


# american whitewater

January/February 1998

Classic Southwestern  
**Colorado**  
**Whitewater** page 42







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## Classic Colorado Whitewater

### Finding your way to the best

You don't have to be an "extreme" boater to paddle some of the finest whitewater in the Centennial State if you follow this itinerary. And, you can double your pleasure, if you bring a mountain bike and hiking shoes along.

by Bob Gedekoh

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## The Beaver... Adirondack Whitewater Treasure

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Cover: Oceana Falls, Tallulah Gorge, Georgia  
Photo by Katie Nietart

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## You Live to Learn

The longer you live, the **more you learn**. Here are just a few of the pearls of wisdom I have accumulated over the years.

### Regarding gear:

The likelihood that a drysuit gasket will fail is inversely related to the ambient water temperature.

The harder a spray skirt is to put on, the more likely it is to pop off.

The only thing sadder than a broken glass boat is a broken plastic one.

### Regarding river running:

If there are two lines through a rapid, the strainer always blocks the easiest one.

The more critical it is to make a boof, the less likely one is to make it.

It is best to tell lies about class V rivers that are far, far away.

The more likely a boater is to remember the swims of others, the less likely he is to remember his own.

### Regarding swims:

It is better to go for a swim in January than to paddle through the spring



and summer, waiting in suspense for the ax to fall.

Anyone who says they never swim either doesn't boat much or lies.

If you don't swim once in a while, you aren't trying hard enough.

(Walker's Law)

No matter how terrible things may seem, they will only get worse if you abandon your boat. (Tomko's Law)

No matter how hard you throw the rope, it always falls six inches short of the swimmer.

If a swimmer winds up on river left, his boat inevitably winds up on river right. And vice versa. The paddle disappears into the undercut in the middle of the river.

Unless, of course' someone in the

party has a breakdown paddle. No one ever loses their paddle when a breakdown is available.

### Regarding shuttles:

There is no such thing as a short cut. (Gedekoh's Law)

It is better to spend several hours trying to extract a vehicle from a mud puddle than to spend a few minutes paddling flat water to the regular take out. (Tuscano's Law)

No amount of clearance is ever enough.

The oil drops under the shuttle vehicle did not fall from the sky.

### Regarding editing this magazine:

If a story is well written, the pictures are lousy. If the pictures are great, the story stinks.

Most of our contributors should use periods more often and other marks of punctuation less.

Because... When a sentence has more than three commas, it is the

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

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

editor's prerogative to make any one of them a semicolon. Regular colons are for anal compulsive sissies. Apostrophes are optional. No matter where you put them, it's wrong. Hyphens screw up line spacing - so we never use them. Finally, when you don't know what punctuation mark to use, try an **ellipse...**

Although writing in the present tense gives a story a sense of urgency and makes it more exciting, to read, it is very difficult to do correctly and so is best left to professional writers. I am not a professional writer and neither are you.

If God had wanted us to surf cyberspace, he wouldn't have made waves.

If deadlines had anything to do with death, the cemetery would be full.

When you don't know how to end an article, try an ellipse...



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## Accept New Rating System!

Dear Editor:

In the last issue of AMERICAN WHITEWATER you saw the results of AWA Safety Chair Lee Belknap's two year effort to make the river classification work better. Processing dozens of returns on hundreds of rivers from boaters throughout the country was a huge job! When I read the article I became uncomfortable. This is not the way I'd rate those rivers! I imagine other people had similar reactions, and for the same reason.

But the specific rating numbers are unimportant; the real issue is uniformity. The old system was too variable. You don't need much imagination to see how people could get into real trouble because of it. In the interest of better communication we need to get beyond our own private (or regional) way of rating rivers! It's too quirky and inaccurate.

I plan to learn the new system and use it. I'd encourage everyone else to do the same. Let's make giving accurate river information one of the characteristics of a good paddler.

Sincerely

Charlie Walbridge

*Editor's Note: If the new system is okay by Charlie, it's okay by me! A lot of work went into it and it deserves widespread acceptance.*

## In Search of the North American River Elephant

Dear Editor:

I read many of the internet postings following the Upper Gauley death last September. As is usual in a situation of this magnitude, dissection had begun regarding responsibility. There were postings on what should have been done, as well as discussion of what shouldn't have been done.

Before the electron microscope becomes stuck on who and what to blame, I think it's time to go in search of the elusive North American River Elephant.

While it is important to continually process safety issues in regards to clients, there is an immense problem. As is typical of human behavior, at least at this time in our society, we are 'lost' in the introversion of the would'a, should'a, could'a's, and unable to see the big picture.

We are standing right next to this massive beast, and I mean so close that all we can see is the individual hairs. There is no dis-

cernment as to what this 'thing' really is. And so we study this hair and that hair, and we pick it apart, but still are unable to 'see' what this 'thing' is.

Looking at it from this distance will not work. Back up, back waaaaay up. And then you'll see it. That Big Elephant. So ridiculously large, we wonder how we missed it.

There are several phenomena that have contributed to creating this ever growing beast on the river.

We exist in a time of rapidly diminishing and decaying personal responsibility. Lawsuits proliferate and create a new rich of our time. This feeding frenzy that feeds upon itself has spawned the Church of Victimology, which claims thousands more adherents yearly. The true elephant is the death of personal responsibility.

And, as if trying to redeemingly be born out of these moral ruins, a new human trend emerges. Adventure. Whitewater rafting. But, this is not Disney Raft World. The river is not a safe and insulated theme park. The river is the pulsating vein of nature raw, and from its continually teaches history's hardest lesson. Sooner or later nature will always win.

Woe be to the raft companies that try to acquiesce to the current victim trends. Woe be to the raft companies that subtly or loudly

promote that roller-coaster water ride attitude toward the river.

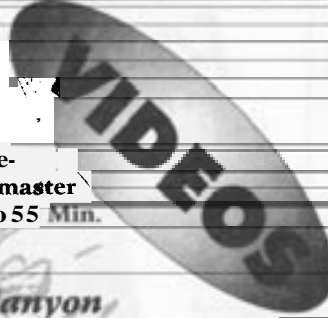
No matter how good a company or individual guide is or becomes, 'something' will inevitably happen, the river will have her way, and deaths will occur. By trying to pasteurize the river, we only patronize nature.

Demand personal responsibility. Stamp out any "don't worry, you'll be ok" attitudes. The finest thing you will ever do is to really get someone to accept true responsibility for the challenge of the river. This is real personal growth. Don't sugar coat it.

"People have died on this river and people will continue to die on this river. You must choose to accept responsibility for the possibility of death today. We will do what we can to minimize that hazard and you will need to do what you can. But be sure you understand one thing; the river has the final say. There is no shame in choosing to not take this trip. Please take a minute of silence to reflect on your decision. Those who wish to leave, may do so."

There should be a sign at every raft company stating how many deaths have occurred on that river. There is a good possibility it will affect raft company profits, but maybe not. Like the river, it's a risk. But more importantly, it is the truth.

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You will have done someone a great personal favor, if, in their gut, they accept responsibility and then meet the challenge of the river. It will be their success—not the guide's, and they will be changed forever. One person beginning to emerge from the clutches of victimology will lead to another.

No one should be on the river that hasn't been shown the North American River Elephant.

Sincerely,  
Peter Lauritzen  
Miami, Florida

*Editor's Note: Peter Lauritzen is the Director of Project Challenge.*

## Why No Product Reviews?

Dear AWA Journal,

I think you guys do a wonderful job with the publication making it fun to read. It is jammed full of great information on river access and exciting places paddlers have gone or can go.

My memory may be shot but I don't remember seeing a column that tests and compares gear. Have you ever thought about such a column? I am not talking about techno mumbo jumbo but the truth and how a product performs where it counts, on the river. I also believe that your publication does a good job including all boaters, not just hairball, waterfall dropping, hole playing rad dudes and dudettes. So I believe this column should include testers from every aspect of boating to give a full and complete account of the products performance. There are so many new and exciting products out on the market how can we weekend paddlers ever keep up. Yours is the only publication that I feel is truly for boaters. Will you help us paddle through the junk and get to the stuff that works?

Keep up the good work! Please let me know if I can help in any way with this or any river issue. I have paddled in the South in prior years and now I paddle all around the Sierra's.

As my good friend George Waring says "Paddle Free!!!",

Michael DiGiorgio  
Truckee, California

*Editor's Reply: The various companies which manufacture whitewater gear and boats have been extremely generous to the AWA over the years...funding much of our conservation and access work. Attempting to review their products would place us in an ugly dilemma. If we said a product was inferior we might lose badly needed support. If we gave a product a favorable review, our objectivity would be*

*questioned. Besides, boater's preferences regarding gear are notoriously subjective. Some of my friends swear by models of boats that I wouldn't be caught dead in. We appreciate your opinion, but gear reviews are muddy waters in which we choose not to swim.*

## Ocoee Death a Wake Up Call

Dear Bob,

I was on the scene shortly after they pulled Mike Reisman out of the Ocoee on that fateful day. I know how hard those good samaritans were working to save Mike, against ever increasing obstacles. While I watched in the cold rain, it dawned on me that a lot of us who have been paddling for a while take the inherent risks for granted. After all, this was **just** the Ocoee, a river that most of us on the scene, including Mike, had paddled many times. I realized that this isn't an amusement park, although it seems like it sometimes, and that OSHA hadn't been here to assure its safety.

Although I don't know what he was wearing while he was paddling, Mike was now lying on that rock dressed only in a long sleeved poly top and shorts. He was barefooted, as I was, since we both were paddling RPM's. I was getting cold, and I had on a long sleeved polartec top under a drytop, with long wetsuit pants. I kept kicking myself for not having purchased that space blanket I had been thinking about for cold weather paddling. I surmised that hypothermia must be exacerbating the problem of Mike going into shock and subsequently, cardiac arrest. Yet no one had anything to offer that could have been used to keep the elements off of him.

This tragic accident occurred in a river near a heavily traveled road, with emergency help only moments away. I estimate Mike was in the ambulance 45 minutes after he was pulled from the water. It exemplifies how fragile we humans are when injured and how fast life deteriorates under extreme stress. Most of us paddle in winter conditions that are much more remote than the Ocoee. Most of us are not even remotely prepared for dealing with an accident victim under these conditions, or even if we are hurt ourselves.

This incident should be a wake-up call for all of us to be prepared for situations where members of our boating family could perish. After I got home, I purchased that space blanket (two bucks at Walmart, and it only weighs a couple of ounces). It will be in the first aid kit in my boat from now on, and I will replace it with a new one every year. We should all get back into the habit of carrying throw ropes, and knowing how to use them. We should all be trained in CPR and First Aid.

We should all take a whitewater rescue course and practice the techniques we learn. We should dress like we are going to take a swim, even if we haven't taken one for a while. We should wear full coverage helmets.

These are just the bare minimums. If we paddle really remote areas, we should consider taking EMT training. I don't know if I had been carrying a space blanket on that day, it would have made any difference. I would like to be able to turn the clock back and see.

Sincerely,  
Jim Daniel  
Bluegrass Wildwater Association

## Women, Get a Life!

To Linda Peer, Kipchoge Spencer, and the PC defenders:

Quite a few women seem miffed at the AWA Journal these days. Apparently editor Bob Gedekoh is allowing sexist drivel from various masculine boating legends to penetrate his filter. Granted, women and men differ in many ways, including (but certainly not limited to) our motivations and attitudes about boating. Boating as a sport is populated predominantly by men, so it's no surprise that whitewater language and prejudice is masculine.

Political correctness has made real contributions to our society. The PC movement has reduced rudeness in our media. Our PC monitors maintain that racist, sexist, and otherwise unPC language and jokes, regardless of disclaimers, are rooted in real bias. They further maintain that the elimination of such language in public forum will hasten the death of some truly detestable values that were the norm not so long ago.

However PC has overstepped its bounds. In the name of PCness, people often take the enforcement of widely accepted values so far as to be prudish. Rather than allowing others to express frank off-color opinions, or to make jokes, PC defenders prefer that we limit our language. Better to say nothing, to be boring, than to offend someone. In the rowdy subculture of whitewater boaters, to be politically correct is to be a pawn.

What if Corran Addison and Jonathan Katz really **are** sexist pigs, in spite of Bob's "they're just joking" defense? Does it matter? I don't have to hang out with them. I often bypass their columns because they are intentionally rude. That's my prerogative. It doesn't mean I can't appreciate their sheer GALL.

Personally, I think women would do more good for our gender by standing up for ourselves in real ways—like on the river, at home, at work—instead of being nitpicky about some guy's language. These men get what they deserve. If we women want our attitudes to be better represented in the AWA



# Guidelines for Contributors

Please read this carefully before sending us your articles and photos! This is a volunteer publication, please cooperate and help us out. Do not send us your material without a release - signed by all authors and photographers (attached)!!!

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

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

If possible articles should be submitted on a 3" computer cassette. (WordPerfect preferred - others accepted.) Please do not alter the margins or spacing parameters; use the standard default settings. Send a printed copy of the article as well.

Those without access to a word processor may submit their articles typed. Please double space.

Photos may be submitted as slides, black or white prints or color prints. Keep your originals and send us duplicates if possible; we can not guarantee the safe return of your pictures. If you want us to return your pictures, include a self addressed stamped

envelope with your submission. Because we publish in black and white, photos with a lot of contrast work best.

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

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

If you are writing about a commonly paddled river, your story should be told from a unique perspective. Articles about difficult, infrequently paddled or exotic rivers are given special consideration. But we are also interested in well written, unusual articles pertaining to class III and IV rivers as well. Feature stories do not have to be about a specific river. Articles about paddling techniques, the river environment and river personalities are also accepted. Pieces that incorporate humor are especially welcome. Open boating and rafting stories are welcome.

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

Profanity should be used only when it is

absolutely necessary to effectively tell a story; it is not our intent to offend our more sensitive members and readers.

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

Articles will be edited at the discretion of the editors to fit our format, length and style. Expect to see changes in your article. If you don't want us to edit your article, don't send it to us! Because of our deadlines you will not be able to review the editorial changes we make prior to publication.

American Whitewater is non-profit; the editors and contributors to American Whitewater are not reimbursed. On rare occasions, by prearrangement, professional writers receive a small honorarium when they submit stories at our request. Generally, our contributors do not expect payment, since most are members of AW, which is a volunteer conservation and safety organization.

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

I understand that my work may be edited or cropped at the editors' discretion.

I understand that I will not be paid for my work.

I accept responsibility for the accuracy of the information included in my submission. I have not libeled or slandered any individual, corporation or agency in this work.

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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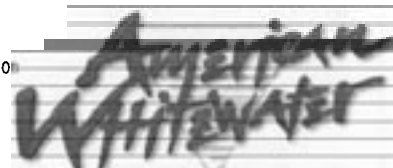
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Journal, we'd best get to writing. I'm sure Bob Gedekoh would be thrilled to print some obviously female-biased features.

Sincerely,  
Teresa Gryder  
Denver, CO

*Editor's Note: For more on this subject see Perri Rothemich's article in the Rivervoices section of this issue.*

## A "Feminist" Checks In

Dear Editor,

In response to Linda Peer in Phoenixia, NY, I say three hoorays to you, Linda, for standing up for what you believe in! But, you're playing right into the hand(s) of people who don't understand your anger. Lighten up girl! Didn't your mother tell you (the secret) that you catch more bees with honey? Complete ignorance (Corran) isn't a crime and the more sexist a man is, the more vulnerable (gullible) he is. After all - the most powerful thing in the world is a smart woman! A sexist attitude is very well-dated and noticed by everyone. Ha! I say - leave 'em (the sexists, the male chauvinist pigs, along with the rest) the way they are - in the dark. It shows their weakness. Besides, they're more easily lead around that way! Power up girl - capitalize on their misperceptions to keep the upper hand. Remember - femininity is power.

"A feminist"

PS-If you're real sweet - ha! You can get 'em carrying your boat, running shuttle, springing for the beer. Just limit this to the sexists! Don't want to abuse the mature ones!

## The Battle Rages On

Dear Linda,

My first task was to try to understand what your point is with regard to your two letters addressed to American Whitewater and I. After much deliberation, I have decided that you, and thus your argument, fall under one of two categories.

1. The first, a frustrated house-wife, tired of Opera, and looking for something to do. Feminism sounded good, so off you went on your valiant cause - to uphold the rights of women.

2. The second, an intelligent, educated, woman, standing up for her rights as a member of our society; a woman who has been wronged, and intends to seek retribution.

In the first case, my reaction would be to

simply fuel the fire. The feminism, or attack on my political correctness, displayed here is unwarranted, ill thought through, and seemingly meaningless. So my response to you, if you fall under the first category, is to do what I can to get you really excited.

Thus: "You will never be my equal. I have a penis, and you don't." If that doesn't do it, I don't know what shall?

However, if you fall under the latter (which I hope to be so), then your argument needs further consideration.

There are, in fact, two issues here: the first, my 'political correctness'. The second, the content of the article in question.

When in the company of a woman, I hold the door for her to pass through. I open the car door for her before my own, offer her coffee first, and insist on carrying heavy things. I fix damaged wires on electrical appliances, and I still pay for dinner, movies and the tickets to the symphony. When I see a beautiful woman. I look, and if given the opportunity, will attempt to make conversation. By some, this makes me a dinosaur - a relic from the past. Today, these actions are quite 'politically incorrect'. But I will not sacrifice - give up my beliefs - of what I see to be chivalry and politeness, for what you deem incorrect behavior in the '90's. I do not see men and women as equals. I see us as different, both needing the other, both with special talents, needs and wants. Neither as inferior nor superior. Simply different. That makes me "politically incorrect." I'll thus wear the label with pride.

The article, on the other hand, had nothing to do with any of this. It was a light hearted jab, and solution (?), at the normal, and very real, tension between paddlers and their non paddling significant others. The fact that 90% of paddlers are men, led me to use the terms "him" and "her" in the roles played, simply because that is the overwhelming norm (better than "it" said and "it" did for the purpose of the article...), but it applies to both sexes. Political correctness had nothing to do with any of it. Whether it is a man or a woman needing time to go kayaking is irrelevant, the problem is the same, as is the solution (if that was indeed the intent of the article).

So while it has been all too amusing to read your fumed letters of attack, I must insist that your argument is both irrelevant and futile. It has no bearing on the article in question, and less on life itself.

Sincerely  
Corran Addison  
Quebec, Canada.

*Editor's Note: As of this issue I am putting the topics of "feminism in boating" and "political correctness" off limits for at least six months. Enough is enough!*

## Thoughts From A Paddling Addict

Dear Editor,

Thanks to all the folks at AWA who keep this great journal under control. I hope it remains the voice of paddlers without too much advertising. I can't wait for the postman to bring the next issue! I was greatly touched by everyone who contributed to the tribute to Rich Weiss. I only wish I could have been one of the lucky ones and paddled with him.

I would also like to thank some of the writers whose articles I have enjoyed. These are my picks for top honors.

Best Writer: Doug Ammons for "The Real Sh\*!" and "Old Friends".

Best Technical Article: Corran Addison for "Choose Your Weapon".

Best Paddling Tip: Jamie Simon for "Women Can Push Limits, Too!" She says, "I love to put on a dress after running something really hard. Try it, it's fun!" Well I tried it and it's fun!!!

Worst Paddling Article: This is almost a tie, and they came from some other magazine. "Nations Worst Shuttles" and "Hot Playboats From Two Years Ago!" Enough said!

Thanks to Rich Bowers for the color cover, I like it. Although a quick check of my old journals show color covers in '83 and '84. Also a great color feature of the Moose from 1982.

Also, can Dagger please provide get a variety of pictures if they are going to hog the back cover?

And thanks to whoever put together "Two Modest Proposals For The Future Of Kayaking". Excellent writing!

Final thought, could you run more articles on urban flatwater touring?

Gary Korb  
Port Orchard, Washington

*Editor's Reply: Your wish is my command! Coming in the next issue: "Kayaking Kansas City" and "Canoeing Cleveland: A Definitive Guide". (Only kidding!)*

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# Purpose

## American Whitewater

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

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

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

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

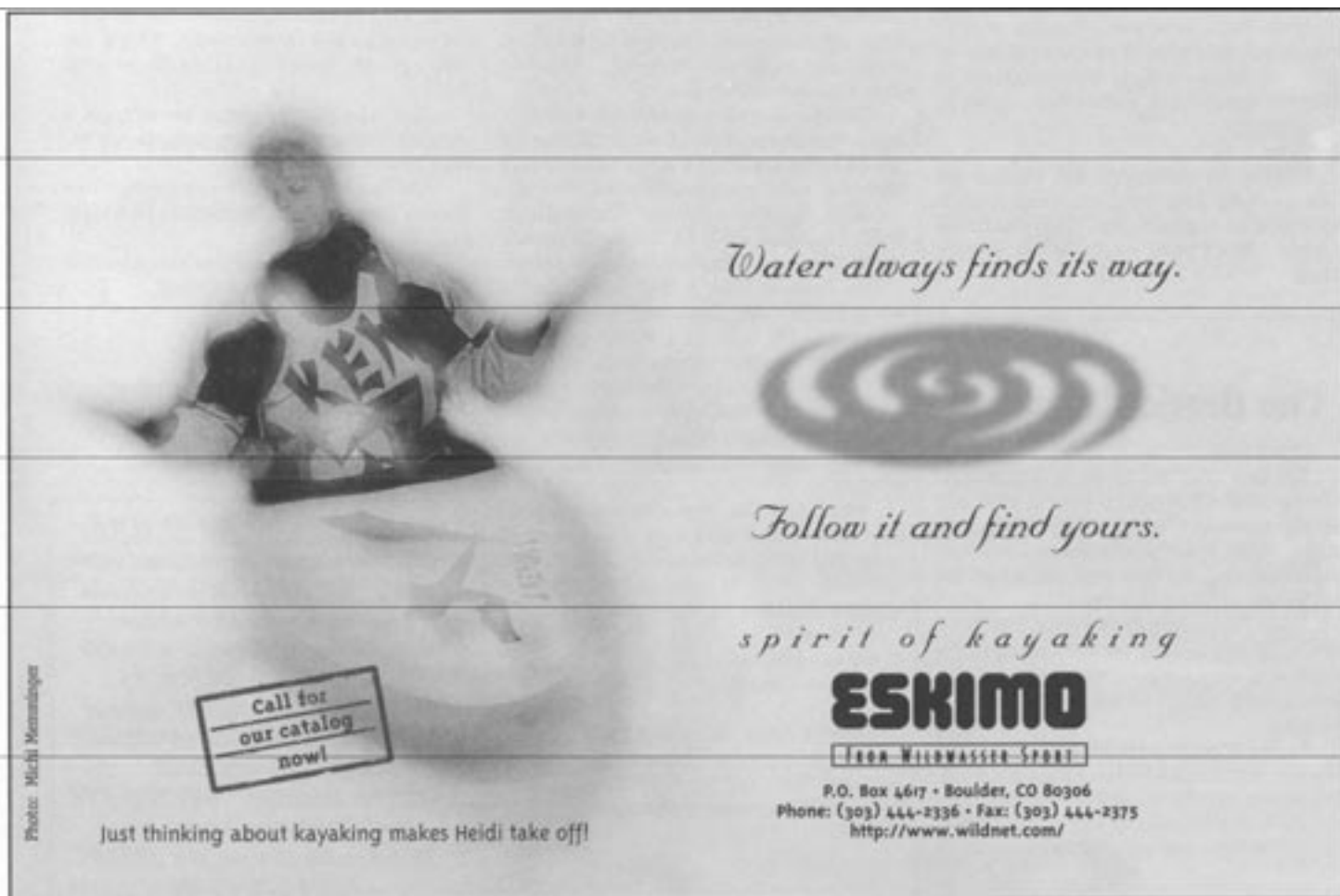
**EDUCATION:** Through publication of the bi-monthly magazine, and by other means, American Whitewater, provides information and education about whitewater rivers, boating safety, technique and equipment.

**SAFETY:** American Whitewater promotes paddling safely, publishes reports on

whitewater accidents, maintains a uniform national ranking system for whitewater rivers (the International Scale of Whitewater Difficulty) and publishes and disseminates the internationally recognized American Whitewater Whitewater Safety Code.

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

American Whitewater was incorporated under Missouri non-profit corporation laws in 1961 and maintains its principal mailing address at 1430 Fenwick Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301) 589-9453. American Whitewater is tax exempt under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.



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## Director's Cut

By Rich Bowers

### 1997 - A Year of Restoration

I hope everyone had a great holiday season! Holidays are such a great time for retrospection, just as the start of the new year is a great time to look ahead and anticipate new personal, recreational, and work-related opportunities.

Over the last month I've had the chance to do both. In addition to planning budgets and resetting priorities for American Whitewater, I've had the time to review 1997 and what this has meant for rivers, especially regarding the restoration of some of this country's most remarkable rivers.

While American Whitewater may mean different things to different people, those most closely involved consider us, first and foremost, a river conservation organization. For me (and I think most of our directors and staff), being safe, getting to the river, celebrating rivers and my love of boating, all are part of conservation and what makes saving rivers so important. In this light, 1997 was a fantastic year.

In some years, success is measured in how a specific dam was stopped, what legislation was passed, or perhaps by how a polluter was reprimanded. Rarely, success is measured in landmark decisions like the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act or the Clean Water Act. Last year, a different yardstick measured success — how many rivers were brought back from the dead!

It's an impressive list. Add the Deerfield (MA), Tallulah (GA), the Taylorsville, Eagle and Moshier sections of the Beaver (NY), Nisqually (WA), and in late November, the lower Kennebec (ME) to the list of rivers again becoming suitable for fish, wildlife, and human use. Look at how rivers such as the Kern (CA), Coosa (AL), Bear (ID), and others are getting increased flows, protected buffer zones, better water quality — and you have a banner year. And these results are just the beginning of more than five years of work by conservation and recreation groups. Expect more rivers to be restored soon.

Retrospection is, by definition, based on memory. My memory recalls that these victories were the product of a great number of people. As Executive Director of American Whitewater, I am especially proud of the part that our organization played in many of these efforts — but the real hero for rivers is not any single group. River work depends on grassroots effort — the work of a small group here, the often outspoken or highly energized personality there.

In 1997, it was Tom Christopher (AW and New England FLOW) working on the Deerfield. Lonnie Carden working on the Coosa. Brooke Drury and Mike Deckert on the Nisqually. Chris Koll, Pete Skinner (AW) and Bruce Carpenter (New York Rivers United) working on the Black and Beaver. It was Steve Brooks and Mona Janopaul (Trout Unlimited) and Margaret Bowman (American Rivers) working on the Kennebec. Ron Stewart, Dave Cox, Kent Wigington, and Risa and Woody Callaway (AW and GCA) on the Tallulah. It was hundreds of others, both professional and volunteer — river people all.

Whitewater boaters should be proud that so many of the names are friends, fellow boaters, and clubs and organizations affiliated with American Whitewater and the coalitions to which we belong. The successes of 1997 will be hard to follow, but I expect river restoration to continue in the future, and I promise that American Whitewater will continue to play its role in the future conservation and restoration of our wildest rivers.

Update: As we went to press, Perception Inc. had just announced their selection of Tom Christopher, American Whitewater Director and Secretary for New England FLOW, as their "1997 Conservationist of the Year." This award was presented to Tom for his volunteer efforts on rivers throughout New England, and specifically in recognition for his outstanding efforts to restore the Deerfield. Way to go, Tom!

## Tallulah Roars Once More!

By Rich Bowers

Tallulah is a name that, for the past five to six years, has meant anticipation and not a little anxiety. Anticipation and anxiety for both whitewater boaters, who wished to run the river, and for conservationists who sought a return to the beauty and awe of a river once known as the "Niagara of the South," and at nearly 1,000 feet in depth, the deepest gorge east of the Mississippi.

Tallulah is located in northeastern Georgia, just across the South Carolina border, and one drainage west of the Wild & Scenic Chattooga River. Dammed and dewatered in 1913, the gorge has seen water only for flood control, rarely for dam maintenance, and briefly for the filming of *Deliverance*.

Tallulah has long been the subject of discussion among those lucky enough to visit it, and those few who witness one of its infrequent flows. What would it look like with water? How many people would be interested in seeing it? What would restoring it be worth to the local community? Would it be boatable — and if so, how hard would it be?

In 1992, American Whitewater, Georgia Canoeing Association, Atlanta Whitewater Club, Georgia Conservancy, and Friends of the Mountains decided to find out. They intervened before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in Washington, DC, and

sought to improve license requirements (and flow) at Tallulah dam.

**"You chip away at each obstacle until years later most everyone involved finds a way to make the river run again." Kent Wigington**

Many of the questions about Tallulah, including whether or not it could be restored, were answered last November when the first three weekends of recreational releases were provided under a new thirty year license for the Georgia Power Company.

For more than 700 expert and advanced boaters, however (total of those running the November releases), water merely increased the anticipation and anxiety. Replacing the uneasiness of "it should be runnable if it had water," was the reality of alternating releases of 500 and 700 cubic feet per second leaping over cataracts such as Tempesta, Hurricane, Oceana, and Bridal Veil Falls. At the put-in, anticipation was a weak word to describe the boaters who contemplated their first descent. In a gorge dropping over 650 feet within two miles, anxiety turned to outright fear for many as they lined up to drop over Oceana and into an exploding wave nicknamed the "Thing" (also called the "Fang" after it took a bite out of several boaters).

**"Tallulah is one of the most impressive whitewater rivers in the southeast. It has it all — big drops, tight channels, play spots, and absolutely incredible scenery." Unidentified whitewater boater**

In the midst of Oceana, boaters saw anticipation turn to exhilaration as they successfully ran one of the larger drops in the East, and during the fall foliage season, one of the most awesome river canyons anywhere. Or not! For some, apprehension turned to chagrin and distress as they exited the bottom hole sans boat and in full view of fellow paddlers and distant spectators.

Anxiety for both boaters and park officials was also heightened by the hype associated with the run and the possibility that, until the last minute (and even during the actual releases), something would mess up the whole event. Would the put-in walkway be finished in time? Would the permit system prove too unmanageable or too onerous to use? Would someone get seriously hurt? Could boaters and park officials work together?

The reality was that everyone worked together - incredibly well. Boaters could be seen parking cars and directing traffic with local police, and supplied a great example on personal responsibility and the ability to provide on-river medical assistance. Georgia Power employees helped load boats into the water. Perception, Inc. and the Nantahala Outdoor Center provided shuttle vehicles. And the park provided a Superintendent and a staff that showed common sense, fairness and in some instances, an extremely open mind on access, camping, socializing, and safety (as well as a just incredible stairway to Tallulah heaven).

**"I have worked with a lot of user groups, but the paddlers are the best group I have ever worked with." Tallulah Falls State Park Ranger**



But Tallulah is much more than just an expert whitewater run. For river conservationists and local businesses (and now equally for Georgia Power, and Georgia Department of Natural Resources - DNR), Tallulah is a national example of how history can be reversed, or changed, and provides an unquestionable demonstration of the value of both whitewater recreation and a restored river.

Over the first two weekends (and before an unusual cold front set in), Georgia DNR reported that more than 40,000 spectators were able to enjoy the sight of water rushing through Tallulah Gorge, expert boaters, and an outstanding peak leaf season in the Georgia mountains. Spectator parking alone raised over \$3,000 the first weekend for the new state park, and according to local rumor, four major hotel chains have expressed interest in building within the town boundaries of Tallulah Falls.

For local businesses, the increase in visitors exceeded by far even their wildest anticipation, and preparation. For instance, traffic was so heavy that boaters were finally required to carry their boats under Highway 441 to avoid the possibility of being run over by sightseers.

**"The goodwill from area stores, restaurants, and the tourism industry was incredible. I remember some of this from the folks at Elkhorn City on the Russell Fork, and it certainly makes a difference in the success of events like this." Ron Stewart, American Whitewater Director**

Local businesses showed their appreciation by hanging roadside signs welcoming boaters to Tallulah. However, the sheer number of weekend visitors caused some short-term dilemmas. On the first day, the local restaurant was forced to close for three hours while they bought more food. On the following Monday, Tallulah Falls Overlook purchased another cash register to handle the newfound customers. The sight of boat-racked cars parked outside local motels, and restaurants opening their doors to the poly-pro crowd was common.

**"The number of visitors are a logistical concern," said American Whitewater past President Risa Shimoda-Callaway, "Although, economically, it is a good problem to have."**

In the end, however, anticipation for river conservationists, boaters, stores, Georgia Power, and Tallulah Falls State Park staff was just beginning. Each of these agencies, interests, and businesses are looking forward to next April, when the next set of recreational releases is scheduled, and to the start of next year's fourteen weekends of aesthetic releases and improved daily minimum flows through the gorge. Regardless of anyone's level of anticipation, thirty years, the length of the flow requirements, should provide everyone with enough time to work out the details and to reduce anxiety to manageable levels.

**"Thanks to American Whitewater our calendar of fall releases has been extended, Gauley, Moose, Russell Fork, Tallulah. What's next?" Katie Nietert**



# Tourism Guide to Tallulah Whitewater

(Information, Warnings, and Updates on Future Releases<sup>1</sup>)

## Safety

Tallulah Gorge is a serious Class IV+ whitewater run, with a solid Class V drop over 58 foot Oceana Falls. Missing the line at Oceana (by inches) resulted in several shoulder dislocations, multiple stitches, and an unlimited amount of embarrassing (and potentially serious) thrashings. For the first three weekends, traffic jams occurred when the full allotment of boaters all put on at the same time (after coffee and when the sun came out). This results in major congestion at the put-in and at Oceana. Don't be a lemming and follow the boater in front of you — scout this drop and portage if it doesn't feel right!

Bridal Veil is a beautiful drop with a river wide and potentially lethal hole at the bottom. It is especially bad on river right. This hole becomes more impressive at higher flows of 700cfs, but is bad news for the unwary even at 500. Run as far left as possible - do not run either the center or the right side - even when the video cameras are set up on river right.

Below Bridal Veil there is a rapid with an undercut rock. Take a minute to review the map and rapid descriptions on the trail down to the put in.

Tallulah hasn't had water for the last eighty-four years. Like other de-watered river canyons, it has trees growing in the middle of rapids, lacerating rocks, and miscellaneous debris accumulated over the years. Be careful and stay awake, scout if you're unsure of your lines or the openness of a rapid.

Tallulah releases will happen for the next 30 years. The only way to get the releases cancelled is to get someone seriously hurt. If you get hurt, chances are that you will wind up on river left. For future releases, American Whitewater will provide a medical kit and backboard. However, in case of a serious accident, the water will be turned off and not released for the remainder of the day. If you're not ready for the run, wait until you are - both for your own good and that of your fellow boaters. Remember that in an emergency boaters can hike out at Wallenda's walk, located just a few drops downstream of Oceana at Bridal Veil. It may not be necessary to bushwhack back to the put-in and climb back up the stairway.



Courtesy

So far, everyone is extremely pleased with whitewater boaters. Let's keep it that way and remember we are visiting an area not accustomed to the boater lifestyle:

Camp only where permitted. In April, a 50 percent discount for boaters is being offered at the Terrors Campground (on the road to the visitor center), including use of the showers. If you camp at the boater parking area, you need to camp in your car. No tents or sleeping on the ground along Highway 441.

On the river, boaters are on their own. If someone needs assistance, please help him or her out, as there will be no one else to provide this.

Georgia Power, Georgia DNR and American Whitewater cooperated on the walkway to the put-in. If for some reason you don't like it (it's too long or you don't agree with protecting endangered plants) go somewhere else and don't mess it up for other boaters. If you like it, thank local boater and volunteer Marshall Wilson who designed the walkways architectural plans

*Above: Walkway to  
put-in at Tallulah, photo by Terri  
Delli Quadri*

*Below: Oceana, photo by Eric Young*



## April Releases

The next releases are scheduled for the first two weekends in April 1998. Permit applications are being accepted now for these releases; please read and follow all of the directions and send your application to Tallulah State Park (not to American Whitewater).

The deadline for submitting applications for the April releases will be March 1<sup>st</sup>. Applications postmarked by this date will be randomly drawn from the pot. A limit of 100 boaters will be permitted for each weekend, along with 20 walk-on spots, first-come first-served.

In April, American Whitewater and Tallulah State Park will review the permit system and change it based on boater input, though daily limits will not change. Several suggestions have already been offered, but timing does not allow us to do this prior to April.

# Reflections on Tallulah

By Ron Stewart, American Whitewater Director

Oceana, photo by Eric Young



Tallulah registration desk, photo by David Hablewitz

The local Clayton Tribune had been good to us following the first test releases on Georgia's Tallulah Gorge, but I didn't know what to expect as I drove into town the night of the 1995 public hearing on the Tallulah relicensing. Right in the heart of Clayton, not all that far from the Dillard House (of Deliverance fame), the Rabun County Courthouse still handled the affairs of local folks in much the same way as

turn of the century, when the Tallulah Falls dam was built, seemed just fine to him. I think that he wanted to be a lawyer? He sat down to applause and cheers from local lake property owners. When the first boater finished speaking...well, you can imagine the scene. I began keeping score. This was going to be a long night!

