The next stop of our adventure was to be the Cariboo and Quesnel rivers, near Likely, BC, to the north of Williams Lake. Diesel estimated that it was a 10 hour drive from the Nahatlatch. A long haul, but luck was definitely with us. Not only did Diesel know all the rivers, but he had a cabin 6 hours North of the Nahatlatch at 100 Mile House. This would make a fine mid-way stop and Diesel mentioned that there was a great bar there as well.

Being only 17, I was excited, because I figured there was no way I could possibly get carded at a bar this far north.

When we finally arrived the bar turned out to be a lounge in a three bedroom motel, full of Indians swapping fishing stories and shooting pool. They made a few cracks about my age, but that was all they said to me. Breck, Diesel and I sat around talking about the awesome day of boating and about the rivers to be done the next couple of days.

Before we went to Diesel's place he warned us that many of the inhabitants of the cabins in the area, including his, use the railroad tracks as an outhouse. "So if you're up there laying coil, keep an eye out for trains," Diesel said.

That sounded like good advice to me.

Fortunately, we were all lucky enough to survive the peril of the tracks. Morning came too quickly, something typical of BC in the summer. We chased all the

critters from the cabin that had joined us for the night and once again headed north.

It was a beautiful mid-morning when we pulled into Likely. Dave took a picture of me in the old Likely jail and we consumed our usual 3 mugs of coffee. The best whitewater stretches on the two rivers we were going to do were about nine miles long. We figured if we got going we could do them both the same day.

We soon discovered that we were not alone. A group of ten boaters from the Calgary boating club joined us in surfing some holes on the Quesnel River. The playing here was awesome, reminiscent of Idaho's Lochsa or the Ocoee in Tennessee, but 5 times bigger and uncrowded. We spent all afternoon surfing and getting brain douched on the Quesnel. The best rapid was indisputably the Devil's Eyebrow, along series of holes and waves that seemed to last forever.

I could have spent the rest of August surfing the very first hole. The surfing spots came in every size, the only limiting factor being the size of one's balls. However, we were surprised how forgiving these holes were, relative to their size.

The Calgary boaters told us that the Cariboo was just as good, so, without hesitation, we headed for the put-in. For the next 35 minutes, Breck and I sat in the back of a pickup inhaling dust, being tossed about, and enjoying the scenic clear cut mountain sides.

Between the Calgary crowd, Breck, Diesel, and I, there were close to 15 boaters. The Cariboo starts just below an unrunnable 23 foot river wide waterfall with a recycle at the bottom which could surf as school bus. It was amusing to watch the salmon trying futilely to leap these falls.

As Breck and I changed into our boating gear we paused for a second to survey the river. It was amazing to see so much water in mid-August. The Cariboo, like most BC rivers, was glacial fed. And so, despite the fact that the air temperature was 80, the water was ice cold.

The rocky beach at the put in was a covered with the Calgary boaters. As I sat in my boat looking at the Canadian kayakers, I noted some obvious differences between them and kayakers from the states. The majority of Canadian boaters model their paddling style after the slalom racers. Almost every Canadian boater seems to belong to some kind of club. Apparently these clubs frequently organize trips to class three and four rivers. Most Canadians seem eager to boat with newcomers.

There are also a few smaller clus-

ters of kayakers scattered about BC's huge wilderness. They run class four to six rivers on a regular basis and keep a rather low profile, but if you happen to run into them, even on a class four like the Cariboo, they are worth observing as they surf and ender. Watching them go will definitely get your heart pumping.

In general, boating with the Canadians was a great time. When you drive as far as everyone did to get to these runs, it's proof that you really love the sport.

Once on the Cariboo I discovered that the rapids were almost identical to those on the Quesnel, featuring huge waves and holes. In spite of the size of our group there was room for everyone. I joined one of the Calgary boaters ripping up a steep wave in his Sabre, then, since my squirt boat was back at camp, I traded boats with one of the Canadians and squirted in some of the huge eddies.

And so we passed another superb but exhausting day of kayaking in BC. Diesel and about half of the Calgary boaters had to head home to work, but when we pulled into camp we found another group of boaters, this one from the boating club out of Vancouver. We sat around the campfire that night, trying to figure out what river to do next.