A lot of feathers began to fly as, one by one, Joe called folks to the microphone. There was the guy who got up and said, "I'm a kayaker." Good, another plus vote, I thought...Not..."And I can tell you that this is the most foolhardy, crazy thing a person could ever imagine doing!" What??? Scratch him. I wonder if he had ever paddled a real river? Another favorite was the woman who stood up, pointed a finger at anyone in general who looked like a boater, and said, "If you guys want a real thrill (somehow boaters are always guys in this situation), ya'll just get in the back of my speed boat." Actually, I thought, it probably would be a pretty good ride judging from her presentation.

There were doom and gloom predictions that releases on Tallulah would: dry up all of the area lakes; wear out the gorge; destroy the Route 441 bridge; bring about pollution and chaos to Atlanta; and result in the economic collapse of the power grid in the southeast.

In the late hours, I listened on the courthouse steps to some of the local landowners, worried about what could happen to their water. This was also the first time I met Bill Tanner, Superintendent for Tallulah Falls State Park, who turned out to be one of the reasons why the recent releases came off so successfully. I'm not sure who made it back to Chattanooga first, me, or the sun. I hope that Glenn had better luck at fishing that morning than I did in staying awake in classes.

Memories like this frame the whole Tallulah experience as an amazing success. Countless meetings, phone calls, sessions, flights, and long drives became routine for those of us who worked closely on the project. But, when that first group of boaters walked down the steps into Tallulah Gorge, you had to feel good. When boaters paddled past Kent Wigington and me at Sliding Rock, more was symbolized than the mere realization of an elusive dream. It was clearly one of the greatest accomplishments for American Whitewater, and signaled

things had always been handled.

It was chilly outside in the December air, but inside, things were heating up. In the hallway, Georgia Power Company's (GPC) Glenn Ivey told me that the evening was likely to be interesting. I found a seat next to Rich Bowers in the jury box section, right next to two of the biggest anti-boater hecklers in the audience. And I was supposed to talk in front of this crowd?

Glenn, standing in the back of the room, was grinning like a mule eating briars. Tonight's big show was going to give him some real conversation when he went fishing in the morning.

In his straightforward but assertive style, Joe Davis, from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) called the meeting to order. The first gentleman to speak stacked so many briefs and books and documents on the table in front of him, that I thought it was going to break. These, he claimed, gave convincing proof of the need to halt this indefensible effort by a tiny group of whitewater crazies. After all, the way that business had been conducted since the

the maturity of an organization that has often been viewed as representing the fringe element of a high-adrenaline sport.

With support from members of the boating community like the Atlanta Whitewater Club and the Georgia Canoe Association, and other groups like the Georgia Conservancy and Friends of the Mountains, the recognition that different organizations could work together for a common good was a significant accomplishment.

But the victory belongs as much to the people, collectively and individually, in GPC, the DNR, and FERC, who were willing to become open to a new relationship with the public. In accomplishing this, each of these companies and agencies worked through the difficult maze of opinion, territory and turf, and years of doing things in traditional ways. I can't say enough for those folks within GPC, the DNR and FERC who worked to make the three fantastic weekends in November possible.

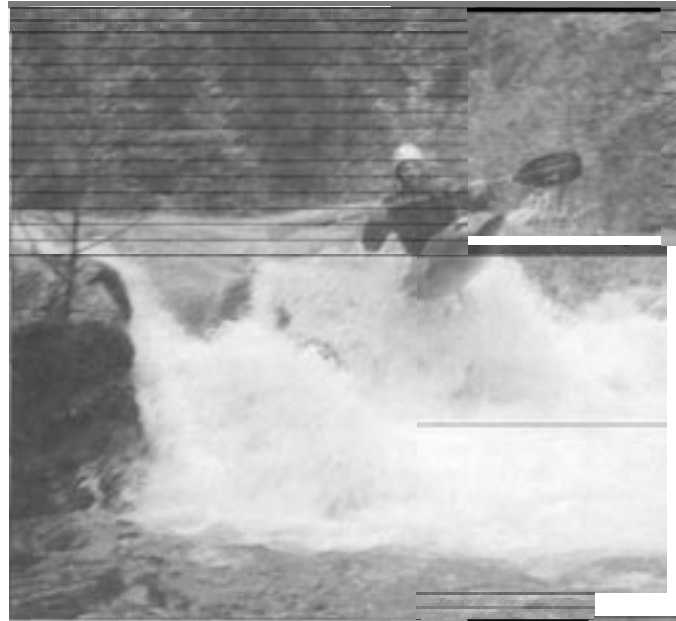
I'm almost afraid to mention names for fear of leaving someone out, but I want to offer special thanks to: Jo Lee Gardner, Winnie Simpson, Mike Phillips, Larry Wall, Glenn Ivey, and Jimmy Wilson of GPC; to Bill Tanner and the staff at Tallulah Gorge State Park;



Finding the line at Oceana, photo by David Hablewitz

Lonice Barrett and Ralph Turner of the Georgia DNR; to Joe Davis at FERC; and to our own Dave Cox, Kent Wigington, Risa and Forest Callaway, Rich Hoffman, David Wallace, Sherry Olson, Marshall Wilson (the architect for the stairs to the put-in) and especially Rich Bowers.

For years I have been involved in one way or another with various river protection and environmental efforts, and more often than not, adversarial relationships. These are often punctuated by get tough strategies, and by a serious lack of good will and respect. Sometimes that seemed to be the only way to resolve things. There has been a basic distrust among power companies, state and federal agencies, and the whitewater community, based on misunderstanding and fear. It has existed on both sides of the fence, and efforts to communicate always seem to break down at a point where each side was trying to be more right than the other. For certain, things did not always go smoothly in the Tallulah matter. But, at some point, GPC ceased to be a dragon that had to be slain, and the whitewater community was recognized as being represented by intelligent, sensible, working folks, and not by lunatic thrill seekers.



Tallulah, Mike Sease boofin near the putin, photo by David Hablewitz

tal interests. In time, I found myself at meetings listening to concerns, rather than thinking of strategies to combat a particular stance on the part of GPC or DNR. This was one of the most gratifying aspects of the whole process.

During the releases, DNR clearly leaned on our whitewater expertise. It was also clear that politeness and the understanding attitude exhibited by boaters played a key factor in making DNR feel good about the situation. This is the way a cooperative relationship should work. That the boaters in the gorge could handle their own rescue, and respond to their own injuries was also reassuring to both GPC and DNR officials. After all, the whole business of advanced runs in a public arena is a new and unnerving thing for companies and agencies that are ac-

countable for what happens under their watch. As a further example of how a success such as Tallulah can influence the efforts on other projects, consider the way that the Georgia DNR reviewed boating interests on Bear Creek in Cloudland. There's still a lot of work to be done in clarifying whitewater issues on Bear, but much of the task has already been accomplished by the Tallulah efforts.



Tallulah, Bridal Veil falls, photo by David Hablewitz

At a time when the deregulation of power is shaping the future environmental and economic landscape of our country, working relationships like these are essential. My hope is that utilities and power companies in neighboring states will take a cue from Georgia Power. And that other state and federal agencies, in reviewing the way that the Georgia DNR has operated, will realize that significant gains can result from honest and sincere efforts with organizations like American

Whitewater, and other environmental groups.



# April Permits for Tallulah Releases Being Accepted Now



Unknown boater Tallulah Falls Gorge  
Photo by Brik Miller

This spring, two weekends of whitewater releases have been scheduled for Tallulah Gorge in northeastern Georgia. These releases are currently scheduled for the weekend of April 4/5 and 11/12. Applications will be randomly drawn on March 1st, and permittees will be notified immediately by mail.

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

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

If you are unsure of your whitewater skills, please do not attempt the Gorge. Boating accidents are always unwelcome, but are even more unwelcome during initial releases. Besides hurting yourself, you may jeopardize future whitewater in this incredibly beautiful canyon.

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

To verify releases, even with a permit, please call 1-888-GPC-LAKE.



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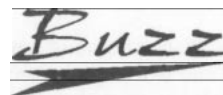
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**ATTITUDE**

# TALLULAH GORGE STATE PARK WHITEWATER BOATING RELEASES PROPOSED PERMITTING SYSTEM

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

1. Only persons paddling Qualified Whitewater Craft will be permitted to paddle Tallulah Gorge. Qualified Whitewater Craft is defined as follows: kayaks (one person and two person), whitewater canoes or open hard boats (solo and tandem), decked canoes, including C-1s and C-2s and "Qualified Inflatables." Qualified Inflatables mean inflatable craft owned (not rented or borrowed) by the applicant or one of the people in his or her group that conform to established DNR guidelines.

2. Permits allow access for both days of the release weekend. Each permit holder (or one of up to four alternates listed on the permit application) must check in by 12:00 p.m. each day or the permit will be released on a first come, first served basis.

3. An applicant may request one permit for each of the scheduled release weekends. Up to five paddlers paddling Qualified Whitewater Craft are authorized per permit. A separate request must be submitted for each scheduled release weekend.

4. Each permit request must be prepared by hand and mailed by the applicant.

5. Permits are nontransferable and the applicant (or one of the alternates listed on the permit request) must present proof of identity at the check in.

6. Any fraudulent application will disqualify the applicant and all alternates listed on the permit from receiving the requested permit or any permit in the future.

7. Requests will be filled on a first come, first served basis by postmark date. NOT RECEIPT DATE. Absolutely no metered mail, courier or hand delivered packages of any kind will be accepted. Certified mail may be used for either the permit request and/or the return envelope at the applicant's expense.

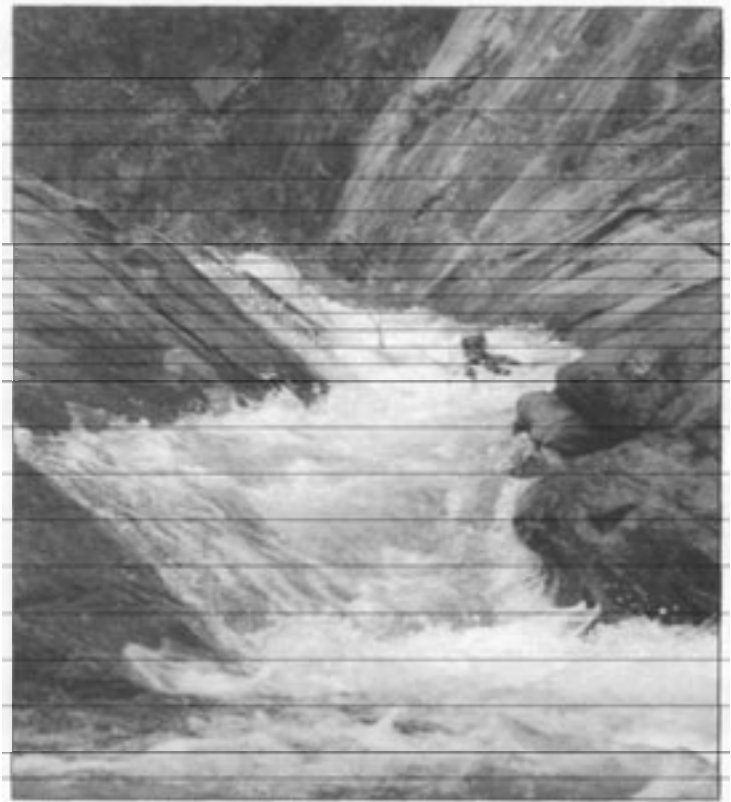
8. We are accepting requests for the 1998 (Spring/Fall) releases now.

9. Failure to comply with these rules may result in disqualification of the applicant's permit request.

10. Remember that polite, responsible and safe behavior might ultimately result in greater access.

11. Permit holders are encouraged to confirm that the scheduled release has not been postponed due to adverse conditions or emergency before departing for Tallulah by calling 1-888-GPC-LAKE and noting whether or not a postponement message has been added to the recording.

12. Applicants are reminded that much of Tallulah Gorge State Park is extremely rugged and potentially hazardous. It is an environmentally sensitive area. To protect the visitor from the gorge, and more importantly, the gorge from the visitor, all regulations and laws are strictly enforced.



Tallulah, the groove just below Bridal Veil, photo by David Hablewitz

## PERMIT INSTRUCTIONS

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

## American Whitewater, the Access Fund & the International Mountain Biking Association Host Colorado Summit to Improve Outdoor Recreation

On November 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>, hikers, mountain bikers, backcountry skiers, climbers, and whitewater paddlers met in Boulder, Colorado, to build a united voice for human-powered outdoor recreation.

Hosted by the Access Fund, American Whitewater, and the International Mountain Bicycling Association, the successful National Recreation and Access Summit attracted approximately 180 outdoor enthusiasts, resource managers, and others to discuss future growth and the potential political and economic benefits of outdoor recreation. Topics discussed over the two days included: the role of conservation in recreation; the need for improved public access to outdoor areas; liability; user conflicts; recreation fees; and federal regulations.

Highlights included Keynote presentations by Lyle Laverty, Regional Forester for the Rocky Mountain Region of the US Forest Service, and Royal Robbins, climber, boater and CEO of the Royal Robbins Company. Other speakers included non-profit recreation experts, and state, federal, and local agency resource managers.

The Summit was developed to provide strategies for grassroots activists working together on recreational access and conservation

issues. With nearly 189 million participants, outdoor recreation activities involve 94.5 percent of all Americans over 16 years of age. This includes some 7.5 million rock climbers, 2.7 million kayakers, another 15.3 million rafters, and 57.4 million bicycling enthusiasts. (Statistics provided by the Outdoor Recreation Coalition of America and the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association's 1997 State of the Industry Report)

The National Recreation and Access Summit was sponsored by a grant from Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI).

In addition, the Summit was the first ever opportunity for American Whitewater Regional Coordinators to get together and meet with staff and Directors. Over twenty Coordinators from Maine, California, Alabama, Colorado, and other states sat down for a morning of discussion on American Whitewater issues, including conservation, access, safety, events, and the Journal.

For more information, contact:

American Whitewater at (301) 589-9453, Access Fund (303) 545-6772, IMBA (303) 545-9011.

## Removal of Dam Changes Public Views on Rivers

Moving upstream, the Edwards Dam is the first of fourteen dams on the Kennebec River in Maine. On November 25, 1997 the FERC ordered that this 160 year-old dam be removed to restore the habitat of sea run fish - the first dam ever to be removed without the owners consent.

FERC determined that the energy produced by the dam (1% of Maine's power needs) "can be easily replaced" and that there will be "no environmental or social drawbacks" from removal.

This landmark decision, widely published in both local and national newspapers, is important not only for the removal, but also because it presents the public with a different perspective on dams. "The federal order is likely to ratchet up pressure across the country," commented the Washington Post, "... for removal of dams that are

far bigger and produce vastly more power than Edwards."

This decision comes after 5 years of intensive efforts by the Kennebec Coalition, which consists of environmental groups such as American Rivers, Trout Unlimited, and others (American Whitewater is a member of this coalition working on upstream projects).

The decision is equally important in that it requires the owner, Edwards Manufacturing, to pay for removal; and it will assist in making a stronger case for removal of other dams on rivers such as the Upper Kern (CA), Pine (WI), the Snake and White Salmon (WA), and others. For more information, contact Margaret Bowman, American Rivers (202) 547-6900 or Mona Janopaul, Trout Unlimited (703) 284-9405.

## ALP Lite - Dinosaurs Don't Die Easily

Colorado Governor Roy Romer recently announced his support for ALP Lite—the scaled down version of the Animas-La Plata water project (113 lighter). In July of this year, Congress failed to fully fund ALP in its present form due to its fiscal irresponsibility and environmental impacts.

The lack of federal appropriations failed to put to death this water project described as a "dinosaur," reminiscent of past pork barrel projects. Colorado Governor Romer, supposedly compelled to uphold the 1986 Colorado Ute Indian Settlement Agreement, created a negotiation process between ALP proponents and opponents. The negotiation process initially identified over 60 potential alternatives, but for an unexplained reason most of the alternatives were discarded — further polarizing opponents and proponents. Nonetheless, two "alternatives" emerged.

One alternative, endorsed by the governor, is called "ALP Lite" and is actually just Phase IA of the original project with a slightly downsized reservoir. The other alternative is "The Legacy Fund", which proposes to use the open market to purchase water rights to settle the water claims of the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Indian tribes.

ALP Lite is billed as one-third the size and cost of the original ALP

— at first glance, a remarkable compromise. But as the details are exposed, it turns out the reservoir and pumping features are virtually unchanged. The project has been re-packaged to claim project beneficiaries are 2/3 Indian and 1/3 non-Indian. The project still delivers no water to Indian land. This proposal amounts to building the portion of the project allowable by law and looks remarkably like building the first third of the project, with plans for expansion.

The Animas River Citizen's Coalition released a Conceptual Proposal largely based on the Southern Ute Grassroots Organization (SUGO) proposal. The SUGO Legacy Fund proposal, would set aside a fund for Ute tribes to buy existing land and water rights from willing sellers over a 30 year time period.

Now it has reverted to a war of words, frequently instigated by project proponents, who are wielding their renewed political power recently restored by Governor Romer's endorsement. Governor Romer and ALP Lite proponents hope to introduce legislation for their alternative in the next Congress, even though it will require sufficiency language to bypass existing environmental laws.

For additional information or to find out how you can assist contact Kent Ford, [kentford@frontier.net](mailto:kentford@frontier.net) at 970-259-1361.



## Whitewater Study On the Wisconsin River - Go Pack!

A hardy bunch of individuals representing whitewater clubs in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota took part in yet another recreational flow study associated with hydropower relicensing. This study took place in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, located in the "great north woods" and "lakes region" that everyone romanticizes. This section of the Wisconsin River, situated inside the boundaries of Rhinelander Papers industrial complex (complete with paper plants and settling ponds), hardly conjures up images of the great north woods.

With late October temperature fluctuating about 30 degrees F., boaters cavorted about on flows of 400, 600, and 800 cfs in this bypassed reach of the river, thankful for maximizing their caloric input from their daily state required allotment of cheese curds. On a gray, cool, blustery day that threatened to rain but didn't, paper company workers came (some on their day off!) to see the typically drab channel punctuated with moving splashes of red, purple, blue, turquoise, and yellow. Bundled up against the whistling wind, they shook their heads in amazement and disbelief; motorists passing overhead stopped mid-bridge. This was something indeed different from watching Green Bay Packer highlight videos!

This segment of river, typically completely dewatered in summer by diversions to the Rhinelander Paper Company, is approximately 1600 feet long with a drop of 27 feet. No run has been documented for this river segment, so the boaters discovered interesting play areas and one great play spot, a hole on which boaters relentlessly front, back, and side surfed; front and back ended; and cart wheeled. There was talk of rodeo potential, especially between the two higher flows. The metallic infrastructure arching overhead didn't detract from the experience; if the boaters noticed it at all, it provided sort of an interesting geometrical abstraction. The real excitement was in exploring a new boatable river segment.

Overall improvements needed, in addition to flows for both recreation and fish habitat, include access, clearing of in-channel trees and shrubs, rest room facilities, viewing areas, and directional signs. The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service, which coordinated the study, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) will seek these improvements. The improvements will enhance the area significantly and would become a tourist destination point, a whitewater teaching area for a local college, and would connect with Rhinelander's ongoing creation of a greenway along the river.



Above: Paddling Club Members from Badger State Boating Society, Hoofers, and Chicago Whitewater Association

### Participating in the study were:

Boaters	Association
Steve "Guido" Corsi	Univ. WI Hoofers
John Gangemi	American Whitewater
Michael Giddings	Univ. WI Hoofers
Mike Herman	Badger State Boating
Pete Hubbard	WDNR
Charlie Johnson	Badger State Boating
Kent Lundholm	Rapid Riders (MN)
Sally Lundholm	Rapid Riders (MN)
Erik Sprenne	Chicago Whitewater
Scott Watson	WDNR
Susan Watson	WDNR
Ben Ellis	Berger & Assoc.
Observers	Association
Bob Martini	WDNR
Bruce Olsen	Rhinelander Paper
Doug Spaulding	STS Consultants
Greg Theyel	Berger & Assoc.
Angie Tornes	National Park Service

## New Commissioners Named at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Linda Key Breathitt and Curt Herbert, Jr. were appointed commissioners for the FERC in November. The FERC, an independent regulatory agency, is composed of five commissioners appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

Commissioner Breathitt is a former Chairman of the Kentucky Public Service Commission. Ms. Breathitt, a Democrat, will serve for a term expiring June 30, 2002.

Commissioner Hebert is a former Commissioner of the Southern District of the Mississippi Public Service Commission and a former

Member of the Mississippi House of Representatives. A Republican, he will serve for a term expiring June 30, 1999.

President Clinton earlier in the month appointed James J. Hoecker, a Democrat, as Chairman of the five-member commission. No more than three commissioners may be of the same political party. The commission consists of three Democrats and two Republicans with the recent appointment of Commissioners Breathitt and Hebert.



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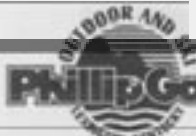
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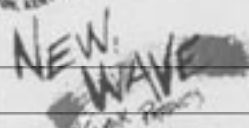
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## Senate Oversight Hearings on Hydropower

The Water and Power Subcommittee of the Senate Energy Natural Resources Committee held an oversight hearing October 30, 1997, on the issue of hydropower relicensing in light of electric industry restructuring. The hearing was conducted at the behest of the National Hydropower Association, whose goal is to remove the mandatory conditioning authority of the following agencies: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service in prescribing fishways; the U.S. Forest Service, Native American Tribes, the Bureau of Land Management, and others in prescribing conditions for operation of projects on or affecting federal lands; state water quality agencies in issuing water quality certification according to applicable state laws; as well as making changes to the endangered species act and the coastal zone management act.

Margaret Bowman, the Chair of the Hydropower Reform Coalition (of which American Whitewater is a founding member) testified on behalf of conservation interests. Representatives from the Department of Interior, the National Marine Fisheries Society, the United States Forest Service, the Western Governor's Association, and water quality specialists from Vermont gave strong testimony advocating conditioning authority by state and federal agencies.

Although no decision has been made by the subcommittee, the general attitude at the conclusion of the hearing was that there was no need for a legislative fix to the current relicense process prescribed by the Federal Power Act.

## South Boulder Creek Hydropower Relicense

Colorado's Denver Water Board (DWB) initiated the FERC relicense process for Gross Reservoir on South Boulder Creek in the spring of 1997. Gross Reservoir was constructed in 1950 primarily as a municipal water supply reservoir. DWB received a hydropower license in 1950 coinciding with construction of the Gross reservoir dam. Curiously enough, the hydropower component for the project was never built, raising the question as to whether they currently have an actual hydro license? Regardless, the current license expires in the year 2000.

Gross Reservoir presents a tremendous opportunity for the paddling community to secure access and more predictable flows. South Boulder Creek, situated just 15 minutes from downtown Boulder, provides two excellent whitewater runs. The lower stretch, below the dam, is a 6-mile class IV (2 short V's) run through Boulder Mountain Parks, ending in Eldorado State Park. Release flows on this run often occur later in the summer coinciding with irrigation and municipal water needs. Previously, DWB didn't permit kayakers on project lands and used to hassle boaters at the put-in. To avoid problems, boaters minimize time and vehicles at the put-in, often trekking through the woods to reach the creek.

The upper run has only recently started to see traffic, and provides 3 miles of "big-hair". The upper run dumps out onto Gross Reservoir where DWB does not permit any watercraft. Anyone running this stretch in the past faced either a horrendous portage around the reservoir (never really done) or possible fines and/or harassment while paddling across the reservoir to a fisherman's parking area.

DWB has elected to go the route of an applicant prepared environ-

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mental assessment (APEA) in the relicense process rather than have FERC prepare one for them. In this approach, DWB attempts to front load the relicense process by engaging state and federal agencies and the public with their interests and concerns at public meetings and involvement in the development of the environmental assessment.

After numerous public input meetings, boaters were able to solve access issues in the draft "recreation plan". The draft recreation plan includes a 10-car parking lot at the put-in for the lower run for both boaters and fishermen. Mountain Search and Rescue representatives and local homeowners were vehemently opposed to any boating on

the lake, but local kayakers were able to get an exception for people exiting the upper run.

DWB sent out its Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment and Draft License Application for review on December 8th. All comments on these documents must be received no later than March 8, 1998. DWB must file their APEA and apply for a new license application with FERC by April 30, 1998.

For more information contact Chris Webster: [chris@raf.atd.ucar.EDU](mailto:chris@raf.atd.ucar.EDU)

or Terry DelliQuadri: [terry@wildnet.com](mailto:terry@wildnet.com)

# Tom Christopher blamed 1997 River Conservationist of the Year

Easley, SC: Perception has awarded its 1997 River Conservationist of the Year Award to Tom Christopher for his efforts in restoring and improving wilderness rivers such as the Penobscot, Maine's Rapid and Magalloway, the Kennebec, as well as the Moxie Stream, a tributary of the Kennebec. Tom, whose many titles have included Director for American Whitewater, founding Director of New England FLOW, and member of the national Hydropower Reform Coalition, recently won a landmark victory in May of this year for the relicensing of the Deerfield River Hydroelectric Project in Vermont and Massachusetts.

"While the Deerfield settlement was the work of many people and organizations, Tom was one of the driving forces in the day-to-day work to finalize this agreement which has taken over eight years to complete," said Richard J. Bowers, Executive Director of American Whitewater. "Tom has been involved since day one, and was instrumental in establishing early negotiation strategy and developing a broad coalition to turn this opportunity into reality."

Because of this landmark victory, all Deerfield River enthusiasts can now enjoy restored or improved fishery and minimum flows in all river sections; 32 whitewater releases on the Class IV Monroe Bridge section; 106 releases on the class II-III Fife Brook section; a 24-hour flowphone; improvement of existing recreational facilities; conservation restrictions on future development; and the establishment of a \$100,000 Enhancement Fund to finance watershed conservation, development of low-impact recreational projects, and educational projects within the watershed.

In Tom's other life, he has busied himself by running a greenhouse business (recipient of several state and regional conservation awards for energy conservation), sitting on the town of Leominster's Conservation Committee, and working evenings to earn an undergraduate degree in resource economics at the University of Massachusetts, which he has since completed and is now working toward his Master's degree.

"We are proud to recognize Tom for his efforts in conservation and his passion for the environment," says Steve Jordan, Marketing Director for Perception. "It was very difficult to single out one individual from the field of strong applicants who applied. However, Tom's achievements as a volunteer conservationist were impressive enough to make him stand out as our Conservationist of the Year."

As Perception's 1997 River Conservationist of the Year, Tom will receive a \$1,000 grant to continue his conservation efforts. Perception has been presenting the River Conservationist of the Year Award

to leaders in the river conservation community since 1981.

For additional information, please contact Veronica Griner, Communications Coordinator, Perception, Inc.

111 Kayaker Way, P.O. Box 8002, Easley, SC, 29641-8002, 864-859-7518, Fax 864-855-5995. December 9, 1997



# Access

## American Whitewater Acquires Access to Watauga River!

In November, American Whitewater closed the deal to acquire 1.13 acres of land in Johnson County, Tennessee, along the banks of the beautiful Watauga River. The Watauga flows from North Carolina into Tennessee for 6 miles of Class 3, 4 and 5 rapids. The Watauga is one of the most popular advanced-expert runs in the southeast and runs frequently in the winter and spring, and after heavy rain. In *Carolina Whitewater*, Bob and David Benner describe the run as "a classic East Coast hardwater run since the East Tennessee Whitewater Club pioneered trips here in the early 70s."

The take out is located above the lake (the take out that folks are currently using), near Watson Island, adjacent to the old (or "short") take out on Watson Island or Stansbury Road. We will be organizing a work party there this season to make the property more suitable for use as a take out. After this work is done, we will open this site for use and publish a map and detailed description of how to get there. In the meantime, please continue to take out at the current lake take-out and be courteous and respectful of private property and local custom.

This acquisition is the latest effort in our strategic plan goal of solving access issues on private lands. Previous efforts include acquiring a take out at the confluence of the Blackwater and Dry Fork Rivers in West Virginia; working in partnership with the Forest Service, BLM, State of Colorado and Colorado White Water Association to acquire a put-in to the Numbers of the Arkansas (CO.); getting permission for a take-out on the Black River (NY); signing a lease for an access site on Big Sandy Creek (WV). Other projects in the works include access sites on the Cosumnes River (CA), White Salmon (WA), Gauley (WV),

Kaweah (CA), and Contoocook (NH).

Outright acquisition of land is obviously more expensive and time-consuming, but the Watauga take-out is a good example of a situation for which this tool was well-suited. For us to consider acquisition, there are two essential criteria that a project must meet: 1) the river needs to be an excellent whitewater run and be popular; and 2) there must be a pressing need or threat. The Watauga was a home-run on both counts. First, the whitewater and scenery are world-class. It has a long season in the winter and spring, (and runs after rain in the fall and summer) and attracts boaters from the southeast and mid-atlantic. Second, there was a pressing need for a long-term solution. The Watauga cuts a steep gorge; the limited land available for parking and taking out is on private land. Boating on the Watauga is only going to get more popular—and the informal agreements with private land owners often disintegrate when more people arrive.

Furthermore, the two take-out options were faced an uncertain future. The "short" take out (above the lake) is the better site, but adjacent property changed hands several years ago and there has been increasing discord between boaters and landowners. In addition, an adjacent owner subdivided his property and put 1-2 acre lots on the market for sale. The "lower" take out (on the lake, formerly known as Tex Phillip's Campground) was sold to the Head fer the Hills Resort in 1996. The new owners have been gracious enough to allow boaters to continue taking out there (and pay an increased fee), but with more "resort" cabins being installed and the unknown inclinations of future owners, the long-term future for access at this site remained uncertain.



We were also motivated by history. Five or six years ago, American Whitewater had an opportunity to acquire all of the land at the short take-out for a modest price. At the time, however, we had no access program and no funds to acquire the property. Today, thanks to a generous grant from the Conservation Alliance and our friends in the

paddlesports industry, we were able to capitalize on the opportunity and acquire one of the one acre parcels at the short take-out, an ideal and cost effective solution and a guarantee for access in perpetuity. Special thanks to Dewey Fuller and the APES, and especially Sherwood Horine who got this project rolling.

## Grand Canyon Update

In late November, American Whitewater was invited to present our concerns with the new fee structure and its impacts on allocation for non-commercial boaters at Grand Canyon before the National Park Service Advisory Board. At the meeting, held at the Presidio in San Francisco, AW and staff from Grand Canyon National Park had the opportunity to present their opinion and answer questions. The Advisory Board is composed of recently confirmed Director Bob Stanton, top NPS policy analysts, and experts from other fields.

At their June meeting, the Advisory Board passed a resolution that classifying non-commercial boating as a special use is out-of-line with NPS policy and practice. At their next meeting, the Advisory Board will analyze this issue in more detail, will likely make a recommendation to the Director, who may then make a decision on these fees. The decision will likely center around the classification of river running as a special use and paying to wait in line.

Our presentation reiterated our support for user fees in general but our concerns with: 1) the designation of river running as a special park use (that the definition of special uses in NPS policy is so broad as to allow virtually any activity to be so designated; that the designation runs counter to the intent of Congress and other NPS units; that the policy of cost recovery as applied to special park uses has not been consistently applied; and that this designation and cost recovery implications sets a negative precedent for low-impact

backcountry recreation); 2) the fact that the structure of the fees requires the average river runner to pay \$350 while waiting in line; 3) the fact that the cumulative effect on the taxpayer is paying fees that exceed operational costs by 80%; and 4) that the process of developing the fee program did not involve public input.

We remain hopeful that we can develop a fee program at Grand Canyon that fulfills resource and operational needs, that is consistent with policy and equitable among comparable users, and that has the support of river runners. We are greatly appreciative of the National Park Service Advisory Board and NPS staff to examine this issue and solicit public comment.

## Access to Cispus River (WA) Hanging in the Balance

In November, FERC staff traveled to Washington State for a site visit and meeting regarding the take out dilemma for the Cispus River. At the meeting, boaters had the opportunity to express the quality of the whitewater run on the Cispus and the importance of a take out at the head of the reservoir. Director Brooke Drury and Regional Coordinators Mike Deckert, Carol Volk, Gary Korb, and Dara Kessler (Conservation Director for Washington Kayak Club) attended the site visit and public meeting.

As mitigation for the damage caused by the construction of the Cowlitz Falls hydro project, the Lewis County Public Utility District (PUD) agreed to provide a boating take out at the head of the reservoir. This requirement was stated in Article 42 of their FERC license. In 1996, the PUD applied to FERC to remove this license article, claiming

that it could not provide access because the property owners of the road were uncooperative and that they had already provided access 2 + miles downstream on the reservoir. In December of '96, American Whitewater and Rivers Council of Washington opposed this license amendment, arguing that the PUD had signed a contract with the public to mitigate for the damage from their project. FERC is accepting comments until December '97 regarding this issue. Stay tuned for latest developments.

## Wenatchee River (WA): Access Closure Narrowly Averted

by Dara Kessler.

Conservation Director, Washington Kayak Club

The Wenatchee River runs off of the Eastern slopes of the Cascade Mountains. A popular, big-water class 3 stretch, it attracts boaters from the entire Northwest region during spring runoff, and is home to a premiere play hole. This past spring, the Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) threatened to close the Peshastin put-in (the only public access point for 7 miles) during the busiest boating season, due to complaints of nudity and fast driving from one particular neighbor. In addition, getting to the Peshastin put-in requires driving through a residential neighborhood and past an elementary school. The Wenatchee Whitewater Committee (WWC) negotiated to adopt or patrol this access point during the busiest weekend hours, build a permanent changing screen and WDFW agreed to provide portable restroom facilities. The Wenatchee Whitewater Committee, Washington Kayak Club, The Mountaineers and American Whitewater donated money for these minor improvements. Unfortunately, only a few key volunteers from both WWC and the Washington Kayak Club (WKC) showed up to volunteer. Please consider helping out in the future at this site! Special thanks to Rich Buckingham for spearheading this situation.



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## Uncertain Future for Tellico and Little River Gauges (TN)

In November, the TVA held a meeting to discuss the proposed closing of river gauges on the Tellico and Little Rivers in Tennessee. TVA has stated that the reasons for closing the gauges include the fact that they are facing drastically dwindling appropriations, that these gauges cost \$7500 a year to operate, and that the sole purpose for these gauges is for recreation.

At the meeting were representatives from local paddling clubs, Dagger Canoe Co., and American Whitewater (Chuck Estes from Oak Ridge). This meeting was an opportunity to express to the TVA the critical importance of these gauges for whitewater recreation. These gauges provide critical flow information to boaters throughout the southeast and beyond who enjoy the world-class whitewater on these rivers. It was also a chance to demonstrate the positive economic impacts to the local community. State and local tourism groups at the meeting expressed the economic benefits that boaters bring to the area.

At the meeting, TVA agreed to work on identifying interim and permanent solutions, including setting up a 1-900 phone service (\$1-2 per call), and setting up a cost-sharing system.



## Metolius River, Oregon

In November, the Forest Service affirmed its decision to implement the river management plan for the Metolius. The plan was challenged by the Deschutes River Chapter of Trout Unlimited which argued that boating should be excluded from the lower river, below Bridge 99 for the following reasons: whitewater boaters gain access to remote and protected wildlife areas; they have destroyed instream fish habitat by removal of woody debris; they have caused riparian

area damage from boat landings; they have trespassed on the Warm Springs Reservation; they have increased the threat of fire; and they have endangered the lives of rescuers who attempt to save lost and hurt boaters. The appeal pits anglers against boaters, an unfortunate mindset for groups who are natural allies. After examining these arguments, the Forest Service affirmed their previous decision, a well-thought out management plan that was based public input.

## Blackwater Canyon Land Exchange (WV)

In early December, 1997, the Monongahela National Forest (MNF) and Allegheny Wood Products (AWP) signed a memorandum of understanding to exchange AWP lands in the Blackwater Canyon for comparable Forest Service parcels in Preston and Tucker Counties. AWP is willing to exchange the lands on the north side of Blackwater Canyon from the centerline of the railroad grade to and including the Blackwater River. AWP will retain the remainder of their

properties in Blackwater Canyon. Presently, AWP property encompasses 3000 acres of the Blackwater roughly from just upstream of Hendricks to the boundary with Blackwater Falls State Park and including the North Fork of the Blackwater. Laterally, AWP ownership extends from the centerline of the rail trail to the south rim of the canyon.

The exchange also provides public access to a number of trails on the south side of Blackwater Canyon, and public use of Canaan

Loop Road. At present, the public cannot access the river via trails from the south rim. For a complete list of the agreements in the exchange, see American Whitewater's web site ([www.awa.org](http://www.awa.org)) under Hotnews.

Senator Rockefeller (WV) would like to expedite this land exchange and finalize the deal by this spring. However, the MNF is required to provide public involvement in the process. At the least, MNF will hold public meetings and develop an environmen-

tal assessment for public review and comment sometime this spring.

This land exchange, although viewed as a compromise by some, is a step forward for public ownership of lands in Blackwater Canyon. This will eventually benefit paddlers and the larger recreational community utilizing the canyon. American Whitewater encourages paddlers to support this land exchange.

## Boater Access to Blackwater Still in Jeopardy

A land exchange may solve the access issue long term but does little for this paddling season!

American Whitewater has met separately with AWP and the Monongahela forest supervisor in an attempt to rectify the situation. American Whitewater has requested that temporary access be included as part of the MOU. At present, access has not been granted but we are optimistic that a temporary solution can be reached.

Presently, all access to the Blackwater is in jeopardy due to an anonymous letter sent to the MNF claiming trees were spiked in the Blackwater Canyon. This prompted AWP to deny all access on their 3000 acres. Currently, AWP property encompasses the Blackwater from the centerline of the rail trail to the south rim of the canyon up to the boundary with Blackwater Falls State Park and extending up the North Fork of the Blackwater. As a result, paddling access is denied on the Blackwater unless you paddle the upper Blackwater from the State Park or run the North Fork. The confluence cannot be accessed from the rail trail.

American Whitewater encourages paddlers not to cross onto AWP lands until the access issue is resolved. Trespass violations may exacerbate the situation. Look for updates on the web page under the Hot News button ([www.awa.org](http://www.awa.org)) as well as the journal and signs posted at the parking area on the North Fork. Thanks for your patience and cooperation with this sensitive issue.

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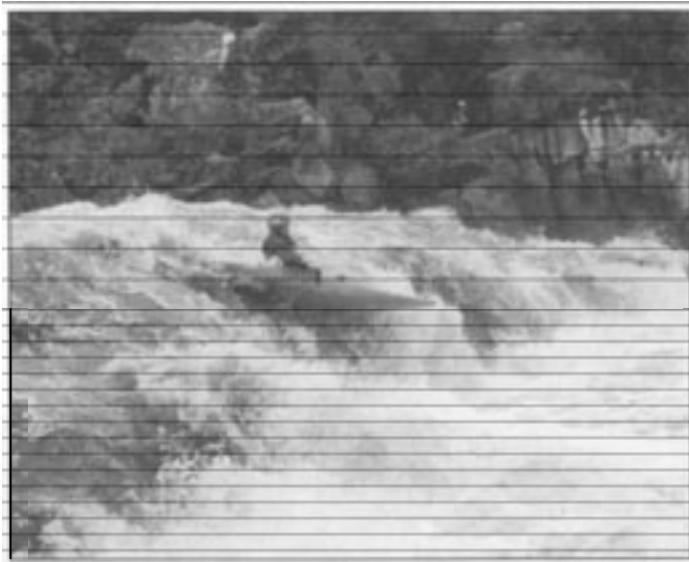
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## American Whitewater Board of Directors Election

This year, the Executive Committee has submitted five candidates for inclusion on the American Whitewater Board of Directors. Ron Stewart, Joe Greiner, Barry Tuscano and Joe Pullium are renewing their positions, and Mark White, Bill Sedivy and Jeff Leighton will be new additions to the board. Both Mark and Bill have been Regional Coordinators, and all three of our new candidates have been working with this organization on river issues for years.

The next step is approval by the general membership, and each of the candidates statements are published here for your consideration.

Two existing board members, Pope Barrow and Susan Scheufele, are stepping down this year. Pope is our past Vice President, and along with Pete Skinner one of the founding fathers of our Conservation and River Access Programs. Susan has spearheaded American Whitewater's growth in California and in Hydro Relicensing. Both have helped develop American Whitewater over the years, and their presence and direction will be missed. However, both Pope and Susan will continue to work as Regional Coordinators, and we look forward to continuing to work with them on specific rivers in the future.



### Mark White Salt Lake City, UT

Mark has kayaked extensively since 1974, making numerous first descents and winning a variety of whitewater competitions. As American Whitewater Regional Coordinator and President of the Utah Rivers Council, Mark writes for several publications, served on the World Whitewater Championships Steering Committee and remains involved with a myriad of conservation efforts.

Mark holds bachelors and masters degrees in business administration and is employed as

Salt Lake City's Convention Director. A former member of the US Ski Team, he still enjoys recreational skiing and snowboarding. Mark is married to Dr. Andrea White (also an accomplished kayaker) and has two young children.

### Bill Sedivy Clarksburg, West Virginia

Since I started boating in 1989, whitewater rivers have taken me through beautiful forests in the eastern United States, into stunning canyons in the desert west, and past awesome mountain peaks in the northern Rockies. Rivers also have carried me to personal heights of accomplishment, incredible states of relaxation, intense moments of terror, and into relationships with many new friends.

I am seeking a spot on American Whitewater's Board of Directors because I want to help insure that I - and fellow boaters - have an opportunity to continue enjoying America's rivers for many years to come.

Before moving back east to West Virginia this past summer,

I had a chance to work closely with American Whitewater's staff as a regional coordinator based in Logan, Utah. While in Utah, I was involved with the process of relicensing of hydroelectric dams on the Bear River in southern Idaho; helped organize a whitewater feasibility study on a class IV section of the Bear; and helped raise hell over increases in private boater fees in the Grand Canyon. Over the years, I've also done some work in helping produce American Whitewater's Journal, and in 1995 I published *River's End: A Collection of Bedtime Stories for Paddlers* in cooperation with



American Whitewater.

During my time in Utah, I realized that American Whitewater's professionals can-

not possibly do all of the river conservation work that needs to be done throughout the U.S. They need volunteer help. In order to continue outstanding conservation and access work, American Whitewater must continue to build membership and recruit volunteers - especially among the ranks of younger paddlers. With my background as a newspaper editor and as a journalism educator, I believe that I can help American Whitewater, especially in the areas of public outreach and public education.

Thanks for this opportunity to work on behalf of our rivers!

## Jeffrey Leighton Lafayette, CA

I have been an outdoor enthusiast all my life but became totally captivated by rivers in the mid-1970's when I took my first trips on the Rogue and the Snake. My wife Deborah and my eleven-year-old, Erika, both enjoy kayaking. My six year old, Brian, is a future kayaker who is presently an avid eddy paddler. We all seem to enjoy rivers for the same reasons; the natural beauty, the wildlife, and the unique opportunity they offer for spiritual renewal. Rivers must be preserved because they are the arteries of so many eco-

systems. River access is likewise important because people most value and protect that which they come to know and love through first hand experience.

In my professional life I am a financial and management consultant who serves foundations and non-profit organizations. As a board member I hope to provide counsel and guidance to help American Whitewater grow and further develop its capacity to achieve its objectives of river conservation, safety, education and access.



## Joe Pulliam Harriman, TN

I've enjoyed my term as a director of American Whitewater and hope I have provided a valuable perspective to the board. This board, and this organization as a whole, continues to impress me with its accomplishments. I have been an active paddler since 1969, and have paddled "real" whitewater since 1973. For the past fifteen-plus

years I have made my living in the paddlesports industry, and I am currently president of Dagger. I have a particular interest in rivers of the Southeast, and have recently been involved in issues concerning such rivers as the Ocoee and the Pigeon.

## Ron Stewart Chattanooga, Tennessee

As an American Whitewater board member, I have worked on several river protection and conservation projects. I was privileged to work closely on the Tallulah Gorge Relicensing effort, and I was proud to be associated with American Whitewater in that special endeavor. Working on behalf of American Whitewater, and in association with the Save Our Sequatchie organization, a major threat to river and private landowner concerns. in the form of the

Armstrong Energy Pumped Storage Project, was averted.

I consider the opportunity to work on projects like the access issue on Bear Creek in northwest Georgia, and protection efforts for North Chickamauga Creek, and the Upper Ocoee Management Plan, as a way to give back to rivers like these, and as a measure of thanks for the countless wonderful experiences I've had on steep creeks around the country.



# Time to Vote

Please Mail Vote card below

## Joe Greiner

### Raleigh, North Carolina

I like to think of myself as a teacher, a "good shepherd", and a good-will ambassador.

I have been paddling since 1978, starting in the stern of a tandem canoe and switching to kayak in 1983. I got a lot of my experience through club boating and I have served the Carolina Canoe Club as Cruise Chair and Secretary/Treasurer. I was a club delegate to the Chattooga Symposium of 1990. I was lucky to be a participant in Nantahala '90, an international rafting peace rally, where I was a member of one of the Soviet teams. I have been the volunteer coordinator for the American Whitewater Gauley Festival the last six years. I have been present at all but one of American Whitewater directors meetings over the last three years.

I owe a lot to many people who showed me boating techniques and

who introduced me to various rivers. I can never repay those who have given their time and energy to me. But I have become an ACA Instructor-Trainer and I share my enthusiasm and love for whitewater and its settings with those who want to learn technique or who want to see a new river with a good shepherd along.

Paddling has taken me to all six boatable continents and to places that I would never hike to. I like gravity on MY SIDE. My travels have made me sensitive to the twin issues of conservation and access. These are issues that American Whitewater and its board address more effectively than any other organization. I am in awe of the efforts of many board and club members. I have been of some support to these people in the past and will continue that support in



the future.

I feel that all of us in the boating community are thrice blessed: First, with our health. Second, with the magical, mysterious, and sometimes mythical places that are open to us, many of which are hidden from the majority of people. Third, with our skills that allow us to safely visit these places.

To share the skills, I will continue to teach those who want it. To share the places, I will continue to be a good shepherd to those who ask. To help preserve those places,

I would like the privilege to serve as a member of the board of American Whitewater, where I will continue to support those who are in the forefront of the conservation and access causes.

I will continue to do all I can to be a good ambassador for the sport on and off the river, within and without the boating community, helping to spread the fun around and to deliver the messages of conservation and access.

## Barry mscano

### Bolivar, Pennsylvania



In the 10 years that I've been involved with American Whitewater, I've been witness to (and an accessory to) some huge developments in the organization. What first impressed me about this group was the incredible drive and commitment of the board and the impressive record of accomplishments achieved by an all volunteer work force. With the phenomenal growth of the organization and the evolution to a paid staff there has been a gradual shift in our appearance towards respectability. This would normally be dis-

turbing to me. But because the board has been judicious in the hiring of dedicated and qualified people, so far we are avoiding the pitfalls of becoming a top heavy, bureaucratic, respectable, organization. If elected to another term, I will work to defend our agenda of proactive involvement in the conservation of rivers, access of all paddlers to those rivers, and the heralding of the joy that those rivers bring to all of us. I will also diligently guard against allowing American Whitewater to become fat and lazy.

## American Whitewater Board of Directors Election

Please indicate your approval or disapproval on this enclosed ballot and return it to:

**American Whitewater  
P.O Box 636  
Margaretville, NY 12455**

Candidates require a minimum of 50% approval from the general membership to be named to the Board.

**Ballots must be postmarked by February 20, 1998.**

Ballot-1998 American Whitewater Board of Directors

Aoomve		Disapprove
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ron Stewart	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Joe Greiner	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Barry Tuscano	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Joe Pullium	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark White	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bill Sedivy	<input type="checkbox"/>
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by Jayne H. Abbot

## American Whitewater/NOWR Event Manager

As I sit down to write this article summarizing our fall events and the end of the 1997 season, it's November just before Thanksgiving and the real cold has yet to settle into our bones. I'm nearing the end of my first year as the Events Manager for American Whitewater and I can tell you first hand, whitewater events are growing by leaps and bounds. It's been an extraordinary season filled with incredible events run by unbelievably dedicated volunteers. It never ceases to amaze me the vitality and energy of our event organizers. If you run into one of these dedicated souls in your travels, be sure to thank them for their time and effort. They do appreciate the recognition. Or better yet, see what you can do to help in 1998.

The Moose Festival, October 18, was bigger than ever this year with an estimated 350+ people on the river and 750+ at the festival/party in Old Forge, NY. Long time Moose River runner Mike MacDonald said he never thought he'd see the day that many people would be on the Moose! The Russell Fork Rendezvous, October 25, was a different animal this year with a down-home atmosphere of bands, bands, bands as the music played from morning 'til night and through the night to morning again. Yeehaa!

In this issue is the 1998 schedule which is chock full of all your old favorites as well as some exciting new event venues. You'll note that we've packaged our existing list of races into the American Whitewater Cascade Series to enhance their promotional value and highlight these excellent races. Watch for more information on these races in the future.

And what's this "Don't call this a Festival River Rendezvous" event on the Beaver River? Chris Koll, the creative backbone of American Whitewater's events program for many years is at it again hyping up a great river American Whitewater has secured for recreational releases. This "not a festival" is literally not a festival. Uhhhh??? The Beaver River will be running Labor Day weekend and American Whitewater wants you to come, run the river and enjoy it's newfound freedom, camp and hang out together at a bonfire and enjoy a beverage of the evening. An impromptu race may also be part of the weekend. It's as simple and fun as that!

The NOWR schedule has added some new event venues including our first ever event in the Midwest and in a downtown location - Wausau, WI. That's right, downtown and Midwest, not your average rodeo site but one well worth attending as a competitor or spectator. The Wausau Kayak/Canoe Corporation has been running world cup slalom races on their custom-built downtown course for years and is busy at work this winter perfecting a hole worth cartwheeling, spinning and popping up over.

### Photo credit due.

Clayton Spangler took all the Gauley Fest photos used in the Nov/Dec issue. We appreciate it.

## NOWR Events

The 1997 NOWR (National Organization of Whitewater Rodeos) series ended with the party to end all parties at the Ocoee Rodeo in mid-October. Result highlights from some of the classes for events that have passed are listed below. For full results at your fingertips, check out our web sites at [www.nowr.org](http://www.nowr.org).

## NOWR Point Series Championship Winners

This year was the first annual NOWR Point Series Championship. The winners are: Eric Southwick, K-1 Men (286 points); Brenda Ernst, K-1 Women (296 points); and a tie in the K-1 Junior class between Ryan Felt and Rusty Sage (100 points each). The top 3 placements receive a certificate and the winners receive an engraved Kayapelli from Nazazi Artworks. **CONGRATULATIONS!!**

### Men's K-1 Expert

1. Eric Southwick (286 pts)
2. Sam Drevo (225 pts)
3. Dan Gavere (215 pts)

### Women's K-1 Expert

1. Brenda Ernst (296 pts)
2. Saskia VanMourik (185 pts)
3. Erica Mitchell (183 pts)

### Junior K-1 Expert

1. Ryan Felt (tie) (100 pts)
2. Rusty Sage (tie) (100 pts)
3. Ren Coleman (85 pts)

*Squirt, Open Canoe and C-1 classes did **not** qualify for point series awards.*

## American River Festival - September 13-14

### Men's K-1 Expert

1. Kale Frieze
2. Norwood Scott (in a C-1)
3. Dustin Knapp

### Women's K-1 Expert

1. Brenda Ernst
2. Trisha Lowere
3. Carlyn Perona

### Junior K-1 Expert

1. Derek Beitler
2. Jake Spies
3. Charlie Center

## Outer Banks Surf/Kayak Rodeo - September 19-21

### Men's K-1 Exvert

1. Shane Benedict
2. Michael Moore
3. Keith Liles

### Women's K-1 Exvert

1. Karen Mann
2. Tanya Shuman

## Coosa Whitewater Festival - October 3-5

### Men's K-1 Exvert

1. Richard Oldenquist
2. Dan Gavere
3. Eric Southwick

### Women's K-1 Exvert

1. Jamie Cooper
2. Brenda Ernst
3. Aleta Miller

### Junior K-1 Exvert

1. Scott McCorvey
2. BJ Parnell
3. Nathan McDade

### C-1 Expert

1. Adam Boyd
2. Chris Ennis
3. Josh Mann

## Ocoee Rodeo - October 10-12

### Men's K-1 Exvert

1. Keith Liles
2. Richard Oldenquist
3. Eric Jackson

### Women's K-1 Exvert

1. Aleta Miller
2. Brenda Ernst
3. Erica Mitchell

### Junior K-1 Exvert

1. Javid Crubbs
2. Macy Burnham
3. Jeremy Adkins

### C-1 Expert

1. Allen Braswell
2. Shane Benedict
3. Walt Lynch

### Open Canoe Expert

1. Frankie Hubbard
2. Billy Davis
3. Allen Braswell

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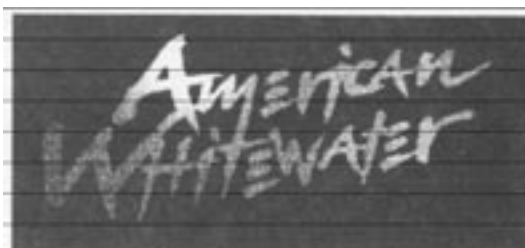
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# Point Series Winners



**Ryan Felt, 1<sup>st</sup> place Junior K-1 (tie), age 17.**

Ryan, currently sponsored by Dagger and Werner Paddles, has been rodeo boating for three years and has competed all over the United States. In 1997, Ryan placed fourth in the West Coast Team Trials, fifth in Junior Olympic Slalom and tied for first in the NOWR point series. In addition to being an outstanding young boater, Ryan is also an avid musician, potter and snowboarder.

Left: Ryan Felt

**Rusty Sage, 1st Place Junior K-1 (tie), age 16.**

Rusty has been into rodeo boating since the age of 11 when he entered his first rodeo on the American River in Chili Kar hole. This season, in addition to placing first in the NOWR point series, Rusty placed fourth in the World Rodeo Championship in Ottawa and traveled to Scotland to compete in the World Surf Kayaking championship where he took first place in Junior International. Rusty is sponsored by Perception, AT Paddles, HF, Mountain Surf, Oakley and Powerbar.

Right: Rusty Sage, South Fork Surf Wave, Payette River  
Photo by Emily Hart-Roberts



**Brenda Ernst, 1<sup>st</sup> Place Women's K-1, age 23.**

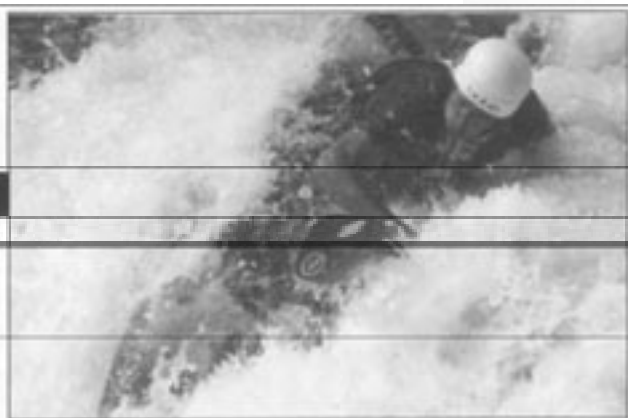
Brenda lives in Lake Tahoe, CA where she works in a Califo Canoe and Kayak school when not on the rodeo circuit. She began paddling in the spring of 1995 quickly advancing to rodeo boating and logging 74,000 miles in two years in pursuit of the sport. In addition to boating, Brenda snowboards and spends time with her dog and traveling companion, Yuba. Brenda is sponsored by Necky Kayaks, Stohlquist, AT Paddles, Grateful Heads Helmets, Mountain Surf, Teva, Orosi, Ultra Nectar Clothing and AZX Sport Watches. Brenda's comments upon winning, "Thanks Mom and Dad!"

Left: Brenda Ernst  
Photo by Dan Gavere

**Eric Southwick, 1<sup>st</sup> Place Men's K-1, age 22.**

Eric has been paddling for 12 years and has competed nationally and internationally in both slalom and freestyle whitewater rodeo. Eric lives in Durango, CO where he and a partner run Shaman Products. When not paddling, Eric enjoys climbing and snowboarding. Eric is part of the Wave Sport team of pro-rodeo boaters and is also sponsored by Orosi, Lightening and Dr D Paddles, Oobe and Bomer Gear.

Right: Eric Southwick



# 1998 SCHEDULE OF RIVER EVENTS

Come join American Whitewater in 1998 as we celebrate whitewater rivers across county through our *world famous festivals*, races and rodeos. Hope to see you there!

## AMERICAN WHITEWATER EVENTS

National Paddling Film Festival - East	February 21	Lexington, KY	Barry Grimes	606-623-9067
National Paddling Film Festival-West	March 7	Bakersfield, CA	Linda Ivans	805-871-6790
Kennebec River Festival	CANCELLED - new	organizer needed - if interested	call	704-645-5299
Sacandaga Festival	July 11-12	Hadley, NY	Pete Skinner	518-474-2432
Black River Festival	July 25-26	Watertown, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397
Deerfield Festival	August 1	Charlemont, MA	Jayne Abbot	704-645-5299
"Don't call this a Festival River <b>Rendezvous</b> "	September 5-7	Belfort, NY/Beaver River	Chris Koll	315-652-8397
Gauley Festival	September 26	Summersville, WV	Phyllis Horowitz	914-586-2355
Moose River Festival	October 17	Old Forge, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397
Russell Fork <b>Rendezvous</b>	October 24	Haysi, VA	Brent Austin	606-278-2011

## and Introducing the AMERICAN WHITEWATER CASCADE SERIES

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Canyon Creek Race	May 2	Clarks Country, WA	Keith Jensen	503-285-0464
Potomac Great Falls Race	May 30-31	Great Falls, VA	Ricky Rodriguez	703-742-8742
Black River Race	July 25-26	Watertown, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397
Upper <b>Yough</b> Race	August 20	Friendsville, MD	Jessi Whittemore	301-746-5389
Core Canyon Downriver Race	August 22 -23	Grand Junction, CO	Paul Tefft	970-923-3955
Gauley River Race	October 5	Summersville, WV	Donnie Hudspeth	800-950-2585
Moose River Race	October 17	Old Forge, NY	Chris Koll	315-652-8397
Russell Fork Race	October 24	Haysi, VA	Brent Austin	606-278-2011

## NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF WHITEWATER RODEOS (NOWR) CIRCUIT

Kern River Festival	April 17-19	Kernville, CA	Linda Ivans	805-871-6790
New River Rodeo	April 25-26	McCoy, VA	Roanoke Co. <b>Pks/Rec</b>	540-387-6091
Merced River Rodeo	April 25-26	Mariposa, CA	Susan Scheufele	408-459-7978
Canyon Creek Rodeo & <b>Race/Bob's</b>				
Hole Rodeo	May 1-3	Clarks County, WA	Andrew Wulfers	503-285-0464
<b>Gilman</b> Falls Rodeo	May 2-3	Old Town, ME	John <b>Miligan</b>	207-827-5872
<b>Maupin</b> Daze Whitewater Festival	May 9-10	<b>Maupin, OR</b>	Dave <b>Slover</b>	541-395-2201
<b>Bigfork</b> Whitewater Festival	May 16-17	<b>Bigfork, MT</b>	Derek Thompson	406-862-4926
Kananaskis Whitewater Rodeo	May 16-18	Calgary, AB	Mark Taylor	403-266-1527
Jackson Hole Rodeo	May 30-31	Jackson Hole, WY	Aaron Pruzan	307-733-2471
Potomac Whitewater Festival	May 30-31	Great Falls, VA	Ricky Rodriguez	703-742-8742
Taylor River Rodeo	June 12-14	<b>Almont/Gunnison, CO</b>	Gunnison Chamber Of Commerce	800-274-7580
<b>Skyfest</b>	June 13-14	Index, WA	Randolph Pierce	206-789-0444
Headwater <b>Championship/FIBARK</b>	June 18-21	Salida, CO	P.T. <b>Wood</b>	719-539-3174
Willow River Paddlefest	June 19-21	Prince George, BC	Rick Brine	250-964-7400
Animas River Days	June 27-28	Durango, CO	Johnna Jacobson	970-259-3893
Gorge Games - WW Rodeo	July 11 -12	Hood River, OR	John <b>Trujillo</b> (TREE)	541-386-4286
Derby Creek Days	July 25	Burns, CO	Chris Emerick	970-736-0080

## NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF WHITEWATER RODEOS (NOWR) CIRCUIT

Cootenay Whitewater Festival	August 1-3	Castlegar, BC	Gerry Harrmon	250-362-7259
Wausau Whitewater Rodeo	August 22-23	Wausau, WI	Julie Walraven	715-845-5664
Ottawa River Rodeo	August 29-30	Bryson, QB	Paul Sevcik	416-222-2223
American River Festival	September 12-13	Placerville, CA	Larry Goral	916-621-1224
Outer Banks Surf/Kayak Rodeo	September 19-20	Nags Head, NC	Pam Malec	919-441-6800
Coosa River Whitewater Festival	October 2-4	Wetumpka, AL	Lonnie Carden	334-272-0952
Ocoee Rodeo	October 9-11	Ducktown, TN	Susan Wilson	704-658-1332

## OTHER EVENTS

Carolina Paddlesports Film Festival	(Various dates around the southeast)	Greenville, SC	Steve Brennecke	803-777-8100
Cheat River Festival and Race	May 1-2	Albright, WV	Dave Bassage	304-379-3141
South Yuba Pedal-Paddle	May 9-10	California	Dave Good	916-265-9653
Nike World Masters Games	August 9-16	Oregon	Dave Slover	541-395-2201

Nike World Masters Games include both whitewater slalom and rodeo events. You must be 30 or over to compete in the games

## EVENT ORGANIZERS NEEDED!

American Whitewater is in need of event organizers for the following events; **Kennebec Festival, Deerfield Festival and Ocoee Rodeo**. The Kennebec and Deerfield festivals were started and have been organized by Tom Christopher for the past few years. Due to other personal commitments, Tom will no longer be involved with the Kennebec Festival and is stepping back dramatically on his participation in the Deerfield Festival. As a result, the Kennebec Festival will not take place in 1998 without a willing and able local volunteer to pull it off. The Deerfield will go on with Jayne Abbot, American Whitewater's Events Manager, handling many of the responsibilities but in need of a local person to help pull it all together.

Susan Wilson, the Ocoee Rodeo organizer for the past MANY years is also in need of help. The Ocoee Rodeo, a major fund raising event for American Whitewater, has grown to the point where one person can no longer manage all aspects of the event. American Whitewater needs your help in putting on this event for years to come. We are looking to find dedicated volunteers to take over the management of various tasks throughout the year. The Ocoee Rodeo Organizing Committee (OROC) will be responsible for the organization of the rodeo with each member being responsible for one portion of the rodeo such as sponsorship, site development, organizing volunteers, registration, judging and scoring, auction, awards, party set-up/take down, planning the rodeo's future, etc.

If you want to see these events continue to grow and want to get actively involved in supporting American Whitewater, contact Jayne Abbot at (704) 645-5299 or email: . I look forward to hearing from you!



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# Ocoee Whitewater Rodeo 1997

By Susan Wilson

This year's T-shirt was dedicated to our dear friend Chuck Kern with the words, "To Have or not to have, Attitude is the question," on the front and a quote from Chuck, "Good OneÖ" on the sleeve. The attitude to have at the Ocoee Rodeo was a good one with an appreciation for the experience and the friendships we sharedÖremembering our friend Chuck and his good attitude and love for life.

This year's Rodeo was busy with ~~two~~ new events held on the Upper Ocoee Olympic course, Freestyle through a Rapid and a head-to-head downriver race. Risa Shimoda Callaway organized a Freestyle through a Rapid event for the expert boaters on Saturday where competitors had two minutes to complete the course earning points by entering eddies along the course and performing freestyle moves along the way. Competitors had a blast and spectators learned how kayakers can use a river to have fun.

Chris Hipgrave organized the downriver head-to-head races on Sunday which were entertaining for all. The event not only included boats going as fast as possible but also a few elbows being thrown, some pretty slick "cut the other guy off at the slot" moves and the old "bump the other competitors bow into the eddy" trick. The grand champs of the first head-to-head downriver race was Abel Hastings for the men and Carolyn Porter for the women.

The action at Hell Hole and Torpedo on the Middle Ocoee was hot as usual. The Squirt competition was smaller than last year but was still a lot of fun as the boaters displayed their stuff at Torpedo with deep mysteries and multiple transitions with cart wheels, whirly gigs, and screwing around. Eric Zitzow won the men's expert class in his new design the Angst, and Deb Reuhle finish first for the women. It has been predicted by some that squirt boating will die out but it seems like every year we see a few new squirtiest on the river.

The Open Canoes entertained the crowd with three, thirty second rides with the best two counting. The old timers still dominated the open boat competition when Frankie Hubbard won in his newly designed boat. This year's open canoe competition was smaller than usually with only twelve com-

petitors but with the new open canoe designs I'm sure we'll have more competitors next year.

Hell Hole was cranking as usual despite a last minute scare that we would not have enough water. The Tennessee Valley Authority which controls the dam provided the rodeo with extra water for all three days but only 6 hour releases on Saturday and Sunday (we normally have 8 hours) requiring the competitors to move quickly through their heats. We witnessed a changing of the guard when hot young boaters won both the men and women expert classes. Keith Lyles won the expert men's class with an amazing run filled with a variety of moves including cartwheels, splitwheels and washouts. Eighteen year old Aleta Miller won the women's expert class with a five-point cartwheel and a huge smile showing us all what rodeo is - FUN! The C-1 expert class was won again by Allen Braswell.

This year's party was the best ever with the hot Atlanta band Mr. Schmee, four kegs of beer donated by Atlanta's own Sweetwater Brewing company and a very large silent auction and raffle. Great deals on awesome gear was a highlight as well as the Dagger Disco trailer set up for an aerobic workout and a lot of fun. OAR hosted the party in their campground located along the beautiful banks of the Lower Ocoee which provided plenty of camping for all. You can miss the Rodeo next year but you are making a big mistake if you miss the party!

We raised \$8000.00 at this year's event to be donated to American Whitewater in memory of our wonderful friend Chuck Kern. Chuck had an excellent attitude about life and his friends as he was heard encouraging his friends with a positive "good oneÖ". Hopefully we will all carry the memory and good attitude of our friend Chuck with us forever. Thanks to all the wonderful volunteers who helped pull off this eventÖthe sponsors, Perception and Dagger for providing boat shuttles, the raft companies that provided shuttle, OAR for hosting the party, TVA for the extra water, Tennessee State Park Rangers, Forest Service, and to the competitors with the good attitudes.

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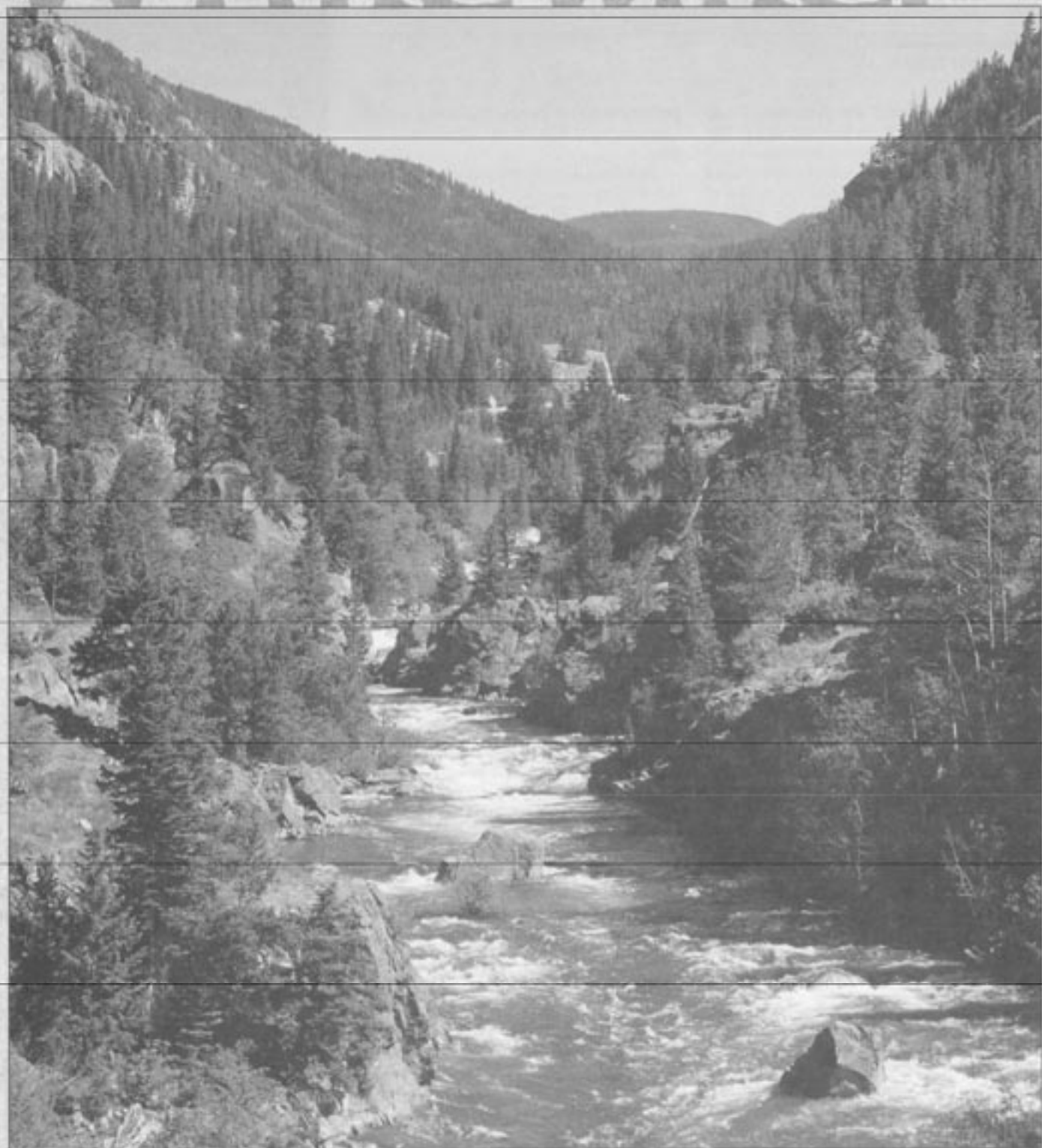
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Classic Southwestern

# Colorado Whitewater







# Classic Southwestern Colorado Whitewater

## Finding Your Way to the Best

You don't have to be an "extreme" boater to paddle some of the finest whitewater in the Centennial State if you follow this itinerary. And, you can double your pleasure, if you bring a mountain bike and hiking shoes along.



Left page: More than to do than just boat, Photo by Bob Gedekoh  
This page: The Gunnison River Gorge, Photo by Bob Gedekoh

by Bob Gedekoh  
Editor, [American Whitewater](#)

My yearly June paddling treks to southwest Colorado have become a ritual. I sleep at the same campgrounds, eat in the same restaurants, traverse the same mountain passes and paddle the same rivers...all in more or less the same order. I hate to admit it, but the older I get, the more I take comfort in the familiar.

But, with age comes wisdom and with repetition comes perfection. And after seven or eight forays, I think I have come up with a nearly perfect southwestern Colorado whitewater itinerary.



# Classic Southwestern Colorado Whitewater



Clockwise The Gunnison River Gorge, Carrying into the Gunnison River Gorge, Photos by Bob Gedekoh

This hasn't always been the case. My first paddling vacation in Colorado was chaos on wheels. I streaked across Kansas eagerly leafing through the old Stohlquist guidebook, in the company of a bunch of equally naive whitewater travelers. We were determined to paddle every river in Colorado once, and the good ones twice. We didn't quite meet our goal, but we had one hell of a time trying. The problem was that we had boundless enthusiasm but not much of a plan. As a consequence our vacation was not very relaxing. In fact, it was downright hectic.

We trooped about willy nilly like chickens with our heads cut off. We probably crossed the continental divide a hundred times. There was quite a bit of backtracking. We floated the Arkansas one day, the Animas the next, Gore Canyon the day after that. We spent a lot of time driving and a lot of time arguing. We put our odometers to the test. We tested our stamina and our tempers, too. I returned to Pittsburgh

beat to a frazzle, just in time to go back to work.

One thing I learned on that trip is that it is best to tour with a small group of like minded boaters. Traveling with two or three people with similar boating skills and interests will minimize conflict and the inevitable pandemonium that is inevitable with unruly mobs. Sometimes I even like to spend several days alone, biking or hitchhiking my shuttles. I have also learned the value of looking using a road map to plot a sensible course, one that will allow you to move from target river to target river in a logical sequence.

Over the years I have learned another important thing. There is a lot more to do in southwestern Colorado than just paddle whitewater. Hiking to Maroon Bells in the headwaters of the Roaring Fork, for instance. Or mountain biking through the Lead King Basin in the headwaters of the Crystal. Or just gazing down into the bowels of



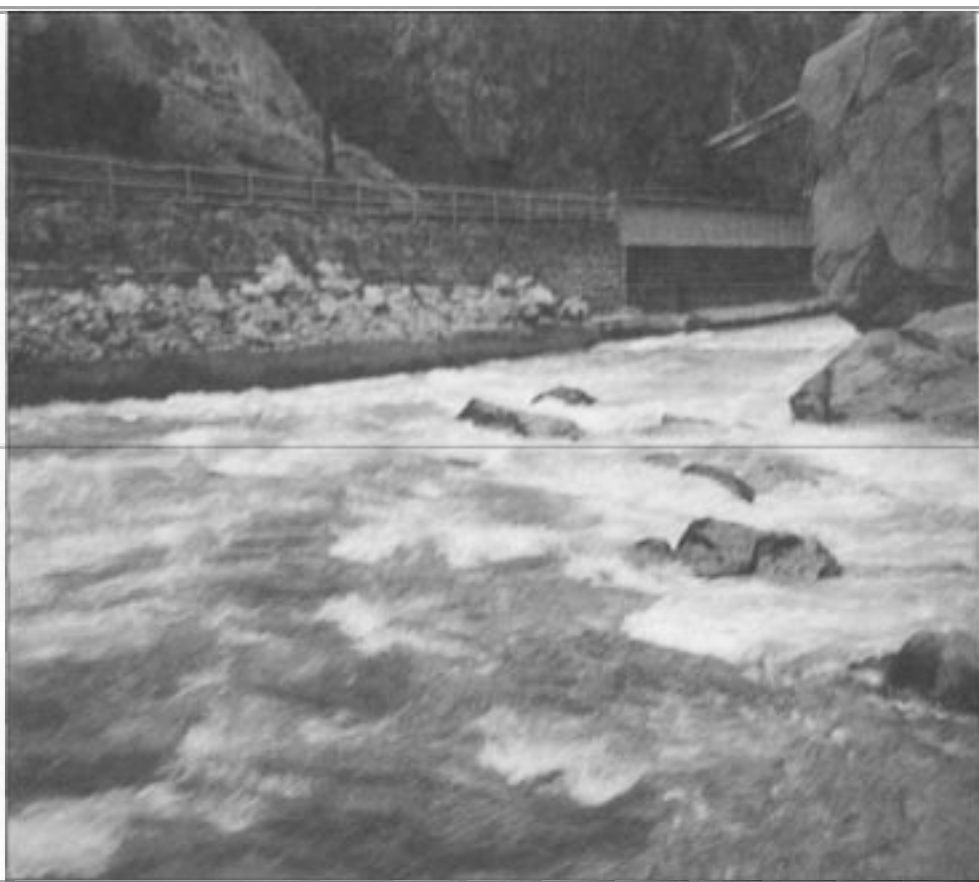
the earth at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison. There are horses to ride, hot springs to soak in, mountains to climb and ghost towns to explore. With a little planning you can do all of this, and still tackle some significant whitewater every day.