We had all heard stories about a river called the Chilko. Diesel had told us that this run should not be done by only two boaters because the closest road was 24 miles from the most difficult stretch of rapids. Fortunately for us the BC boaters decided to head there the next day.

The next morning we made a quick run on the Cariboo, then headed towards the Chilko. We spent most of the afternoon checking out the sights and small towns of BC that we passed along the way. The route was complex; we had to find our way through a maze of logging roads. It was almost dark by the time we pulled off Highway 20 near the town of Alexis Creek on the Chilcotin River.

The campsite was at the confluence of the Chilko and Taseko rivers, which give rise to the Chilcotin. There was just enough light to see the Chilko. Its blue color was like that of some tropical paradise, perhaps in Hawaii or the South Pacific. When the Chilko's water mixed with the silty brown Taseko, it made a cool contrast. We pitched our tent on a flat plateau 50 feet above the river, talked with the BC boaters about the legendary and almost mystical Chilko, and went to sleep.

When I woke up the next day, it sounded like the river was running right under my thermarest. After hearing so many great stories about the Chilko I was

so excited that I couldn't even remember what day it was.

I did remember, however, that it was **Breck's** turn to make breakfast. It seems like it wouldn't take a genius to figure out that you can't cook pancakes in a soup bowl without so much as a flipper! We learned this lesson well; I spent the next hour trying to scrape batter off the bottom of the bowl.

By the time Breck and I cleaned up our breakfast mess the BC boaters were ready to get going. We threw our wet, smelly gear into our bags and loaded the cars. The shuttle was no problem because two of the BC boaters had brought their wives along. The ride was typical of BC shuttles, a 40 minute bounce down a logging road to the put-in. It would have been uneventful had the Ford Van loaded **with nine kayaks** and eleven people **missed** the rock on the steep hill.

A big if! As it was all nine boats went torpedoing off the top of the van and slid down the steep bank. Our second boat launch of the expedition!

The water of the Chilko looked even more brilliant in the bright sunlight. The river bed was full; we knew the rapids were going to be huge.

The best water on the Chilko lies about 12 miles up from the camp. Since it wasn't even noon, we had all day to play. As I caught the first eddy I was amazed by the speed of the current. We surfed every wave we could, warming up for what we knew would be awesome whitewater below.

Not three miles from the put-in **we came to Bidwell**, the run's biggest rapid. Here a series of huge dynamic waves ended in three **wave/hole** combinations that made for great surfing. It reminded me of the North Fork of the Payette, only safer.

The infamous White Mile was just around the corner. This continuous wave **train** seemed to go on for more like six miles than one mile. A few bends later the entire river narrowed and flowed into the Lava Canyon. This looked like something out of **This** looked like something out of **National Geographic**; the canyon walls were covered with huge geods.

The whitewater of British Columbia has been compared to that of Chile. Chile is known for exotic runs like the Bio-Bio, Futaleafu, and the Fuy; but I'm convinced that if the Chilko was in Chile, it would easily rate with these legendary rivers. The Chilko was one of the best surfing rivers I have ever paddled and easily one of the most beautiful.

The river was teeming with so many salmon, and, in the two days we

spent on the Chilko, we saw bears, rocky mountain goats and more eagles than a person could count.

On the second day, Breck and I were drifting back to camp watching the eagles fly. One bald eagle lost a tail feather and I watched it spiraling down towards the river. As it got closer, I stuck out my paddle and, miraculously, the feather landed right on the blade. It seemed an omen; I still have that feather!

Breck and I were as tired as ever when **as we** got off the Chilko and changed into dry clothes. We only had a couple of days until we were due back in Idaho, so we loaded the Toyota and said goodbye to our Canadian boating friends. We were sad to leave the Chilko, but we knew someday we would be back.

Besides, no boating trip to BC would be complete without a stop to surf on the Thompson River. We made it there the next day. I remembered Rob Lesser saying that the Thompson's waves were some of the biggest he had ever tackled. We knew that when Rob said a wave was big, it would be big!

Despite the fact that we were exhausted, we spent an amazing day surf-

ing, concentrating on two waves, the Frog and Lunch Stop. The Thompson is said to be at its best in late summer and early fall, when the level drops to about 17,000 cfs.

The take out is at its junction with the **Fraser**, and so, in a sense, we had come full circle. We took our time changing and enjoying one last Canadian beer.