It is also possible to paddle two or even three of the standard whitewater runs within a day. I typically paddle the Numbers and the Brown's Canyon sections of the Arkansas on the same day. And I have paddled two separate sections of the Crystal and the Roaring Fork in a day, as well. But some of my favorite runs, like the Piedra, the Upper Animas and the Gunnison Gorge, are through the wilderness and quite a bit longer, so I allot a day for these.

By following my loop through southwestern Colorado you can maximize your recreation and minimize your driving. My suggested loop is geared toward class IV and IV+ boaters. Most of the rivers I will discuss in detail are not "hair runs", unless you hit extremely high flows. I will mention a few class III and class V alternatives along the way. Since I enter Colorado from the east, I usually start boating on the Arkansas. Those coming from the north, south or west might find it better to enter my loop elsewhere.

Most of the rivers in southwestern Colorado reach peak flows in early to mid June. When the snowpack is heavy and/or the weather is particularly hot, some rivers may hit levels that would be unsafe for recreational boaters. When the snowpack is light rivers crest earlier and the boating season can be shorter. Rivers draining lower elevations, like the Piedra and Hermosa Creek, peak earlier in the season. I try to be flexible in scheduling my Colorado vacations. I investigate the snowpack by phone in late spring, than pick the dates accordingly. Most often I wind up going during the second, third or fourth week of June.

Flows can also fluctuate from day to day. In some cases this is due to manmade diversions which carry water under mountains from one watershed to the next. The weather can also be a factor, in a way that will seem para-



The Royal Gorge of the Arkansas, Photo by Bob Gedekoh

doxical to those used to boating in the east. In Colorado hot sunny days accelerate the snowmelt raising river levels. Cool drizzly days often cause them to fall.

Daily flows for most Colorado rivers are available by phone through the Watertalk computerized system (303) 831-7135. Instructions for using Watertalk and specific gauge codes are listed in Colorado Rivers and Creeks by Banks and Eckardt. This is currently the most useful whitewater guidebook available for Colorado. It contains precise descriptions, flow data and maps for all of the commonly paddled rivers, as well as information about extremely difficult and infrequently run creeks. Be aware, however, that the authors are expert hair boaters. When they say class V, they mean class V!

I also recommend Doug Wheat's The Floaters's Guide to Colorado as a secondary source. This older, more conservative book does not have as much information about radical runs and creeks, but it does contain long sections covering the geology, ecology and history of each of the watersheds.

Another resource worth purchasing is the Colorado Atlas and Gazetteer which contains topographic maps of

the entire state. This reference is invaluable in planning four by four or mountain bike excursions, hikes, as well as for running shuttles. It is widely available in outfitting stores and even gas stations around the state.

## The Ark: A River of Alternatives

From its lofty headwaters near Leadville the **Arkansas** runs southeast toward the Oklahoma border, ultimately terminating in the Mississippi. The sections of the river of greatest interest to advanced and expert whitewater enthusiasts lie along routes 24 and 50, near the towns of Canon City, Salida and Buena Vista.

Lying furthest downstream, the nine mile **Royal Gorge** section flows through a deep, foreboding canyon that is a bona fide and well promoted tourist attraction. It is also popular with commercial rafters... so you will have company. With a gradient that approaches fifty feet per mile the Royal Gorge offers lengthy roller coaster



Lake Fork of the Gunnison, Photo by Bob Gedekoh

wave trains within constricted vertical walls. At low to moderate levels the river is class IV, but at higher levels (ie ■ 2500 cfs) the continuous nature of the explosive whitewater merits class V respect.

Even though the Gorge is located relatively far downstream, the water is still cold and swims can be protracted. Flush drownings have occurred because at high water rescues can be difficult. A buddy of mine once inadvertently blew his skirt and swamped at the Sunshine rapid, about two miles into the run. His boat was eventually recovered near the takeout in Canon City, nearly five miles downstream!

Several years ago another friend dislocated his shoulder muscling his C-1 through a powerful hole at Sunshine. Unfortunately this occurred on the first day of his two week vacation. The dislocation was so severe that we had to anchor his torso to the railroad tracks with a sling to provide enough coun-

tertraction to reduce it. (Rumor has it that Sunshine has evolved and the hole has disappeared, but I can't confirm this.)

Barring such misadventures paddling the Royal Gorge can be a blast. At moderate levels there are lots of surfing waves and the stark canyon walls are spectacular. To my mind there are two drawbacks the Gorge. Canon City (the takeout) is a little too busy for my tastes and the next significant whitewater lies more than fifty miles upstream of the put-in.

For that reason I usually make the Arkansas near Buena Vista the first stop on my Colorado loop. Three challenging sections of the Arkansas are located nearby: the Pine Creek Canyon, the Numbers and Brown's Canyon. Let's start downstream and work up.

The popular Brown's Canyon section of the Arkansas is the most remote but the easiest of the three. The Arkansas flows away from the road for much of this 13 mile long run. Though not nearly as deep or precipitous as the Royal Gorge, Brown's Canyon is craggy and impressive. The first several miles are deceptively easy, then the action picks up, particularly at a long steep rapid known as Zoom Flume. At high water (>3000 cfs) the explosive waves at Zoom Flume somehow manage to flip me every time. This year (at over 4000 cfs) I nearly made it to the bottom before I backended. At these high levels Brown's Canyon rates a solid class IV, but at lower levels it is mostly class III. Two takeout options are now available for Brown's; the first at Hecla Junction, the second several miles downstream at Stone Bridge. If you choose to paddle to Stone Bridge you will want to scout and possibly portage Seidel's Suck Hole, a menacing wave-hole, particularly at big water. The "sneak" is on the right.

The new and legal (thanks to the Colorado Whitewater Association and the AWA) put-in for the Numbers section of the Arkansas is located near mile marker 199 on route 24 upstream of Buena Vista. The take-out lies five miles downstream where a railroad trestle spans the river. The Numbers is

one of the most popular class IV runs in Colorado; at low to moderate levels it features countless holes and play spots. At higher levels (> 2300 cfs) running the Numbers becomes a more serious class IV+-V enterprise. Locals often monitor the Numbers by the gauge located on upstream river right side of the bridge ruin at the bottom of Number 1. 2300 cfs equals four feet on this gauge. My impression is that most class IV Colorado boaters shy away from the Numbers if it much higher than four feet.

I have paddled the Numbers at lower levels a few times, but not in recent years. During the past few seasons I have managed to hit the Arkansas near its peak (usually mid June.) This has not been by design, but it hasn't kept me off the river either.

This year I paddled the Numbers several times between 5.5 and 6 feet (4200 cfs and 5300 cfs). ~~This~~ is a serious undertaking. There are a number of dangerous hydraulics hidden along the explosive wave trains, although they are relatively easy to spot and dodge if you are used to paddling really big, powerful and continuous whitewater. At these levels prolonged swims in the frigid water have led to drownings. Don't even think about a highwater run on the Numbers unless you are part of a strong group and have a dynamite roll.

There are six "numbered" rapids on this section of the Arkansas. Number 1 lies about a mile below the new put-in and just above Scott's bridge (private property). Numbers 2,3 and 4 follow in rapid succession. In fact, although I've paddled the Ark many times, I'm still not completely sure which is which. Suffice it to say that some of the largest holes on the river are located in this stretch. Number 5 lies just below the bridge that leads to the Otero pump station; this should be scouted the first time. Many locals consider number 5 to be the toughest rapid on the Numbers, at least at moderate levels.

The shuttle for the Numbers can be easily biked. There are several free campsites nearby.



# Classic Southwestern Colorado

About a mile upstream of the Numbers put-in experts will find the Pine Creek Canyon section of the Arkansas... so named because Pine Creek, a small tributary, enters on river right part way through the run. The Pine Creek Canyon section consists of a single rapid (albeit very long and continuous) and so, when it is paddled, is usually done in conjunction with the Numbers. The Pine Creek rapid should always be carefully scouted before it is attempted. And, it should be scouted from river level, since it is much more powerful and dangerous than it appears from high above. At low to moderate levels Pine Creek has long been regarded as a significant "credential" for expert boaters. At these levels an ugly hole defines a crux move near the top of the rapid. A swim that starts here will inevitably result in an evil battering in the long torrent downstream, where rescue is essentially impossible.

At high levels the Pine Creek rapid is class V++ (VI if there still were such a thing!) and is very dangerous and infrequently paddled. I have never attempted it at high water and never will. Remember that kayakers died in the Pine Creek rapid during both the 1996 and 1997 run off. It's fun to look at, but before you launch (at any level), you'd better think twice.

If your fancy runs toward creek boating you may wish to check out two of the Arkansas tributaries, Clear Creek and Lake Creek, while staying around Buena Vista. I have followed expert boaters down both of these. They both contain class V whitewater and strainers can be a problem. The volume of water flowing in Lake Creek can be unpredictable because water is sometimes diverted under the mountain from the Roaring Fork into the Lake Creek drainage. There are mandatory portages on Lake Creek as well. Before you attempt either of these runs you should carefully read Banks and Eckardt's Colorado Rivers and Creeks and put on your scouting shoes. Better still, follow a reliable local expert familiar with the runs.

## The Roaring Fork - Glitz and Fun

When I have had my fill of excitement on the Arkansas I usually take highway 82 over Independence Pass (12,095 feet) toward Aspen. This spectacular serpentine drive is quite an attraction. Although this can be accomplished in an hour and a half, allow some time to stop and gawk and, if you're cheap like me, to fill your ice chest with snow.

Your reaction to the city of Aspen (it ain't no town!) will no doubt be determined by how you feel about conspicuous consumption and glitz. You will either be impressed, amused or appalled. I tend toward the latter. Nevertheless, you will probably want to spend a couple hours walking around, looking for the beautiful people and at the amazingly wierd and incredibly expensive works of "art" in the gallery windows... if you can find a place to park!

A worthwhile scenic excursion is located just outside of Aspen, the hike to Maroon Bells. These peaks have provided the quintessential "purple mountains majesty" for countless calendars... you will recognize them when you see them. Take an hour and a half to hike to the upper lake for the best views and to get away from the crowd. And go after 5 p.m., unless you want to park in town and ride the mandatory bus shuttle to the base area.

At moderate levels the four plus mile Slaughterhouse Canyon section of the Roaring Fork, one of Colorado's best class IV runs, is located on the edge of Aspen. Although most of the commercial rafting on the Roaring Fork occurs in the class III water below Slaughterhouse Canyon, Slaughterhouse is rafted to a limited degree at moderate to low flows. At high water you won't see many rafts on the river and there probably won't be a lot of hard boaters either.

Not far below the put-in you will

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# Classic Southwestern Colorado Whitewater

encounter Entrance Exam, one of the most challenging rapids on the river, particularly at high water (>2000 cfs). There are voracious holes to the left and the route down the right is choked with boulders, pourovers and, lately, a log. If you can negotiate Entrance Exam, you will probably be able to handle the rest of the run.

The exception to this is Slaughterhouse falls, located just beyond a placid stretch not far below the bottom of Entrance Exam. This must also be scouted. At lower levels experts boof off the lip into an eddy on the left. At moderate levels there is a sneak down the far right. At high water the falls is best portaged in entirety (on the right), because of what appears to be a terminal river wide hydraulic at its base.

Beyond the falls the Roaring Fork offers non stop fun. At low to moderate levels there are countless slots to hit, eddies to catch, waves to surf and rocks to boof. It is a great place to work on technique. Small wonder the Aspen based boaters are so damned good! Several years ago I paddled this section with three of the Colorado big dogs; my old friends Dave Pizzutti and fellow AWA director Paul Tefft, who

were key players in the Meltdown Madness video, and Charlie MacArthur, who is the head of instruction at the Aspen Kayak School. Watching them dance in and out of microeddies and sashay through tortuous slots, boof boulders, ender and surf was like watching a three ring circus. At higher levels Slaughterhouse canyon is no place for the faint hearted. (> 2500 - Class V) Last summer my friend Gary Ward and I arrived in Aspen to find the Roaring Fork running at close to 3500 cfs. The paved bike trail under the bridge at the put-in was flooded. The water was icy, chocolate brown and moving fast. There were a lot of other boaters milling around the put-in, but no was putting on. All of these things might have been

regarded as clues. I had paddled the river at nearly 3000 cfs before so I had a pretty good idea what was coming. Gary had never been there so he didn't know any better.

When Slaughterhouse is running high it is not such a great place to work on technique. Most of the boulders are covered or transformed into pourovers. Eddies are squirrely and few and far between. And many of the holes are... not for playing in! This

would be a really bad place to try to refine your swimming technique. It is a really good place to work on your big water river reading skills. It is also a really good place to work on staying out of trouble.

Fortunately Gary and I managed to finish Slaughterhouse unscathed. Since no one else even put on the river that we were hanging around, our egos were a bit inflated. Nevertheless, neither of us felt the need to drive back to the put-in and hop on again.

If Slaughterhouse is running a bit high for your taste while you are in Aspen, the sections of the Roaring Fork downstream are said to offer class II-IV whitewater.

And if you are an expert and into creeking, you might consider paddling Castle Creek. I have paddled this class IV+ - V Roaring Fork tributary with some of the locals several times. Be aware that deadfall tends to accumulate in this swift, technical stream and that there is a broken down low head dam that forms a nasty hydraulic at some levels. Read the description in Colorado Rivers and Creeks and talk to the locals before putting on... there are serious hazards to be avoided here.

Another "creek" option in the general vicinity is the Upper Fryingpan, a short but technical class IV - V Roaring Fork Tributary, located upstream of the town of Basalt. Check with Watertalk before you make the drive, since flows on the Fryingpan flows are unpredictable and the season is short. And keep an eye out for strainers.

Since cheap camping is not easy to find near Aspen I usually try to drive over to the Crystal drainage before night sets in. This is accomplished by driving down the Roaring Fork valley to Carbondale, where the Roaring Fork meets the Crystal on the way to the Colorado river. Follow 133 upstream through the Crystal valley.



Lake Fork of the Gunnison near Montrose,  
Photo by Bob Gedekoh

## The Crystal

The Crystal valley is more narrow and less developed than the valley of the Roaring Fork. There are very few stores or restaurants and they tend to be expensive, so you might want to stock up at Carbondale. Camping is not permitted near the Crystal except in designated (fee) areas, but the campground located at the takeout for the Bogan Canyon section is quite nice. If you want to camp for free you may have to drive to the pulloff at the top of McClure Pass.

There are a number of class III options on the Crystal outlined in the Colorado guidebooks but I have not paddled them. I have paddled two relatively short, but nonetheless interesting sections of the river. It is possible to tackle both in the same day and still have plenty of time for sightseeing, hiking or mountain biking.

The **Crystal Narrows** is located along route 133 several miles downstream of the town of Redstone. This two mile class IV-V flush becomes increasingly intimidating as water levels rise. The Narrows begins abruptly just downstream of some flatwater and an unmarked hot springs. Here the river is constricted between the roadbed and the canyon wall. The most difficult and explosive water lies near the top of the Narrows, but there are several significant pourovers downstream. This can all be scouted by walking along the road.

At higher levels (1100 cfs) the action is absolutely continuous. If you swim near the top it is unlikely that other boaters will be able to help you and the **best** you can hope for is a sound beating. I have never seen the Crystal at what has been described as low to moderate levels (<1000 cfs), but I assume the Narrows becomes less fierce.

This year when Gary Ward and I paddled the Narrows it was running at more than 1600 cfs. I decided to launch about 100 yards below the top to avoid a couple of mandatory crux



Scott's Bridge section on the Numbers, Photo by Jo Ann Lang

moves, but, as usual, Gary went for broke. It took him less than ten seconds to sail past me! I peeled out directly behind him. We careened down the raging wave train determined to maintain our course down river left, since the worst of the pourovers seemed to be on the right. After four or five minutes the Narrows mellowed a bit. The whole run took less than fifteen minutes.

Not far upstream of the Narrows lies the **Meatgrinder**, a long rapid which I have never paddled. Nor do I believe that I ever will, although I have never really seen running at a low to moderate level. According to Banks and Eckardts' guidebook this lengthy, technical and steep class V+ rapid is best attempted between 500- 1100 cfs. Runs at higher levels are "not recommended". In fact, just two days after Gary and I looked at Meatgrinder last summer, an expert Colorado boater was killed there.

A quick look at Meatgrinder will satisfy the curiosity of most recreational boaters. But don't give up on the Crystal yet! Follow the river upstream to the **Bogan Canyon** section, a pleasant four mile class III-IV run. The take-out is at the Bogan Flats Campground; several put-ins are available downstream of the town of Marble. At moderate to high levels the current and action is fairly continuous; as a consequence it is unlikely that you will spend more than an hour on the river. I have heard rumors that this section sometimes collects nasty strainers, although I have never seen any deadfall here that could not be easily avoided.

Assuming that you have spent the morning looking at Meatgrinder and paddling the Narrows and/or Bogan Canyon, you owe it to yourself to spend an afternoon off the river. And exploring the headwaters of the Crystal can be a great way to expend all your extra energy.

But be forewarned that the Forest Service roads upstream of the tiny town of Marble are rough. To explore the headwaters, including the ghost town of Crystal, seven miles upriver of Marble, you will need a high clearance four wheel drive vehicle or a mountain bike. Jeep rentals are available in Marble. I prefer to pedal.

The best known landmark in the ghost town is the ruin of the Crystal Mill, a wooden structure perched on the brink of a falls. It is one of the most photographed sites in Colorado and, like Maroon Bells, has graced many a calendar. Fortunately (or unfortunately, depending on your perspective), not far beyond the ghost town the roads become impassable, even to the most stalwart of four wheel drive vehicles (snowdrifts, fallen trees and slides). But, a mountain bike can get by. It is possible to pedal up into the Lead King basin, a spectacular alpine wilderness that is bounded, in part, by the Maroon Bells (the side you can not see from Aspen). The basin is carpeted with an astonishing variety of alpine wild flowers and there are several impressive waterfalls. If you have the stamina to continue up and over the crest you can coast back down to Marble, completing a strenuous fourteen mile loop.

## Black Canyon Country

After taking route 133 over McClure Pass (8755 feet) you enter the Gunnison River watershed. Here you have two options. You may take the scenic Forest Service road over Kebler Pass (9980 feet) to the popular ski town of Crested Butte, then continue on to the cowboy town of Gunnison. The **Taylor River** and the **Lake Fork of the Gunnison**, both class III-IV can be readily accessed from this route. Or, you can continue on 133 to 92, which will take you past the take out for the Gunnison Gorge, also class III-IV, located near the town of Delta.

Although Crested Butte is commercializing at an alarming rate, it still has the look and feel of a old western town. At least for now it has not been "Aspenized". You can still find cheap pancakes, hamburgers and pizza, not to mention a place to park. Crested Butte seems to have attracted a cadre of genuine hard core skiers, climbers, bikers and boaters, as opposed to the army of posers that hang out at some of the other mountain resorts.

The 4 mile class III+ section of the **Taylor River** is about one half hour's drive from Crested Butte. Forest road 742 parallels the run and provides an easy shuttle. The private landowners along the Taylor have posted much of



9 year old Jennifer Schackel at the helm on Brown's Canyon of the Arkansas (a member of Rhonda Fleck's tribe), Photo by Greg Schackel

their property and are reportedly rather militant, so be sure to use the appropriate public access sites at the New Generation area and the One Mile Campground.

With an fairly even gradient of 90 feet per mile and a riverbed strewn with boulders, the Taylor provides a good place for advanced boaters to work on technique. There are several decent play spots as well and, as of June of 1997, a slalom course. (The Taylor hosted a slalom race and rodeo in mid-June.)

After driving to Gunnison take route 50 west. Near Sapinero you can cross one of the bridges over the impounded Gunnison River (essentially a lake here) and paddle the **Lake Fork of**

**the Gunnison**. The difficulty of this four mile run varies with flows, but it can be scouted from Forest Service road that runs beside it. Watch out for strainers.

Continuing west on route 50 toward Montrose you will pass the entrance to the Black Canyon National Monument. If you have a couple of hours this is a magnificent place to do some sightseeing. Unless you are prepared to do some extreme, class VI back country exploration, your visit will most likely be limited to short walks to the lookouts along the brink of the canyon.

Take the time to peer 2,200 feet over the brink of the sheer cliffs to "scout" the Cunnison river as it rages through menacing rock gardens, plunges over falls and vanishes completely beneath monstrous boulders. Traversing the Black Canyon by kayak is a serious multi-day expedition that requires class V+ whitewater skills, tremendous stamina (the portages are brutal) and impeccable judgement. Last summer the Black Canyon claimed the life of Chuck Kern, one of the best hair boaters in the country. Small wonder the Canyon is rarely paddled and only by teams of experts.

But class III-IV boaters can get a taste of the Black Canyon by paddling the section immediately downstream,

The Numbers at High Water, Photo by Jo Ann Lang



the thirteen mile long **Gunnison Gorge**. With a moderate gradient of twenty feet per mile, most of the rapids in the Gorge are class III. At higher flows (>2000 cfs) there are some memorable wave trains (Surf City) and a few impressive holes. I have paddled the Gorge at more than six thousand cfs, the waves were gigantic but mostly friendly. Still, at high water this would not be a good place for a weak or tentative group. I have also paddled the Gorge at 800 cfs; at this level the action is quite mellow, but the surroundings are still awesome. Though not as deep or precipitous as the Canyon upstream, the towering rock walls are still impressive. This section of the Gunnison is a world class trout fishery; at low flows you may pass a few commercial rafts filled with fisherman as you drift downstream.

The shuttle is the biggest drawback to paddling the Gorge. The dirt road to the put in at Chukar Trail is long, serpentine and rough. When wet it becomes slick and impassable. As a consequence many boaters arrange their shuttles through the Gunnison River



Above: Shuttle road for the Numbers, Photo by Jo Ann Lang

Pleasure Park, (970)872-2525, which is located at the take-out.

Delta and Montrose are large, modern towns with limited appeal, so I usually waste no time in heading south on route 550 when I have finished paddling in the Gunnison basin. By this time I am chomping at the bit to get to my favorite Colorado river, the Animas. You can see the towering San Juan mountains as you drive across the

Classic Southwestern  
Colorado

flatlands for a long time. Ouray, a resort town nicknamed the Switzerland of America, lies at the very base of these mountains. Be careful as you approach Ouray, there may be a speed trap.

As you enter Ouray you will pass what appears to be a tempting whitewater run on the **Uncompahgre**. I paddled this section once at relatively high water and can't get too enthused about it. Unbeknownst to us the day before we paddled it another eastern boater died in the steep, serpentine crux rapid, which can be seen from the road. This rapid contains a lot of jagged rock and debris and there are often log jams and brushfalls downstream.

My advice is to skip the Uncompahgre altogether. Instead, head for the municipal hot springs located on the northern end of Ouray. One end of this large facility features really hot water for soaking weary muscles. The other end is a cooler swimming area

Below: The train roars by on the Upper Animas, Photo by Greg Schackel





Right : Greg Schackel shows how it is done at rapid number 4 on the Arkansas

with a diving board and full length lap lanes. This is also a good place to take a shower, if you are into such decadence.

You may want to do some sightseeing in Ouray, though I find it a little bit smarmy. The town caters to older folks and families. There is some excellent hiking not far outside of town.

Once you leave Ouray headed south there is no way to go but up. The serpentine drive over Red Mountain Pass (11,018 feet) is spectacular and thrilling. Amazingly the highway department manages to keep this route open most of the winter. There is a memorial along the road dedicated to the snowplow operators who have died here. If I were you I would cross this pass before dark.

## San Juan Whitewater

Once you cross the pass and start the descent to the town of Silverton you will be entering the San Juan watershed, which includes the Animas and the Piedra. The fact that Silverton is the put-in for the Upper Animas, to my mind one of the finest class IV-V whitewater runs in the country, is only part of the reason that this is my favorite part of Colorado. I typically spend four or five days camped along Mineral Creek several miles north of town. Some days I paddle the Animas, other days I mountain bike or hike.

First a few words about Silverton (elevation 9240 feet). Silverton became a notoriously boisterous boom town af-

ter the narrow gauge Denver and Rio Grande railroad was completed in 1881. In no time the town featured fancy hotels, saloons and brothels that catered to an army of miners, railroaders and cowboys. Many of these historic structures are still in place and open for business. (Not the brothels, at least to my knowledge!)

Almost all of the mines are closed now. Silverton's economic base has become the hordes of tourists that ride the ancient trains, pulled by steam powered locomotives, that arrive daily from Durango. Yes, Silverton is a tourist town, but don't let that discourage you. The first train doesn't arrive until late morning and the last train pulls out in mid afternoon. So you can woof down a banana pancake breakfast in the ornate parlor of the Gold King Saloon with the real cowboys in the morning. And you can wash down authentic chili rellenos with Margaritas at Romero's in the evening, with only a few locals and the proprietors' grandkids to keep you company.

Silverton is usually serene at night, unless your visit coincides with the annual folk music festival or the High Plains Drifters motorcycle gang reunion (this is very interesting!). The cowboy bar on a side street can get a little rowdy. Try not to get into any brawls! The local amateur theater group's productions provide more sedate entertainment for those so inclined.

If you have a high clearance four wheel drive vehicle and nerves of steel you can do some thrilling back country exploring on the old Forest Service roads. It is sometimes possible to four by four cross country to Lake City or to Telluride, providing there isn't too much snow and the roads are passable. By driving up the valley out of Silverton on route 110 you can access some magnificent, but rugged, hiking and mountain biking terrain, as well as the old ghost town of Capitol City, now a national historic site.

## Paddling the Animas

The Upper Animas, between Silverton and Rockwood, is one of the most astonishing whitewater runs in the county. Here the Animas cuts its way through the lofty San Juans. Snow capped 13,000 foot peaks tower in the distance, waterfalls cascade into the river from the mountain sides, jagged cliffs plummet into the river. Paddling the Upper Animas will be a memorable experience if you have the skill and savvy. But if you don't, and you get in over your head, your day on the Animas will be truly unforgettable! The run is nearly 27 miles long with an average gradient of 80 feet/mile and there are no intermediate access points. Keep in mind that there are no



roads into the Animas River canyon, only hiking trails and the narrow gauge railroad which parallels the river. And because relations between whitewater boaters and the railroad have been strained in the past, you should not rely upon the trains to bail you out of trouble.

The difficulty of the run is dependent upon the flow, which is gauged far downstream at Durango. The river can reportedly be run as low as 1200 cfs, though this would make for a long day. *Colorado Rivers and Creeks* rates the river class IV (V-) at less than 2500 cfs and class IV+ (3X V) at flows greater than 2500. If the river is running higher than 4000 cfs it must be considered a very serious class V run. Sturdy companions and a bombproof role are absolute necessities at higher levels.

It is best to paddle the Animas with someone who knows the river, particularly at high levels, because the approaches to two of the biggest and meanest rapids on the river, Garfield and No Name, are innocuous looking and not obvious. At either of these rapids you can find yourself in really big trouble before you know it. Many boaters elect to portage No Name after scouting. The approach to a third rapid on the river which should be scouted is marked by a broken down bridge over the river. All three of these rapids contain dangerous recirculating holes and all are followed immediately by long stretches (greater than two miles) of booming, continuous class III-IV whitewater. Rescue at high water is difficult on the Animas. Big water swims in the icy water can easily extend for more than a mile and wayward boats often go unrecovered.

Getting off the river presents a logistical dilemma. Not far below the Tacoma hydro plant at mile 24 the Animas plunges into a constricted, sheer walled box canyon which contains a number of difficult drops. The first of these is a blind, unscoutable and unportageable river wide ledge that can be quite nasty, particularly at higher levels. Below the ledge the Animas flows swiftly through the box.

The train tracks are hundreds of feet above the river on the face of the cliff and are not accessible. There are a few relatively placid stretches between the rapids, but even these contain tricky eddy lines and swirlies. Several of the rapids within the box are long and contain ominous hydraulics. Climbing out of the box would be difficult, if not impossible. To make matters even more interesting, the hard to spot takeout on river right lies just below and just above some significant class

the box. Instead they make arrangements with the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad to haul their boats out from Tacoma (970) 247-2733. Other boaters elect to carry their boats a couple of miles along the tracks to Rockwood, starting at the railroad bridge below Tacoma, but above the box. Unfortunately, this is trespassing and illegal. Over the years several boaters have been arrested and fined. If you plan to use this option, and we can't recommend it, make sure



Above: A hiking bridge across the Upper Animas, Phot by Greg Schackel

IV water. Not far beyond this takeout the Animas disappears into another sheer walled canyon and over a gigantic, unrunnable (probably lethal) waterfall. If you drift (or swim) past the take out you are in big trouble!

The box is spectacular, but the decision to paddle it should not be taken lightly. By the time you reach the box you will already have paddled 25 miles of difficult water. If you had any trouble upstream, you certainly don't belong in the box. Many of the rapids in the box are blind and they are generally more technical than those upriver. It is advisable to follow someone who knows the river here. I have run the box several times, once at about 4000 cfs, but I will never do that again! Now I cut it off at 2500 cfs.

A lot of paddlers elect never to run

you are nowhere near the tracks when a train comes by. "Wise" trespassers avoid confrontations by discretely waiting until the last train has passed before starting the hike, which takes at least an hour.

There are several other whitewater options in the Durango -Silverton area. The section of the Animas running through Durango, the **Town Run**, is commercially rafted and rated class III. I have never paddled it, but I have been to Animas River Days, which is held every June in the town park along the river. There is an excellent slalom course in the park and, not far downstream, a phenomenal rodeo hole. Much of the credit for Animas River Days and for the vital boating scene in Durango must go to renowned kayaker

# Classic Southwestern Colorado Whitewater

Nancy Wiley, who manages the family business, Four Corners Marina, located on the outskirts of town. If you need any gear or reliable advice regarding water levels or potential runs in the area, Four Corners is a good place to start.

Durgano is a bustling, upscale college town with more than its share of hotels, restaurants and stores. There is a rodeo several nights a week (the real kind, with horses and cows!) that is worth seeing. A very nice commercial hot springs and swimming facility is located in the neighboring town of Hermosa. Those interested in native American history may want to make a side trip to Mesa Verde National Park, located about an hour away.

Hard core expeditionary boaters might consider running class IV-V Hermosa Creek, provided there is enough water. A number of years ago I paddled Hermosa Creek from its headwaters on the back side of Purgatory Ski Area. This rigorous twenty mile wilderness expedition has one major drawback, strainers. Some would be difficult to avoid at high water. Leave plenty of time for scouting and portaging.

Even more outrageous hair runs can be found on Vallecito Creek, located east of Durango, and on Lime Creek, which is an Animas tributary. Anyone who has seen the whitewater video, Meltdown Madness, will appreciate the severity of these class V+ runs.

I have never attempted either and probably never will. Both are reportedly quite dangerous and difficult to access... very few boaters have the skills and experience needed to paddle them.

## East to the Piedra

The last stop on my swing through southern Colorado is usually the scenic Piedra River, located west of the town of Pagosa, which, by the way, also has commercial hot springs. Like the Animas, the Piedra is a tributary of the San Juan river.

The Piedra is a twenty mile long wilderness run that can be divided into two parts. If you elect to run the upper section, which is easier, you will need to put in at the route 631 bridge. Check a map and ask directions; finding this put in can be tricky. The

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Above: Paul Lang having a high water escapade on Slaughterhouse Canyon, Roaring Fork River. Photo by Jo Ann Lang

intermediate put in/ take out is located where First Fork road (FR 622) descends from high on the river left canyon wall to a dead end at the river. The takeout for the lower, more challenging section is on FR 622 about a mile upstream of it's intersection with 160. An alternative take out and campground is located across the river. When the river is running at moderate to high levels, I usually run both sections back to back.

There is no Watertalk gauge for the Piedra. If the gauge on the San Juan River in Pagosa is greater than 2000, the Piedra will probably be high. If the Pagosa gauge is less than 1000, it may be too low. The San Juan gauge can only give a rough "guesstimate", so eyeball the flow at the takeout or ask the folks at Four Corners for advice. There will be much less water at the upper put in, which lies above many of the tributaries. At lower water you may want to skip the upper section. Because the Piedra drains a lower elevation than the Animas, it tends to peak

earlier. In years when there is poor snowpack in the San Juans, the Piedra may be too low after mid June.

The Piedra is smaller than its sister, the Animas, but it is, in it's way, every bit as beautiful. The Animas is majestic on a grand scale, while the Piedra is intimate and pristine. There is a lot of class I-III whitewater on the Piedra, particularly near the top and the bottom, but don't let that dissuade you... the scenery is worth it. Smell the pines and marvel at the Columbines blooming on the cliffs. Some locals claim there are still grizzly bears in the headwaters of the Piedra, but there have been no "official" sightings. Keep your eyes open for rattlesnakes when you scout and portage. If you are lucky you might see a black bear and some elk, or even one of the otters that were reintroduced into the river several years ago.

Last year my friend Scott Stough and I rounded a bend and startled a coyote so badly that he tumbled ass over tincups fifteen feet into the river. Watching the indignant

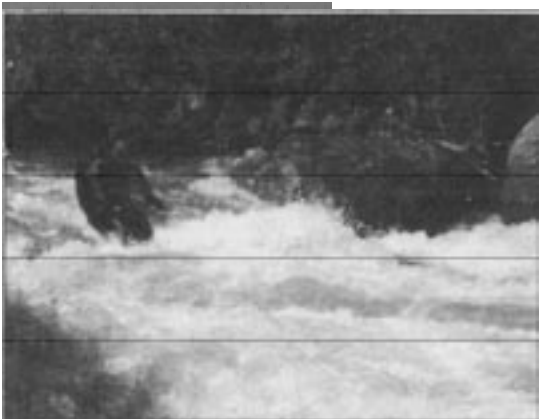
creature scramble back up the vertical rock outcropping was a memorable show.

The Piedra passes through a series of box canyons, each geologically different from the rest. Sheer cliff walls plunge hundreds of feet into the river. The effect is breathtaking.

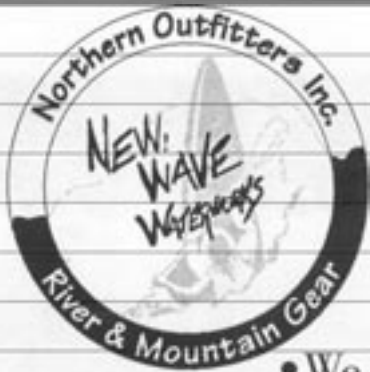
The hardest rapids in the upper section are located in a box canyon not far above the intermediate access point. At higher levels these are steep, technical class IV+ rapids that contain several significant holes. If members of your party get into trouble here, you probably should not continue into the second section of the run, which is decidedly harder. The difficulty of the lower section varies tremendously depending on flows. Don't underestimate it at high water.

#### The most difficult rapids on the

lower section lie within and just below the next box canyon. The first is a slide/ falls which can be scouted, and usually run, on the left. On our initial trip down the Piedra, many years ago,



Above: Derek Varble having a high water escapade on Slaughterhouse Canyon, Roaring Fork River. Photo by Jo Ann Lang



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the river was running high. A friend swam out of a hole not far upstream of this rapid. We watched helplessly from a turbulent eddy as she dogpaddled by and disappeared over the horizon. Fortunately, we had a couple of strong and fearless boaters with us... Dean Tomco and Dave Brown. They gamely charged over the blind drop (with the rest of us in hot pursuit) and quickly rescued the disgruntled swimmer and retrieved her gear.

After several long class IV rapids the box starts to open up. But the fun is not over. The two most difficult rapids on the river are located here (V). Don't run them blind! If you are not sure where you are, get out and look. Keep an eye out for the landslides (mudslides) on river right beside each one of them. These rapids should be scouted (from river right) and portaged, depending on water levels. Be aware that they change from year to year and sometimes collect deadfall. After a couple more technical class IV rapids the Piedra mellows out... enjoy the float to the takeout.

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## Homeward Bound

There are a couple of other so-so paddling options in the Pagosa area. I have paddled the class IV-V East Fork of the San Juan several times. The difficult rapids on the East Fork lie in a box canyon not far below the put in. If you decide to run this section of river







Page 56: Scouting and running Pine Creek section of the Arkansas.

Above: More to do than just boat all day. Photos by Bob Gedekoh

you will need to scout it thoroughly from high above on the cliffs before putting on, because logs frequently lodge just beyond blind turns in the middle of the pushy, technical rapids. It seems to me that this short run is almost more trouble than its worth. Below its confluence with the East Fork, the San Juan is mellow and there are several miles of enjoyable class III+ water. Keep an eye out for the remnants of a low head dam.

The **Mesa Canyon** section of the San Juan also lies just outside of Pagosa. This is a non-threatening thirteen mile scenic float that might be of interest if you have intermediate boaters in your party.

Otherwise, it's time to face the facts and head home. Reality bites and the party is over! So load those boats and start driving. After all, you don't want to be late for work on Monday, do you?

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# THE BEAVER... ADIRONDACK WHITEWATER TREASURE

By Chris Koll

I felt like a latter-day Pied Piper as I glanced in the rear-view mirror at the long line of cars and trucks—all loaded with brightly-colored creek boats—that trailed behind me as I sped down the narrow Adirondack lane.

The Pied Piper, of course, was a legendary figure who rid the German city of Hamelin of an infestation of rats by performing a lively ditty on his flute. The rats—gaily dancing to the music—blindly followed the Piper out of town.

But as my wife Caron and I negotiated the maze of backwoods roads that led to the put-in of the Eagle section of New York's Beaver River, I wondered if our rat-obsessed neighbors recognized the similarity of the situation to the old German bedtime story. And I also wondered if the paddlers speeding behind us remembered the final disposition of the rats...

The vermin capered behind the Piper until he led them to a river—where they drowned.

Left and right page: Bernie Wooten running Eagle Falls.  
Photos by James Swedeberg

The boaters trailing behind us had no idea what they would find at the Eagle. They had only heard vague rumors of a short class 5 creek run. They were still flushed with success from a morning paddling the first-ever recreational whitewater release on the nearby Taylorville section of the Beaver. Taylorville had provided challenging but approachable class 4 rapids and slides. Now the availability of an afternoon release on the reportedly more difficult Eagle stretch beckoned like a siren's song...or Piper's melody.

But what many of the boaters didn't know was that the Eagle section had never been paddled. In fact—to that point—only three paddlers had ever even scouted Eagle. And that for a portion of the run—Eagle drops at a stunning gradient of 475 fpm!

"Once we get there, what if Ni-Mo gives us a release and no one chooses to boat?" I commented to Caron.

"The dam operators will probably team up with all these boaters you're leading on a wild goose chase and throw you in the river...without your kayak," she replied. "But don't worry—you can still call it a first descent."

I was one of the first three boaters to scout Eagle, along with (then lieutenant—now major) Tim Kelley of the U.S. Army and AWA board member Pete Skinner. It was nearly 10 years ago during a cold spring weekend. Four inches of rain had swollen practically every river and creek in upstate New York. Despite a leaden sky that threatened snow—it was the boating day of the decade. Everything was running.



The only trouble was we weren't spending the day on a river...we were wasting it searching for that special creek that had never been run.

Skinner had a special interest in the Beaver. Although most of the whitewater on the Beaver had been dewatered by hydro-electric projects, Skinner was starting to consider the possibility of demanding recreational releases on certain sections during their relicensing in the mid 1990s.

"Some of these bypassed reaches have a lot of gradient and they might be spilling with all the rain. We can see if the sections are worth fighting for," Peter argued.

I countered with irrefutable logic that the Beaver was one of New York's most isolated rivers, accessible only by miles of dirt road, and that attempting to locate the Eagle section would result in a loss of valuable boating time and—even worse—might possibly cut into the Happy Hour.

But, as is often the case in discussions with Skinner, logic finished sec-

ond. Two hours later, we were still poring over topo maps while mucking along mud-slicked lanes. Finally, more by accident than skill, we blundered onto a side road that led up a long, steep hill to the dam that formed the Eagle reservoir.

"You know, the river will be falling at the same rate this road is climbing," I commented to Tim as the incline forced me to drop down into second gear.

"If it does, I don't know if it will be runnable," Tim replied.

Near the top of the hill we parked, scrambled down an embankment and then up over a rocky escarpment to the river. As we cleared the final boulder we were stunned to find one of the most spectacular panoramas of falling water in the eastern United States.

From our vantage point we could look upstream for half a mile to where about 200 cfs of water spilled in a sheer white curtain over the sloping face of a 40-foot high dam. After collecting itself in a short pool, the water funneled into a magnificent gorge formed by sheer 300-foot granite cliffs on the north shore and a sloping solid rock slab on the south bank.

The river remained playful for several hundred yards below the dam—a narrow, class 2 slalom course of small ledges and little hydraulics. But then the river literally fell off the earth, plunging 70 feet in four separate cascades in a little more than a tenth of a mile.

We spent another hour marveling at the steep, technical drops. Every drop looked possible and we hypothesized how a kayak could negotiate the entire stretch. But none of us were eager to test our theoretical lines. Finally—to our mutual relief—we decided to save the Eagle section for another day and drove on to the Moose to "start" our day of boating, at nearly



Above: Tom Vickery doing the 10 ft. waterfall that forms the 4th drop. Photo by James Swedeberg

three in the afternoon.

Since that day I'd always fantasized the Eagle as my private steep creek run. Skinner had grown old, cranky and cautious, while Tim Kelley had been transferred to North Carolina, where he lost his hair and took up golf. So I considered Eagle as my own special secret waiting to be run.

Or so I thought. But as it turned out, while Skinner had all but disappeared from river running—he was never more active in river saving. And in the years following our scouting adventure, the Beaver received his full attention.

At one time, the Beaver River might have been one of the premier

whitewater streams in the country. From its source in the northcentral Adirondacks, the Beaver plummeted 1,400 vertical feet in its 40-mile length—with most of the gradient concentrated in seven sections of steep and severe waterfalls, slides and rapids.

Unfortunately for paddlers, the conditions that make for great whitewater—steep gradient and plenty of water—also appeal to hydroelectric development. And following World War II, the Beaver's capacity for power generation was heavily mined by the Niagara-Mohawk Power Co. They erected seven dams, transforming the once-wild river into a string of still-water ponds.

Most of Ni-Mo's power projects on the Beaver are similar in design...a dam was thrown across the river just above anywhere the gradient tumbles away in a series of cataracts. Then, a six-foot diameter steel pipe was run from the base of the dam through the woods to a powerhouse located at the bottom of the rapids.

During operation, the entire river runs through the penstock, leaving the real stream bed a collection of damp rocks punctuated by sharp ledges. As a consequence, on current topo maps the Beaver is shown as a series of lakes

joined by dotted lines, where once flowed a living river. And because water levels within the impoundments can be manipulated and tightly controlled—spills seldom occur, even during spring runoff or heavy rains.

I realized long ago that Pete Skinner is not a reasonable man. A reasonable man would have looked at the mess that had been made of the Beaver, heaved a sigh at what could have been, and drove on to boat the nearby Moose.

But, instead, Skinner saw the Beaver as a whitewater opportunity waiting to be exploited.

What if—he reasoned—Niagara Mohawk could be persuaded to allow a regulated amount of water back into the natural streambed during scheduled release dates? You could create a whitewater resource at times when other streams were too low to boat.

So Peter went to work. All of the Ni-Mo Beaver projects were licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission back in the 1950s. The licenses had a 40-year duration and were up for renewal. To be relicensed, Ni-Mo had to prove to FERC that their projects considered the needs of all possible river users.

To Skinner's unreasonable mind that included providing boaters with a bunch of recreational water releases. Of course, Ni-Mo disagreed. A cordial, but protracted, squabble developed regarding the sites where whitewater might be made available.

As part of the process, American Whitewater and Ni-Mo conducted feasibility studies on the Taylorville and Moshier sections of the Beaver during



Left: Chris Koll catches his breath at bottom of 2nd drop.  
Photo by Caron Koll

Peter racked his brain and remembered that one spectacular scouting expedition.

"How about Eagle?"

Done deal.

So that is how American Whitewater engineered the agreement signed in July of 1997 for five releases at Taylorville, one at Moshier and five at Eagle to be scheduled annually in the month of September. And that is how I found myself leading a caravan of trusting compatriots to the Eagle section, one that I, alone, knew to be both magnificently spectacular and hideously difficult.

Because we had forged the final agreement so late in the year,

the early 1990s. After all, since the sections seldom flowed, no one was really sure if the whitewater to be found was appropriate or safe for boating—or how much water would need to be released to create an optimal level.

The test runs were well attended by local boaters and (much to Ni-Mo's chagrin) the paddlers found the sections to be well worth the trip to the backwoods of the Adirondacks. So Skinner continued to push for an established schedule of release dates for Taylorville and Moshier.

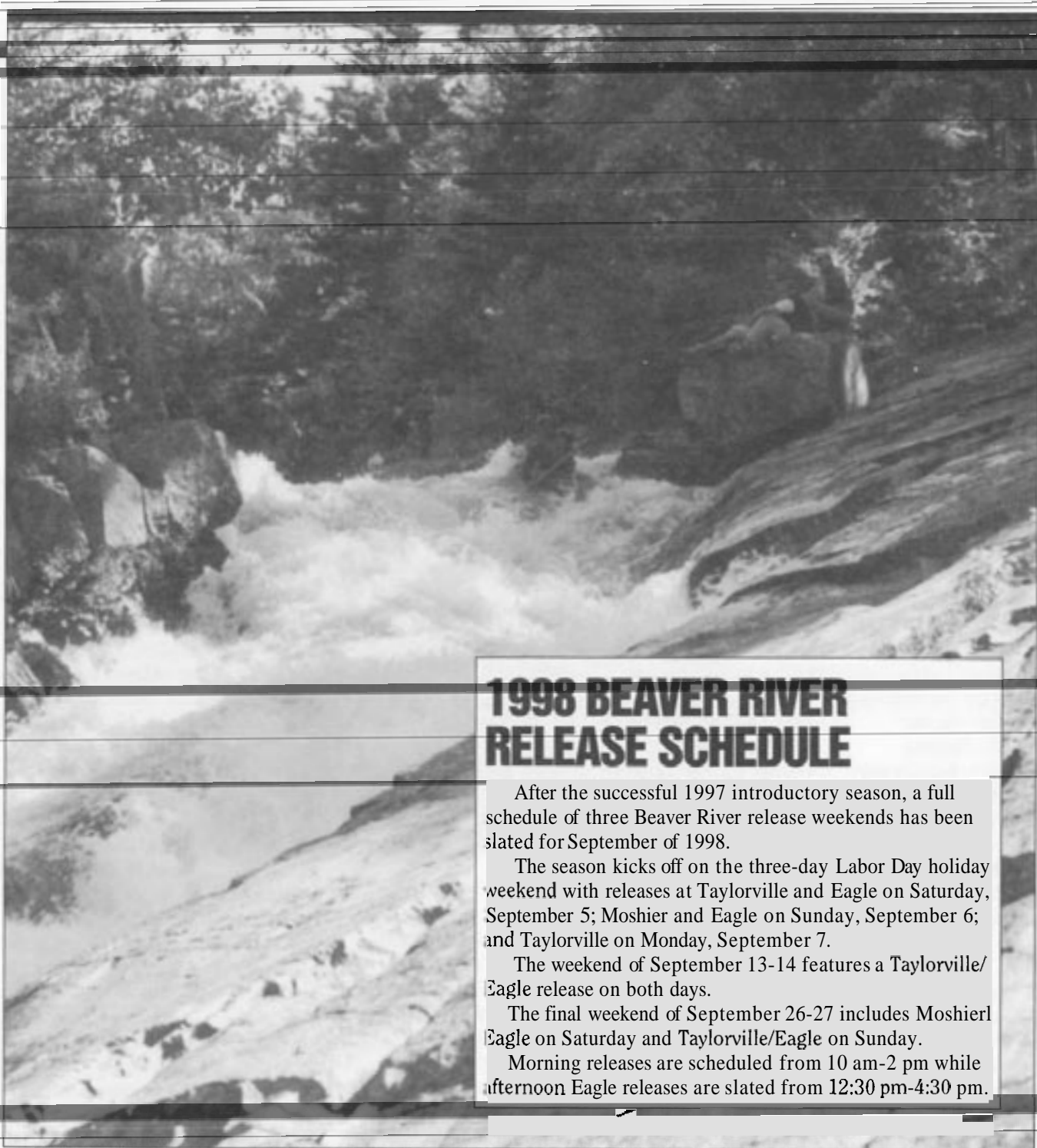
As years passed and negotiations dragged on, it became apparent that Ni-Mo was willing to yield a number of releases at Taylorville. But because of operational difficulties, Ni-Mo could not agree to more than one annual Moshier release. So they asked Skinner—was there another section of the Beaver we could include in the deal that would satisfy your position?

I proposed to Ni-Mo an abbreviated release schedule for 1997—just the second and fourth weekend of September; with a release at Taylorville in the morning, followed by an afternoon release at Eagle. I was concerned that we wouldn't have adequate time to promote the event and Ni-Mo would "turn on" the river for an embarrassingly small assemblage of boaters.

My worries were unfounded. Half way up the dirt road leading from the Taylorville power station to the put-in at the base of the dam, we rounded a corner to find a line of vehicles parked along the right shoulder and stretching out of sight up the hill. A mob of boaters were already occupied unloading gear or dragging kayaks off to the river.

We quickly disembarked, ran the two-minute shuttle, and joined the throng.





## 1998 BEAVER RIVER RELEASE SCHEDULE

After the successful 1997 introductory season, a full schedule of three Beaver River release weekends has been slated for September of 1998.

The season kicks off on the three-day Labor Day holiday weekend with releases at Taylorville and Eagle on Saturday, September 5; Moshier and Eagle on Sunday, September 6; and Taylorville on Monday, September 7.

The weekend of September 13-14 features a Taylorville/Eagle release on both days.

The final weekend of September 26-27 includes Moshier/Eagle on Saturday and Taylorville/Eagle on Sunday.

Morning releases are scheduled from 10 am-2 pm while afternoon Eagle releases are slated from 12:30 pm-4:30 pm.

## Warm-Up on Taylorville

Taylorville was the perfect run to introduce many of the assembled paddlers to the joys of creek boating. Only 1.5 miles long—Taylorville still boasted seven class 3-4 rapids. Ni-Mo had delivered on its promised flow of 400 cfs—plenty of water to pad the drops, but not so much as to make the rapids unmanageable.

Which was a good thing. Because

while the Taylorville rapids were generally straight forward—they also featured a healthy gradient.

The second rapid was a case in point. From the eddy above the drop appeared relatively simple—just a right to left move on a tongue over a five-foot ledge.

Caron elected to run a conservative line down the far left, but I spent an

anxious moment flailing away to stay on the tongue, then dumped sideways into a vicious pour-over.

"We're going to have some action here," I commented to Caron from the security of an eddy. Sure enough—the next boater was blown down the middle and flopped sideways in the hydraulic. The paddler flipped ...rolled. .. then flipped again, before getting

Above: Chris Koll drives toward the left tongue at top of 2nd drop on the Eagle section. Photo by Caron Koll

sucked from his boat. As we scrambled for throwbags, the paddler was recirculated three times before flushing free.

We spent the next half hour retrieving equipment and extracting unfortunate swimmers from the hole. Many boaters learned a valuable lesson: even 400 cfs can pack a punch when the gradient starts to fall away.

Chastened by the carnage, most of the boaters approached the next horizon line with a bit more caution. And for good reason. Just below, the river pitched down a smooth 20-degree incline, dropping 30 vertical feet in a 100 foot long slide.

Despite its impressive appearance—the slide proved simple to run. All the water funneled towards the center of the river...directly into an intimidating hydraulic. Boat after boat careened down the slide slamming into the hole. Some back ended, some flipped, and some briefly surfed—but no one endured an extended visit in the hydraulic. Most paddlers carried back up for a second or third attempt.

We hurried down the remainder of the Beaver, boat-scouting its tight, technical class 4 drops, then paused to surf two play holes at the conclusion of the run. After a quick shuttle back to the top, we blitzed down the river a second time, finishing just as many were completing their initial trip.

The scene at the take-out was festive. Intermediate boaters eagerly recounted their first exposure to steep water, while experienced paddlers simply noted that another prime class 4 option had been added to their September itinerary. But the foremost topic of conversation was the Eagle section what was it like...and how the Hell did you get to the put-in?

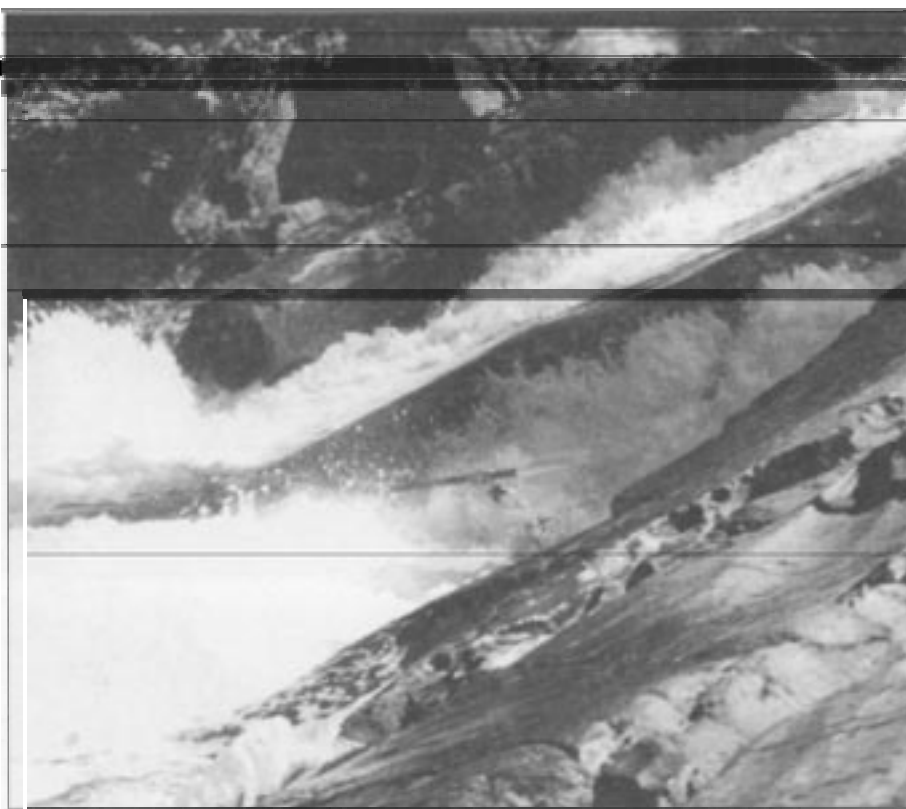
I just honked the horn and shouted out the window.

"Come on...let's go!"

The pack scrambled for their cars and the chase was on.

"If you and Tim and Pete chose not to run Eagle ten years ago—what makes you think people are going to run it now?" Caron asked as we approached the turn-off to the river.

"Boat design," I replied. "Remem-



Above: Paddler buried in hydraulic at bottom of 2nd drop Photo by Caron fKoll

## RIVER SUMMARY

### Taylorville section

Put-in: ..... Base of dam upstream from Taylorville power station in Belfort, NY  
 Take-out: ..... Taylorville power station  
 Flow: ..... 400 cfs  
 Length: ..... 1.5 miles  
 Difficulty: ..... Class 3-4  
 Description: ..... Advanced intermediate to expert run with seven rapids ranging from steep slides to tight, constricted drops

### Moshier section

Put-in: Base of dam upstream from Moshier power station located off Stillwater Road approximately 10 miles west of Stillwater reservoir  
 Take-out: ..... Moshier power station  
 Flow: ..... 400 cfs  
 Length: ..... 4 miles  
 Difficulty: ..... Class 4-5  
 Description: ..... Advanced to expert run featuring runnable waterfalls ranging from 10'-20' and steep, sluice-like rapids

### Eagle section

Put-in: ..... Base of dam located at top of access road located just east of Eagle power station on Effley Falls Road  
 Take-out: ..... Eagle power station  
 Flow: ..... 200 cfs  
 Length: ..... .75 mile  
 Difficulty: ..... Class 5  
 Description: ..... Expert level run featuring five steep, convoluted drops

ber—ten years ago we were paddling Dancers and Sabres. Current creek boat designs have really opened up a lot of water. In addition—perceptions of what's runnable have dramatically changed over the years. I don't remember Eagle being worse than what we see in any number of creekin' videos."

"Plus, who knows...maybe my imagination has exaggerated the difficulty. Maybe it isn't as bad as I remember. Maybe we'll all take a look at it and say, 'Hey—it's no big deal.'"

## Tackling the Eagle Section

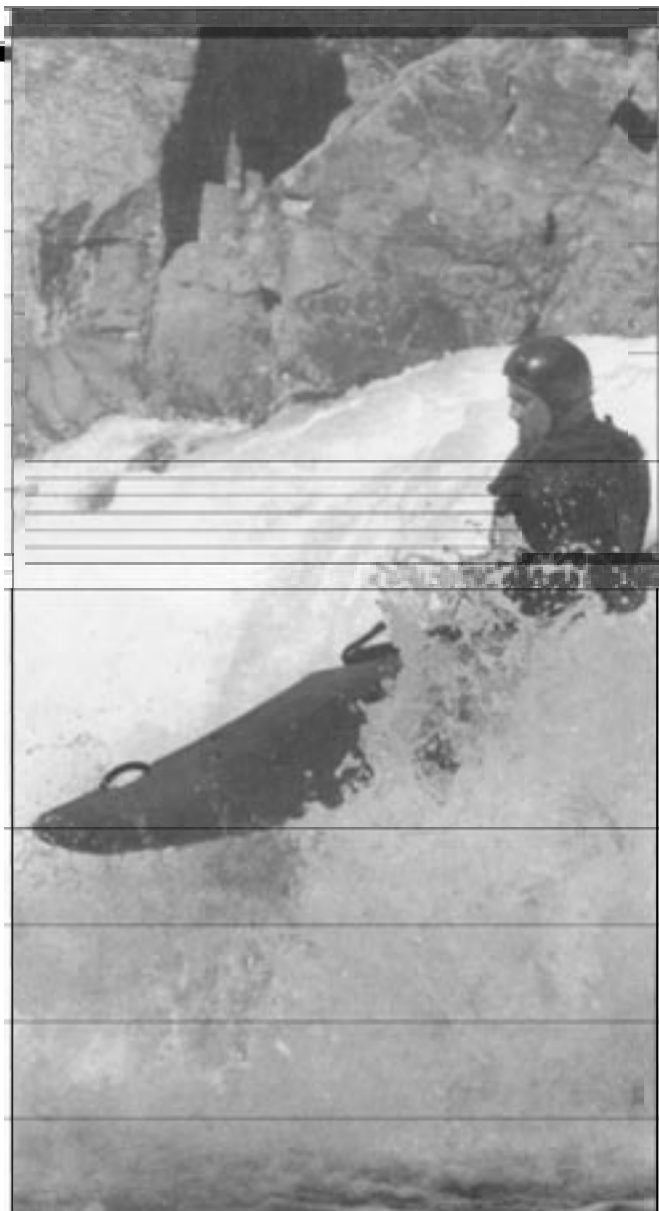
"Hey," Caron said. "It's a big deal."

We were standing with Justin Beckwith—a hot, young boater from nearby Holland Patent—on the sloping rock shelf that formed the left bank. Before us the Beaver blasted through a series of three drops that comprised the crux of Eagle. Up and down the shore, other paddlers stood slack jawed, struck dumb by the spectacle.

And for good reason. The cataract opened when the river turned right, piled up against the right hand cliff, then sluiced back to the left over an eight-foot drop. A tiny eddy hugged the left shore, but most of the flow continued unabated toward the next rapid.

There the river narrowed to 20 feet in width and plunged 30 vertical feet in as much distance. To complicate matters, midway through the drop a spine of granite split the flow, with most of the water pushing left in a pulsing tongue. And at the bottom of the drop an undercut boulder protruding from the left shore guarded a nasty hydraulic that developed where the rushing water impacted on the bottom pool.

"What do you think, Justin? Is this



Above: Bernie Wooten in the 4th drop.  
Photo by James Swedeberg

do-able?"

"This looks okay," Justin replied with the surety of a 19-year old. "But the one down there has me worried."

Justin pointed at the third drop, downstream, where the river knifed between large boulders in a 12-foot high sluice. At the bottom, a hydraulic spread from shore to shore.

"That hydraulic looks pretty sticky," Justin observed.

"But there's a lot of water going through," I countered.

"Well, are you guys going to run these things or not?" demanded Caron.

Justin and I simply exchanged grim looks and shrugged.

My limbs were strangely heavy as I lifted my Rockit from the racks and dragged it to the water. I paddled across the impoundment, carried around the dam, and slid down the steep rock shelf into the river.

No other boats were in sight as I eddied out above the opening drop. Most of the paddlers from Taylorville—still in street clothes—were perched on vantage points above the water. Instructing my wife to catch the nose of my boat if I missed the eddy below, I peeled back into the current.

The boat rode up on the right pillow and I drove the nose back left into the eddy. Breathing heavily despite the minor exertion, I quickly climbed out onto the bank.

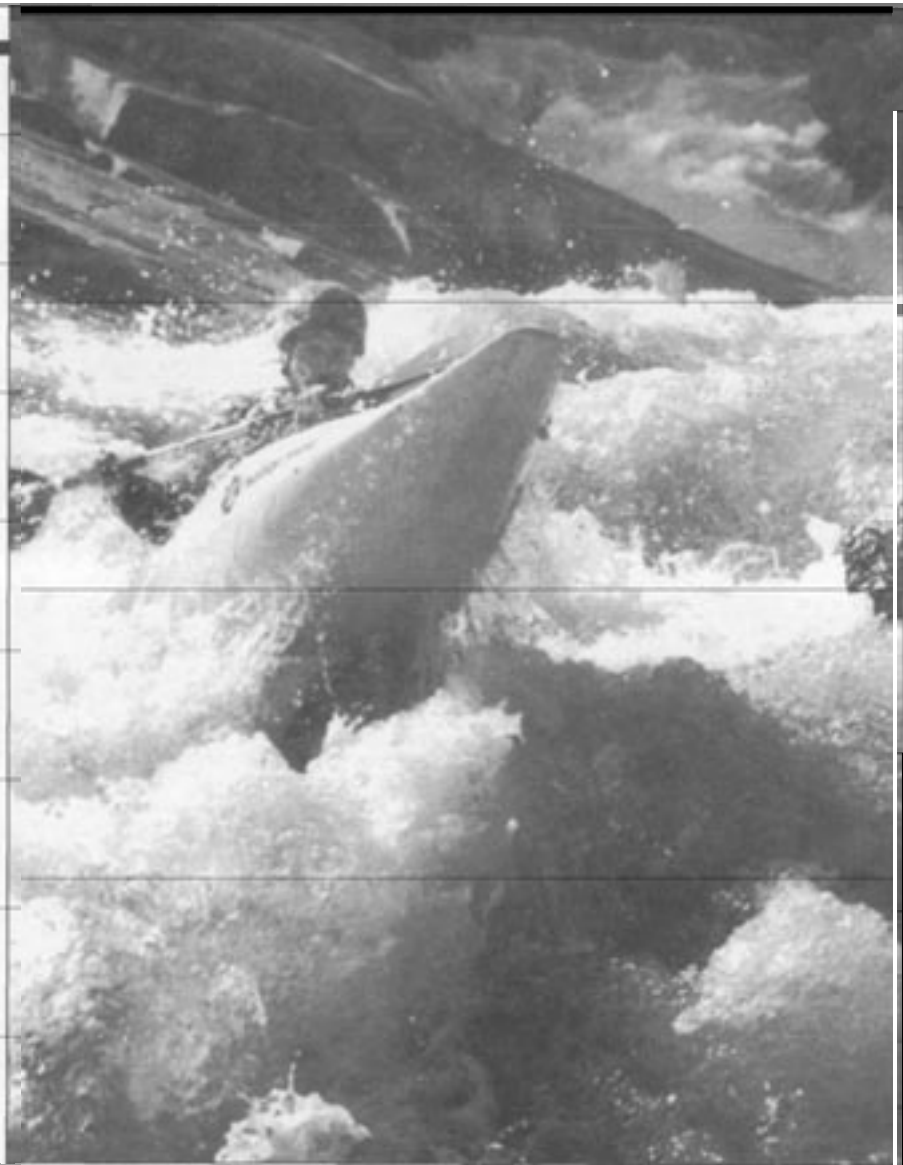
I walked down along the second drop, searching for a graceful way of portaging this frightening monster rather than looking for a clear line through it. Then, I caught a glimpse of color from upstream. Justin and his roommate from Middlebury College had just slid over the face of the dam

and were streaking down the class 2 approach to the first drop.

They never hesitated. The pair ran the opening drop cleanly and drove strongly into the second rapid, screaming down the left tongue and blasting through the right side of the bottom hole.

I joined the throng in wild cheers and a second later was back in my boat. Maybe I would not be able to nail the first descent of my private steep creek—but there was still time to claim the distinction of the first boater over 40 to navigate the Eagle.

Later, I rested in the eddy below the third drop. I knew that a 10-foot waterfall and a 6-foot ledge remained, but they would be easy compared to what I had been through.



And as I waited for my heart to stop playing "Wipeout," I watched Joel—a college student from Pottsdam State—give me a thumbs-up as he paddled by. Upstream, I saw more boats being gingerly committed to water.

And suddenly I felt pretty good about the day. Then a boater blew his approach to the second drop. Spinning wildly as he passed the point of no return, he was swept backwards down the left tongue. He flipped as he slammed into the hydraulic.

With my heart now in my throat, I waited while the kayak twitched twice, then righted itself.

Relief poured over me in a wave. There would be no further similarity between me and the Pied Piper. After all—German rats didn't know how to roll.

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Left: Lars Pterson on the middle of 3rd drop.  
Photo by Caron Koll  
Below: Tom Vickery at Eagle Falls. Photo by  
James Swedeberg



## BEAVER RIVER RENDEZVOUS ANNOUNCED

American Whitewater will sponsor the first annual "Don't Call This A Festival" Beaver River Rendezvous on Labor Day weekend, September 5-7, 1998.

"Don't call this a festival," warned event organizer Chris Koll. "This is a gathering—a throw back to the time when paddlers camped along a river, boated, and drank beer out of coolers around a campfire."

Releases on all three sections of the Beaver are scheduled for the weekend. With whitewater on the Beaver ranging from the class 3-4 Taylorville run to

the class 5 Eagle along with the nearby class 3-4 Black River—paddlers of all abilities will have an opportunity to boat and socialize.

"There won't be any band, exhibitors, T-shirts, auctions or any other activities that will get in the way of boating or hanging out," Koll said. "This is a retro event—you'll have to pee in the woods and there won't be Laundromats to dry your pile on Sunday morning. Boaters will see what whitewater was like back in the seventies before we all got old, sophisticated and civilized."

"The area around the Beaver is per-

fect for the event," Koll said. "At the top of each whitewater section is an isolated lake that feeds the river. The power company owns the land and has developed free primitive camp sites around the lakes so boaters can simply pull in, throw up a tent and roll out their coolers."

For more information about the "Don't Call This A Festival" Beaver River Rendezvous, contact Koll at cko111234@aol.com or call (315) 652-8397.

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Below: Kids playing with us in Rurrenbaque  
 Right: The drive to Apolo



# Jungle Journey

## A Bolivian Adventure

Story and photos by Doug Ward

Below top: Sergio Ballivian kayaking  
 Bottom: Mule carrying kayaks on approach



Deep in the San Pedro Canyon of Bolivia's Rio Tuichi, Sergio and I approached a thundering rapid that dipped out of sight 20 yards ahead. We pulled off to the right intending to scout, but as I drew closer I saw a large turbulent eddy midway through the rapid on river left. Feeling strong and invigorated by our first few jolting rides of the day, I announced to Sergio with all the bravado I could muster "I'm going for it." Having narrowed to about 50 feet by the canyon, the river was now moving with speed and fury and I was immediately surprised by the violence of the waves. Within the first few strokes of entering the rapid I flipped for the first time on this river.

Underwater I felt like I was somewhere between the wash and rinse cycle in a load of laundry. Survival Central beamed a message that flashed in my mind. **ROLL UP, YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT.** Somehow in that muted, oxygenless underwater darkness I calmly positioned myself and rolled. Whew! In to the eddy. Safe! As I stared down river at the serpentine series of jagged drops, I realized, suddenly, that the illusion of control had been broken and the consequences of brashness can be harsh when running an unknown river in the middle of the Amazon jungle.

Realizations of this sort were common last summer during our attempt to be the first group of rafters and kayakers to descend the Rio Tuichi. The imaginations of Bolivian adventurers Sergio Ballivian and Fernando Jordan had been sparked by reading of Yossi Ghinsberg's travails in his book: *Back From Tuichi: The Harrowing Life-and-Death Story of Survival in the Amazon Rainforest*. And so our expedition was born. If all went according to plan, our 8 day journey would combine third world travel, jungle safari and world class whitewater. In the Amazon jungle of Bolivia, however, nothing goes according to plan.

The rest of our team consisted of a diverse selection of adventurers: Jay Kirby, a Seattle lawyer in temporary retirement; Pachi, an eccentric Spanish expatriate who has been living in La Paz for several years; myself, an avid kayaker and climber; and Oscar, an Aymara Indian who had lived in the area for many years and claimed to have run many of the rapids in a callapo, a crude form of raft lashed together from tree trunks. Oscar's strategy for running the larger drops was to walk around the rapid on land, then send the callapo down on its own, hoping it wouldn't get smashed to pieces. If the callapo was never seen again (which was often the case), a new one was built below the rapid. A life jacket consisting of 5-gallon containers strapped to his chest completed his functional, albeit precarious, system for running whitewater.

With a collection of vague and often contradictory information, Sergio and Fernando had distilled the difficulties of the river down to this; 6 major rapids, one deep canyon named after Saint Peter, and Puerto del Sol, a 30-foot waterfall. The San Pedro canyon was rumored to be steep enough to render any notion of escape impossible. Once in the canyon there would be no choice but to continue down the river, which would eventually lead us

## A Bolivian Adventure



Top to bottom: Loading up the mule for the approach, Rio Tuichi, Bolivia. Army recruits carrying kayak on the approach to Rio Tuichi, Bolivia. Raft team, Jay Pachi, Fernando, Oscar on the Rio Tuichi.

to the potential show stopper at Puerto del Sol. Since no one had run this section of the river successfully, it was difficult to determine where Puerto del Sol was, let alone how to run it. We would just have to wait and see for ourselves.

Just getting to the Tuichi was a major 4WD challenge. Our first day was an all-nighter. We thought the 160 mile trip from La Paz to Apolo in our gear-laden jeeps would take twelve hours. Instead it took nineteen, over the collection of ruts and rocks posing as a road. The farther we drove, the fewer people we saw. Those we did stared curiously at the purple and red kayaks poised on the roof of our jeep like circus torpedoes.

As we descended into the jungle with its billion hues of green, the rarefied air of the mountains around La Paz was replaced with a thick humidity. The road became a slimy bog in places, forcing us to plunge ankle deep in black muck to push our way out. At one point Pachi's shoes were sucked right off his feet.

Apolo, where we had our last civilized meal of eggs and toast, does not see many travelers. We were disappointed to learn that the mules we had hired for the two-day trek to the river had more important work in the fields. Such are the priorities of the recreationally deprived.

Fortunately the Bolivian army has outposts in this area, and for a price they were willing to send ten of their finest, along with six mules, to escort our crew of whitewater gringos. None of the soldiers appeared older than eighteen, and, understandably, they

didn't seem all that excited about this assignment: trekking through the jungle with nothing but a thin blanket and rations consisting entirely of corn meal, dried soup mix and tangerines. Those in the rear of our caravan quickly learned to keep an eye out for the tangerine peels that marked the trail.

Loading up our caravan of mules proved to be a day long affair. We had packed a slingshot and carbine rifle to kill wild animals, protect ourselves from jaguars and fend off the natives who were rumored to be headhunters. Added to the weaponry were ropes, rescue hardware, repair kits, first aid, a 16-foot raft, two kayaks, and a week's worth of food for 6 people. The load looked so formidable that we deceived ourselves into thinking we could supplement our diets by foraging off the land and ditched some of our processed food. Bordering on delirium, we even considered cutting back on our rations of chocolate.

And then there were the kayaks. Hell hath no fury like that of an unsuspecting mule about to be saddled with two 10 foot kayaks. Amid howls of laughter from the observers perched well out of harm's way, a series of maneuvers were attempted. Each starting with a blind-

folded mule, and each ending with an explosive whirlwind of hooves and plastic. By late afternoon, the procedure had been perfected with all limbs intact and we began our trek to the Tuichi.

On our first night out I asked Oscar, our Aymara regional expert, if it was going to rain. He looked around the clear night sky and quickly declared, "Not tonight, but it will in the morning. It always rains three days in a row during the new moon." Oscar always had a quick and sure answer to any question. Initially we trusted his judgment and were charmed by his folkwisdom. But as answers poured from his lips like campaign promises and the factual discrepancies mounted, we realized Oscar was no Svengali.