We knew it would be a while before we would be back to BC, but we were already making plans. Out of BC's 843 rivers, we had done six.

That left 837 for the next trip. BC is said to be one of the next great boating frontiers, and with good reason. Between the small forested canyons of the Nahatlatch, the huge play holes on the Cariboo and Quesnel, the massive wave trains on the Chilko, and the phenomenal surfing on the Thompson, BC has something for everyone.

The whole way back to Idaho, Breck and I chattered about the rivers we had paddled. Just before we got to the border, Breck turned to me and said, "**Man**, those BC rivers broke our fun scale. We'll have to pick up a new one at REI."

I could only agree!



Editor's Note: Adam Shadro (pictured above) is a hot young slalom racer and hair boater from Boise, who started college this fall.

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An insulted Gary relinquishes spot

Just the other day, a **girl**...I mean lady...I mean a woman paddler called me an anachronism.

Naturally, I was insulted.

"Hell," I said. "I don't even look like a spider."

Since she just laughed in my face, I figured maybe I had mistook her meaning. So I looked up the word.

"...out of time...outdated..." the dictionary read.

I didn't feel so bad, then. I always figured I was just as old-fashioned kind of guy.

But I've got to confess--old-fashioned boaters like me are a dying breed. It's damned hard to impress modern girls...I mean ladies...I mean women when you're not politically correct. Consequently--our rate of reproduction is way down.

Now I know a lot of you "enlight-

ened" paddlers might applaud that prospect.

"Get rid of old Gary and his ilk! It would be good for the sport!"

Well, okay then. I'll relinquish my spot in End Notes this issue. Bill Hay will take my place. And who knows--if you "modern" paddlers have your way, maybe Phil Donahue can write the next column.

Help save civilization... Don't clean your airbags

By **BILL HAY**

It's been a rough fall. There has been no rain in the East forcing thousands of boaters onto the Gauley and Ocoee. My paddling life has been rough, too. Recently, on the Gauley, I destroyed the bow of my boat doing enders. That was the same day I carried an open boat in at Panther Creek.

I know, I know. Such behavior is inexcusable. Interestingly, however, the broken boat led to a new scientific discovery.

Before doing a repair, I took out the air bags. I noted that they were encrusted with a thick, slippery, brown substance, so I decided to clean them. First, however, I began to wonder about the biological characteristics of this brown slime.

Being of the same scientific ability as Jerry Falwell, I decided I needed an expert. So, I called a biologist friend of mine and he graciously agreed to do a lab analysis of the brown slime for me. I sent a sample over.

The lab report arrived several days later. "The specimen consists of 90% dehydrated primordial ooze, 5% human sweat smelling of abject terror, and 4% other noxious substances which discretion prohibits detailing further. The remaining 1% consists of traces of

neoprene, polypropylene, athlete's foot fungus, peanut butter, and cheddar cheese. What toxic waste dump did this sample come from?"

I could account for **all** of this except the first ingredient. What, for heaven's sake, was "dehydrated primordial ooze?" A quick call to my scientist friend cleared things up.

"Well, Bill, dehydrated primordial ooze is, to put it simply, the stuff from which all life evolved. It is the dried form of the basic building blocks of life. It consists of the amino acids from which all proteins evolved. It contains **all** the ingredients for the development of more complex forms of life, like squirt boaters.

"Mixtures similar to this have been concocted and used in laboratory experiments for years," he continued. "But yours seems to have occurred naturally."

"Why is it so slippery?" I wondered.

"Well, the ooze itself is encased in a protective covering of immense strength. That is what is so slippery. We see many examples of protective devices that are slippery."

This fact had profound metaphysical implications.

"Does the slime have any ecological significance?" I also inquired.

"Certainly; given the human race's potential to completely destroy life on this planet. In the case of nuclear holocaust, environmental collapse, or a cosmic whimper, primordial ooze might well be the only surviving life form. Complex life would then have to evolve anew.

"Where did you get this stuff?" he asked innocently.

"Well," I mused, "on the Gauley, Cheat, Yough, Payette, Boise, Lochsa, Arkansas, James, Potomac..."

"Bill," he tried to interrupt.

"New, Meadow, Johns Creek, Nolichucky, French Broad, Watauga, Little Salmon..."