On this occasion, however, Oscar proved correct and the next morning we woke to a steady rain. Our Bolivian Army porters were equipped with only the cotton clothing they were wearing and were not too anxious to load the mules and march. To make matters worse, the descent into the river canyon was too steep for the mule loaded with the kayaks,

so he was given a reprieve at the expense of 4 hapless army recruits.

During the day we reached a small village by the name of Copalito. A mother sat outside her thatched roof hut nursing her infant, while older children played in the dirt with the chickens and the pigs. It was easy to imagine having gone back in time a century or more. The children stared silently at us with great fascination. On previous tourist treks we had been accustomed to being assaulted by the annoying and omnipotent phrase "regalame plata, regalame dulce" (give me money, give me sweets). Here in the deep jungle it was a relief to see the wonder in these children's faces without feeling like a walking money dispenser.

We camped that second night by the Machariapo, a Tuichi tributary, and awoke the next morning to a hard drenching rain, as predicted by Oscar. We arose from our waterproof nylon tents and dressed in our neoprene wet suits while the Bolivian army huddled together, attempting to stay as dry as possible. With no sign of the rain letting up and no indication from our shivering army friends that they were ready to load the mules for the final 5 hour walk to the Tuichi, we decided to put in right there on the bony Machariapo. Oscar would stay with the Bolivian army, who would carry most of our food and gear to a rendezvous at the confluence of the Machariapo and the Tuichi. It was noon by the time we shoved off, accompanied by the stares of a dozen or so perplexed villagers. Their usual routine of scratching the dirt for a living, tending to the pigs and chickens, and looking after the children, had given way to the spectacle of us preparing to launch these silly looking plastic playthings.

The kayaking was fabulous down the Machariapo. Lots of technical paddling, catching eddies and weaving through boulder gardens. There is nothing more intense than careening down an unknown river in the middle of the jungle. Sergio and I scouted as much as possible from the kayaks, scrutinizing every ripple, every bump and bounce of the river. The flow was low so it was not too pushy, barely enough to keep us moving over





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## A Bolivian Adventure

some of the 3-5 foot drops. But the raft was getting a workout. Sergio and I would maneuver through a tight section and emerge in the runout, pumped with adrenaline and grinning madly, only to look back at our three rafting compatriots tugging and cursing at their bulbous oversized raft.

As more and more side streams fed the Machariapo the kayaking got better and better. Unfortunately the raft was moving very slowly and the crew was tiring. As twilight approached we faced the prospect of a cold, hungry night if we didn't soon reach camp.

Just as we were beginning to worry, Sergio and I spotted a small man hunched over his patch of vegetables on the bank above the river. We called to him, but he was oblivious to our shouts. Finally the raft caught his eye and he meekly turned toward the river. "How far is the Tuichi from here?" Sergio shouted several times, each time louder than the next. We were certain that every living creature in the jungle could hear him. The old man made pitiful gestures with his eyes and mouth. His entire body seemed to be convulsing in his attempt to form words. But no sound came out. We waited for a minute or so, expecting to hear a roar of words come spilling out, telling us not to worry, the Tuichi was just around the bend. But it became apparent that no semblance of communication would pass between us. Frustrated, we waved good-bye and paddled on.

"Just our luck," said Sergio. "The only guy we see all day on the river and the poor bastard is deaf."

We learned later from Oscar that before the agrarian reform of the early 1950's, many of the landowners in this region enslaved peasants by cutting out their tongues and piercing their ear drums. Reportedly there were many older victims of this cruel practice still farming in this area.

Now in a frantic rush to reach camp, Sergio and I joined the raft crew and we all helped paddle and push the behemoth down river. Just before we were completely enveloped by darkness the orange glow of a campfire appeared on the left bank of the river. We were relieved to see the silhouettes of Oscar and several members of the Bolivian army waving. They were just as relieved to see us, thinking we had surely disappeared somewhere in the unknown rapids of the Machariapo.

That evening, we prepared a feast to celebrate our first day in the water and our last night with the Bolivian army. With the Tuichi finally just around the bend, a sense of excitement charged through our camp. Our spirits were high. After months of planning, the grueling drive, and 3 days trekking through the jungle, we were about to realize our dream.

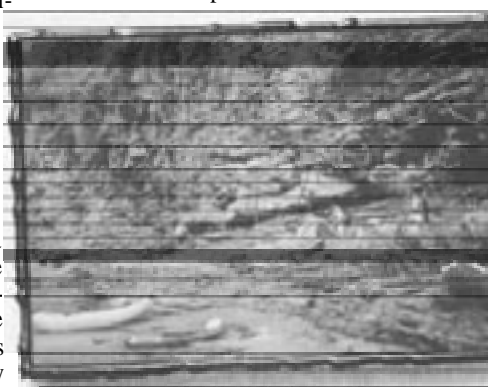
In the morning we said our good-



byes to the Bolivian army team and cut loose from our only semblance of support. Immediately a sense of isolation crept over us. No backups, no roads, no villages, no people, not even a decent map. Just six guys with an arsenal of fancy equipment and a growing interest in each successive uncharted horizon line downriver. Now on our own and deep in the jungle, every rapid, every little wrinkle in the landscape, would carry a much greater consequence.

Our first impression of the Tuichi was its size: over 100 yards wide in some sections. The placid, brown rolling waves packed a deceptively powerful punch. The raft crew was happy to see so much water and not to have to jump out and push at each bend in the river. We kayakers felt like bobbing corks in a giant ocean. We got our first glimpse of a callapo, the primitive native rafts on the riverbank near Asariamamas. This was supposed to be the last village we would pass before San Jose, 40 miles downstream.

We unexpectedly encountered two logging camps along the left bank of the river. The first was named after the wood that was being harvested, Mara, or Mahogany. The second camp was named Camafantacia



Top: Flatwater paddling entering San Pedro Canyon.  
Above: Camp in San Pedro Canyon,

(Fantasy Bed). It was sad to see that even in this remote region, the all too familiar practice of destroying the jungle for short term profit had begun. One of the young men in the camp confided that he made \$5 a day cutting down the forest, far more than he could have earned back in town. He ex-

plained that the trees are milled by chainsaw, then floated downriver, collected and transported by motorized dugout canoe to Rurrenabaque, where a burgeoning hardwood market is developing. Apparently the camps have displaced tribes that formerly lived along the banks of the river. Another myth destroyed. No headhunters on the Tuichi, just logging camps.

Most of the day passed before we met our first big rapid. We stopped to scout and decided to take a direct line to the left of a giant keeper hole-capable of recirculating almost anything. In the time honored manner of river runners everywhere I emptied my fear engorged bladder before nervously squeezing myself into my kayak. I managed several powerful strokes to match the force of the accelerating current before plunging down the first drop. Perfectly positioned just outside the gaping hole, I gave way to the giddy sensation of weightlessness as I was swept down the rapid. It was a straightforward run that nonetheless registered high on the thrill meter.

We stopped for a late lunch to refuel and marvel at our solitude. Sitting on a log by the shore, we watched the ants immediately and efficiently assault every scrap of food in sight. I felt lucky not to have any of my body parts exposed, lest I jeopardize my superiority in the food chain. The law of the jungle in action.

After lunch we charged on. We encountered a total of seven class III/IV rapids that day. The scenery grew wilder, the rolling jungle terrain was transformed into a narrow river gorge, and we entered the ominous San Pedro canyon, the point of no return. As darkness approached we were still paddling, trying to add more mileage to our long day. We found a beautiful ledge in the canyon, complete with a beach, overhanging terraced walls and vines dangling to the ground, tantalizing us with images of Tarzan.

That evening Oscar informed us that the Puerto del Sol waterfall was about 4 hours downstream. Since we had already run 7 rapids (and had expected to see only 6 the entire length of the river), we anticipated a fairly calm approach before confronting the "Gate of the Sun". Under the tranquil jungle skies, basking in our campfire's light and our growing camaraderie, we were lulled into a false sense of security.

That night an omen in the form of a baseball-sized rock that dislodged itself from the wall and landed inches away from my head as I lay sleeping. I was so mentally and physically exhausted my only response was to roll over and go back to sleep. I drifted off as the rest of the crew debated the merits of wearing their helmets to bed.

Much to our surprise the "flood" to Puerto del Sol turned out to be a survival run



through the hairiest rapids of the trip. That morning we immediately encountered two rapids that slammed us mercilessly. The first surprised us with a eye-opening curling wave hidden beyond a bend in the river. This allowed only a split second to brace before crashing through. Next the river upped the ante with a series of must-make turns and narrow passages. I was exhilarated after rocking through the last few waves of the rapid. We were meeting all the challenges this river was throwing at us.

Then I experienced my own personal underwater epiphany by flipping for the first time and getting the washing machine ride of my life. Sergio did the smart thing and waited in the eddy above the rapid, cautioning the raft to do likewise. Instead they bumbled the maneuver and came careening down the center of the drop. They got stuck briefly on a small shelf on river left, before dislodging themselves and sailing through the lower section unscathed.

Next Sergio started down. I watched him drift lamely to the right where a dangerous narrow passage of water flowed steeply through a pin-ball course of jagged rocks. Sergio slammed the side of his kayak into the first rock and threw away his paddle. I couldn't believe my eyes. What was he

doing? In the next instant, he flipped and dropped down the passage upside down. "He's in big trouble," was all I could say to myself. A second later his boat was pinned between two rocks. I was certain I was going to watch him die. I was downstream and on the opposite side of the river. All I could do was frantically grope for my safety whistle and blow like hell to alert the raft crew. But the raft was several hundred feet downstream and in no position for any sort of rescue. I felt useless, watching our trip leader pinned helplessly and only being able to blow a stupid whistle. Time seemed to grind to a standstill.

Tons of thundering whitewater separated me from my friend. After what seemed an eternity, I saw Sergio's head pop out of the water. Luckily Sergio was able to squeeze out of his cockpit before the crippling force of the rushing water could wrap his kayak into a taco shell. He grabbed his kayak with a death grip and was able to free it as he was sucked back into the main current. I followed closely behind as he safely swam the rest of the rapid and hauled his boat up on shore.

We gathered on the riverbank, our hearts pounding and hands trembling. We were all badly shaken. The possibility of such an accident had been lurking in the back of

our minds. It's all daring and adventure until someone gets pinned underwater and drowns.

Sergio told us his paddle had snapped in half on his first light brace. With remarkable poise, he put the two broken pieces in one hand and made an attempt to paddle canoe-style. But despite his best efforts the current swept him right into the most dangerous part of the rapid. We never found his broken paddle.

A mood of trepidation settled over us as we set off again. We were immediately greeted with another series of threatening rapids. This time we scouted thoroughly from shore, no longer satisfied with our track record. I was so nervous I bungled the entry and had to frantically scramble to avoid a staircase of boat crunching drops. Sergio went through last with no problem. He seemed to have regained full composure without missing a beat. Being in the Explore Bolivia business must give him nerves of steel.

Emerging below the last rapid we were relieved to see a motorized dugout canoe that was part of yet another small logging operation. Our relief quickly turned to curiosity. What the heck was a logging camp doing in the middle of San Pedro canyon, above the Puerto del Sol falls? We asked one

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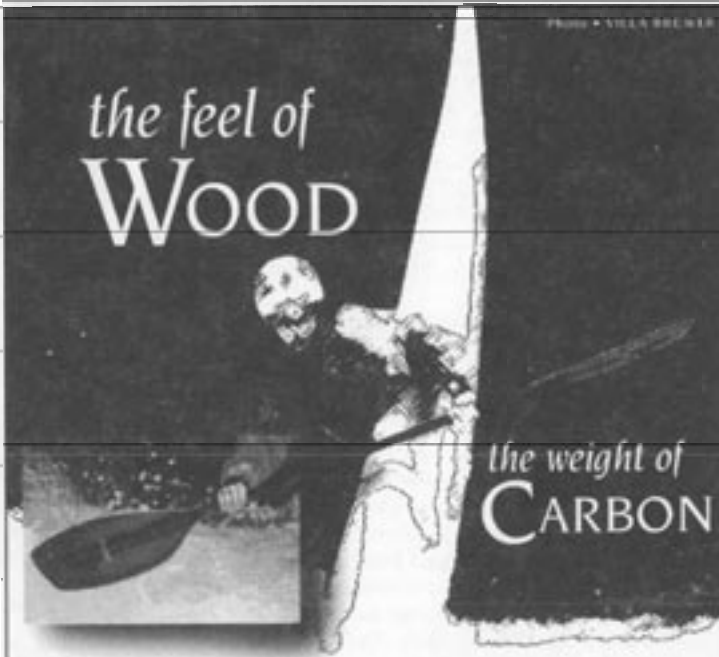
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## A Bolivian Adventure



Rio Tuichi first descent team left to right, Oscar, Sergio, Fernando, Doug, Jay Pachi (kneeling)

of the loggers how far it was to the Puerto del Sol falls. "The falls are upstream," he replied. Huh?!?! Had we run the falls without even realizing it?

Evidently 3 months earlier the falls had been dynamited in an attempt to make the Tuichi more navigable for the motorized dugouts of the loggers. The falls we had worried about during our entire trip had passed without us even knowing. Not that we didn't get our money's worth. Sergio had given us the scare of a lifetime. We were just thankful that we would no longer be facing any major rapids. We had shared more than enough excitement for one expedition.

After passing the logging camp we saw no one for several hours. The Tuichi broadened considerably and we paddled along beautiful, but tiring, flat water, punctuated intermittently with class II. We soon discovered another one of Oscar's fallacies: "There are plenty of motorized dugouts below the falls." Wrong. We had traded the thrill of the rapids for the laborious task of rowing ourselves to Rurrenabake, still some 50 miles away.

Hours and hours of flatwater paddling eventually brought us to our final logging camp, where we negotiated the hire of a motorized dugout canoe for the next morning.

We broke down the raft that night, set up our last camp on the beach, and ate what was left of our food: rice with mustard; which we supplemented with some sawdust flavored gruel, re-hydrated from the emergency rations. We didn't even bother to pick out the bugs that collected on our plates. At this point the added protein couldn't hurt. Down the hatch, bon appetit.

With civilization just a comforting day or three away, we savored our last evening of solitude in the jungle. What we lacked in physical sustenance, we made up for in spirit. We had done what we had set out to do. Our teamwork and perseverance had been rewarded with the incomparable descent of the wild Rio Tuichi - for me, the adventure of a lifetime.



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## GRAND PRIZES... TWO WHITEWATER TRIPS TO ECUADOR

# Safety

## A Few Thoughts on Risk

By Charlie Walbridge

The deaths this past year of several nationally known kayakers has stimulated a lot of serious thought about risk in the paddling community. As the limits of whitewater sport have been pushed back, the rapids commonly run have become increasingly intolerant of errors. These fatalities serve as a warning of the true nature of high-end river running, and should encourage everyone to examine their decision-making.

This year's accidents, moreover, were not the result of a typical "safety code" violation; like not using a PFD or helmet, failing to get prior training in river running, or neglecting to portage an obvious hazard like a strainer or low-head dam. The paddlers who died were a well-prepared group. Instead, each tragedy arose when the victim encountered unexpected problems while paddling difficult rapids. This places most readers of American Whitewater at risk!

I always assumed that inexperienced paddlers were at the greatest risk for accidents. But this is no longer true for kayakers. There were fifteen whitewater kayaking deaths during the last 12 months (October 1996-October 1997). Six of the victims were intermediate or advanced paddlers and six more were true experts running class V water. The remaining incidents involved novices who were using kiwis or sit-on-tops. Untrained paddlers in regular river kayaks probably flip and swim before they get into serious trouble.

Paddling a kayak involves overcoming fear and apprehension from day one. These tippy, confining boats are quite intimidating to ordinary people. Lots of folks think you "strap yourself into" a kayak, which makes any sensible person shudder. Those who plan to kayak whitewater must first master the Eskimo Roll, a strange technique performed upside down and underwater. Then they learn to paddle effectively while being tossed around in moving water. Beginners have to put aside their fears and concentrate on their paddling. This is an important ability, but one which can get you into trouble if carried too far.

Fear is a two edged sword. It warns us of danger, but at the same time it can reduce our ability to deal with it. A natural reaction to danger is to "tense up" physically and mentally, limiting your ability to think quickly and act decisively. For example, most of us could easily walk along a piece of 4x4 lumber placed a few feet above the ground. But put this board fifty feet off the deck and it requires considerable confidence and poise. Our awareness of the consequences of a slip or momentary loss of bal-

ance, rather than the difficulty of the stunt, is what makes it hard. Aspiring paddlers must maintain their skills and focus in the midst of turbulent water, and learning to maintain their focus takes time and effort.

A well-designed training program exposes students to a series of tasks, each one more difficult than the one before it, that gradually develop their skill. Novices progress from flat water into mild rapids, then step up gradually into more challenging water. Since failure is an important part of the learning process, instructors take novices to relatively safe places to learn. But since no moving water site is ever risk free, they gradually prepare them to recognize dangers and deal with them. As a student successfully completes each task, their confidence builds and their fear diminishes. Good paddlers gradually learn to paddle in a focused and purposeful way through more intimidating drops. This is the "safe" way to learn, but it also may prepare some of us to ignore our fears when we should be listening to them.

**It is possible to become too comfortable with dangerous activities. There are many people on today's busy highways who have become far to accustomed to the speed and power of their automobiles.**

Ordinary people who think rafting or kayaking is "too dangerous" may pilot their vehicles with incredible recklessness. They drive at high speeds and cut in and out of traffic, missing other vehicles by inches. They risk death or serious injury for a small increase in speed. In the same way paddlers, climbers, and other risk sport participants who work hard to keep their fear in the background sometimes succeed far too well. This, too, can lead to recklessness in the face of danger.

It is important to realize that as we improve our skills we are also "desensitizing" ourselves to the fear of whitewater. This is the same technique psychologists use to treat persons suffering from phobias. Someone burdened by an unreasonable fear of dogs, for example, might start by sitting some distance from a small dog, then gradually work up to being close to and even petting a very large one. But just as we must overcome unreasonable fears, we must also avoid becoming unreasonably confident.

People trying to overcome dog phobias must also learn to recognize nasty, ill-tempered dogs and avoid them. Experienced paddlers, after working for years to control their fear, should also work to maintain respect for moving water! This becomes harder as your skills increase, and is especially difficult when paddling rivers that you frequently run. Just because you're not afraid of a big rapid it doesn't mean you shouldn't be!

Pushing yourself can be habit forming. There is a raw exhilaration that only comes from stretching your skills and trying things that you haven't done before. Some folks enjoy the challenge of maintaining precise control as they maneuver their boat through difficult rapids. Others who are less skilled relish the sheer adrenaline rush of a wild, barely controlled descent down a big drop. Both enjoy the feeling of being on the edge, and try to recreate these feelings again by moving on to rivers of gradually increasing difficulty. At some point we all need to learn to back off.

Rivers are not amusement rides, but natural arenas where wild and not-always-predictable forces are at work. There is no such thing as absolute safety. Unanticipated undercuts and unseen strainers are a concern on rivers just as drunk drivers, cancer, crime, and earthquakes are a cause for worry on dry land. Mountaineers call the hidden, uncontrollable hazards they encounter on their climbs "objective danger". You can do things to minimize your exposure, but you cannot eliminate it. Since objective danger generally increases with the difficulty of the river, experienced paddlers must pay increasing attention to it as they progress.

The growth of paddlesport in the last two decades makes this job harder. It wasn't hard to be fearful in the 60's and 70's when there were so few of us and we knew so little about the rivers we ran. We made our own boats and gear, then found our way down rivers with very little help. Today, with modern equipment and instruction, it's possible for a fit, athletic person to be running Class IV-V whitewater in a few months. A paddler running a difficult river for the first time is often coached above each rapid, receiving very specific instructions from someone who has been making the run for ten years or more. The presence of dozens or even hundreds of people running the river at the same time adds to the impression that everything is under control. But the rivers are still wild, and the consequences of a mistake remain the same.

Realistically, cutting edge rivers have gotten progressively harder in the last 20 years. In the 1970's we always thought the river would be worse than it was. We thought that venturing into certain parts of the river would be fatal...until one of our buddies miscalculated and came through unscathed. Twenty-five years later the opposite is true:

the river is worse than it appears to good paddlers.

**The "safe" mistakes have all been made, and now the errors often have serious consequences.**

This, combined with an explosion in the number of serious boaters, has increased number of kayaking deaths on the river from one every few years to 8-10 each year. It is very clear after last year that even the most skilled paddler can screw up.

But you don't have to be a hot paddler to become desensitized to the risks of river running. We all encounter people who paddle on the brink of disaster, courting trouble on every trip. Successfully running a big drop creates an excitement and momentum that lures them into the next rapid, which could be the one they shouldn't try. Some rapids are wild as a runaway roller coaster, yet surprisingly forgiving. A wipe out and swim can be as exhilarating as a successful run. Some people lose respect for the river as a result. They say things like "it's only water" and "it's all going downstream." This amounts to playing Russian Roulette, with the exceptions to these "rules" waiting like a live shell in the chamber. The fortunate ones have a near miss that changes their philosophy; others are not so lucky.

How can we reduce the risks? Deaths among experienced paddlers are best prevented by added caution. Each paragraph in the American Whitewater Safety Code was written because it could have prevented a fatal accident. Part of the solution lies in taking more care when running difficult rapids. Scouting, setting safety, and portaging all slow us down, but can significantly reduce the risks of running big drops. An awareness of our own mortality and the realization that even the best paddlers can be overwhelmed by the river should keep us honed and focused.

Each of us has a unique perception of risk that will change during our careers. At some point the actual risk is growing as our appreciation of it diminishes. Fear has much to teach us, and we must learn to listen carefully. To have a long and active paddling career, you must not ever forget that you are dealing with a powerful, untamed natural force. Never assume that a drop is safe, and never ever discount the possibility of an accident.

# "LIVE BAIT" - The Rescue PFD System

By Benny Waller

*There has been a lot of commentary about rescue PFDs (otherwise known as tether vests or "live bait" PFDs) in recent editions of American Whitewater, other paddling magazines, and even in some of the professional rescue trade journals. The main focus of these comments seems to be that there have been quite a few situations where rescue PFDs could have been used, EXCEPT: 1) There was no rescue PFD at the scene of the accident, 2) No one present had rescue PFD training, and 3) No one was sure whether sending a rescuer into the water would even have been appropriate, especially in Class V or VI rapids, big drops, hydraulics, and low-head dams.*

I can't specifically address everything about rescue PFDs here, but I can provide a few general ideas that will help you decide whether or not you need to buy rescue PFD and train in its use.

Take a Swiftwater Rescue Technician course from a reputable training agency. A.C.A., Rescue 3 International, the Tennessee Association of Rescue Squads, the Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources, and several other groups offer excellent SRTI and SRTII classes. The agencies listed above all teach rescue PFD systems through high-repetition, in-the-water methods. All of these programs have excellent instructors with lots of whitewater experience. Swiftwater Rescue Technician courses offer the student a chance to spend two or more days swimming in whitewater and learning a variety of rescue techniques, since using a rescue PFD isn't the best option for every situation. The addresses for all of these agencies are listed in Charlie Walbridge and Wayne Sundmacher's excellent Whitewater Rescue Manual, except for the Tennessee Association of Rescue Squads (T.A.R.S.). That address is "T.A.R.S., 1515 Magnolia Ave., Suite 303, Knoxville, TN, 37917. Charlie Walbridge, who is an A.W.A. Director, was the prime mover in developing rescue PFDs, and taught me how to use mine properly.

Find out what rescue PFDs are available, and buy a type that fits your personal needs. Extrasport/Swiftwater Professional, Stohlquist, and Lotus all offer Rescue PFDs which are Coast Guard certified. All offer low-profile kayak-type tether vests. Extrasport also offers two rafting-type vests with more floatation. There may well be other brands and types with which I'm not familiar. If you run drops with vertical pinning possibilities, Stohlquist offers a rescue PFD with a pre-attachable mini throw bag in a pocket on

the back of the vest. This theoretically enables avertically pinned paddler to throw the bag to someone on the shore, to be used as a tag line. (I say theoretically, because I've never seen this done.) If you may have to swim in big water, respond to river and flood rescues as a professional rescuer, and/or work as a raft guide, a larger PFD with more floatation, such as Extrasport's Ranger model, might be more appropriate. Rescue PFDs come in all shapes, sizes, colors, fabrics, prices, and may have a variety of other goodies attached. Check out as many as you can before you buy your own.

Rescue PFDs can also kill you. At the 1996 Olympic Games slalom events, one of our swimmers had a problem with a non-locking carabiner (NLC) which attached his quick-release to the tether rope. While swimming in (Class IV) Humongous, the tether pulled the NLC to the side of the PFD, where it caught in one of the belt loops. This prevented him from being able to release from the rope. Fortunately, the unobstructed riverbanks and a good vector pull retrieved the swimmer before he got in any real trouble, but thereafter we only used locking carabiners with our tether systems. Even if you connect your tether with a locking carabiner, NLCs carried elsewhere on the PFD can catch in a loop of rope and entangle the swimmer and/or override the quick-release feature. Don't mix non-locking carabiners and rescue PFDs for any reason! Use a Figure 8 knot and form a small loop with which to attach the locking carabiner to the rope.

If you get in a head-down position while swimming in a tether vest, you'll turn into a human submarine unless you immediately pop your quick release. We can thank laminar flow for this. A tethered swimmer who gets stuck in strong current follows the path of least resistance, which is the river bottom.



The quick release is the only escape if the belay/vector team can't get the swimmer across the eddy line. Even when it works correctly, the quick-release won't do you much good if you have to use it immediately upstream of Niagara Falls.

Using tether systems requires trained teamwork! At least two, and often three or four rescuers are required. If you show up at a river accident wearing a rescue PFD, other folks will assume that you know how to use it correctly. Duh! If you are the only one in your group with a rescue PFD, guess who gets to be the swimmer if a rescue is necessary.

Using a tether system to rescue paddlers who are trapped in a boat which is being washed downstream can be difficult to impossible, depending on the force of the current. Anyone who saw the C-1 event at the 1996 Olympics probably remembers the long, inverted swim one of the competitors had while trapped in his boat by a suicide block. The paddler broke his paddle, flipped and popped his spray skirt. Then the suicide block prevented him from reaching his thigh strap releases. He washed downstream upside down and trapped in his boat. Due to the current he couldn't hold three perfectly placed throw ropes. A tethered swimmer couldn't get him out of the Chattanooga Choo Choo wave train below Humongous, because the rescue swimmer was pulled away from the paddler when the belay was engaged. The forces applied to a belayer by the Ocoee River, two people, and a C-1 full of water are pretty incredible. In this case, the belayer was anchored to a large rock with a webbing loop hooked to his tether PFD with a pigtail. That anchor system was all that kept the belayer from being pulled into the river.

The good news from this incident is that the throw bags and tethered swimmer allowed the athlete several breaths of air, and slowed him down enough for the safety boaters to quickly get him upright and into an eddy. The paddler had no serious injuries and no water inhalation. Contrast this scenario with a typical recreational river accident. Recreationally speaking, you are unlikely to have the time or manpower to set up this many layers in your rescue system, especially in big drops. The moral of the story is that it can be impossible to rescue some victims with tether systems.

Now that I've focused on some of the limitations of rescue PFDs, let's look at a BIG positive. It's pretty tough for an injured, hypothermic, or unconscious swimmer to grab a thrown rope. It's even tougher for his paddle, boat, or dry bag to grab a rope. Rescue PFDs were made for these situations! Just remember to set up at the bottom of the rapid, if possible. It's much easier and safer to catch the swimmer after she washes through the drop. Ditto for her boat and gear.

Another big positive is that with enough practice, time, and creativity, you can invent some new river rescue systems. There are a wide variety of uses for rescue PFDs, including "live bait" rescues, tethered wading, tethered boogie boarders, V-lowers, X-lowers and anchoring belayers while providing them with a quick release option. Remember the tethered boogie boarder in the hydraulic at Humongous? That system resulted from a combination of ideas from the Wasau, Wisconsin Whitewater Rescue team, and the Ocoee River Rescue team, which combined to work the Olympics.

Wasau's folks specialized in surfing a boogie board into the hydraulic, putting the "grabussnatchus" on the swimmer, and then catching a thrown rope to complete the rescue. The southern team members had spent most of their time training with strong-swimmer tether rescues. These were combined into the system used at the Olympics, and the need for the boogie boarder to catch a rope while towing someone else was eliminated. The tethered boogie boarder requires a much different belay method than downriver-type rescues, but it's a terrific technique when used appropriately. Several rescues in the hydraulic at Humongous only took a few seconds, and a second tether team quickly retrieved the boat. Surfing hydraulics on a boogie board also requires lots of training and practice, and less-than-perfect belays can entangle the boogie boarder. Don't restrict your thinking to just one technique,

and practice all of your techniques before you need it to make a rescue. Real emergencies are a poor place for on-the-job training.

*Get proficient with whatever rescue PFD you chose, maintain it properly, and don't loan it to people who aren't qualified in its use. Practice rescue PFD use with your paddling friends - your life might depend on it! Also, don't use tether systems as a way to commit suicide in places like low-head dams, the hydraulic at Woodall Shoals, strainer-choked flood channels, etc.*

*Finally, we all need to remember that "Fear is God's way of telling you He wants you to stay alive, pain is God's way of telling you that you are still alive!"*

Editor's Note: Benny Waller is a Swiftwater Rescue Instructor and was a member of the 1996 Olympic Whitewater Rescue Team.

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# Hole in the Pigeon

by Adam Herzog

Rivers are beautiful, smooth, flowing things. They never stop flowing, and yet they never really get started. We throw our trash in the rivers, we dam them and, eventually, we lose respect for them. When people lose respect for something as powerful and mighty as a river, bad things happen. Water is an uncontrollable force. When we get torrential downpours for days in a row and the rivers rise to the point where dams are breaking and houses are washing away like grit and grime off a coal workers hands, we regain some respect. We usually forget this respect after a week or a month, but then it happens again.

As a senior in high school with about three years paddling experience, I use rivers more than most people. But because I became so familiar with them I got cocky and forgot to be respectful. Until last July nothing really bad had happened to me in a kayak. I had not been seriously hurt or even had any close calls until one day on the Pigeon River, on the North Carolina-Tennessee border.

It was a gorgeous summer day, a day that you would not want to come to an end. I got up early to meet my paddling friends in the parking lot of the A & P grocery store. The put-in for the Pigeon is interesting because it is a place where rivers meet. Big Creek is a crystalline little Smokey Mountain creek. It is clear — so clear you can see the bottom some eight feet down. The Pigeon comes out of turbines at the bottom of a giant brick building. The water is nothing like Big Creek. Here it comes roiling out of the tubes, thrusting itself through as quickly as possible. There were a lot of people at the put-in, and I struck up a conversation with a weathered old raft guide. He had a long, gray beard and a haircut that would have let him pass for the Unibomber. His tie-dye shirt accentuated his deep, dark tan.

"How's it going?" I walked up to him.  
 "Not bad. How bout yourself?"  
 "I'm doing alright. How's the river looking today?"  
 "It's at a good, high level today. You been down the river before?"  
 "Yeah. Actually, I went down ten or fifteen times last season."  
 "Just watch out for that hole at the bottom of Lost Guide. It's pretty bad at this level."  
 "Alright" I said, "have a good 'un."  
 "Yeah, you too."

At this the guide turned around and walked over to his customers. My friends and I put on our gear. We got in our boats and started playing on the waves. I had recently got a new kayak and was still getting used to it. I could tell I would have a good day on the river; I was paddling well and, as usual, feeling invincible.

**There is one rapid on the Pigeon that is bigger and badder than any of the others. It is called Lost Guide and features a long tongue which flows into a bad hole.**

**The hole is about thirty feet wide and has a six or seven foot backwash. There are some big boulders in the hole.**

There are three ways to run the rapid. You can go around to the left of the hole and skirt the entire rapid. You can go straight through the hole and just hope you make it. Or you can go on the right of the hole, skirt part of the rapid and run the rest of it. I went through the middle and did not have any problems.

Just below Lost Guide there is a good surfing wave but it has a substantial hole just to the left of it. I decided to surf the wave, and I was doing great for a while. But when I got too far left, I got sucked into the hole. Although it did not look very bad, it was. I flipped, missed a roll, and swam out of the boat. I remember trying to swim to the surface but I could not move. The backwash was holding me under, and I was not going anywhere.

"Jesus Christ - I can't believe it. I can't swim." I thought.

I looked up and not more than a foot above my head was the surface of the river. I tried to swim straight up. I kicked with all the strength I had, but nothing happened. My lungs were burning for air. My legs were in pain from kicking so hard. It was so intense and yet serene. I was not panicking. I felt like I could die, yet for some reason I was not afraid.

Finally, I popped out of the water like a rocket and grabbed a quick, gasping breath of air only to be pulled down again for five more seconds though it seem a lot longer. After the second cycle I washed free and floated downstream where a raft guide picked me up.

"Are you all right?" the guide asked after hauling me into his raft.

I tried to answer him but couldn't. I could only wheeze and cough up water.

"Paddle, dammit" the guide yelled to his customers so they could get me to the bank before the next series of rapids.

They got me over, and I sat more drained and utterly exhausted than I have ever been in my life. I felt as if I had just run a marathon. Adrenaline was still racing through my blood. My friends brought my kayak and paddle to me. It was ten or fifteen minutes before I could climb back into my boat. When I did I could barely paddle. Even so, I felt incredible. I was just breathing in and out deeply, remembering what it is like to be able to. I looked at the sky. The color was stunning. I felt alive.

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# It All Comes Down To the X's and Y's

By Perri Rothemich

First let me begin by stating that this is not intended to be a battle of the sexes article or a feminist approach to kayaking. I am simply writing to propose an explanation as to why there aren't more women boaters that are any good. There are several reasons and I will talk about each one separately. They are genetics, male influence and design/technology.

After doing much research and speaking to many people I have decided to attempt to present the genetics explanation of women and boating. At first, I didn't buy it- but after looking into it, I found that it does have validity. In the fall of 1996, Trip Kinney posted a thread on the newsgroup rec.boats.paddle entitled *Why Paddle Class V?* The thread took many turns and eventually landed on Corran Addison's take on male genetics and reasoning for hair boating. This brought many questions to my mind, the first being *Why is all this male specific?* But after reading between the lines, and with greater scrutiny, I realize he is talking about women.

Ever since the years of cave dwellings, women have been the caretakers and the support of the family. Corran once asked me, *What happens if the father of the family dies?* The woman takes over. *What happens if the mother dies?* The family dies. A woman carries a child for 9 months before birth, and for a lifetime after. Homo sapiens are perhaps the most obvious k-selected species on the planet. The female has one child at a time, and offers large amounts of care and protection. The father does his job in a matter of minutes and then is able to move on to another. His genetic program is to continue his superior traits as many times as possible. Therefore, he who survives class V obviously has the superior gene pool and should continue his line.

Women, on the other hand, take a more conservative look at life. If a woman dies- her family dies. She has to care for them after procreation, whereas the male does not. This allows the male the freedom to paddle crazy waterfalls and run previously unrun rapids. A woman does not have this luxury.

I am not saying that men and women are consciously thinking this about kayaking. In fact, that is what proves its validity. It is inbred in their nature, and you cannot fight nature. It's the classic downfall of the protagonist: man vs nature. Nature always wins and always prevails, because it is inherent and uncontrollable.

So how do we overcome this? We cannot. This comes back to sex as well. Men are genetically programmed so that, for them, the purpose

of sex is to continue their genes, the basic *survival of the fittest*. Natural selection dictates that the man that takes the most risks and prevails has the strongest genes. Since there needs to be more like him out there, he sleeps with many women (because the more times he makes his genes accessible, the more offspring will carry his genes). Women have sex for procreation. It is an innate idea that every time a woman has sex, she has started another life and she must care and nurture this child. Therefore, she has sex far less than the man who impregnated her. This is where the generalization comes from that it's ok for a man to sleep around, but not for a woman. Yes, this does have to do with kayaking, just keep reading.

If women were sexually free, and didn't feel as if they were the *constant mother* figures, the sole reason the species doesn't become extinct, they would be freer to take risks and put their lives on the line. All they would have to worry about was their individual lives- not the lives of their whole families. As Corran said, *If the mother dies- the family dies.* This is an incredible responsibility. So we as a society cannot change thousands of years worth of genetic programming on the female psyche. There are women out there that can, and do, take such risks- and it is the male's job not to discourage them, but rather to promote and encourage.

I can't tell you how many men I've run into who complain about the male:female ratio in paddlesports. Tuff. That's the way it is. It's genetic and it ain't gonna change overnight. But both men and women are responsible for the fact that as you move up the scale of difficulty on rivers- the gap grows even greater. Men and women are not different, but they are not equal. But I think men and women should compete against each other in competitions and women should be able to look to men for help as they become better kayakers. For example, say the ratio of men:women boaters on the Nantahala River is 5:4. That's class II. The ratio of men:women on the Green River is 8:1. That's class IV. The ratio of men:women on something like the Crystal Gorge is 15:1. That's class V. The ratio keeps getting worse. (These are not documented figures, just well educated guesses).

There are a lot of class I-II women boaters that have taken the first step. 50% of them have the potential to become class V boaters, but are discouraged early on by both men and women. I'll interject a few personal experiences here for clarification. I was lucky, I was 6 when I started boating, so the risk factor wasn't of concern to

me. But, at twenty, my skill is not equal to that of a male that has been kayaking for 14 years. My family is a nuclear family down to the last letter. Father works and provides for the family. Mother stays home, takes care of the family and joins the PTA. One son, one daughter. The son was always allowed to take risks and be wild and crazy because *boys will be boys*. But not the daughter.

In the 80's when the son was a skateboard punk, always bleeding and single-handily keeping Band-Aid in business, the daughter was expected to stay inside and color. But, oh, how she wanted to skateboard! At early ages the male and female sexual instincts are inert, and females often exert the same risk taking qualities as males. (Those of you asking yourselves if skateboarding is really that risky at age 7, obviously never skateboarded with my brother). So, I learned to skateboard. I had the cute hair-bows, but I wanted the skateboard. Later, my brother was allowed to drive the powerboat. But not me. I was programmed both genetically and socially to stay inside and learn to care for my family. But I had a kayak. My liberation. (Even at the time I'm writing this, my parents do not know I have run such risky rivers as the Narrows of the Green, as well as other hair runs). As I said before, I've been boating for almost 14 years- but my skills and techniques are still that of a beginner. I have knowledge, strength and experience (not to mention a chemical imbalance that makes me yearn for class V) that allow me to prevail on hard rivers, but I want the skill. I want the technique.

Men do not, as a whole, take the time to help women become better boaters. And this is not entirely their fault. Women do not help themselves by way of changing the stereotype. I've talked to many of the elite paddling men, and they all say the same thing, *women don't listen*. To some extent, this is true. 9 out of 10 women hear one thing, but continue to do the other. And that has made men not want to even try to help the 1 out of 10 that listens, and really wants to do better.

The biggest problem people face when learning rodeo moves is that they do not look at the hole. Same principle as in baseball. *Keep your eye on the ball*. If you're looking at 3rd base, you haven't a prayer in the world of hitting a home run.

If you're looking downstream- that's where you'll be. If you concentrate your energy on the water downstream- not the hole, and you'll just end up there. So Elite Paddler A tells Betty A this- she paddles out, gets her initial ender, looks downstream, and flushes out of the hole. She

paddles back to the eddy and says "What did I do wrong?" Paddler A gets frustrated and ignores her. Why should he waste his time telling Betty A the same thing over and over? He turns to Boy A, tells him the same thing. Boy A paddles out, gets his initial ender, turns and looks at the hole as he's coming around for his next point, gets window-shaded and swims out.

True, he swam, whereas Betty A rolled, but Paddler A is going to concentrate his energy on him, because he went out there and did what he was told. Two months later, Elite Paddler A is in the same position. Betty B and Betty C are in an eddy with Boy B. Paddler A remembers the incident with Betty A, and immediately turns his concentration to Boy B. Who knows- Betty C could rip- but he's not going to direct his efforts to her because he assumes it's going to be the same scenario.

This is frustrating for me as a woman boater. I am at fault because sometimes I am Betty A, but on the days that I'm Betty C, and Paddler A won't help me. Both men and women can learn from this.

I basically taught myself to kayak. It's taken longer, my learning curve was prolonged, but I've reached the same point as Boy A who learned from someone else. Now, as I want to learn more advanced moves, I am having trouble teaching myself. But, due to the actions of women before

me, men don't want to take the time to help me. So, I've reached a plateau.

We, as a paddling community need to pick up on the 1 out of 10 women that truly want to be better boaters and teach them. Guys complain that their spouses don't boat. But you won't teach them. Women again are partly at fault, because they think that in order to gain the respect of the paddling males, they need to be "one of the guys", and lose their femininity. Why would a guy go out of his way to help a woman boater that is just trying to be one of the guys? Come on girls! Be proud of who you are! Kayaking is a sexy, sensuous sport, full of clean lines, smooth water and graceful maneuvering. It's not supposed to be choppy, harsh and gruff like most men. We need to embrace our women-ness and be who we are! Wash your paddling gear- comb your hair, wear a dress instead of tevas and a t-shirt, and be sexy. (You'll get a ton more dates this way too.)

Technology is the third explanation for why there aren't more women boaters. Kayaks and gear have always been designed for men. And I can't say I blame the designers and manufacturers, either. They have to eat, they have to make money, and the "women's" market is small. It's not profitable to cater to us. But we allow it to become stagnant that way- because we don't know the difference, and buy it anyway. For

example, lifejackets. There are a few companies that have made life jackets for women, but they still don't cut it. I have one of these women's jackets, and in order to compensate for my curves, I had to buy a large/x-large. It's huge on my shoulders, and monstrous in the distance from the underarms to my waist. But it does fit through my chest. So, how is this different from a man's large/x-large? They label it for a woman and we, like socialistic slaves, buy what we are told. True, there is nothing else on the market. But we need to make a point of telling designers this, or designing our own. Our bodies are different. End of story. It's not "I am woman, hear me roar." It's "Hey, Look! I've got breasts. Do something for them."

Now we come to boats. I'm not saying there needs to be a boat-line specifically for women. Not at all. There are plenty of boats out there perfect for all types and sizes for both men and women. We just need to educate ourselves as to what works and what doesn't. This works for men and women. For a beginner, bigger isn't always better. Think about it. The bigger the boat, the less contact points you have with the boat. And the less control overall. I like a boat small and tight. I use my hips to paddle. Women's bodies have hips- use what you've got. Same gig with physical attractiveness and attitude: It isn't always what you've got, but how you use it.

I'm not going to go into every boat on the market and why it will or won't work for women of various paddling skill levels. Just use your head. Don't be programmed by the market- think about boat design. Think about the shape of your body, the muscles you have and use, then make an educated choice. One of my paddling friends tells me I have too much confidence in and give too much credit to the populous. This is true to some extent. But we are not idiots. If people would stop and think about something before they say it, or act on it- the overall intellect level will rise.

Women and men are very different physically, mentally and genetically. But women will never rise to the top if they are just compared to other women. In kayaking, the top women aren't even close to being as good as the top men. I'm not criticizing the women elite here, I'm just stating that women have no need to do much better or strive harder, because they traditionally have just been competing against themselves. If women and men competed against each other and paddled as equals, the learning curve would sky rocket. Women have much to learn from male boaters and male boaters need to encourage the females, if they want to accomplish anything for the future benefit of the sport.

Ok, enough already. I don't want to sound like a broken record. I just get frustrated with kayaking, because there shouldn't be a schism between males and females. After all, we're all after the same goal "Have Fun. Be The Best?" (not necessarily the best we can be, but the best). Right?

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# Night of the Frogs

by Bryan MacKay

Like a night landscape illuminated by a flash of lightning, a memory returns, unearthed by a surprise visit of old friends. It brings to mind a special night and suggests that not all of the best paddling stories happen on the river.

I had taken a group of my college students out for two days of paddling on the Cacapon, a scenic, easy West Virginia river. The first day had gone well, with only the usual assortment of flips, swims and near-disasters typical of beginners. As we loaded up at the take-out, the sky grew dark and soon a thunderstorm raged down the valley. We cooked dinner in a small canopied picnic area nearby, safe and dry amidst the torrential downpour. Finally, under a watery lowering sun, we drove to our campsite, an old cow pasture on my paddling buddy Phil's family farm. The farm's access road was hubcap-deep in mud; we gunned the engine and slid across the meadow on surface tension and hope, fishtailing wildly. Giddy from a day of whitewater, we were having a blast.

Phil's cousins drove up in an old pickup, probably curious about us city slickers. I put on my best laid back pose, adopted the slight southern accent that I can't help but affect when I'm in rural parts, and conducted a fine example of humoring the locals with an urbane and absurd mix of trivial chatter.

As the conversation began to languish, there was a sudden, terrifically loud bang right behind me. I wasn't startled, but as soon as my feet came down to earth I turned to find one of the cousins pumping bullets into an old tin can at point blank range. My masquerade as a good ol' boy dissolved in an instant. My students, busily erecting tents, all stopped and stared at me, jumpy as deer. Scenes from "Deliver-

ance" flashed through my mind, but I had of course misjudged the nature of these rural people. Shooting a pistol at tin cans is normal behavior for them and soon we had resumed our pleasant conversation.

Eventually, Phil's relatives bid us good evening and left. Camp made and darkness falling, we decided to drive to Capon Bridge for beer and bluegrass. All six of us piled into Jay's car, an old full-sized sedan held together with equal parts rust, compacted dirt and duct tape. We slid back across the field, down the dirt road and onto the pavement. Dusk settled, the clouds thickened and owls hooted in the gathering gloom. Our headlights created twin cones of light revealing wisps of fog rising in the warm, humid evening.

Suddenly Jay swerved sharply to the left, then back to the right, dumping his passengers in a heap. "Frog," he remarked. Jay never said much. A minute later, he swerved again, and again, and again. Now we could see the road ahead on a short straight stretch. It was littered with frogs every few yards, hopping across the road to the river on our right. Even though the traffic was light, squashed carcasses were strewn all about. Jay slowed, but steering around the frogs was hopeless: they were everywhere. He drove on, heedless, leaving bloody destruction in his wake. The situation was absurd almost to the point of humor, but this example of the fleeting nature of life made an indelible impression on us all.

The night in Capon Bridge was memorable. The place with bluegrass was a combination dance hall, restaurant, beer parlor, pool hall, snack bar, laundromat, and community center: only in West Virginia. Up on stage, guys in

identical western garb and cowboy hats thumped out the Orange Blossom Special and other bluegrass standards. Tubby women with too much makeup and too-tight pants danced hopefully with tall, languid, uninterested men whose skinny hips threatened to lose their hold on wrinkled blue jeans. Over in the corner by the laundromat, women chatted while their small children played by their feet. Young teens played pool with cigarettes dangling from their skinny lips while their little brothers skated a slalom course around them. It was an all-American scene.

At midnight we staggered out from the smoky, noisy bar and into the fresh air. Stars glittered overhead. Driving back revealed the same wispy fog, dripping countryside and frog carcasses. But all the live frogs were gone. The migration between estivation and breeding sites was over. However, fewer reached those vernal ponds that night than the year before; man sees to it that this trend continues. What seems like incredible numbers is reduced annually, like soldiers in a losing army, until one day no more will remain to answer the wild call of moonlight, rain and warm humid evenings. We drove slowly back to camp each vowing to ourselves that this was a night we would never forget.

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# RockHARD

## on the Russell Fork

By James Ruch

### FRIDAY, DAY ONE

10am- The trees have gone to brown but the day is warm. Weather Channel forecasts clear skies and comfortable temps. Which means rain. But the Suburban fires up on the first try. The stereo cranks. Everything is groovy. Jack and I hit the Gas and Go for supplies.

12:30pm- Friendsville and running late. Croc's gone, driving his brand new Subaru Outback. Despite what his wife might say, Croc is no dummy, he knows we got two reservations at the hotel. He'll get there first to score the best room and swipe the towels. He's picking up Prossciutto and another Shredder en route.

1:30pm- Ah, Morgantown, Morgantown. What a splendid town. Gray skies, gray buildings, gray people. We stumble down the stairs to Phat's flat. The gang's all there; Phat, KTB, Young Squire, Hero. Spirits are high. Jack heads for the fridge. I stake out a spot on the sofa.

3pm- The Suburban's luggage rack is a piece of crap. I hope the duct tape holds. The boys have loaded three kayaks and two Shredders with lots of rope. Phat takes the wheel. Spirits are really high.

4pm- Scenic Fairmont and cheap gas. We restock the coolers. Jack gathers useful sodomy information from the bathroom walls. As the youngest member of our party, Jack is the least burdened with dead brain cells. His memory works. But we refuse to let his vivid descriptions of Triple Drop and El Horrendo dampen spirits.

5:55pm- Phat freaks and pulls off the road. In the middle of godforsaken nowhere and he thinks something is wrong with my truck. I accuse him of driving stupid. Hero leaps out and jiggles the front tire. Bad bearing. Definitely a bad bearing. Phat laughs in my face. A collect call to my mechanic offers little reassurance "Get it fixed." "Drive slow." "Don't call collect."

6:30pm- No mechanics with spare Suburban bearings in sight. We decide to drive really slow. It is only another 150 miles.

9pm- The bearing grinds like a Soul Train dancer, but we might just make it. The road twists and turns like a rat snake on methamphetamine. Spirits are low. Phat is at the wheel. I mention the upcoming hairpin turn in Grundy. Phat mentions the lack of brakes. I accuse him of driving stupid and take over

the wheel. The peddle slaps to the floor. Phat's derisive laughter does little to lift my spirits.

10:30pm- The Gateway Motel greets us like the freakin Taj Mahal, like the Promised Land, like the Emerald City. The Suburban lurches and bucks in granny gear, the bearing screaming like a train wreck. I back into a mechanic-friendly spot near the basketball hoop and pry my fingers from the wheel. The balconies brim with boaters. The party has started without us.

11pm- Our room has two bowl-shaped beds. As RockHard Expeditions chief bottlewasher and head muckety-muck, I get one. The boys can fight over the other. Somebody will be on the floor. Which looks comfy. The carpet is dirt brown. So are the walls and the ceiling and the curtains and the tub. The heater doesn't work but the TV does. No lamps. Somebody has tequila. Spirits revive. We collect money and order pizza.

### SATURDAY, DAY TWO

1am- The Gateway Motel is Party Central. The world's biggest pizza arrives like a half sheet of plywood splattered with sausage and onion. Sausage and onion? Who ordered that? We'll be sorry in the morning. I fear vomit. KTB has consumed much tequila and fails to recover his sleeping bag from the basketball hoop. I show him to a nice warm sleeping spot near the toilet but he refuses to retire. He prowls the motel in his underpants.

3am- Hero sleeps like a wristwatch-wearin' turd on a rock. Poke him with a stick and he emits a bad odor but no signs of life. The watch beeps every hour.

4am- The watch beeps. The room is dark as a burnt sausage in a rental bootie. My mouth tastes of fur and sausage and rental bootie. The room smells of sausage and farts and feet. Jack's feet are in my face. Jack's feet smell like rental feet. I need to pee. Even with my eyes closed against the glaring light I achieve a respectable 60/140 bowl to floor ratio. Must remember to tip the maid. On the way back to bed I trip over KTB's face. Flailing wildly in the dark I stomp squarely on Young Squire's belly. Now I know who's sleeping on the floor.

5am- The watch beeps. Hero hits the head and humors us with half an hour of musical

intestines.

7:30am- We meet with Croc the Outback Driver and Prosscuttio the Spicy Italian Ham in the other room. As expected, their room has all the amenities ours lacks; heat, towels, lamps, soap.

8am- Breakfast at the Whitewater Cafe. Over grease we discuss shuttle options. Eight boaters, one Subaru Outback. Our options suck.

8:15am- The Postman arrives. Three time WVa State ironman champion, rodeo bull rider, water carnage king; the Postman needs no introduction. He is fresh from a weekend of BASE jumping off the New River Bridge. The Postman greets us happily and mentions that KTB looks like sh\*!. He is not the first to make this observation. The Postman has a truck. Shuttle! Spirits soar.

10am- Phat is not fat. We call him Phat because of his love of fine food, good wine and soft beds. Phat's a helluva nice guy and a great boater, but he has one glaring flaw. His gear stinks. Phat thinks his river gear will self-clean if left long enough in the hot trunk of a car. Phat puts on a polyester shirt that makes my eyes water. It makes my nose bleed. It makes my eyes bleed and my nose water. We forcibly eject him from the room, but the stink lingers.

10:30am- Betty runs the motel. Betty is a jolly, friendlpwoman with a healthy approach toward work. She would rather chat. I tell her my sad tale. She knows a good mechanic. Her ex-husband, Shotgun. Then she tells me about the kayaker who slept out back in a sleeping bag and got run over by a pickup truck. Squashed his pelvis. And then the weenie didn't even go boating.

12:30pm- We are on the river. Three kayaks, three Shredders. Hero paddles a Diablo. He knows the river. Croc and Prosscuttio paddle a Shredder. They have seen the river. Phat and Jack paddle a small Shredder. Jack has seen the river. Young Squire paddles an ancient UV degraded banana, KTB paddles a monster hangover. They saw a video. And I get to shred with The Postman. Paddling with The Postman is like being Clint's partner in a Dirty Harry movie; you know you won't be in the sequel.

1:30pm- The locals say the dam is a wonderful place to fish. Looking down on Triple Drop, I wish I was there. Triple Drop is no place to fish.

2pm- I begin to see the line. I discuss it with The Postman, "We don't go there, we don't go there, we don't go there." He tells me about his upcoming hip replacement surgery. I forge ahead, "We sneak that little chute there, run this hideous sh\*! here pointed left, and paddle like hell to reach that eddy." Turns out The Postman has no cartilage left in his pelvis, just bone against bone. "Then we run that waterfall."

2:05pm- KTB gets hammered. KTB gets crushed. KTB gets his ass handed to him on

a leaking paper plate with no napkins. KTB flips and rolls and flips and rolls and gets sucked up into the hole and flips and rolls and flips and swims. He tries for the eddy but he ain't gonna make it, he's going for the big drop over the ledge eight feet down onto sharp rock, his boat right behind him. This is gonna hurt. I blow my whistle helpfully. KTB scrambles on top of his overturned kayak and, in an awesome display of raw stupidity... er... courage, stands up and rides it like a surf board over the ledge.

2:15pm- The Postman and I run Triple Drop without incident. KTB is depressed. His stick caught an eddy on the right and disappeared under a massive undercut rock. KTB will be walking unless we can stuff Young Squire far enough under that rock to find the paddle. The sky opens up in cold rain. KTB heads for the train tracks, dragging his boat and grumbling obscenities.

3:15pm- El Horrendo is ghastly. El Horrendo must be unrunnable. No way a Shredder can make it through this apocalyptic nightmare. We're gonna die. We send Phat and Jack out as probes. They slide over a dry ledge and turn sideways. They suck back into a huge hole. The Shredder squirts and heads for the big drop. Jack is still in the boat. No sign of Phat. Jack has big eyes. Phat pops up next to the boat. His eyes are really big. He scrambles in. Just in time to slam the bottom hole and get packed under a rock.

3:25pm- The Postman and I hug each other in the bottom of the raft. We blast the hole and disappear into the froth. We get packed under the rock. My helmet gets a new gouge. We call it a clean line.

4:30pm- Cold rain falls on the takeout. Phat has twisted his ankle and it is swelling up quite nicely. No sign of KTB. I consult Rik, a local boater. "Where do those train tracks end up?"

"Elkhorn City."

"Is that close?"

"Hell no, and he better hope he don't meet a train in those tunnels." Rik is also a paramedic. He pokes at Phat's ankle. "Broken, definitely broken."

Worst of all, we have no beer.

6pm- Everyone beats me to the shower. Even KTB. All the towels are wet. Soggy, smelly crap hangs from every corner. But there is a beer store across the street.

11:30pm- Spirits are high. I wish I could sleep, but there's thirty-seven people partying in my room.

## SUNDAY, DAY THREE

12:30am- Spirits are high. I wish I could sleep but there's forty nine people partying in my room.

1:30am- Spirits are jump-up-and-get-your-head-whacked-by-the-ceiling-fan high. There's one hundred and seventy five people and a large, drooling dog partying on my bed.

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3am- Hero's watch beeps. I listen to the gentle grunts and snores of my compadres. This is the life. 4am- Hero's watch beeps. I bounce a beer can off his temple.

Sam- The motel room smells like buzzard barf. Like a buzzard that just ate a rental wetsuit and Phat's polypro and feet. Gad, I'm famished.

9am- After a hearty breakfast of greasy eggs and potatoes, I chat with Betty. A mechanic won't be available till Monday. I break the bad news to the boys. They don't care, it's not like any of them have jobs. Phat can't walk, so we make him run shuttle.

1pm- The Russell Fork is not a gradual river. Once it gets going, it gets going fast. Fist Rapid is only a micro-eddy past Tower Falls. Young Squire misses the eddy and runs the fan, impacting with a sickening crunch. Oh. That's why they call it Fist. Young Squire washes out, packed into his boat up to his armpits.

1:15pm- Triple Drop comes up too fast. The eddy at top is full. We bounce off a raft and curses follow us over the first ledge. We noseplant hard, catapulting The Postman head over buttcheeks. He faceplants the front tube and stands the Shredder vertical. I tumble out. Below, the big drop detonates. We race for the eddy. We swim like Olympic champions. We swim right up onto dry land like prehistoric fish scrambling out of the sea. The Shredder runs a clean line. One of our paddles joins KTB's stick under that damn undercut rock.

2pm- We only have one paddle. No spare. We could walk. We could try it with one paddle. We could carve a paddle. We could tie a rope to The Postman and scuba dive him under the rock. Young Squire shows us his purple ankle. Spirits are not high.

2:30pm- Between Triple Drop and El Horrendo is a wild, twisting waterslide I call El Betweeno. We borrow a paddle but it does us little good, we pinball off of every rock. We run El Horrendo without scouting. Packed under the rock we congratulate ourselves for another clean line.

3pm- Spirits are high at the take-out. Phat meets us with both vehicles and beer. He still can't walk, but then neither can Young Squire.

6pm- The motel is quiet. Everyone with a life is on the road, home to their warm beds and jobs. KTB catches a ride, leaving his boat behind. I might have to sell it to pay the mechanic. Phat catches a ride with Croc and Prosscutio, leaving his nasty, fetid, awful gear behind. I might have to burn it for my own sanity. Young Squire dangles his purple engorged ankle in the beer cooler. We munch fish burgers and watch Rainman.

## MONDAY, DAY FOUR

2am, 3am, 4am, 5am, 6am, 7am, 8am- Hero's watch beeps.

9am- I talk to Shotgun on the phone,

"Chevy? Not a problem. Three quarter ton? Might be a problem."

10am- Betty's ex-husband's partner Matthew arrives with his wife and kid. Matthew is a pleasant, round guy with a shock of sandy hair. Matthew nips from a brown paper bag. I like him immediately. Matthew jacks up the Suburban and the wheel falls off. It starts to rain. My spirits plummet.

10:30am- Shotgun arrives with two buddies. Shotgun and Matthew discuss options. The axle and hub are shot, I need major repairs. "Might be a problem." Shotgun bums a beer. Matthew bums a cigarette. The buddies bum beers. I get the wife and kid a coke. I have a beer.

1:30pm- Matthew negotiates a deal with a woman up the creek. She has a trashed out Chevy sitting in the mud. Matthew pulls the damaged parts off the Suburban and heads up the creek. I repair to the room to watch soaps and goof on Young Squire's eggplant-looking ankle.

4:30pm- Matthew returns with twenty-five bucks worth of rusty parts. He cleans them with gasoline and Hero's toothbrush. Spirits soar.

6:30pm- Matthew is tired and ready for beer. I grab a six pack and we head out for a

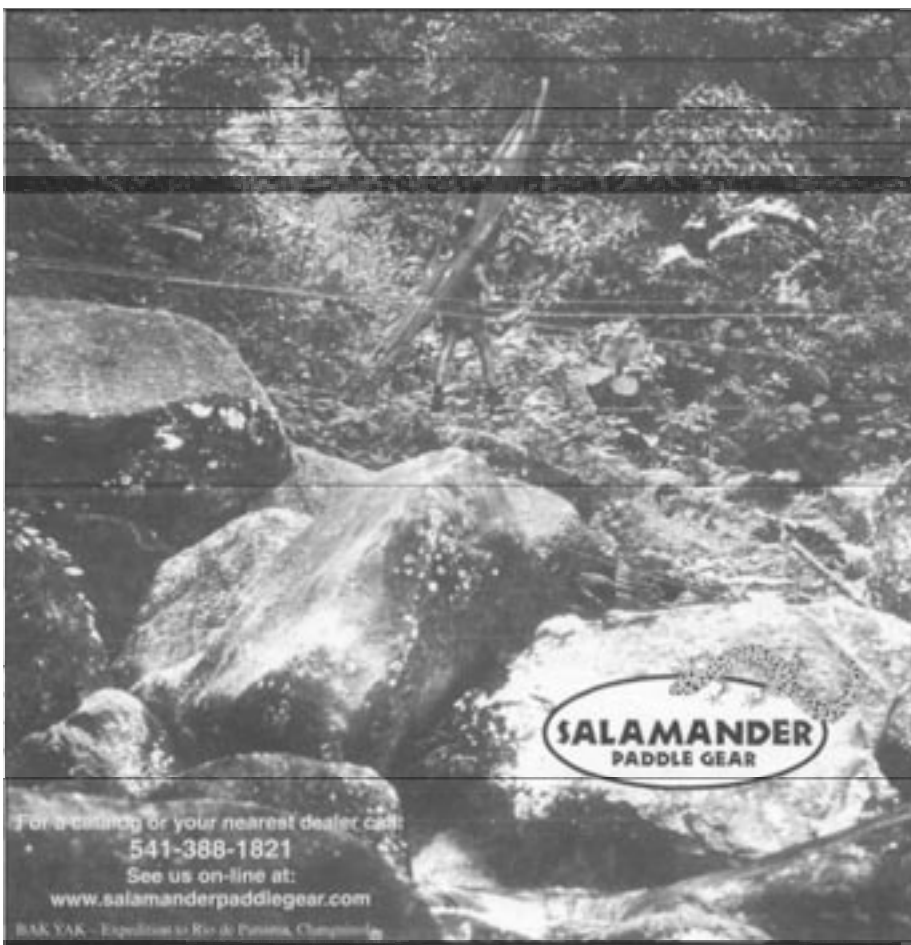
test drive. The Suburban is missing a hubcap and Matthew finds this offensive. We drive up to the trashed out Chevy and Matthew lifts a hubcap. The Chevy is actually sitting in the creek. On the way back, I learn some facts about Kentucky. Kentucky is where you throw your trash. Kentucky grows good pot. And if you need a regular paycheck to survive, get the hell out of Kentucky.

7:30pm- The Suburban runs fine. Matthew wants eighty-five dollars for his work. I give him a hundred. He gives me a handful of Xanax for my nerves.

8pm- A general feeling of well-being pervades the motel room. We decide to leave in the morning. Hero and I carry Young Squire across the street for our last meal at the Whitewater Cafe. I crave vegetables, four days of grease has left my bowels in an uproar. They serve up a tasty iceberg lettuce salad. For dessert we have Xanax.

10pm- I finally get a good night's sleep. I don't even hear Hero's watch.

*Editor's Note: James Ruch is a well known WVA river rat and expert on fifth grade doodie humor. His work appears regularly on bathroom walls. He currently resides in Tokyo.*





# Kayak Standard Time

By Marion Boyer

My husband, Ed, says in Michigan we're in the center of whitewater adventure — drive five hundred miles in any direction and there's a river to run. The Michigan river runners that we travel with have all the skills necessary to expert kayakers. In a snap, each is able to assess available options and confidently responding to circumstances on the river. Challenges? Bring 'em on, is their spirit. They have the talents to handle all manner of difficulties on the water. Somehow these talents fail them in the morning at the campsite.

The early risers stumble slowly toward the Coleman stove, root around for a clean plastic spoon, and turn away from the clothes that overnight dropped in a wet heap beneath the clothesline. They cup their hands around steamy mugs, shuffle the dry leaves of the campsite, eye the sky and hunch their shoulders.

"What's the plan?" one begins.

"Dunno. Whatdaya think?"

"Gonna rain."

All pause and stare upward in unison.

"Might not."

"You think?"

"What time are we leaving?" The pivotal question. Leaving is certain, timing the only variable.

"What time you got now."

"Local time or Michigan time?"

"Rafters gotta be at the put-in by 9:30."

"Local time?"

"Well, sure."

"What time's it now?"

"Local? It's, uh, 7:00."

"No, that's Michigan time — it's 6:00 here."

"Oh, you switch over?"

"Yeah, last night. You should too. It's 6:00 here."

"I can't — I don't know how to change time on this digital."

"Why'd you buy a digital if you can't work it?"

"It's an Indiglo."

"Oh. Lemme see."

"So, how far to the put-in?"

"It'll take about twenty minutes, but we gotta run shuttle."

"Right. So what'll we need, an hour?"

"No, more like forty-five minutes."

"So we need to leave by, what, 8:15?"

"There about."

"Local time or Michigan time?"

"Might as well give ourselves an hour, unless you want to hit the outfitter store."

"Okay, so leave at 8:00. What time's it now?"

"Six Michigan time, so that's seven local."

"You sure? I thought they're an hour behind us."

"Yeah, they are. We're Eastern Standard and they're Daylight Savings, so it's earlier here."

"If they're an hour behind, isn't it later here?"

"Is this like spring forward, fall back?"

"So, we're leaving, in what, another hour from now?"

"We leave at 8:00 for a 9:30 put-in?"

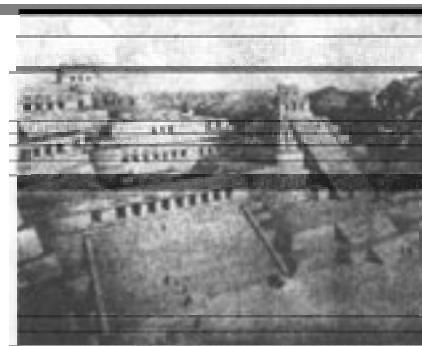
"Isn't that too much time? Didn't we say we need an hour?"

"Okay, so what, we leave at 8:30?" "Michigan time or local time?"

"Local."

"So what time you got now?"

This conversation repeats each time a new group member stumbles over for coffee.



*Clearing by Teresa Froese/Smithsonian Institution of Piedras Negras*

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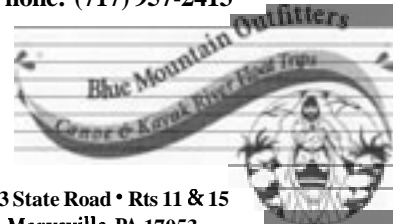
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# Hanging, Dangling, on the Edge of My Obsession

By Scott Shoup

"Men *play* at tragedy because *they* do not believe in the reality of the tragedy which is actually being staged in *the* civilized world."

- Jose Ortega y Gasset and opening quote for *Into Thin Air*

There comes a time when events force us to stop and think, to try and grapple with the ways of the world. The questions we ask and the answers we find are dependent on the experiences that come from our past and the dreams that image our futures. At some time every boater, or practitioner of risk sport, will be forced to closely examine why it is they partake in the activities that they do and whether or not the reward justifies the risk. The eventual decision will be to retreat to a safer realm, or step ever closer to an unseen edge pretending to be oblivious to the reality of death.

Years ago a chill wind announced itself in short, staccato, gusts of air that told me my tormentor had arrived. The slow plunk of fat rain drops fell from the darkness and built up to a suffocating roar that threatened to smother me. Slowly, with the oncoming storm, a wave of strength and excitement grew in me and was released when it became too great for me to contain. I slept fitfully.

Morning came and within hours I found myself breaking into a rhythm on the cascading waters of a creek. Somewhere behind me I left even my deepest worries of everyday life in some dank mud puddle. I relished the natural world around me, and lost myself physically and mentally to a new world made real by the trueness of life and death. It was if I had cast aside a dark heavy cloak from my shoulders to bask in the sun. I was utterly fulfilled and the risks were justified. So my obsession began.

These type of rewards, in a nut shell, are why many of us paddle. However, when our experiences begin to dull we seek new ones. Often these new experiences become more difficult and more dangerous, because it is the risk of death that makes these experiences real. Thus our quests become more perilous and we lose sight of death. Until something happens.

This spring I was paddling a difficult steep creek outside of Chattanooga. The water was high and my group had a handful of minor problems that were easily dealt with and quickly placed in the sh\*! happens category. We finished the run with some cuts and bruises, but with no feelings that we had narrowly escaped death. What we didn't know was that a second group of boaters was behind us, a group that had actually waited for the water to drop. Their class V day had apparently gone smoothly until the last mile or so of class III boating. Then a young gentleman named Todd lost his life. Todd's wife was waiting at the takeout. The invisible line that divides life and death was obscured by my group's success. It was redrawn for us by the evening news.

Traditionally, the fact of death has been a silent given for those of us on the edge of extreme sports. It occurs, it is something that we pretend to accept, and it is something that we turn away from in order to insure our blindness - to insure that we avoid asking the questions we do not want to answer. So we simply move on, and death becomes an enigma. To the outsider the risk of death and its inevitable occurrence creates the lure and romance that attracts and excites many to risk sports. To the experienced, though, this lure and romance holds no truth. We know death must be personalized before it can be realized.

In 1993, after a particularly good day of boating on the Ocoee, I drove to the nearby Nantahala river and noticed an unusual crowd at the class III rapid known as Lesser Wesser or The Falls. I drove to the other side of the river, grabbed a life jacket from my car and sprinted up a line of railroad tracks to the rapid. What I found was a large group of boaters, some experts in river rescue, waging a small war. A half an hour later what they found below the river's metallic green surface was the cold, lifeless, broken body of a 17 year old boy who had done nothing wrong. A 17 year old boy who will never graduate from high school, experience the awe of nature, or feel the depth of love. Death was not new to me, but it took this experience for me to even begin to fathom the cost of death. It took this experience for me to raise my eyes from the ground so that I could begin to grapple with

the reality of my obsession.

When we hear of a death in the boating community we tend to depersonalize it. In response to the news of a drowning, the first thing we do is confirm that we have no association with the deceased individual. This conveniently separates us from any emotional connection to the reality of death. Next we analyze the accident in search of errors that were made, so that we will not make the same errors ourselves. As a result we develop an impersonal and analytical detachment to death that creates an elaborate ruse. The ultimate purpose of the ruse is to keep death as an enigma. This allows us to press on and continue to reap the rewards of our risk taking.

The ruse has two main constructs. The first construct is the detachment that we develop. We see death as something that can be avoided. We take faith in the fact that we can survive, because we possess excellent skills or paddle with safe people. The fact of the matter, however, is that nature is sometimes indifferent to the skills you possess or the rescue abilities of your partners. Accidents happen to the most innocent of beginners, or to the best of the best, as we have seen this summer. Nature believes in luck, or in this case bad luck.

The second construct of the ruse is more subtle. Defining and understanding risk is a very difficult thing. No one has an understanding of risk's negative side until they have had a great deal of experience with life and death. Even then our interpretation of death continually changes. How can a teenager grasp what the future holds? How can a young adult understand the depth of inherent responsibility that marriage brings or parents feel? How can we comprehend what our own death may do to others? This takes life experience.

All this year death seemed to follow me. It was near me in the spring; then it followed me to the Poudre, the American, the Arkansas, and the Crystal. It was there around every corner. I held it at bay by ignoring it, but the enigma of death finally reared its head at me on Gore Canyon in Colorado. I didn't perform badly. I didn't get off line, or swim, or anything like that. I just couldn't justify taking the risk as I have for so many



years. While paddling, my mind was focused on the things life was going to bring me - things to do, people to hold, places to see. All I wanted to do was to paddle to the bank, step out, discard my gear to the river, and walk away from boating. I was terrified. I was terrified of losing life, of losing the future, and of losing boating. The only time that I have ever had so much mental difficulty on a run was after nearly drowning in a hole at high water, in cold weather, and then having to finish paddling the remaining eight miles of the run because I was too weak to walk out.

At Gore I tried to ignore the risks at hand all day...unsuccessfully. When I reached the takeout, I kept things to myself. I didn't want to admit to losing my edge, to grasping the enigma. I spent the next few days dumbstruck, wallowing in the back of my station wagon struggling with the truth. My final realization was that it wasn't the river, it was me. With age and experience my eyes had been opened and my views altered. I no longer saw death as a dark shadow, but as the end of life, as the end of opportunity.

In the end avoiding risk would seem to be the answer, but it is not, because we use risk to explore our lives and to test reality. At times risk is justified. So I suspect I will be out there taking the risks again as soon as the rains come. I will be out there hanging, dangling on the edge of my obsession, living life, looking for some experience, looking for some new enlightenment, until some other force arrives and rescues me. I have an obsession that, in many ways, my personal well being depends on. I will move on, as I should. As I move I will carry my new knowledge with me as carefully as a brilliant gem. The gem's sparkle allows me to see through the ruse and view the enigma more clearly now, to better understand both sides of reward and risk. I also know death is no longer following me. It left me, but took a friend in the depths of the Gunnison's Black Canyon. I hope it stays there awhile....

During the 1996 tragedy on Mt. Everest, Beck Weathers miraculously stumbled into camp after being left for dead in a snow storm. His first mumblings in essence were - I think I've got this life thing figured out now.

Author's Note: Much of ~~the~~ thought and inspiration for *this article* is based on John Krnkauer's works *Into Thin Air*, *Into the Void* and *Eiger Dreams*.

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Dan Govere working the wave for the Fibark '97 rodeo.  
Kevin S. Warren photo



# Trespassing in Ohio?

by David Knox

Before I get into this whole thing with our near-arrest, ticketing and general persecution, let me just go over one thing to dispel any myths you may have heard. Especially for all you who are fortunate enough to call the mountains of the east, west, north, or south your home. **OHIO IS NOT ALL FLAT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!** Yes, it's the honest truth. We have hills and valleys, and, yes, we even have a little bit of that wonderful thing called whitewater here. There are even some who would argue that a few of our whitewater runs are worthy of a "V" classification, but that whole debate usually leads participants to slanderous speech and physical violence. I personally think that some of our class IV/V's are rated up a notch or two because of dangers posed by bacteriological and chemical threats.