"Bill..."

"North Anna, Passage Creek, Tohickon, Shavers Fork, Cranberry..." Click.

Although my friendship with the biologist was somewhat strained by this conversation, he had impressed a clear moral principle on my mind. Never, ever clean the air bags in your boat. The continued existence of the planet Earth is at stake.

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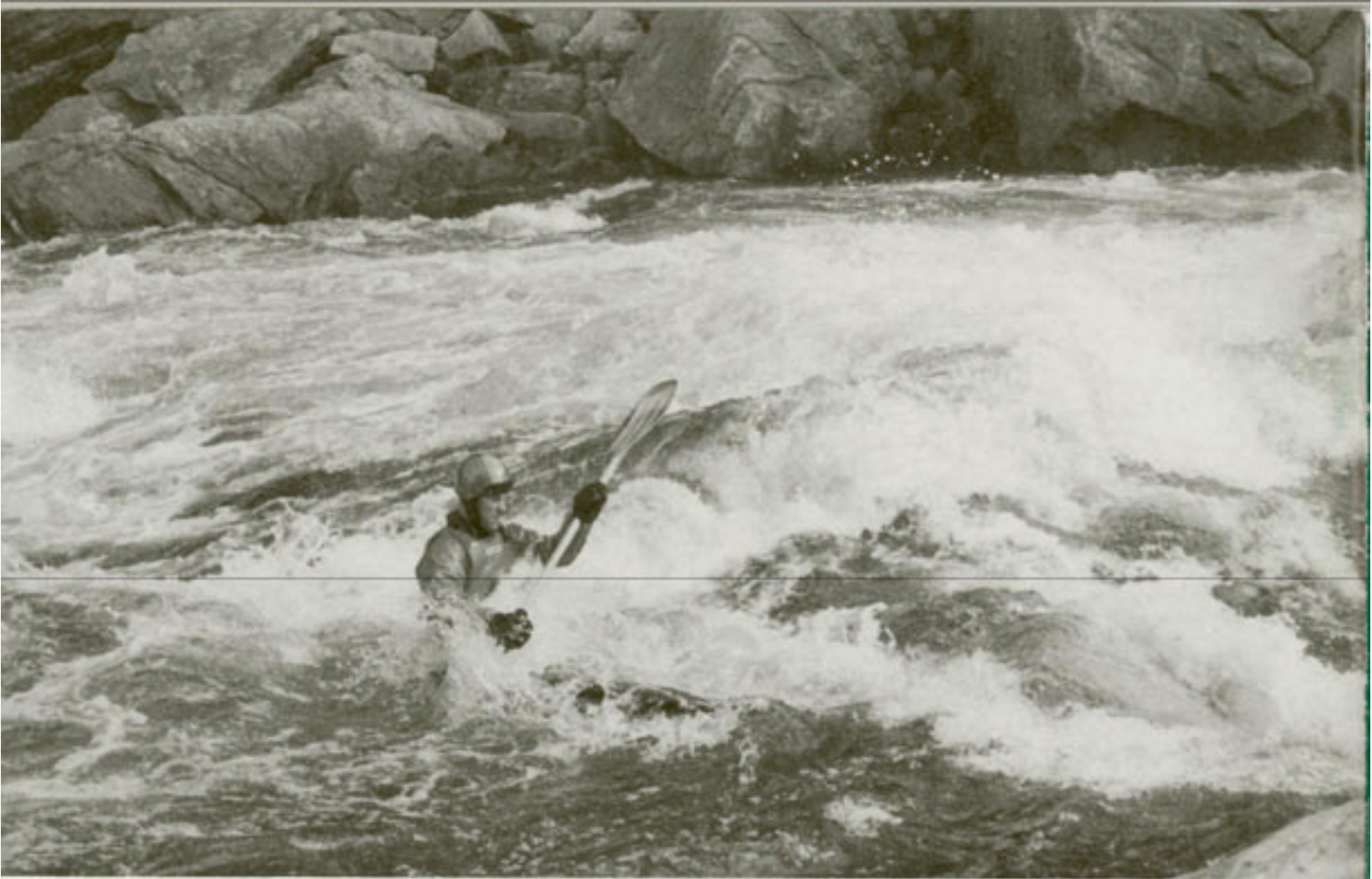
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