As I'm sure all of you know, the western slope of the Appalachian plateau begins to rise along the eastern side of Ohio, reaching ear-popping altitudes of near 900 feet. And if you knew that, you probably also knew that the level of Lake Erie, which forms part of Ohio's northern border is about 570 feet. If you didn't know any of that, it's time to go to your local library and read up on some Ohio geography. (If you did know that, you need to get out more.) This gives northeastern Ohio a little bit of gradient for rivers and streams in the Lake Erie watershed.

Now let me get to the part where my friends, Eric Quigley, Eric "Max" Metz, and I were incredibly stupid, or in the eyes of the nice ranger of the Lake County Metroparks, incredibly defiant.

Back in early December '96, we had stopped by Paine falls, a thirty foot high, cascading waterfall, just to take a look. By strange coincidence, we were all wearing lots of paddling gear, and we even had a few

kayaks strapped to the top of a van. Perhaps to a passer-by, we looked a little suspicious. Unfortunately, two of those passers-by happened to be on-duty park rangers. They stopped by just to let us know that by standing on the bank of the river near the falls, we were violating a restricted area. We sat and tried to talk them into looking the other way while we ran the falls for at least a half hour, coming very close to succeeding on a few occasions, but eventually coming away with only the name and phone number of a park administrator who would 'probably OK it'. So we left that day and went home, each of us intent on talking to the administrator on the next business day.

When I called him the next day (I'll refer to him as Steve), we talked for a while about exactly why the falls were closed. From what I gathered, they were shut down a few years ago because of liability scares when a few high school kids split their heads open trying to do flips off the falls. Steve went on to tell me that there was no way he'd ever grant us permission to run the falls, except if we could give him a detailed float plan. In this float plan, he required us to say who would be running the falls, which is hard to pinpoint when you're dealing with a bunch of college-age slackers. Even harder to pinpoint, he wanted to know the exact dates of when we'd be attempting this endeavor. I tried to explain that our being able to run the creek was contingent on rainfall, because its normal flow is estimated (by me) at 5 or 10 cfs. However he seemed to turn a deaf ear, because he just replied that 'I told you what I need from you.' Our chances for getting any kind of permission to run the falls looked slim to none, so we gave up on it altogether. . . at least for a few months.

The beginning of May brought two important things: the end of spring semester and lots of rain. Unfortunately, the first rains fell during exam week, hampering any immediate opportunity to take any long trips, which turned our attention 30 miles north to those all but forgotten falls on Paine creek. It rained over an inch on the night of Monday, May 5, which was more than enough to make that little creek swell for the next 24 hours. And so it came to pass that on the night of May 5, Quigley, Max, and I conspired to shoot the falls the very next day.

We arrived at the falls equipped with as much of our gear as we could find, our boats, a video camera, and a hangover. (Okay, maybe

not the hangover, but every great kayak story has to have a hangover in it somewhere, doesn't it?)

The falls are broken into two drops separated by a ten foot long ledge. The top tier is a 12 foot long 75 degree slide, the bottom is a sheer 15 foot vertical drop into what we found to be a deep pool. All things considered, it's bark is much worse than it's bite; it looked 4 times more intimidating than it actually was. If only we could have explained that to the three different motorists who called 9-1-1 when they drove across the bridge overlooking the falls. We did not know this, otherwise we probably wouldn't have run the falls five consecutive times each. I guess we just kind of 'just one more time'-ed ourselves into trouble. I should also point out that we were already on the side of the road, tightening down the last boat when the ranger arrived.

Let me just make a list of things not to do, (for anyone considering committing such a heinous crime in the future). Please learn from these following mistakes:

- 1) When the ranger asks "don't I recognize you guys from somewhere?", don't remind him where you've met before.
- 2) When the ranger asks what you did, don't tell him that you took out just above the falls when your footprints are on the ground at the take-out point below them.
- 3) Don't leave the pelican case with the video camera inside it sitting on the roof of your getaway vehicle.
- 4) Don't believe the ticketing officer when he tells you the ticket you just got shouldn't be more than \$25.
- 5) Don't let the ranger fool you into thinking that he did you a favor by only charging you with criminal trespassing when he could have also included reckless endangerment and disorderly conduct.

With our tickets in hand and tails between our legs, we split up and went home. I called the Painesville municipal courthouse the next day to see how much it was going to cost to waive my ticket. I nearly soiled myself when the clerk said it was going to cost \$100 apiece. Waiving the ticket quickly became a poor option. We would have our day in court.

Two weeks later, the three of us showed up in court, Quigley even came prepared with a law book in hand. He had found a loophole in our case on the way to court. We were charged with **criminal** trespassing on

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our citations. Criminal trespass, loosely defined, is trespass with intent to steal, damage property, or do other bad things. Clearly none of which was our intent. The judge dismissed our cases, making us only pay for court costs, on the following grounds: 1) He agreed with the whole "it wasn't criminal trespass" scenario, and 2) He didn't understand how you could trespass in a public park in the first place. The judge ultimately decided that in the best interest of the court and our own time, he would be willing to dismiss the case at our cost. We each were responsible for covering court costs, which amounted to \$50 a head, turning out to be our second-best case scenario. The best case scenario, of course would have been not having to pay anything at all, but nothing's perfect.

In the following weeks I familiarized myself with Ohio's navigability laws, and the fact that the problem may be solved if we gain access to the river upstream of the falls, recognizing the concerns of the park. I'm sure it may sound pretty stubborn, but understand how hard-up we are for good IV-V whitewater in Ohio — everything else is out-of-state by at least 4 hours — and what a great resource these falls are. So now we must wait until it rains again, and this time, be more considerate.

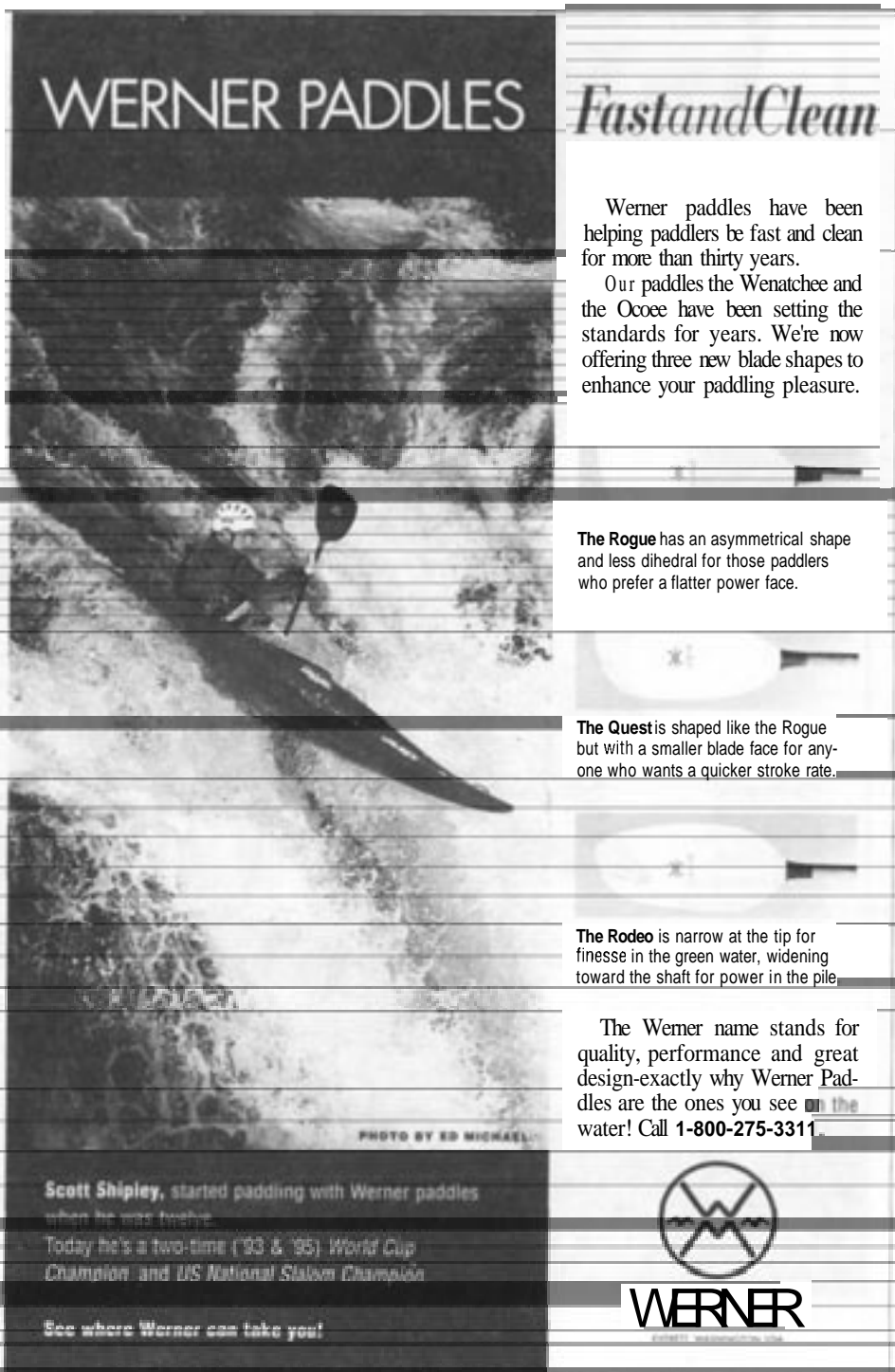


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## Upper Chattahoochee River Keeper Awarded 1997 Conservation Alliance Grant

Perception Kayaks recently announced that the Upper Chattahoochee River Keeper Fund has been named a recipient of a 1997 Conservation Alliance Grant. As a grant recipient, the Upper Chattahoochee River Keeper Fund will receive \$35,000 to continue their work advocating and securing the protection of the Chattahoochee River watershed. This includes improving and maintaining the environmental integrity of the Chattahoochee, as well as preserving and enhancing the natural, scenic and recreational character of this river corridor.

"We are especially pleased that the River Keeper Fund has been named a recipient because Perception was the industry sponsor," says Risa Shimoda Callaway, Conservation Alliance Board Member and Director of Research, Design and Development for Perception. "Given the Chattahoochee's designation by American Rivers as one of the 10 *Most Endangered Rivers* in the United States, the grant will help direct the issues shaping the future of the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basin, likely to be determined during the next 18 months."

The Upper Chattahoochee River Keeper Fund plans to use their Conservation Alliance Grant to organize the effort on behalf of environmentalists, anglers and paddlers to ensure that water quality, biological diversity, environmental and recreational issues are made top priorities in the water allocation process.

Since Perception was founded, they have been a leader in the movement to protect the quality of and access to water based recreational venues. These include: Annual River Conservationist Award (est. 1981), Recycling of Consumers Used Kayaks (est. 1993), and Charter Member of the Conservation Alliance (est. 1989).

## New Ocoee Take-Out Announced

Tennessee State Parks, the lead agency for the management of the Ocoee River Recreation Area, is proud to announce the opening of the new Big Creek Take Out. The need for a new take out was identified years ago and the managing agencies are excited to have this facility available for paddlers. The Big Creek Take Out is eight-tenths of a mile by car below (or west) of the Caney Creek Take Out on Hwy. 64. The entrance to Big Creek is on the west end and the exit is on the east with one-way traffic through the take out moving west to east. Long merge lanes are found on both the entrance and the exit for easy ingress and egress. Big Creek has sixty-four PARKING spaces, spaces for vehicles with trailers and handicap parking spaces. A restroom building that is handicap accessible with changing rooms is also available.

During the three summer months park attendants are on duty for the hours of water release to monitor the area, maintain the restrooms, as well as being a contact point in the event of an emergency. All park attendants have radio contact with the Park Ranger on duty. During the spring and fall the rangers on duty monitor the new take out.

The addition of this facility extends all regulations governing the use of the recreation area to the western boundary of the Big Creek Take Out. This would include PFD's, the alcoholic beverage prohibition and the prohibition of motorized vessels in the recreation area. When the Big Creek Take Out was opened on July 9, 1996 one major change took place at the Caney Creek Take Out that will effect paddlers. At Caney Creek what was formerly a paddlers loading zone on the river side of take out is now a COMMERCIAL BUS lane. The paddlers loading zone on the highway side of Caney Creek is still available. However, there are only eight spaces and they are for loading ONLY. This new \$325,000 facility has been a long time in coming. Please join with us in getting the word out that the new Big Creek Take Out is open to paddlers! For additional information call: 423-338-4133, or write Hiwassee/Ocoee Rivers, Box 255, Delano, TN. 37325

## Friends of the River's 18th Annual Rivers Festival

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Join the growing number of Northern Californians discovering the excitement and beauty of California's rivers at the Friends of the River's 18th annual Rivers Festival, February 20 - 22, 1998 at Fort Mason Center, San Francisco. Celebrate 25 years of successful river conservation and whitewater enthusiasm.

From the West's largest display of whitewater equipment and outdoor gear, to interactive seminars on river conservation issues and hands-on workshops on sporting technique, this year's festival promises to pack in people from all over the West.

"We want to see everyone out at the festival, learning about river conservation and having fun," said Greta Ossman, Festival Coordinator. "Whether you go kayaking or rafting every weekend, or if you've never been on a river and want to check it out, this is the place to get the gear, see the tours and get in on the excitement!"

Special events include live and silent auctions of the latest in outdoor gear and adventures, 'Round the Rock: 5th annual sea kayak race around Alcatraz, West Coast's largest gear swap meet, and a concert featuring the world beat of Pele Juju.

Proceeds go to Friends of the River's conservation efforts. Admission to the Rivers Festival starts at \$5 for admission for exhibit hall events; pre registration is encouraged.

For more information, call Greta Ossman, Festival Coordinator (916) 442.3155 x203 or email at [ossman@friendsoftheriver.org](mailto:ossman@friendsoftheriver.org).



## Corps Provides New Gauley Flow Data

By C.J. Hamilton, Resource Manager

Local Corps officials at Summersville Dam, responding to requests by river users, have decided to post a CFS conversion chart at the gauging station put-in site and on one of the below dam bulletin boards. Donnie Hudspeth, organizer of the annual Upper Gauley Race and frequent hardboater on the Gauley, met with Corps Resource Manager C.J. Hamilton and Maintenance/Damtender Tom Carr to work out the details on October 28th.

The chart will be installed on the face of the door on the U.S.G.S. building at the put-in. River users can simply look at the river gauge staff reading (in feet) at the edge of the water and walk up to the chart to see what the equivalent CFS is.

Having good information has many obvious benefits. The biggest one is boater safety. River users can now determine exactly what the CFS level is at their time of put-in. This, of course, is no substitute for getting all the information you can prior to boating about possible changes in river levels. The easiest way to do that is to call the 24 hour information line at (304)872-5809. Remember, however, that this number is updated once a day at around 7:30 to 8:00 am. It is also updated during the day if significant changes to the river occur. Smaller changes may not result in the recording being automatically updated. River users can also stop in at the Corps office prior to the start of their trip and see if there are any anticipated changes to flows. The office is located across from the picnic area, on the west end of the dam.

In addition, various river levels and out-flow readings can also be found at the Corps of Engineers Huntington District Web page. The address is: <http://155.80.20.63/wc/whitewater.html>, which can also be accessed via the AWA web pages.

If anyone has any suggestions on how to improve communications for river flows or any other issue dealing with Summersville Lake, call me at the Resource Manager's Office at (304) 872-3412.

*(The posting of CFS conversion charts at Summersville Dam is a great example of private boaters and representatives from the Corp working together to make improvements at a major river access. This service is an important one, especially at low levels, when 300 cfs change can make over a foot difference in some rapids. Paddle Hard AND Paddle Safe! Donnie Hudspeth)*

## Gauley Race Full of Surprises



By Donnie Hudspeth  
Race Organizer

Rain. Cold. That miserable gray type of day we have learned to associate with Gauley Season, the Festival, that sort of thing...

But not this year. Race day was crisp and blue, with temps in the mid 70's. Wildwater soaks, Wavehoppers, and antique glass boats were common sights in the parking lot as registration tables were set out. Registration at the dam was reasonably well organized, with the usual joking and borrowing of duct tape to outfit boats. As we got closer to the sacred time, you could feel the excitement growing. There were a lot of new faces this year, as well as the regular crew. It was quite a gathering: world champion rodeo boaters, wildwater racers, video boaters, and just plain old recreational boaters that wanted to go FAST. A reunion of folks that haven't seen each other for as much as a year, and an excuse to get together before the end of the warm weather paddling season.

New for 1997, two additional classes: a 'Sport Boat' Class for boats 9'6" or less; and a '6 Person Raft Team' Class. The number of sponsors grew and the total cash value of prizes was well over \$4,000! After a group photo at 'the tubes', safety boaters and timers went to their stations and racers started getting psyched. It was almost time...

The scene at Sweet's was busy. Local television stations and remote radio broadcasts were getting set up. Timers anxiously watched the clock waiting for the first racer to come into view. Then we saw Roger coming. He was stroking fast and hard coming up on Sweet's Falls. The crowd began to yell "Go Roger Go", cameras were clicking. It was a Race! A clean line at Sweet's and Roger flew past the finish line. As usual, his time was super fast.

Soon, however, Ben came into sight. He looked fast, and indeed he was. Until he got eddied out just feet above the finish line. People were screaming as Ben made his way out of the eddy water to the finish line, just seconds behind Roger.

Then came the first surprise! Everyone was so busy jumping around we hardly noticed Andrew as he cruised past the finish line. "Who was that?" Timers were calculating times and then the word went out; Andrew had moved into first place!



Racer after racer came through Sweet's, as the crowd on the rock grew. As the woman's Wavehopper class came in we got another surprise. Caroline, a flatwater racer from Switzerland, was the fastest woman! There was a lot of hand shaking and smiling as folks enjoyed cold beverages while basking in the West Virginia sun. The fine folks at Appalachian Wildwater cranked up the grill and served ribs and chicken, too! Finally, after another group photo, (you should see this photo...;) we headed back to NARR for the post-race Celebration.

*Thanks to all the people involved that made this race happen: Timers, safety boaters, Sponsors, the Corp (for the extra water), and certainly- the people that came to RACE! See ya' there next year!*

## 1997 ANIMAL Upper Gauley Race Results

Wildwater	Time	Overall	Class
Roger Zbel	45:15	2	2
Steve Kauffman	48:13	4	4
Chris Hipgrave	48:18	5	5
Ben Lawry	45:17	3	3
Andrew McEwan	44:51	1	1

### Wavehopper Men

Tracy Clapp	52:41	17	8
Clay Wright	50:58	10	5
Paul Hoda	66:01	38	11
Ted Newton	48:55	6	1
Howard Tidwell	50:27	9	3
Rick Gusic	51:26	13	7
Jesse Whittemore	50:04	8	2
Sherwood Horine	51:12	12	6
Mike Burns	54:52	22	9
David Bonomo	56:16	27	10
Clem Newbold	50:53	11	4

### Wavehopper Women

Kathy Howerton	54:38	21	4
Colleen Laffey	54:19	20	3
Carolyn Porter	53:36	18	2
Katie Neitert	57:28	29	5
Caroline Domenghino	52:16	15	1

### K1 Slalom Men

Eric Lindberg	52:34	16	2
Jeff Nelson	57:25	28	5
David Persolja	51:46	14	1
Pete Persolja	55:41	24	4
Curtis Burge	54:05	19	3
Trip Kinney	58:00	30	6

### K1 Slalom Women

Deb Ruehle	55:12	23	1
Mary Bethune	1:44:11	47	6
Gia Deangelis	59:05	32	3
Anita Adams	61:51	33	4
Shannon Carroll	56:01	26	2
Tracy Hines	64:11	37	5

### Playboat

Catfish Vermillion	70:20	43	3
Bill Chouinard	63:54	34	2
Andy O'Reilly	58:48	31	1

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## 1997 ANIMAL Upper Gauley Race Results

C1 Women	Time	Overall	Class
Heidi Domeisen	64:01	35	

### C1 Wildwater

Andy Bridge	50:00	7	1
Mike Beavers	55:48	25	2

### OC1

Nolan Whitesell	64:03	36	1
John Deardorff	69:16	41	4
Tim Spangler	66:54	40	3
Milt Aitken	72:22	44	5
Steve Frazier	66:27	39	2

### OC2

Liz Garland/Lynn Aycock	75:30	45	
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### Raft Teams

Team Wing	69:25	42	1
Inflatable Dolls	76:36	46	2

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When: Monday, September 29<sup>th</sup>  
Registration begins at 9am in the parking lot below the dam

Post-Race Celebration at NARR's High Country Cafe'

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Previous page photos: Top photo, Andrew McEwan cruising...  
Bottom Roger Zbel, Fast and Clean at Pillow

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PROBE 12	12'6"	28.5"	15.5"	48 LBS	ROYALEX	\$875	\$612.50
PROBE 12 II	12'2"	27.5"	15.5"	48 LBS	R-64	\$875	\$612.50
PROBE 14	14'2"	30.5"	15.5"	58 LBS	ROYALEX	\$940	\$658.00
VIPER 11	11'8"	27.5"	15.5"	45 LBS	ROYALEX	\$875	\$612.50
VIPER 12	12'6"	27.5"	15.5"	48 LBS	ROYALEX	\$875	\$612.50
XL 13	13'3"	30"	15.5"	58 LBS	ROYALEX	\$920	\$644.00
XL 14	14'3"	32"	15.5"	68 LBS	ROYALEX	\$940	\$658.00
XL 15	15'6"	35"	15.5"	85 LBS	ROYALEX	\$970	\$678.00

# The Cleaned-Up ACT

by Jonathan Katz

Omaha awoke, having slept well. He was alone. Being single, it was both necessary and desirable for him to sleep alone. It had taken an effort, but he had given up nonmarital sex. This had been difficult, but his support group helped. Worshipers Abstaining from Drugs and Sex (WADS) met six nights a week in the basement of the local Assembly of God. Insert Tab A into Slot B, he had thought at first, but now he knew better. Last meeting Omaha was the keynote speaker. He remembered now what he had said then.

"Sex is a dangerous behavior which should only be practiced by heterosexual married adults, only for the purpose of conceiving children. In the ideal sexual relationship, the couple mates once for each child it conceives. Given the population of the planet, two children per married couple are enough. However, although my biographer conceived three children with just two acts of copulation, most couples cannot achieve even the desired one-to-one ratio between matings and live births. It is therefore occasionally necessary to mate additional times to assure the survival of the human species. According to the latest studies, three to six well timed matings per couple should be sufficient to accomplish a lifetime's reproductive goal. Additional sex has a tendency to produce excessive pleasure in one partner, and sometimes headaches in the other. Therefore it is discouraged.

He got a standing ovation for this speech.

WADS did not help him deal with his now-unmet physical needs, which he found particularly acute on arising. But he had found that he could subdue even the worst case of morning stiffness by pulling on a pair of cold, clammy polys.

He ate a bowl of granola and a glass of fresh squeezed orange juice, from organic oranges grown on a collective farm in Georgia. Florida growers savagely exploited their labor forces and he simply would not contribute to their profit stream. The Georgia juice was tart and pulpy, and cost about \$6.00 a

quart, but he could drink it without shame. He reached for a pot of coffee—Kenya MDark Roast, beans ground to 40-grit that morning, and brewed with unpasteurized water.

Omaha had been off drugs and alcohol for three months, but his hands still shook in the morning. His mug slipped out of his hands and steaming hot coffee spilled into his lap.

"Mother....!" he nearly screamed, before he caught himself, blushing. It was the WORST word he could have chosen, and he reproached himself for the mental error as he lowered himself into a bathtub of freezing water.

As the agony from the hot liquid subsided and hypothermia set in, he replayed the string of mental errors that had climaxed in this latest pain.

Drugs were a sin to start with, he reflected. Long ago he had permitted himself to walk down their twisted road, and the journey had nearly killed him. He was lucky the only permanent damage (other than the tendency to forget his name) was the trembling in his fingers. It was this tremor that had caused his grip to fail this morning, and nearly made him use bad language.

Omaha had once spent some time on one of the company computers, calculating that if all the drugs he had done were mounded up and stuffed into his van, there wouldn't be room for the driver to sit. This was a lot of dope, but not as big a dope as he was for getting addicted in the first place.

He wouldn't have gotten off drugs if it wasn't for heroin. He'd finally ruined all the veins in both arms. Tracks? He had the Union Pacific up one arm and the Erie Lackawanna down the other. When he found himself trying to tie off and inject a vein in his little toe, light dawned. He put down his works, reached for the phone and called the police.

"Can I speak to the DARE officer?" he asked.

After a few minutes of country music on hold he was connected.

"I've decided to say no to drugs, and I want to get rid of my stash," he explained.

The DARE officer, who had heard drug perps say just about every sort of stupid thing, shook his head. This was up there. Just go with it.

"What do you have that you need to get rid of?" he asked.

Despite the brain damage, Omaha had an encyclopedic memory for his drug holdings, which varied from day to day like a well-churned stock portfolio.

The DARE officer took copious notes. "Dime bags?"; he asked.

"Garbage bags. I'm wondering if I could just sell the stuff and donate the proceeds to DARE?"

Long ago the policeman had gone hunting with his AK47 set on full auto. He'd stepped into a clearing, and there, twenty feet in front of him, was a doe, grazing. He raised the assault rifle to his shoulder. With one squeeze of the trigger that deer would be killed, skinned, gutted—doeburger. Now he felt the same way about busting Omaha. He lowered the rifle without firing.

"Don't worry about the contribution," he said, shredding his notes. "Just take your drugs to the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Center. They can help you."

Omaha had been clean ever since.

Less than a week later McBride had called him into the Boardroom.

McBride ran his fingers through what was left of his hair and studied his partner before he spoke.

"We have a problem," he began. "DeGecko called. They are getting a lot of heat at American Whitewater, and they don't think they can print reports of your activities any more. They're just too lurid."

Omaha nodded. "Which explains why we got left out of the Gauley Edition."

McBride shook his head. "That was a different problem. Either Katz blew his deadline or his writing sucked."

"Aren't 'blew' and 'sucked' banned terms of art?" Omaha asked.

McBride looked down. His ears reddened with embarrassment. There was no option

but to apologize.

"I'm sorry, Kenny. I mix-spoke," he said sincerely.

After a moment he continued. "The official explanation was that they didn't want to run any off color humor in a magazine devoted to honoring the memory of a drowned paddler."

"They weren't really worried about offending him, were they? I mean, given his medical condition and all."

"No. But they've been getting a lot of complaints from their live readers. You really have to do something about your behavior. There's just no more room for sex, drugs and rock & roll in a magazine devoted to a recreational sport practiced by humans of both genders."

"I understand," Omaha said. "I promise I'll clean up my act. In fact, you'll be happy to know I haven't taken any drugs since last Tuesday."

McBride smiled widely. "That's splendid, Ken. Congratulations." He extended his hand, but then his face darkened. "What about alcohol?"

"It's a problem, still, I must admit. I'm searching for divine guidance there. It seems that all forms of alcohol are banned in the Islamic faith, but Christian services utilize red wine."

"So?"

"No beer. I permit myself one glass of Beaujolais before bedtime."

"This is an improvement. At least you don't smoke cigarettes."

"Good thing. Its a tough habit to kick. And they just made the Gauley a nonsmoking river."

"The whole thing? Or just the Upper?"

"Almost the whole river. There's a small smoking section in Pure Screaming Heck. Low tar filter cigarettes only. No cigars."

"Thank goodness for small miracles."

Toward the end of Gauley season McBride, Omaha, Chopper, Arden and Rachel drove down to run the river. They took two cars, for the shuttle and so they could split up along gender lines. It was easier that way, particularly since Arden was Omaha's ex and Chopper's current womanfriend, and since she and Chopper were abstaining till the wedding, which wasn't till June, 1999.

During the twelve hour drive the women talked about needlework, what to wear at church socials, and drysuit gasket repair. The men talked about baseball, what to wear at church socials, and drysuit gasket repair. Since the men traveled in one car and the women in the other there was no chance of provocative contact between the sexes. Nobody used any bad language and there was only one "incident." Chopper accidentally started to play an old cassette tape he found in the glove compartment. It was the Rolling Stones. He recoiled in horror, and savagely

punched the eject button. McBride produced some Brahms violin concerti, and the mel-low strains of classical music soothed their ravaged ears while Chopper methodically stripped the tape off the offending cassette, tore it into shreds and threw it out the window. There, he thought, finishing, now the world is a little bit safer, a little bit purer, a little bit happier. It was going to be a good day.

Thirty miles outside of Summersville they hit a huge tie-up on U.S. 19. Slowly they passed an amazing caravan of vehicles: two school busses and a raft truck, then two more busses and a raft truck, alternating on and over the miles. It was a Promise Keepers outing. The religious group was trying to set a world record for family rafting on the Gauley. The Army Corps had extra troops on hand to help blow up the rafts and pass out free ice cream sandwiches to everyone under age twelve. Men with bullhorns were leading mass prayers and singing hymns. People were smiling, braiding flowers into their hair, swapping Bible stories and recipes for jams, jellies and pies. The Keepers had reserved one bus for tobacco addicts, and had stationed it last in line, virtually eliminating exposure to second-hand smoke. McBride carefully rolled up all the windows and gave the smoking bus a wide berth. Other than the threat posed by these toxic gases, the mood was sublime; . . .

Eventually the five adventurers managed to put onto the river. All the paddlers were wearing dry-quits and life jackets. Their secondary sex characteristics were totally concealed under river garb, except for McBride's

thin gray mustache. Arden had abandoned her practice of wearing brazen red nail polish and lipstick on the river, and Omaha no longer changed in public. In fact he had stitched an applique of cloth fig leaves over the crotch of his dry-quit. It was not true innocence, which he knew sadly that he had lost forever, but it camouflaged the most provocative part of his silhouette.

They ran the river without incident until they got to Iron Ring. Chopper, who was leading, gathered the five boaters in an eddy. "Since this is Arden's first run, I think we should scout Iron Ring. Its Class VI."

Omaha disagreed. "It is not. Its a 3."

"VI"

"3"

"VI"

"3"

"Roman."

"Arabic."

"Roman. You know darn well there isn't any whitewater in Arabia."

"And there aren't any rapids in Rome, either, you infidel. Arabic."

McBride intervened, before a fistfight broke out. "The American Whitewater Affiliation has never taken an official position on whether rapids should be rated with Arabic or Roman numerals. So for today we will scout Iron Ring in English. We can argue about rating the rapid after we survive it."

The boaters gathered on shore, and stared intently into the ugly mix of black rock and white water, deciding how—and whether—to run the notorious drop.

McBride spoke, "One time a couple years ago I took a squirt boat through



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Chopper kicked him. 'You know they don't call 'em "squirr" boats anymore. Too suggestive. Now its a Very Low Volume Kayak—VLVK.'

McBride nodded. "Sorry. As I was saying, I took my vulvok through there, got backendered, had to roll twice in the hole before I could get out."

Chopper groaned. "Backendered?? You pervert!"

Omaha, too, scolded his partner. "Watch your tongue, Bam Bam. Even American Whitewater won't print the "h" word anymore. And its not "roll," its "right."

McBride was getting flustered. He spoke slowly. "I paddled through there and the stem of my vulvok was pulled down by the hydraulic. I capsized and had to right myself twice before I could paddle downstream."

"Better," Arden said, and smiled a sweet, innocent smile.

The spent a few more minutes discussing the route through Iron Ring in neutered English, before McBride voiced his concern over a matter of life and death.

"We have a problem," he said. "We have three men but only two women on this trip. If a man gets in trouble in there and needs CPR there are two other men available, one for rescue breathing and the other to do

chest compressions. But if one of the women gets hurt, a man will have to participate in the resuscitation."

McBride glanced pointedly at Arden as he spoke. He knew that Rachel was far too good a paddler to swim Iron Ring.

Arden pondered the risks. If she needed CPR, than she would have to let at least one man touch her body, either her mouth or—God forbid!—her chest. The prospect was politically incorrect, to say the least. Grimly she made her decision.

"I confess, Chopper and I have kissed before. If you have to revive me, he can do the mouth to mouth and Rachel can do the compressions."

"I have a pocket-mask, if that would make you more comfortable," Chopper replied.

Arden nodded. —Perhaps it would be better that way."

The fear of intimate contact with her rescuers gave her a sharp shot of adrenaline. She hit her line perfectly and ran the rapid dead on the money and upright. Then she smiled. The worst was behind her.

The paddlers finished the run without further difficulty. Arden and Rachel left the men and drove their van a couple of miles into the woods before changing into their burqa-and-veil street clothes. Reunited, the

hungry boaters went back Summersville to get something to eat. They drove past the firebombed shell of Hooters and pulled into McDonalds.

Omaha stared intently into the eyes of the woman behind the counter as he ordered. Then he got his tray of food and turned away, smiling inside. He was so proud. He'd waited five minutes at the counter and not once had he looked at her hair, her lips, her hips, her legs or her bosom. He was beginning to heal. He joined the others at the table.

"Will you say Grace?" McBride asked him.

"Of course. Orthodox or Reform?"

"Reform, please."

Omaha bowed his head, waited for the others to fall silent, and spoke in a loud, clear voice.

"Our Parents, who art in Heaven, hallowed be your names ...."

He knew he was not yet Redeemed. But he was zeroing in on Salvation.

Jonathan Katz, October 10,  
1997



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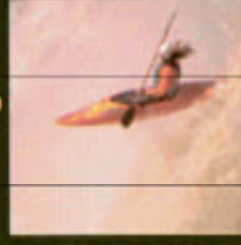
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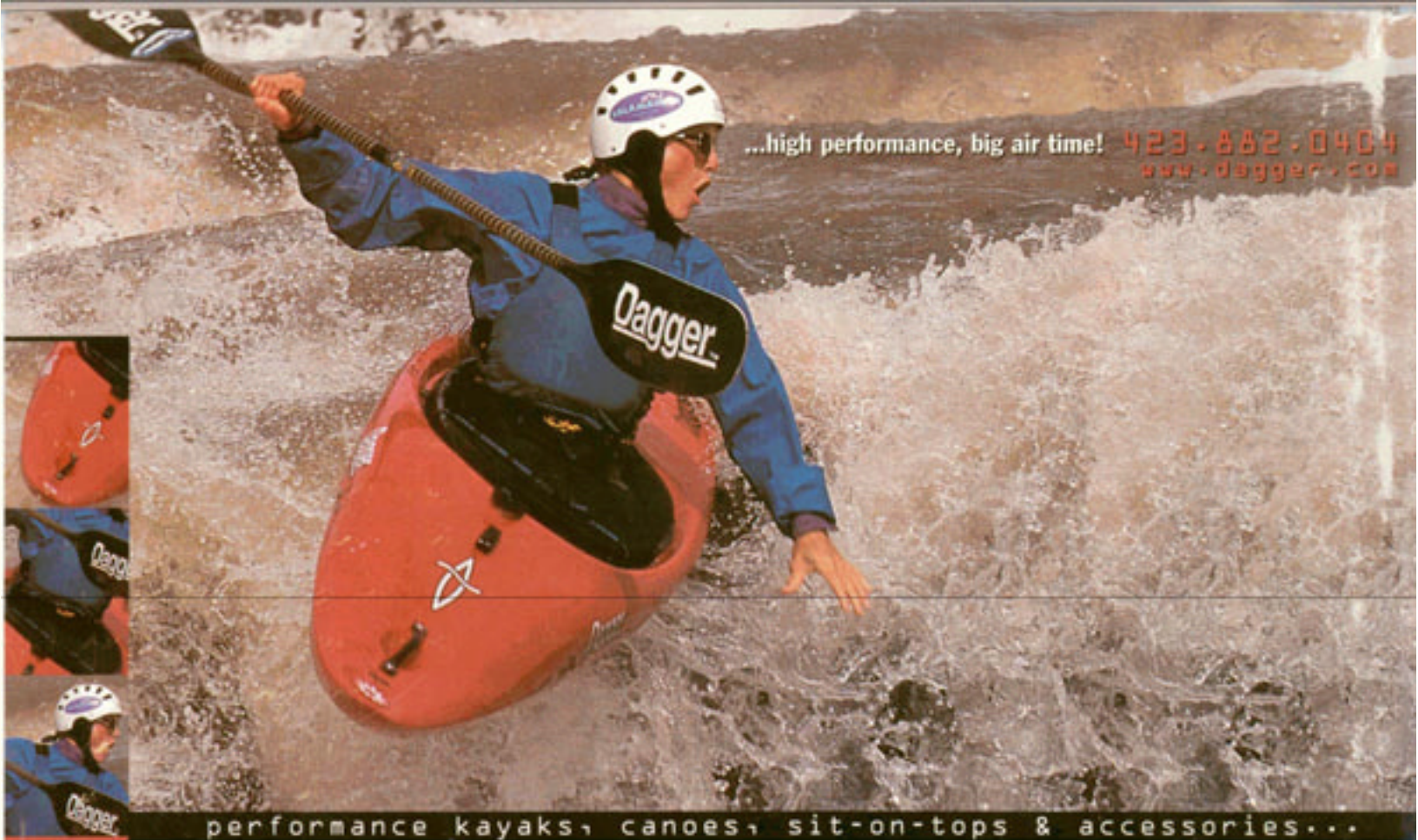
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